

WITH THE LOYAL
YOU SHOW YOURSELF LOYAL

ANCIENT ISRAEL AND ITS LITERATURE

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Number 42



WITH THE LOYAL
YOU SHOW YOURSELF LOYAL

Essays on Relationships in the Hebrew Bible
in Honor of Saul M. Olyan

Edited by

T. M. Lemos, Jordan D. Rosenblum,
Karen B. Stern, and Debra Scoggins Ballentine





Atlanta

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2021931881

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Abbreviations

1 En.	1 Enoch
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
1QM	Milḥamah <i>or</i> War Scroll
1QS	Serek Hayaḥad <i>or</i> Rule of the Community
2 En.	2 Enoch
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
4 Macc	4 Maccabees
4Q266	Damascus Document ^a
4Q271	Damascus Document ^f
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AcBib	Academia Biblica
Acts John	Acts of John
ADAJ	<i>Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan</i>
AES	<i>Archives Européennes de Sociologie</i>
Aet.	Philo, <i>De aeternitate mundi</i>
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AFS	<i>Armed Forces & Society</i>
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
A.J.	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
AJS	<i>American Journal of Sociology</i>
AmAnt	<i>American Antiquity</i>
Anab.	Xenophon, <i>Anabasis</i>
ANEM	Ancient Near Eastern Monographs
ANET	Pritchard, James B., ed. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Apoc. El.	Apocalypse of Elijah
Apoc. Zeph.	Apocalypse of Zephaniah
ANRW	Temporini, Hildegard, and Wolfgang Haase, eds. <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Part 2, <i>Principat</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–.
AntCl	<i>L'Antiquité Classique</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
Apoc. Ab.	Apocalypse of Abraham
Apol.	Aelius Aristides, <i>Apology</i>
ARP	<i>Annual Review of Psychology</i>
ArSt	<i>Aramaic Studies</i>
ARC	<i>Archaeological Review from Cambridge</i>
AS	Assyriological Studies
Ascen. Isa.	Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah 6–11
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AWCH	The Ancient World: Comparative Histories
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
AYBRL	Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
b.	Babylonian Talmud
B. Metz.	Bava Metzi'a
BAMA	British Academy Monographs in Archaeology
BAP	Meissner, Bruno. <i>Beiträge zum altbabylonischen Privatrecht</i> . Leipzig, 1893.
BAR	Blackwell Ancient Religions
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BBVO	Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient Texte
BCT	<i>The Bible and Critical Theory</i>
Ber.	Berakhot
BG	Biblische Gestalten
BHS	Elliger, Karl, and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds. <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibJudSt	Biblical and Judaic Studies

<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BibRef	Biblical Refigurations
BibThSt	Biblich-Theologische Studien
<i>B.J.</i>	Josephus, <i>Bellum judaicum</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BJSUCSD	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BKAT	Biblische Kommentar, Altes Testament
BLay	Khirbet Beit Lei
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
BM	Tablets in the collections of the British Museum
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BNP	Cancik, Hubert, ed. <i>Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World</i> . 22 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2002–2011.
<i>BRev</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
BTT	Berliner Turfan Texte
<i>BWL</i>	Lambert, Wilfred G. <i>Babylonian Wisdom Literature</i> . Oxford: Clarendon, 1960.
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament
BZABR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2006.
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue Biblique
CAT	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the Damascus Document
CEB	Common English Bible
<i>Cels.</i>	Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i>
ch(s).	chapter(s)
CH	Code of Hammurabi
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East

CIJ	Frey, Jean-Baptiste, ed. <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum</i> . 2 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1936–1952.
CogPsy	<i>Cognitive Psychology</i>
col(s).	column(s)
Comm. Hom. II.	Eustathius of Thessalonica, <i>Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem</i>
Conf.	Philo, <i>De confusione linguarum</i>
COS	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> . Edited by William W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002.
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQR	<i>Church Quarterly Review</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i>
CSCP	Cornell Studies in Classical Philology
CurBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
D	Deuteronomistic source (of the Pentateuch)
DD	<i>Dor le Dor</i>
DDD	van der Toorn, Karel, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, eds. <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1995.
Decal.	Philo, <i>De decalogo</i>
Descr.	Pausanias, <i>Description of Greece</i>
Did.	Alcinous, <i>Didaskalios</i>
Dig.	<i>Digesta</i>
DNWSI	Hoftijzer, Jacob, and Karen Jongeling, eds. <i>Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> . 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
Dtr	Deuteronomistic (History; writer); Deuteronomist
E	Elohistic source (of the Pentateuch)
EBR	Klauck, Hans-Josef, et al., eds. <i>Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception</i> . Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009–.
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
EGed	En-Gedi
Eruv.	Eruvin
EssBib	Essais Bibliques
ET	English translation

<i>ETR</i>	<i>Études théologiques et religieuses</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>FAT</i>	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
<i>FB</i>	Forschung zur Bibel
<i>fig(s).</i>	figure(s)
<i>Frag.</i>	Aristobulus, <i>Fragments</i>
<i>FRLANT</i>	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
<i>Geog.</i>	Strabo, <i>Geographica</i>
<i>GNT</i>	Good News Translation
<i>H</i>	Holiness source (of the Pentateuch)
<i>HAE</i>	Renz, Johannes, and Wolfgang Röllig. <i>Handbuch der Alt-hebräischen Epigraphik</i> . 2nd ed. 2 vols. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2016.
<i>HALOT</i>	Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . 3rd ed. Leiden: Brill, 1995, 2004.
<i>HAV</i>	Handbuch der Archäologie Vorderasien
<i>HBAI</i>	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>HG</i>	Kohler, Josef, Ernst Peiser, and Arthur Ungnad. <i>Hammurabi's Gesetz</i> . 5 vols. Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1904–1911.
<i>Hist.</i>	Polybius, <i>Histories</i> ; Thucydides, <i>History of the Peloponnesian War</i>
<i>Hist. Aug.</i>	Historia Augusta
<i>HM</i>	Hebrew Monographs
<i>HR</i>	<i>History of Religions</i>
<i>HSM</i>	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IB</i>	Buttrick, George A., et al., eds. <i>Interpreter's Bible</i> . 12 vols. New York, 1951–1957.
<i>IBHS</i>	Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael O'Connor. <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
<i>IBulgChr</i>	Beševliev, V. <i>Spätgriechische und spätlateinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien</i> . Berlin, 1964.

<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IGLSyria</i>	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i> . Beirut, then Paris, 1929–.
<i>IJO</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis</i> . 3 vols. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004.
<i>Il.</i>	Homer, <i>Iliad</i>
<i>ILR</i>	<i>Israel Law Review</i>
<i>Int</i>	Interpretation
<i>ISBL</i>	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
<i>J</i>	Yahwist source (of the Pentateuch)
<i>JADD</i>	<i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i>
<i>JAFC</i>	<i>Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry</i>
<i>JAJ</i>	<i>Journal of Ancient Judaism</i>
<i>JANER</i>	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
<i>JANES</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCH</i>	<i>Jewish Culture and History</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JEA</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JEPG</i>	<i>Journal of Experimental Psychology: General</i>
<i>JEPLMC</i>	<i>Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JIGRE</i>	Horbury, William, and David Noy. <i>Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
<i>JIWE</i>	Noy, David. <i>The City of Rome</i> . Vol. 2 of <i>Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JMF</i>	<i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i>
<i>JPS</i>	<i>Journal of Palestine Studies</i>
<i>JPSTC</i>	JPS Torah Commentary
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>

JRV	<i>Journal of Religion and Violence</i>
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods Supplement Series
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Studies
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
Jub.	Jubilees
KAI	Donner, Herbert, and Wolfgang Röllig. <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> . 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–1969.
Kom	Khirbet el-Kom/Qom
KTU	Dietrich, Manfred, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, eds. <i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> . Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013.
l(l).	line(s)
LAB	Pseudo-Philo, Liber antiquitatum biblicarum
LAPO	Littératures Anciennes du Proche-Orient
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LE	Laws of Eshnunna
Leg.	Plato, <i>Leges</i>
Let. Aris.	Letter of Aristeas
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LL	Laws of Lipit-Ishtar
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
LXX	Septuagint
m.	Mishnah
Mak.	Makkot
MAL	Middle Assyrian Laws
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
MCR	<i>Material Culture Review</i>
Metam.	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
Metaph.	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysica</i>
Mo'ed Qat.	Mo'ed Qatan

<i>Mor.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Moralia</i>
MP	Myth and Poetics
MSSMNIA	Monograph Series of the Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology
MT	Masoretic Text
MVAG	Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft
NA ²⁷	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 27th ed.
NABR	New American Bible, Revised Edition
NAC	New American Commentary
Naz.	Nazir
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
NET	New English Translation
Nid.	Niddah
NIDB	Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob, ed. <i>New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . 5 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006–2009.
NIDOTTE	VanGemeren, William A., ed. <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS	<i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation, according to the Traditional Hebrew Text</i>
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBO.SA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica
OE	<i>Orient-Express</i>
OEB	Oxford Encyclopedias of the Bible
OG	Old Greek
OH	Oxford Handbooks
OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
OJA	<i>Oxford Journal of Archeology</i>
OL	Old Latin
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
<i>Opif.</i>	Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>
OPR	Oxford Paperback Reference
OS	<i>Oriental Studies</i>

OSEE	Oxford Studies in Early Empires
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
P	Priestly source (of the Pentateuch)
PA	Palestina Antiqua
PAT	Littmann, M. Enno. "Deux inscriptions religieuses de Palmyre, le dieu שֵׁעַ אֱלֶקוּם." <i>Journal asiatique</i> 18 (1901): 375–81.
PEQ	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
Pesah.	Pesahim
PHAKPAW	Philosophische und Historische Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Aus dem Jahre
pl(s).	plural; plate(s)
PN	personal name
PRR	<i>The Presbyterian and Reformed Review</i>
Qom	Khirbet el-Kom/Qom
QSS	Qatna-Studien Supplementa
r.	reigned
RA	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RACCAE	Reihe, Ägypten, Classification and Categorisation in Ancient Egypt
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
REB	Revised English Bible
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RIMA	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
RIPH	Reihe Innovativer Psychotherapie und Humanwissenschaften
RS	Ras Shamra
RSBW	Routledge Studies in the Biblical World
RSE	<i>Rassegna di Studi Etiopici</i>
RSJB	<i>Recueils de La Société Jean Bodin</i>
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SAIL	<i>Studies in American Indian Literatures</i>
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records

Sanh.	Sanhedrin
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SciAm</i>	<i>Scientific American</i>
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico</i>
SGRR	Studies in Greek and Roman Religion
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
<i>SI</i>	<i>Social Imaginaries</i>
Sifra Qed.	Sifra Qedoshim
<i>Somn.</i>	Cicero, <i>Somnium Scipionis</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo, <i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>SPhiloA</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
SPRTS	Scholars Press Reprints and Translations Series
SRIE	Studies of Religion: Inquiry and Explanation
SS	<i>Security Studies</i>
SSN	<i>Studia Semitica Neerlandica</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
StBib	Studi Biblici
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature
StDem	<i>Studia Demotica</i>
STR	Studies in Theology and Religion
<i>Strata</i>	<i>Strata: The Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society</i>
SWBA	Social World of Biblical Antiquity
SymS	Symposium Series
t.	Tosefta
T. Levi	Testament of Levi
T. Sol.	Testament of Solomon
TA	<i>Tel Aviv</i>
TAD	Porten, Bezalel, and Ada Yardeni, eds. and trans. <i>Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt</i> . Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986–1999.
TCBAI	Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute
TDNT	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.

<i>TDOT</i>	Botterweck, G. Johannes, and Helmer Ringgren, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Translated by John T. Willis et al. 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976–2006.
<i>ThWAT</i>	Botterweck, G. Johannes, and Helmer Ringgren, eds. <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> . Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970–.
Trad	Traditions
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
<i>TUAT</i>	Kaiser, Otto, ed. <i>Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments</i> . Gütersloh: Mohn, 1984–.
TW	Theologische Wissenschaft
UBL	Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
UISK	Untersuchungen zur indogermanischen Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
var.	variant
VIHA	Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Historische Anthropologie
<i>Virt.</i>	Philo, <i>De virtutibus</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WD</i>	<i>Wort und Dienst</i>
WGISS	Wenner-Gren International Symposium Series
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WO	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WOL	World Oral Literature
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
y.	Jerusalem Talmud
YOS	Yale Oriental Series, Texts
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZBAT	Zürcher Bibelkommentare Altes Testament
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Introduction

*Debra Scoggins Ballentine, Karen B. Stern,
T. M. Lemos, and Jordan D. Rosenblum*

Saul M. Olyan is an influential and highly accomplished biblical scholar. He is currently the Samuel Ungerleider Jr. Professor of Judaic Studies and Professor of Religious Studies at Brown University. Over the past four decades, Saul has published research on a staggering breadth of topics within biblical studies and religious studies more broadly, including angels, goddesses, ritual, social hierarchy, sexuality, disability, stigmatizing categorizations, family and household religion, ritual violence, the concept of monotheism, friendship, and animals. Among the contributors to this volume in his honor, his students, colleagues, and friends engage his work on relationships in the Hebrew Bible in various ways, from the marking of status in relationships of inequality, to human family, friend, and sexual relationships, to relationships between divine beings.

Saul has authored eight books, and reviewers of his work frequently observe that he addresses underappreciated, overlooked, and neglected topics and questions and that he consistently advances the field by producing comprehensible works about highly complex phenomena. The essays in this volume follow themes that relate to Saul's publications, organized according to various types of relationships. While our shared theme of relationships is most clearly inspired by his recent book *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible* (Yale University Press, 2017), the contributors draw from the full range of his publications, especially how he has theorized many forms of rituals and social phenomena as operative in creating, maintaining, and/or reworking various sorts of relationships, across many monographs, including most recently *Violent Rituals of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford University Press, 2019), *Social Inequality in the World of the Text: The Significance of Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), and *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*:

Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences (Cambridge University Press, 2008). Likewise, he discusses power relations at length in different works, including in his important book *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton University Press, 2000), which also deals with relationships between Israelites and other groups as well as sexual relations. In *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford University Press, 2004), he treats relationships between the living and the dead. *A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism* (Mohr Siebeck, 1993) and *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (Scholars Press, 1988) address relations with and among divine beings.

He has edited or coedited twelve volumes, most recently *Pain and Its Representation in Biblical Texts, Post-biblical Texts and Other Materials of the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean* (Mohr Siebeck, 2020). These coedited volumes cover topics such as ritual violence, social theory, sexuality, and household and family religion. *Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible: New Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, 2015), for example, established a groundbreaking standard for theorizing ritual violence across biblical exemplars, which are wide ranging but had been undertheorized prior to Saul's organization of symposia on the topic, followed by his editing of the *Ritual Violence* volume and subsequently publishing his own monograph on the subject. *Social Theory and the Study of Israelite Religion: Essays in Retrospect and Prospect* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2012) likewise showcases work that grew out of a symposium that Saul organized at Brown University, in which there was productive debate and discussion that both challenged and advanced the use of social theory within biblical scholarship. *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity: Contextual and Comparative Perspectives* (Blackwell, 2008), exhibits the cross-disciplinary scholarly conversation that Saul initiated with John Bodel, in which they completely refigured the categories typically used across ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean public and private cultus, both large- and small-scale. Especially for those of us who attended these symposia early in our academic careers, it has been exciting to learn from the ways that Saul fosters opportunities for and encourages scholars to utilize theory and critical biblical studies methodologies and how he then works diligently to bring quality written work on these topics to publication for broader scholarly engagement. Saul also continues to invest his time, mentorship, and friendship in former students, routinely inviting them to participate in and even coorganize symposia and coedited volumes.

In addition to his monographs and edited volumes, he has published over eighty articles and essays, in English, French, and German. Most recently, he has become interested in human and animal relations, as discussed in “Are There Legal Texts in the Hebrew Bible That Evince a Concern for Animal Rights?,” *Biblical Interpretation* 27 (2019): 321–39. As with his monographs and edited volumes, the range and depth of Saul’s articles and essays is beyond exemplary, including studies of rituals, prophetic motifs, etymology, gender and sexuality, theology, and classifications of the “other.” Especially influential have been the following select essays and articles. Contributing to recent advances in how scholars categorize divine beings in biblical scholarship, he published “Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?,” *JANER* 12 (2012): 190–201. Among his many contributions regarding purity discourse and hierarchical and exclusive categorizations and labeling is his “Stigmatizing Associations: The Alien, Things Alien, and Practices Associated with Aliens in Biblical Classification Schemas,” in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, edited by Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz, and Jakob Wöhrle (Harrassowitz, 2011), 17–28, as well as the often-cited “Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community,” *JSJ* 35 (2004): 1–16. Two of his contributions on gender and sexuality that are particularly well-known are “‘Surpassing the Love of Women’: Another Look at 2 Sam 1:26 and the Relationship of David and Jonathan,” in *Authorizing Marriage? Canon, Tradition and Critique in the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions*, edited by Mark D. Jordan (Princeton University Press, 2006), and “‘And with a Male You Shall Not Lie the Lying Down of a Woman’: On the Meaning and Significance of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 (1994): 179–206. For these and his many other essays, his work is regarded for its clarity, thoroughness of research, up-to-date methodologies, attention to detail, textual rigor, and nuanced sensitivity to detail and complexities within the data.

In addition to his research and publications, he has shaped the field through his editorial activities, professional conference participation, and, as already mentioned, his organization of symposia and conferences. He currently serves on the editorial board of the Brown Judaic Studies monograph series and the Anchor Yale Bible series from Yale University Press. In the past, he has served on editorial boards for the *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, and the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. He has presented in scholarly conferences

throughout the United States, as well as in France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Scotland, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal, the Netherlands, England, Finland, Canada, and Israel. He has organized multiple symposia and conferences on wide ranges of topics, including human rights, animal rights, violence, Israelite religion, and social theory, which have contributed to the training of many graduate students, to interdisciplinary discussion among a range of senior and junior scholars, and to many publications, as previously described.

We editors have each studied under Saul during our academic training at Brown University, whether as graduate or undergraduate students. Among the contributors to this volume, eleven of us have been Saul's students, whom he has continued to mentor and support as we have gone through the job market, publication processes, tenure or tenure-track promotional reviews, and life changes. Saul has directed nine dissertations and is currently directing several more, and has served as a reader for numerous and additional completed dissertations, both at Brown University and other institutions. His mentorship, teaching, advising, and professional guidance have contributed to our scholarly and personal learning, success, and career trajectories.

Other contributors to this volume include scholars who trained alongside Saul at Harvard University and colleagues with whom he has worked closely at Brown University as well as colleagues and scholarly friends with whom he has collaborated in conferences, publications, and service to the field of biblical studies for decades. For each contributor, Saul's scholarly work has influenced and will continue to influence our own work, not only in themes, topics, and methodologies, but also through the ways that we are motivated by Saul's high standards for precision, thoroughness, responsible philology, challenging theorization, and active engagement with scholarly discourse on the subject matter, as well as high standards for mentorship, as many essays in this volume describe and attest. As we, Saul's students, friends, and colleagues, consider the following sorts of relationships in the Hebrew Bible, these original essays in his honor present a sustained and multifaceted engagement with Saul's lengthy set of publications.

Several essays engage with Saul's scholarship to consider personal and familial relationships. Drawing from *Biblical Mourning*, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, and "What Do We Really Know about Women's Rites in the Israelite Family Context?" for instance, essays in this group consider bonds between mothers and daughters, between fathers and sons, between broth-

ers, and between spouses. Carol Meyers takes an interdisciplinary approach to consider mother-daughter relationships. Drawing from biblical texts, archaeology, and ethnography, she assesses components of the functionality, pedagogy, and authority of mothers, and their roles in training their offspring in ancient Israel. Rainer Albertz analyzes ambivalence within biblical depictions of fraternal relations, contrasting brotherly conflicts with extrafamilial fraternal solidarity. Engaging with Saul's comparison of friendship with features of sibling relationships, Albertz discusses Cain and Abel, Jacob with his brothers, and the Joseph story, as well as Deuteronomistic requirements of fraternal solidarity. Andrew Tobolowsky also addresses brotherly relationships as well as relations between fathers and sons, analyzing inconsistencies within the Joseph novella that comprise varying presentations of Joseph's family. He distinguishes Joseph's fraternal rivalry from other biblical examples, such as those Albertz discusses, and proposes that narrators may be aiming to align with Jacob's perspective regarding his sons. Turning to spousal relationships, Debra Scoggins Balentine analyzes how the legal case in Deut 25:11–12 provides examples of protective violence, punitive mutilation, and gender-based hierarchy. She considers why the wife, who physically helps her husband against attack, is punished with bodily harm rather than celebrated as an ally, engaging with Saul's comments on the role of *ḥābēr* as an ally in biblical texts. More broadly, Bob Becking considers Aramaic documents from Elephantine to address relationships of love, friendship, and sexuality. Addressing three textual genres—a wisdom text, a letter, and a marriage contract—Becking argues they collectively imply that notions of friendship served as a binding agent, holding together various groups cohabiting the island of Elephantine in Egypt.

Several contributions discuss social relations among Israelites, including topics of self-other, gender, animals, emotion, and hierarchies. These engage especially with Saul's work in *Biblical Mourning*, *Social Inequality in the World of the Text*, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, and *Rites and Rank*, as well as "Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment," *JBL* 115 (1996): 201–18. Karel van der Toorn focuses on relations of family, gender, and self-other, distinguishing between ancient and modern exemplars of public and private selves. He finds emphasis on collectivity, with, for example, distinctions among characteristic locations of men's and women's mourning practices, as women left private spaces to mourn publicly. He concludes that Israelite distinctions between private and public selves were not oppositional but two aspects of a person.

Susan Niditch identifies weeping as “a culturally framed ritual process” within human relationships, applying theoretical frameworks regarding emotion and ritual. Crediting Saul’s critical questions regarding how mourning behaviors serve to bolster or challenge existing relationships, Niditch extends this to a broader data set of narratives featuring weeping as an emotional behavior, including instances featuring Joseph, Jacob, Jephthah’s daughter, baby Moses, Rachel, and Hagar. Ronald Hendel considers human sexual relations as well as divine sexuality, highlighting Saul’s attentiveness to how ancient distinctions regarding honor and sexuality differ from modern discourses. Analyzing ancient comparanda while incorporating multiple theoretical lenses of myth, Hendel discusses notions of shame, morality, nakedness, self-other, and guilt within Gen 1–11 as a mythic framework for the development of civilization.

Continuing with social relations, several essays treat ritual status and hierarchy. Klaus-Peter Adam treats relations between priests with and without blemishes, as well as blemished and nonblemished people. Discussing the redactional history of Lev 21–22, he suggests that the biblical Hebrew word and concept for blemish derives from Greek concepts. Adam finds exclusion based on physical impairment within ritual hierarchy to be central for studying ancient Jewish notions of disability. Stephen L. Cook discusses multiple priestly lines within the Deuteronomistic History, analyzing competition among the priestly lines and how the Deuteronomistic History accounts for priestly group successes and declines through theological explanations framed as prophetic oracles. He highlights how these texts’ ancient interpretations reveal social and ritual interests and vying for position.

Moving to relations between Israelites and others, John J. Collins interweaves themes of kinship, friendship, and group boundaries to discuss relationships among neighbors, both between Israelites and foreigners and between fellow Israelites. He discusses scholarly interpretations of Lev 19:18 as well as ancient interpretations in the Septuagint, Jubilees, Philo, the Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic references, and the New Testament. His analysis shares themes with the essays of Rainey and Allgood as well as much of Saul’s scholarship. Brian Rainey addresses relationships of foreigner and native, self and other, friendship, and gender. Engaging with Saul’s “The Search for the Elusive Self in the Texts of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, edited by David Brakke, Michael L. Satlow, and Steven Weitzman (Indiana University Press, 2005), he discusses estrangement from family and friends, and he explores the inter-

play of terms connoting ethnic foreignness and familial status. Andrea Allgood articulates the impact of Saul's insights on the topics of purity and stigma, as she discusses relationships among humans, the land, and Yahweh. She analyzes the relative status of the Israelites, other peoples, and land through notions of impurity and the foreign, proposing that purity rhetoric is utilized to elucidate rhetoric of obedience and divine blessing of land inhabitance, and in turn, disobedience and expulsion. Thomas Römer engages with Saul's work on societal constructions of the "other," including *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*; "The Ascription of Physical Disability as a Stigmatizing Strategy in Biblical Iconic Polemics," *JHS* 9 (2009): 1–15; and "Stigmatizing Associations." He finds that biblical depictions of the Philistines exhibit ambiguity as they are the enemy and ultimate other, yet they also recognize the Israelite deity's power and are utilized for divine purposes. T. M. Lemos's work is deeply informed by Saul's oeuvre on ritual, status, and violence. Lemos discusses not only human relations with nonhuman animals but relations between human groups. She finds that interactive relations between humans and various nonhuman species affected how ancient West Asian peoples conceptualized violence against other humans. Nathaniel B. Levtow considers questions of loyalty and disloyalty as he draws on Saul's analysis of inversion rites in *Violent Rituals of the Hebrew Bible*. Levtow explores how bodily inversion imagery operates in ancient West Asian loyalty oaths. He focuses on curses that invert natural and social order configurations, such as those in Esarhad-don's Succession Treaties and the Pentateuch, arguing that their visceral inversion strategies have become naturalized in rhetoric that consistently differentiates the "true" religion of insiders from the "false" religion of outsiders—binaries persisting through modernity.

Several essays discuss relationships with the dead. Jordan D. Rosenblum uses Saul's analysis of Israelite interment ideology to reconsider the ideological lenses of ancient rabbis regarding interment. Considering rabbinic focus on transportation of physical remains, he discusses the significance of Moses's treatment of ancestral bones for effecting his transformation from a biblical figure into "Moses our rabbi." Susan Ackerman considers the cult of dead kin as one dimension of Israelite family religion. Examining how the cult of the dead manifests itself in royal circles, she argues that certain rituals concerning the dead are not enacted in the same ways in royal versus nonroyal settings, but rather forge diverse types of relationships between the living and the dead. Rüdiger Schmitt emphasizes archaeological remains of tombs for considering these spaces

as an extension of Israelite and Judean households, where meals and other modes of common engagement could extend family relationships from home to tomb. From inscriptions and tomb decorations, monuments, and analysis of the uses of objects, he argues that rituals reinforced bonds between living and dead, based on ongoing care. Karen B. Stern reflects on Saul's scholarly influence regarding her study of the ancient Levant as she interweaves themes of the living and dead, familial ties, and in-groups versus others. Interacting with Saul's discussions of sociality, gender, friendship, and commemoration, Stern focuses on how an ancient Syrian synagogue mosaic exhibits subtle information about Jewish social and family relationships within their local context. Kerry M. Sonia examines spatial relationships between divine and dead in the Hebrew Bible and broader West Asian contexts. She finds that previous studies have used certain biblical texts, such as the condemnation of royal intramural burial in Ezek 43, to suggest a basic fissure between Yahweh and the dead in Israelite religion. Yet, Sonia argues instead that pre- and postexilic biblical texts attest to a more widespread notion that Yahweh shared ritual space with the dead.

Several essays treat relations among divine beings, drawing from Saul's works *A Thousand Thousands Served Him*, "Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?," and *Rites and Rank*. Steven Weitzman analyzes relationships among angels as well as between angels and humans. He discusses Greek and Roman military organization and structure, as preserved in Roman period military documentation. He compares this to Jewish identification and organization of angels as a celestial army, and he addresses the theological-rhetorical payoff of doing so within their Hellenistic-Roman context. Stanley Stowers focuses on relationships between divine and human beings, evaluating how categories of God, gods, divine beings, and spirits/ghosts have been problematically distinguished within biblical studies. With insights from cognitive science, balanced with analysis of the primary ancient characterizations, he concludes that Yahweh and 1 Sam 28's ghost share core characteristics, including invisibility, special corporeality, special knowledge, anthropomorphic thinking, distinct location, and exchange relations with humans. Jennifer Elizabeth Singletary focuses on Yahweh's relationship to other deities. She challenges scholarly use of the term *incomparability* when describing biblical conceptual frameworks, proposing that prototype theory better serves our understanding of theological claims about Yahweh possessing more of certain characteristics than other gods. Emma Wasserman discusses relationships among angels,

demons, and cosmic powers, tying her current research to her early experience of Saul's teaching on death and afterlife. She identifies an inherent polemic that strategically portrays lesser deities ambiguously, when "lesser ranks of divinity" appear to "serve as foils for centralizing power in God and Christ."

The following essays thus engage with Saul's works in multiple and diverse ways, covering a multiplicity of topics falling under the larger rubric of relationships in the Hebrew Bible. They vary both in the particular relationships addressed and in the methods with which these relationships are analyzed, including archaeological, historical, anthropological, sociological, cognitive-scientific, redactional, and philological approaches. They demonstrate, in all cases, how profoundly and fundamentally Saul has reshaped the fields of biblical, religious, and ancient studies, through his impeccable scholarship, insight, fastidiousness, inspiration, and mentorship. It is with the deepest gratitude to Saul, therefore, that we share this volume, which exemplifies how indelible is his place in our lives and scholarship. We hope that the essays it contains will provoke wide ranges of discussion among scholars of the ancient world, in ways that exemplify, complement, and advance Saul's own work, while expressing our ongoing appreciation for his mentorship, professional guidance, and friendship.

Part 1
Family Relations

Mothers' Wisdom: Technical Training and Lessons for Life

Carol Meyers

1. Introduction

Motherhood is a universal aspect of human life, but it is not a unitary feature. Reproduction, as an essential and central aspect of communities everywhere, has two major components. The first is biological: the physiological process of conceiving, gestating, and giving birth. The second and less often acknowledged component is the social one: the reproduction of the society in which mother and child live. Although certain features of the biological component—the way pregnancy is managed or parturition is achieved—may differ across cultures, the fact of giving birth is the same everywhere. Not so the reproduction of culture. A mother's interaction with her child is not a fixed experience but rather varies from society to society. It is not biologically determined but rather socially constructed.¹

The image of mothers in the Bible, especially in biblical narratives, has attracted considerable attention.² This attention usually focuses on the biological component of motherhood: fertility (and barrenness),

It is an honor to participate in this well-deserved tribute to Saul Olyan. Among the many achievements of his distinguished career is his support of the kind of interdisciplinary approach used here and exemplified by his edited volume *Social Theory and the Study of Israelite Religion: Essays in Retrospect and Prospect* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012).

1. See Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Social Constructions of Mothering: A Thematic Overview," in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie-Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994), 1–29.

2. E.g., *inter alia*, Tammi J. Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

parturition, and the care and feeding of newborns and infants.³ This is especially true in poetic passages featuring the mother metaphor for God.⁴ The scholarly emphasis on biological reproduction follows the biblical emphasis and thereby obscures the equally important role of mothers in cultural/societal reproduction.

To consider motherhood only in terms of giving birth and providing physical nurturance would be to succumb to the essentializing idea that foregrounds female fertility.⁵ Moreover, it would mean ignoring aspects of motherhood that are equally important for family and community continuity. As a social as well as biological process, motherhood involves raising and socializing children as well as bearing them. Investigating motherhood as a social process requires an anthropological perspective.⁶ Biblical scholarship has used interdisciplinary methods in the study of women and of children in the biblical world.⁷ Nonetheless, although mothers are an intrinsic part of the development of children, this central feature of women's lives—the social aspects of motherhood—has been neglected. The “Mother” entry in the *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* puts it succinctly: “A well-rounded understanding of mothers in the Bible and biblical world is elusive.”⁸ The many reasons for this neglect include the

3. E.g., Candida R. Moss and Joel S. Baden, *Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Childlessness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

4. Monographs on this topic include Christl M. Maier, *Daughter Zion, Mother Zion: Gender, Space, and the Sacred in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); and Sarah Dille, *Mixing Metaphors: God as Mother and Father in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

5. Stephanie L. Budin, “Finding a World of Women: An Introduction to Women's Studies and Gender Theory in Biblical Archaeology,” in *The Social Archaeology of the Levant: From Prehistory to the Present*, ed. Assaf Yasur-Landau, Eric H. Cline, and Yorke M. Rowan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 530.

6. See Michelle Walks, “Anthropology of Mothering,” in *Encyclopedia of Motherhood*, ed. Andrea O'Reilly (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2010), 64–68.

7. For women, e.g., my *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). For children, most recently Kristine Garroway, *Growing Up in Ancient Israel: Children in Material Culture and Biblical Texts*, ABS 23 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018). Garroway lists other publications (*Growing Up*, 2 n. 2). See also Reidar Aasgaard, “History of Research on Children in the Bible and the Biblical World: Past Developments, Present State—and Future Potential,” in *T&T Clark Handbook of Children in the Bible and the Biblical World*, ed. Sharon Betsworth and Julie Faith Parker (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 14–38.

8. Patricia Tull, “Mother,” *NIDB* 4:154.

paucity of biblical information, the tendency to accept the scant biblical materials as normative, our distance in time and space from ancient Israel, and the lack of women's writings.⁹ Even iconographic data in the form of *kourotrophoi* (images of humans or deities holding or nursing infants or small children) are virtually nonexistent in ancient Israel despite their frequent appearance in other parts of the ancient Near East.¹⁰

If little information about mother-child interactions appears in the Hebrew Bible, information about mother-daughter relationships, which are especially important in understanding Israelite motherhood, is virtually absent. The remedy for this biblical insufficiency is an interdisciplinary approach.¹¹ Relevant textual references are still useful, but archaeological and ethnographic data are essential, for they reveal otherwise invisible aspects of the family household, which was the primary unit of society and thus the locus for the socialization and enculturation of children.¹²

Artifacts may seem mute as sources of information about motherhood, but anthropologists have shown the flaws in that assumption. In traditional cultures where children contribute household labor (more on this below), household objects and installations involve specific actions and interactions whereby children learn from their mothers. As part of the physical context of daily life, artifacts are "means of socialization and ... education."¹³ Further, they "act as media for the communication and maintenance of

9. The paucity of information is especially true for mother-daughter relationships. Thus Kimberly D. Russaw's book contains no discussion of the relationship of daughters with their mothers. See Russaw, *Daughters in the Hebrew Bible* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018).

10. Beth Alpert Nakhai, "Mother-and-Child Figurines in the Levant from the Late Bronze Age through the Persian Period," in *Material Culture Matters: Essays on the Archaeology of the Southern Levant in Honor of Seymour Gitin*, ed. John R. Spencer, Robert A. Mullins, and Aaron J. Brody (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 175–80. Budin's suggestion that the paucity of mother-and-child images in the Levant indicates a lack of interest in maternity is questionable ("Finding a World," 529–30).

11. For a detailed discussion of this approach, see my *Rediscovering Eve*, 17–38.

12. See Richard R. Wilk and Robert M. Netting, "Households: Changing Forms and Functions," in *Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group*, ed. Robert M. Netting, Richard R. Wilk, and Eric J. Arnould (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 4.

13. Patricia Greenfield, "Children, Material Culture and Weaving: Historical Change and Developmental Change," in *Children and Material Culture*, ed. Joanna Sofaer Derevenski (London: Routledge, 2000), 73.

symbolic and social values.”¹⁴ Ethnographic materials, if used cautiously, are vital supplements to textual and material sources. Consequently, data from Mediterranean and Middle Eastern communities gathered before the impact of modernity are generally helpful. Because ethnographic analogy inevitably has a subjective element, anthropological theorists have identified criteria for inferring the function and meaning of archaeological materials and have established guidelines for using ethnographic analogy.¹⁵

Mothers in all societies are their children’s first teachers, and in traditional societies they teach and model the activities and values of their households and communities.¹⁶ This article examines the mother’s role in the two main components of household education: (1) technical training, whereby children learn the processes of everyday life for which they will ultimately be responsible in their own households; and (2) the inculcation of life lessons—the life skills and traditions of their family and community. The first is largely gender specific, with mothers teaching daughters how to use household artifacts and installations to perform women’s household activities. The second involves a mother’s interactions with both female and male offspring. Both can be considered aspects of wisdom (*hokmah*), which can mean technical skill or expertise (as, e.g., in Exod 28:3; 35:26) as well as sapiential knowledge (as, e.g., in Prov 1:2).

2. Technical Training

A mother’s role in the technical education of children is gender specific because of the division of labor by gender that characterizes traditional societies; most household tasks are typically the responsibility of one gender, although sometimes tasks are shared.¹⁷ Children in these societies have important economic roles; they take on food-processing tasks and assist in making household textiles and implements.¹⁸ This was surely the

14. Jo Sofaer Derevenski, “Where Are the Children? Accessing Children in the Past,” *ARC* 13.2 (1994): 14.

15. E.g., John Bower, *In Search of the Past: An Introduction to Archaeology* (Chicago: Dorsey, 1986), 379–80.

16. Song 8:2 refers to “my mother . . . her who taught me.” In an unnecessary and perhaps sexist emendation, some would change “taught” to “bore” following Song 6:9; 8:5.

17. Gerhard Lenski, *Ecological-Evolutionary Theory: Principles and Applications* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2005), 55.

18. Roberta Gilchrist, “Archaeology and the Life Course: A Time and Age for

case in ancient Israel, where agrarian households were the setting of production and consumption for most people.

From a young age, children were an integral part of the family labor force. They were primarily in their mother's care at least until they were weaned.¹⁹ But eventually female children stayed with their mothers whereas male children began to spend time with their fathers (see 2 Kgs 4:18). When did this happen? Phases of childhood cannot be linked to certain ages. People in the biblical past were unlikely to remember exact ages, and in any case children develop differently. Moreover, the number of children in a family and their genders might influence when boys joined their fathers and girls stayed with their mothers. Although the Bible has a large vocabulary for different stages of childhood, biblical terms cannot be firmly linked to chronological age.²⁰ Ethnographic evidence suggests that people did not reckon children by age but rather by what work the child could do. A small child, for example, might be called one who "chases the animals," that is, keeps sheep or goats from running away or trampling vegetable plants; or "woodgatherer"; or "drawer of water."²¹

Although ethnography suggests that children were designated by socioeconomic rather than chronological markers, several ethnographic reports indicate that boys remained with their mothers until they were about seven.²² Thus mother-child technological training, which pertains

Gender," in *A Companion to Social Archaeology*, ed. Lynn Meskell and Robert W. Preucel (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 151.

19. No biblical texts specify the age of weaning, but data from ethnography and from other ancient Near Eastern texts suggest that women nursed their children for two to three years. See Garroway, *Growing Up*, 95–100.

20. See Naomi Steinberg, "Words for Children in the Hebrew Bible," in *The World of the Child in the Hebrew Bible*, HM 51 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013), 26–41. Julie F. Parker mentions twenty-eight biblical words for children. See Parker, *Valuable and Vulnerable: Children in the Hebrew Bible, Especially the Elisha Cycle*, BJS 355 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2013), 46–73. Age is given only for Joseph (Gen 37:2). See also Garroway, *Growing Up*, 6–8.

21. Hilma Granqvist, *Birth and Childhood among the Arabs: Studies in a Mohamadan Village in Palestine* (Helsingfors: Söderström, 1947), 130, 138.

22. See Josef Henniger, *Die Familie bei den heutigen Beduinen Arabiens und seiner Randgebiete: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der ursprüngliche Familienformen der Semiten* (Leiden: Brill, 1943), 103; Abdulla M. Lutfiyya, *Baytin, a Jordanian Village: A Study of Social Institutions and Social Changes in a Folk Community* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 156; Patty Jo Watson, *Archaeological Ethnography in Western Iran* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979), 210. By age seven a child acquires most language

mainly to female children, is considered here. However, the mother would be involved in life lessons for male children of all ages (see below).

The term *apprentice*, which designates someone learning a craft or trade under the tutelage of a skilled practitioner, is arguably applicable to the technical training Israelite daughters received in order to contribute to their natal household while also preparing for their future roles in their affinal households. Daughters were apprentices in the “prolonged and intimate relationship” by which a mother’s technical skills “were transferred from one generation to the next.”²³ Those skills are not to be underestimated. They were not simply memorized bodily movements; rather, they were an extension of mental *and* physical processes entailing constant judgment and adjustment according to changing conditions.²⁴ Moreover, technological training was a socialization process as well as a technical one, with daughters acquiring gender-specific household management skills and demeanors along with gender-specific tasks.²⁵ As one ethnographer notes, “The work of a growing girl is a grown-up woman’s work in miniature.”²⁶

Food Processing and Preparation

Processing foodstuffs and preparing comestibles were probably the most important tasks that mothers taught their daughters.²⁷ How exactly

skills, making the mother-child pair the primary site of language acquisition (see Neh 13:23–24; Walks, “Anthropology of Mothering,” 64, 66).

23. Stephen D. Salamone and Jill B. Stanton, “Introducing the Nikokyra: Ideality and Reality in Social Process,” in *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*, ed. Jill Dubisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 107. See also Elihu Grant, *The People of Palestine*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1921), 68, 138, 140.

24. David Sutton, “Cooking Skill, the Senses, and Memory: The Fate of Practical Knowledge,” in *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, ed. Ruth B. Phillips, Chris Gosden, and Elizabeth Edwards, WGISS 5 (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 91. Sutton elsewhere insists on applying the apprenticeship rubric for daughters learning household activities. See Sutton, “Mothers, Daughters, and Others: Learning, Transmission, Negotiation,” in *Secrets from the Greek Kitchen: Cooking, Skill, and Everyday Life on an Aegean Island* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 104.

25. Ethnography, iconography, and biblical texts together help determine which tasks were women’s responsibility. For the gender identification of food preparation activities, see my *Rediscovering Eve*, 128–32.

26. Granqvist, *Birth and Childhood*, 138.

27. Note that women and young children of both genders likely participated in growing and gathering crops. See, inter alia, Charles T. Wilson, *Peasant Life in the Holy*

women transmitted the proper techniques for these activities to their offspring is elusive. Although maternal instruction in the different steps of food production was probably fluid, differing from mother to mother, it likely took place “through ‘embodied habits’ rather than western modes of explicit instruction.”²⁸ Children watched their mothers and imitated their movements, which sometimes were accompanied by verbal directions. This form of embodied education would pertain to all the technical and technological training mentioned here.

Many agricultural products, especially grain, require several stages of processing to become edible. The many grinding stones and ovens found at Iron Age sites are witness to the embodied education provided by mothers teaching daughters how to prepare grains, which were the major component of the Israelite diet (more on this below). The nuances of using these tools correctly—for example, how to produce the optimal fineness of flour or bake bread until it is done but before it burns—were imparted to children over time. Daughters would gradually take over one or more steps in these procedures and related ones (e.g., kneading dough) as they grew older. In one Palestinian village, mothers preparing bread dough give small pieces to their daughters so they could practice kneading.²⁹ These physical processes also had a social dimension, for both grinding and baking were often activities performed by women working together. The attendant interaction among adult women modeled the behavior daughters themselves would one day exhibit, behavior that not only made onerous tasks more enjoyable but also contributed to the welfare of the community.³⁰

Similar dynamics can be posited for food-processing activities represented by various ceramic forms—notably cooking pots—ubiquitous at Israelite sites as well as for activities for which material remains have not survived. For example, ethnography reveals that: women sifted grain before grinding, a process requiring “much skill”;³¹ crushed olive residues in a basket, with children watching closely; and churned milk in skin bags to

Land (London: Murray, 1906), 136, 138; James Reilly, “The Peasantry of Late Ottoman Palestine,” *JPS* 10.4 (1981): 88.

28. So David Sutton, “The Mindful Kitchen, the Embodied Cook: Tools, Technology and Knowledge Transmission on a Greek Island,” *MCR* 70 (2009): 64.

29. Granqvist, *Birth and Childhood*, 156.

30. See my *Rediscovering Eve*, 131–32, 139–46.

31. James Neil, *Peeps into Palestine* (Guildford, UK: Billings & Sons, 1915), 58, 59.

produce curdled milk, something like yogurt.³² But neither sieves nor baskets nor skin containers have survived. What are extant are mortars and pestles in which women prepared herbs and other condiments (more on these below), showing their daughters how fine to pulverize these materials and how much to use in cooking. Education provided to daughters in these processes was embedded in a household's myriad food-processing activities.

Textile and Crafts Production

Women made fabrics, utensils, and installations essential for household life in ancient Israel, and the requisite techniques were transmitted from mothers to daughters using the same embodied processes noted for food production. Village weaving techniques have been largely the same for millennia.³³ Girls apprenticed with their mothers, who taught them the spinning, weaving, and sewing skills necessary for making clothing and other household textiles.³⁴ The loom weights, spindle whorls, and needles recovered in excavations attest to these steps in the Iron Age textile-production process, whereas other aspects—for example, washing the wool—are not visible. Weaving was often practiced by women working together and thus provided the same social enculturation noted for bread production.³⁵

Making pottery also was a craft practiced by women working together, as indicated by ethnography and archaeology.³⁶ Consequently, motherhood

32. Suad Amiry and Vera Tamari, *The Palestinian Village Home* (London: British Museum, 1989), 36.

33. For textile production as a woman's task in biblical antiquity, see my "Material Remains and Social Relations: Women's Culture in Agrarian Households of the Iron Age," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina*, ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 432–34. Men were likely the weavers in urban workshops. See Mag Abu Hamdan, *The Crafts of Jordan* (Amman: Al Kutba, 1989), 6.

34. Hamdan, *Crafts of Jordan*, 8, 12, and photo opposite p. 24.

35. For depictions of women in the ancient Near East and the Aegean working together in textile tasks, see Elizabeth W. Barber, *Women's Work: The First Twenty Thousand Years; Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times* (New York: Norton, 1994), figs. 7.4–5, 8.2, 9.4–5.

36. E.g., Hamdan, *Crafts of Jordan*, 23; Amiry and Tamari, *Palestinian Village Home*, 43; Grant, *People of Palestine*, 92. Men likely produced pottery in large settlements (as

involved instructing daughters in the steps—including digging and levigating clay, and forming and firing vessels—needed to produce ceramic vessels. Women especially skilled in these processes might even work with girls or young women from other households.³⁷ All the mothers and daughters involved in ceramic production embodied relationships as well as techniques for producing essential household wares. The same can be said for clay ovens of the kind still used in remote parts of the Levant and Anatolia. Oven construction was a collaborative effort; older women worked with daughters and daughters-in-law, who both helped and learned.³⁸ A similar dynamic—expert mothers, often working together with and simultaneously teaching their daughters—has been recorded for the production of baskets and flat woven trays used for storage and food preparation.³⁹ Baskets are mentioned several dozen times in the Hebrew Bible, but who made them is never specified. The ethnographic evidence must suffice as an indication that mothers made baskets and thus taught basketry to daughters. Note, however, that *ṭeneʿ*, one of several biblical words for “basket,” appears with “kneading bowl,” a woman’s utensil, in Deut 28:5, 17.

Health Practices and Household Ritual

Both these features of household life involved women’s technological wisdom, and both can be considered religious activities. Because they have material correlates, they are best discussed here rather than in the next section.⁴⁰

Jer 18:3–4), but women made their own wares in village settings. Fingerprints of women and adolescent girls have been identified on Bronze Age wares from Tell eṣ-Ṣafī/Gath, with a similar study planned for Iron Age pottery (personal communication, Kent Fowler, May 24, 2019).

37. See Hamed J. Salem, “Implications of Cultural Tradition: The Case of the Palestinian Traditional Pottery,” in *Archaeology, History and Culture in Palestine and the Near East: Essays in Memory of Albert E. Glock*, ed. Tomis Kapitan (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 70.

38. Bradley J. Parker, “Bread Ovens: Social Networks and Gendered Space: An Ethno-archaeological Study of *Tandır* Ovens in Southeastern Anatolia,” *AmAnt* 76 (2011): 603–27.

39. Hamdan, *Crafts of Jordan*, 30–31; Amiry and Tamari, *Palestinian Village Home*, 42–43; Grant, *People of Palestine*, 92.

40. For the archaeological correlates of household religion, see Kristine Garro-way, “Children and Religion in the Archaeological Record of Ancient Israel,” *JANER* 17 (2017): 122–32.

Health practices entailed both preventative and restorative measures. The former included customs meant to avert maladies thought to be caused by divine will, demonic forces, or the evil eye. Protecting expectant mothers, newborns, and vulnerable young children was chief among the preventative efforts, and mothers performed a variety of procedures using amulets and other apotropaic devices, probably with accompanying incantations.⁴¹ Motherhood involved protecting the youngest offspring and teaching older girls how to make and use the requisite devices or materials. In addition, because the household was the primary locus for caring for the ill and injured, women were no doubt adept at various restorative practices. Their role as healers was a function of their familiarity with the herbs, many of which may have had medicinal properties, processed in the mortars mentioned above.⁴² Additional evidence for women as healers is 1 Sam 8:13. The word commonly translated “perfumers” might instead be rendered “herbalists,” for the root *rqh* can refer to the preparation of ointments or spice blends for medicinal as well as culinary or esthetic purposes. Also instructive is the maternal imagery for God in Hos 11:3–4; God not only teaches the people (Ephraim) how to walk but also feeds and “heals” them—that is what mothers do. Ethnographic evidence provides similar information: “medicinal remedies” were “well known to, and used by, all village matrons.”⁴³ Motherhood thus meant teaching daughters multiple uses of natural substances.⁴⁴ In their preventative and restorative acts, women were ritual experts, and this technical wisdom was transmitted to their daughters, the next generation of mothers.⁴⁵

41. See my *Households and Holiness: The Religious Culture of Israelite Women* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 13–17, 31–34, 39–47, 49–56.

42. Carole Fontaine lists several dozen natural substances comprising the *materia medica* of Israelite households. See Fontaine, *Smooth Words: Women, Proverbs and Performance in Biblical Wisdom*, JSOTSup 356 (London; Sheffield Academic, 2002), 76 n. 131. Hyssop, e.g., was both a flavoring and a purgative (Ps 51:7).

43. Winifred S. Blackman, *The Fellāḥīn of Upper Egypt: Their Religious, Social and Industrial Life To-day with Special Reference to Survivals from Ancient Times* (London: Harrap, 1927), 42.

44. Sharon A. Sharp notes the abundance of “studies that mention ... mothers, grandmothers, other female relatives, or female neighbors as the persons who used and passed on knowledge about remedies”; see her “Folk Medicine Practices: Women as Keepers and Carriers of Knowledge,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 9 (1986): 245.

45. See Susan S. Sered, *Women as Ritual Experts: The Religious Lives of Elderly Jewish Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Other instances of household rituals were associated with women's role in preparing food. Both daily meals and feasts had a sacral aspect, and food preparation was thereby ritualized.⁴⁶ In learning to prepare food, daughters also learned about household offerings for festivals or for ancestors.⁴⁷ Especially important was the ritual treatment of bread, which was literally the staff of life, comprising nearly three-fourths of an adult's daily caloric intake. Its sanctity was manifest in how it was handled. Ethnographic observations reveal a millennia-old custom. In the Mediterranean basin, the Middle East, Anatolia, central Asia, even southeastern Europe, dropping a piece of bread is still considered profanity; one immediately would pick up the fallen morsel and kiss it.⁴⁸ Moreover, bread's sanctity appears in the biblical reference to a donation of dough (Num 15:17–21) to secure “a blessing ... on your house” (Ezek 44:30b). Again, mothers were ritual experts as they observed these practices and taught them to their daughters.

3. Lessons for Life

Religious and moral education extended beyond maternal instruction in ritual aspects of health care and food preparation. However, information about such instruction cannot be correlated with material culture but must rely on texts and ethnography. Biblical texts commanding parents to teach God's word to their children (e.g., Deut 4:9–10; 6:6–7) use masculine grammatical forms but are presumably gender inclusive in most cases.⁴⁹

46. For the archaeological evidence of household meal rituals, see James W. Hardin, *Households and the Use of Domestic Space at Iron II Tel Halif: An Archaeology of Destruction* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 133–43. For ethnographic evidence, see, e.g., Jill Dubisch, “Culture Enters through the Kitchen: Women, Food, and Social Boundaries in Rural Greece,” in Dubisch, *Gender and Power*, 207.

47. See my “Feast Days and Food Ways: Religious Dimensions of Household Life,” in *Family and Household Religion: Toward a Synthesis of Old Testament Studies, Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Cultural Studies*, ed. Rainer Albertz, Beth Alpert Nakhai, Saul M. Olyan, and Rüdiger Schmitt (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 239.

48. See, inter alia, Anna Ciezadlo, *Day of Honey: A Memoir of Food, Love, and War* (New York: Free Press, 2011), 243. She describes a Lebanese custom. See Gina Ochsner, “Latvian Bread Is a Breakfast and a Blessing,” *Extra Crispy*, February 6, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL2641a>.

49. Jeffrey H. Tigay asserts that “every parent is to be a teacher of religion.” See Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America,

How instruction mentioned in Deuteronomy was manifest in terms of Israelite household life may be a moot issue, given uncertainty about the date of covenant materials.⁵⁰

Early versions of covenant materials may not have been part of household education, but stories of past events likely were. Psalm 78, which dates to Iron IIB, enjoins people (vv. 4–6) to teach their children about Yahweh's mighty deeds.⁵¹ Surely both parents told stories of the past, with surviving grandparents taking the lead. In traditional societies lacking general literacy, the oldest living generation—grandparents, but especially grandmothers—often take on “the narrative activities of the group,” transmitting both community and family lore to the youngest members of the household.⁵² Indeed, old women are often the most gifted storytellers.⁵³ Children learned history from grandmothers if not also mothers, perhaps in the form of proverbs as well as stories (see below).

Teaching about proper behavior was surely an integral part of household life. Mother-child interactions themselves are the basis for the internalization of family values and goals.⁵⁴ As the primary caretakers and socializers of children, mothers across cultures are “guardians of morality and values.”⁵⁵ The strong association between women and wisdom in the Hebrew Bible might thus reflect this maternal role. The oft-cited Proverbs texts about a mother's teaching (1:8; 6:20; 31:26) attest to maternal pedagogy in transmitting life skills and values, for mothers no less than fathers

1996), 46. Note that in Deut 17:2 both women and men are required to keep the stipulations of the covenant.

50. Shawn Flynn avers that instruction in religious and cultic ideals was a parental responsibility. See Flynn, *Children in Ancient Israel: The Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamia in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 99–100.

51. Richard J. Clifford, “Psalms,” in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 846.

52. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 39. Note that the Second Temple book Tobit has a woman teaching the “law of Moses” (1:8) to her grandchild.

53. Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*, WOL 1 (Cambridge: Open Books, 2012), 364.

54. Gisela Trommsdorff and Hans-Joachim Kornadt, “Parent-Child Relations in Cross-Cultural Perspective,” in *Handbook of Dynamics in Parent-Child Relations*, ed. Leon Kuczynski (London: Sage, 2003), 287.

55. Susan Harper, “Religion and Mothering,” in O'Reilly, *Encyclopedia of Motherhood*, 1057. See also Garroway, “Children and Religion,” 121.

would give advice to the sons who are the target audience of Proverbs. Some Proverbs passages (ch. 7 and perhaps chs. 1–9) are arguably women's words.⁵⁶ Further, the personification of Wisdom as a woman and the descriptor of a city (Abel of Beth-maacah, 1 Sam 20:19) as a "mother in Israel" possibly indicate that the Wisdom figure originated in the mother's pedagogic role in family life.⁵⁷ Similarly, Eve—the prototypical mother ("mother of all living," Gen 3:20)—exhibits and seeks wisdom.⁵⁸

To be sure, the highly curated literary quality of much of Proverbs probably reflects royal or scribal, and thus male, composition. However, some Proverbs materials likely originated in family contexts.⁵⁹ Powerful ethnographic evidence affirms that proverbs and sayings were a major communicative mode for conveying the rules of social interaction in daily life. Indeed, they were instrumental in shaping and transmitting the value system of largely illiterate agrarian households. In traditional village settings they expressed "values of honesty, cooperation, [and] hard work" and were "commonly used to accentuate everyday conversation."⁶⁰ These aphorisms were not learned from books but rather emerged spontaneously in the context of daily life.⁶¹ Moreover, even historical knowledge might be transmitted in this way: "Most knowledge of the past has been

56. Alice O. Bellis, "The Gender and Motives of the Wisdom Teacher in Proverbs 7," *BBR* 6 (1996): 15–22; Athalya Brenner, "Proverbs 1–9: An F Voice?," in Athalya Brenner and Fokkeli van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible*, *BibInt* 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 113–26.

57. See Claudia Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, *BLS* 11 (Sheffield: Almond, 1985); Jenni Williams, "'Mother in Israel': Women and Wisdom," in *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John J. Jarick (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016) 38–55; and others. Michael V. Fox reviews theories about the origins of personified wisdom. See Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, *AB* 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 331–41.

58. Susan Niditch, *Folklore and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 47; Linda Day, "Wisdom and the Feminine in the Hebrew Bible," in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World: An Introduction to Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Katharine Doob Sakenfeld*, ed. Linda Day and Carolyn Pressler (Louisville: Westminster, 2006), 115–16.

59. So, inter alia, Katherine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 88.

60. Audrey Shabbas, "The Child in the Arab Family," *Link* 12 (1979): 9.

61. Afif I. Tannous, "Group Behavior in the Village Community of Lebanon," *AJS* 48 (1942): 232.

reduced to a series of sayings or proverbs in order that they might be transmitted orally with greater ease.”⁶² Women as well as men offer rebukes and counsel in Arabic poetry related to biblical genres.⁶³ Given the role of Israelite women as educators and their association with wisdom in the Bible, Israelite mothers as well as fathers surely admonished and advised their offspring with well-known sayings.

4. Discussion: Maternal Authority

By inculcating lessons for life in their children, Israelite women were exercising maternal authority. Folk sayings and proverbs are considered authoritative in traditional cultures.⁶⁴ Thus women’s use of proverbs and admonitions signifies the authority of Israelite mothers.⁶⁵ What may be less obvious to us modern observers is that the process of teaching daughters the techniques and technologies of daily life likewise afforded mothers household authority. Such instruction controlled the flow of skills and knowledge across generations, and this control was central to establishing and maintaining maternal authority.⁶⁶

Two other aspects of Israelite motherhood signify maternal authority. The first accompanies the beginning of a child’s life, when the newborn is named. Mothers name their children in over half the biblical reports of child naming. In one tally the name giver is female in twenty-seven instances and male seventeen times.⁶⁷ Another calculation finds the mother (biological and adoptive) giving the name twenty-four times and the father nine times (plus once when the mother, Rachel, dies).⁶⁸ In either count, the father gives the name mainly in atypical situations, as

62. Lutfiyya, *Baytīn, a Jordanian Village*, 172.

63. Shelomo Dov Goitein, “Women as Creators of Biblical Genres,” trans. Michael Carasik, *Prooftexts* 8 (1988): 3, 12.

64. So Lutfiyya, *Baytīn, a Jordanian Village*, 172. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel,” in Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, and Carol Meyers, *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 83.

65. See John Barton, “Ethics in the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament,” in Jarick, *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom*, 25.

66. See Sutton, “Mothers, Daughters, and Others,” 103–4, 106.

67. E.g., Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 41, 163 n. 2.

68. Timothy Finlay, *The Birth Report Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (Tübingen: Mohr

when the wife is foreign (e.g., Gen 41:50–52). These statistics clearly favor the mother as name giver, especially if the ancient versions—where the mother names the child in seven name-giving texts for which the MT has the father giving the name—are taken into account.⁶⁹ One more element of name giving favors the mother; mothers give all but one of the twenty-two etymological speeches.⁷⁰ Taken together, these features indicate that paternal naming was the exception, introduced by the androcentric interests of biblical authors, and that maternal naming was the default situation. Data from preexilic inscriptions are relevant. Of the 675 epigraphically attested Hebrew personal names, 28.4 percent of them refer to experiences surrounding the person's birth and were arguably given by the mothers.⁷¹ Concluding that Israelite women were name givers thus receives extrabiblical support. Name giving, which places the name giver in authority over the named, was another dimension of maternal authority.⁷²

The other aspect of maternal authority involves adult children, specifically sons, who remained in the family household when they married, whereas a daughter moved to her husband's household. Adult sons are not usually part of the discussion of motherhood, largely because of our modern experience of *all* adult children becoming independent of parental authority. In traditional societies such as ancient Israel, mothers and fathers continued to have authority over adult sons. That this relationship was sometimes fraught is suggested by several biblical texts (e.g., Exod 21:15, 17; Deut 21:19–20), which surely concern sons still residing in the parental household.⁷³ In a more positive vein, mothers played a role in

Siebeck, 2005), 35–36. In addition, God gives the name four times, and the parents name their child together once.

69. Rainer Kessler, "Benennung des Kindes durch die israelitische Mutter," *WD* 19 (1987): 25–27.

70. Finlay, *Birth Report Genre*, 41, 248 n. 15. The one exception is Moses naming Gershom in Exod 2:22, perhaps as a way of deemphasizing Zipporah in favor of Miriam (so Finlay, *Birth Report Genre*, 238–40).

71. See Rainer Albertz, "Personal Names and Family Religion," in Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 254, 297, "Appendix B5: Names of Birth," 582–601.

72. Savina J. Teubal, "Naming Is Creating—Biblical Women Hold the Power," *BRev* 11 (1995): 40.

73. Blenkinsopp, "Family in First Temple Israel," 71. Also, most admonitions in Proverbs are directed to young adult offspring (66–67).

arranging children's marriages (as for Rebekah in Gen 24 and Samson in Judg 14). A mother's continued connection to grown sons is suggested by the way Sisera's mother looks for her son to return from battle (Judg 5:28) and perhaps by the woman-in-the-window motif in Iron Age iconography. Moreover, several biblical texts indicate that mothers had considerable influence over their grown sons: in Prov 31:1–9 a king receives powerful advice from his mother, and in 1 Kgs 2:13–20 Bathsheba guides Solomon. Maternal influence over adult sons in ancient Israel is supported by ethnographic accounts, which report that “even after marriage the mother retains the highest place in her son's love and respect.... His mother reigns supreme.”⁷⁴

The managerial role of women in Israelite households and the attendant female power has been the focus of several of my publications.⁷⁵ The data offered in this article add another dimension to our understanding of the dynamics of Israelite household life. Mother-child relationships were a foundational and indispensable aspect of daily life and family continuity, and the embedded wisdom of motherhood signals another dimension of women's influence in the household and community.

74. Blackman, *Fellāḥīn of Upper Egypt*, 45. See also Shabbas, “Child in the Arab Family,” 13.

75. E.g., Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve*; Carol Meyers, “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 8–27.

Ambivalent Relations between Brothers in the Hebrew Bible

Rainer Albertz

1. Brothers, Somewhat Neglected Figures in Biblical Studies

Of course, famous brothers such as Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, or David's sons are often treated in commentaries or other studies. More systematic studies on the family in ancient Israel, however, are almost always focused on the vertical relations between father or mother and their children, while neglecting the horizontal relations between the siblings.¹ To my knowledge, there are only a few studies that are concerned with brother relations especially.² A nice exception

Saul Olyan, a friend of mine, to whom I would like to send my warmest greetings with this paper, impressed me over the years by his outstanding ability to use insights from sociological, psychological, and anthropological studies for analyzing societal structures, political and cultic institutions, and collective constructions of self- and worldviews in the Hebrew Bible. We have him to thank for books with titles such as *Rites and Rank*, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, and *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, which became classic investigations in the field. Therefore, I want to honor and please him by dealing with a basic anthropological topic, the sibling, specifically brother relations in the Hebrew Bible.

1. See, e.g., Leo Perdue et al., *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), where the dimension of sibling relations is nearly completely overlooked, or my own investigations on family religion, although we mentioned that אָח, "brother," next to אָב, "father," plays an important role as a divine designation. See Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 350–53.

2. For example, Frederick E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together: Pre-eminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Johanna Erzberger, "Brüderpaare," in *Esau—Bruder und Feind*, ed. Gerhard Langer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 115–21; Kathleen Rochester,

comes—not by chance—from Saul Olyan. Comparing the characteristics of friendship in the Hebrew Bible, he elaborates some important features of brother relations, being characterized by love, reliability, loyalty, and fraternal support including some special obligations of serving as levir or redeemer, revenging bloodshed, or celebrating funerals.³ Olyan shows that it is always the fraternal solidarity that constitutes the example for good friendship, never the other way around,⁴ thus demonstrating the basic anchoring of the familial concept. The idea that relations between brothers should be governed by reliability and solidarity, however, is proven to be an idealistic concept by many biblical texts, which tell that brothers compete with, fight against, cheat, hate, and even kill each other. Frederick Greenspahn has pointed out that biblical narrative traditions are not so much interested in brotherly harmony but rather focus on brotherly conflicts more than any other comparable literature.⁵ Nevertheless, important biblical legal traditions increase the ideal of fraternal solidarity to the point that it even includes people beyond family bonds. Thus, we may ask: How is it possible that in the Hebrew Bible the ambivalence of brotherhood embraces such an extremely wide range?

2. Sibling Relations in View of Modern Empirical Research

In modern empirical sciences as well, be it psychiatry, psychology, sociology, or modern history, the significance of sibling relations was detected rather late.⁶ Not until 1982 did psychologists Stephen Bank and Michael Kahn write their famous book *The Sibling Bonds*, showing that these bonds constitute one of the most durable and influential relations of human life.⁷

“The Missing Brother in Psalm 133,” *ExpTim* 122.8 (2011): 380–82; Matthias Millard, “Die Konflikte zwischen Brüdern in der Genesis—typisch männliche Konflikte?,” in *Männerbeziehungen: Männerspezifische Bibelauslegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 2:15–29.

3. See Saul M. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 11–37.

4. See Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 12, 25.

5. See Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together*, 3–5, 137–38.

6. An overview on the research history can be found in Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and Their Relations; 1780–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 29–45.

7. See in the German translation Stephen P. Bank and Michael D. Kahn, *Geschwister-Bindung*, RIPH 44 (Paderborn: Junfermann, 1989), 8–9.

The relations between siblings, like those of children to their parents, are not created by choice but predetermined by birth; they are not conditional and normally cannot be divorced. Longer than the relations to one's parents, they often last one's entire lifetime. Empirical studies show that sibling relations are very close and emotional during childhood and early youth; they subside during the phase when each of the siblings establishes his or her own family but often see a revival in older age, when the parents have to be cared for and buried.⁸ After the death of parents, siblings become the only emotional link to one's youth.⁹

From their very start relations between siblings are determined by both love and rivalry.¹⁰ As small children, siblings compete for the love of their parents, later on for their talents, their attractiveness, their success in their professions, and in old days for their parental inheritance. Sigmund Freud's theory of an initial deep trauma to the older sibling, evoked by the birth of the younger one and producing wishes to annihilate the latter, is only valid under pathologic circumstances. In normal cases, where parents show love to all of their children, the older siblings are able to rearrange their position in the family and to build up a positive relationship to the new family member, which becomes more and more constituted by closeness and intimacy.¹¹ Rivalry and fights between siblings, which are stronger between brothers of similar ages than between those of more different ages or between brothers and sisters, have the positive effects of mastering one's own aggressions and of building up one's own identity. In contrast to the hierarchical relation to parents, siblings regard their relations among themselves as principally egalitarian, although the older ones are considered to have some more strength and authority. Thus, they very sensitively react to any kind of unequal treatment and injustice. According to psychotherapist Horst Petri, it is not so much the order of birth, as thought by Alfred Adler, that can evoke heavy, even destructive conflicts between siblings, but much more the experienced or assumed injustice between them.¹² During childhood and early youth, unequal treatment

8. See Bank and Kahn, *Geschwister-Bindung*, 22; Ann Goetting, "The Developmental Tasks of Siblingship over the Life Cycle," *JMF* 48 (November 1986): 703–14.

9. See Hartmut Kasten, *Geschwisterbeziehung* (Göttingen: Hogrefe, 1993), 1:161.

10. See the title from an influential book in Germany: Horst Petri, *Geschwister—Liebe und Rivalität: Die längste Beziehung unseres Lebens* (Zürich: Kreuz 1994).

11. See the observations of Petri, *Geschwister—Liebe und Rivalität*, 116–21.

12. See Petri, *Geschwister—Liebe und Rivalität*, 140–48.

by the parents stands at the fore, which is often regarded as unjust, even if the parents try to avoid preferential treatment. Typically those siblings who felt at loss do not direct their hate and aggression towards their parents but against the favorite sibling.¹³ In later stages of their life, siblings more often experience unequal treatment caused by different societal forces or unfortunate circumstances. But even for that, they might blame the luckier brother or sister. Nevertheless, the sibling who has problems normally expects some help from his brothers or sisters in many cases. Mutual psychical and physical solidarity and support is a primary characteristic of sibling relations even in industrial societies and has been even more important in preindustrial countries, where there are many more large families and less public welfare.¹⁴ Of course, not all of these empirical insights taken from modern Western societies can be easily transferred to ancient Near Eastern societies. Nonetheless, there seems to be a stock of anthropological patterns that appears similar to those in the Hebrew Bible, as will be shown, although it mostly focuses on male siblings, the relation between brothers.

3. Common Ideals of Brotherhood in the Hebrew Bible and Other Literature

The Hebrew Bible shares many concepts concerning brotherhood with the literature of the surrounding cultures and beyond. To start with linguistic usage: **אָח**, “brother,” is the second most frequent kinship term in the Hebrew Bible. It occurs 629 times, about half as much as **אָב**, “father,” and two times more than **אִמָּה**, “mother.” According to Lev 21:2, one’s brother belongs to one’s closest kin, on the same level as one’s father, mother, sons, and unmarried daughters. If one’s brother has not only the same father but also the same mother, he is regarded as a very close intimate (Deut 13:7). Like *aḥu* in the Akkadian language,¹⁵ however, the Hebrew **אָח** can denote not only a natural brother but other kinds of relatives such

13. See Martina Stotz and Sabine Walper, “‘Lieblings- oder Schattenkind’: Bedeutung und Entstehungshintergründe elterlicher Ungleichbehandlung,” in *Bruderheld und Schwesterherz: Geschwister als Ressource*, ed. Inés Brock (Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2015), 135–60, esp. 138.

14. Kasten points out that in developing countries the elder siblings often take over completely the care for their younger siblings (*Geschwisterbeziehung*, 47).

15. See the article *aḥu* A in CAD 1.1:195–205.

as nephews (Gen 13:8), cousins (2 Sam 20:9), or clan members (1 Sam 20:29); it embraces even unrelated colleagues (Neh 3:1; see KAI 200:10–11) and political allies (1 Kgs 9:13), but normally not friends, as Olyan has pointed out.¹⁶

As Olyan has already shown, according to the ideal of brotherhood in the Hebrew Bible brothers should live together in harmony (Ps 133:1), should be loyal and honest to each other (Jer 12:6; Job 6:15), should show sympathy with their brother's sorrow (Ps 35:13–14) and should care for him in his need (Prov 17:17). In reality there are limits of support, for example, when one's brother has fallen into longer poverty (Prov 19:7; 27:10), or when the brother, from whom help is expected, was deceived before (Prov 18:19). In exceptional cases a friend can be more loyal than a brother (Prov 18:24) or a close neighbor more helpful than a far brother (Prov 27:10).¹⁷ But when it happens that brothers generally have become unreliable and unfaithful (Jer 9:3), the order of society has broken down. A similar picture is drawn in omen and incantation texts from Babylonia.¹⁸

While the faithful cooperation of brothers is only touched on in biblical narratives (e.g., Gen 9:23; 34), the ideal of harmonious brotherhood is much more enfolded in narratives of Israel's Near Eastern environment. From Egypt of the late second millennium BCE survives a longer narrative called the Story of Brothers or *Brüdermärchen*.¹⁹ Here it is told that an older married brother, Anubis, lives on a farm together with his younger unmarried brother, Bata, in full harmony. Bata is serving his elder brother and his wife with pleasure, making their clothes, cultivating his fields, and driving his cattle. The harmonious relation between the brothers is destroyed by the deceitful wife, who tries to seduce Bata. After being rejected by him, she accuses Bata of trying to rape her, as Potiphar's wife did with Joseph. Anubis becomes furious with his brother and

16. See Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 29. When David denotes Jonathan as "his brother" in 2 Sam 1:26, it may have to do with the generalizing language of funeral laments, where every deceased one seems to be seen as a brother of the living. See 1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18.

17. Prov 18:24 belongs to *ישי* proverbs, which denote exceptions from the normal order; 27:10b belongs to the *טוב מן* proverbs, which revalue the normal preference.

18. See CAD 1.1:196–97.

19. An abridged English version is given in *ANET*, 23–25. A complete German translation can be found in Emma Brunner-Traut, *Altägyptische Märchen*, 4th ed. (Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1976), 28–40.

wants to kill him; but, warned by his cattle, Bata is able to flee.²⁰ Separated by a dangerous waterway, the two brothers meet again. Bata, reminding Anubis that he is his younger brother and of their former familial harmony, is able to convince him of his innocence, emphasized by cutting off his phallus. Becoming weak from his self-mutilation, Bata asks his brother for future help after he goes away to the magic Valley of Cedar. Anubis feels pity for his brother and weeps aloud but cannot help him immediately. He goes home, kills his treacherous wife, and mourns for his lost brother. Much later, when Bata has come to death in the Valley of Cedar, Anubis fulfills the demand of his brother. He goes to the magic valley, searches for many days for his lost heart, finally finds it, and is able to revive his brother. After this, the two brothers come to the court of Pharaoh and together defend themselves against additional nasty attacks by another woman. Finally, Bata becomes the new Pharaoh, and Anubis follows him on the throne. Thus, the miraculous story impressively shows how mutual solidarity of brothers overcomes all dangers and leads to the highest success.

The ideal of mutual solidarity and support between brothers is even more explicitly stressed in the Aramaic Ahiqar story from the late seventh or early sixth century BCE.²¹ The former wise counselor reminds the high official Nabusumiskun, who was sent by king Esarhaddon to kill him, that he brought him to his own house, sustained (סבל *paēl*) him there “as a man deals with his brother,” and hid him from Sennacherib as long as the king was angry.²² Thus, Ahiqar expects the same brotherly behavior from Nabusumiskun, who fulfills his expectations. In his inscription from northern Syria of the late ninth century BCE, King Kilamuwa praises himself that he provided a neglected part of his people with goods and care like a father, mother, and brother.²³ Greenspahn points also to the Greek depiction of the Dioscuri Castor and Polydeuces (Pollux), whose “harmony became legend.... So intense was their unity that in the face of Castor’s death Polydeuces rejected Zeus’s offer of immortality” with the words: “Bid me die, O

20. Prov 6:19 states that God hates those who are telling a pack of lies and stir up quarrels between brothers.

21. See *ANET*, 427–30; *TAD* 3:25–57 (C1.1); *TUAT* 3.2:320–47.

22. See *TAD* C1.1.III–IV:46–52; *ANET*, 428; *TUAT* 3.2: 344–45. The latter edition suggests that the narrative frames the proverbs and assigns the passage to XVII:15–XVIII:4.

23. See *ANET*, 654; *KAI* 24:10–13.

King, with my brother.”²⁴ One can also refer to the German tale “The Three Brothers,”²⁵ who compete heavily against each other for the inheritance of their father’s house but in the end decide to live together because they love each other and can successfully do their different trades side by side.

The participation of ancient Israelites in an idealized concept of brother relations known in the Levant and beyond is also verified by Israelite personal names, where the kinship term **אח**, “brother”—next to “father,” “mother,” “uncle,” and “father-in-law”—constitutes a divinized designation for the family god.²⁶ Similar names occur in the Aramaic, Phoenician, Ammonite, and Moabite onomastica; they are also found in Mesopotamia. The divinized brother designation seems to have been quite popular. From a sample of about 3,000 epigraphically attested Hebrew names, of which nearly 2,000 are theophoric, 155 or 7.8 percent are formed with the element **אח**, even more than those names with the element **אב**, “father.”²⁷ This popularity might be explained by the fact that in preindustrial societies often the eldest brother took over the care for the younger siblings when the parents became ill or died early. The predicates of these names show similar characteristics with those containing other divine elements. However, names such as *’Aḥī’ezer*, “my divine brother is help,” or *’Aḥī’sāmāk*, “my divine brother has supported,” attested in the Bible (Exod 31:6), fit well with experiences among human brothers. Thus, there is a wide range, in which the Hebrew Bible shares common ideals of brotherhood with other cultures.

4. Where the Hebrew Bible Goes beyond the Common Ideals

In the face of this extensive agreement, it is all the more surprising that the Hebrew Bible diverges from the common background in two directions: First, in a very realistic manner it stresses the conflicts and rivalry between brothers in a number of dramatic narratives, especially in the book of Genesis (Gen 4; 25–33; 37–50) but also in the historical books (Judg 11; 1 Sam 17; 2 Sam 13–14; 1 Kgs 1–2). This rivalry often has to do with the

24. See Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together*, 4, with sources and literature.

25. Heinz Rölleke, ed., *Grimms Märchen: Text und Kommentar*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassikerverlag, 2015), 518–20 (no. 124).

26. See Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 350–53, 534–609, and the index, 668–69.

27. See Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 508–13.

preeminence of the younger or youngest brother, typically conceded in the Hebrew Bible.²⁸ Second, several legal passages of the Hebrew Bible, especially in the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 15–25) but also in the book of Leviticus (Lev 25), develop from the common ideal of brotherhood a specific ethic, where the traditional solidarity and responsibility between brothers was expanded beyond the family bonds in order to oblige wealthy citizens to support poor people within Israelite society.²⁹

4.1. Stressing Conflicts between Brothers and Showing Their Solutions

The Bible's first story dealing with brothers (Gen 4:2–16) is short and brutal.³⁰ Born and raised by the same parents, Cain, the elder brother, becomes a tiller of the soil, while Abel, the younger one, becomes a shepherd. It is not the division of labor as such, however, that creates competition between the brothers. According to the story, it is God who induces the conflict. When each of the brothers offers their sacrifice from the goods of their work, which have to be understood as firstling offerings, which should secure divine blessing for one's work in the future, God prefers Abel's and neglects Cain's offering. This means that Abel's herd breeding becomes much more successful than Cain's tilling the soil. That his younger and weaker brother has more success with his work than he himself seems to be unbearable for Cain; he feels at a loss and begins to hate his brother. The solidarity between the brothers breaks down. Many theologians have racked their brains regarding the reason for God's unjust decision, which induces such a heavy conflict between brothers who insist on being equal. One may refer to the fact that the biblical God often sides with the weaker partner. The story, however, deliberately does not provide any divine motivation. It intends to confront the reader and Cain with the fact that there are fateful disadvantages that are totally unexplainable. Cain is not able to bear his discrimination and tolerate the

28. See the comprehensive study of Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together*, 111–40.

29. See Eckart Otto, *Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments*, TW 3.2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), 186–92.

30. See especially the interpretations of Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974–1982), 1:381–435; Jan Christian Gertz, *Das erste Buch Mose: Genesis; Die Urgeschichte Gen 1–11*, ATD 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 150–74.

preferential treatment of his brother. Although warned by God, he lures Abel to the open country and beats his brother to death. In his view, the injustice done to him can only be abolished by eliminating his privileged brother. As is typical, he does not accuse the person responsible for his unjust treatment but thinks that he must punish his innocent brother for his misfortune.

Only God's questioning after the fratricide brings Cain back to a better perspective. Asked by God, "Where is your brother Abel?" he is reminded of his fraternal responsibility. His mocking answer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9), does reject God's question as an unreasonable demand, but against his own intention Cain guesses what real brotherly relationship should have entailed.³¹ Thus, the ideal of solidarity between brothers is not absent from the conflict.³² The murderer of his brother is driven from the soil to outside the human community by God's punishment. But now, complaining to God, Cain is not totally banned but protected by him from arbitrary attacks. He gets the chance for a new beginning. According to the primeval history of the Hebrew Bible,³³ with worldwide scope, brotherhood was especially threatened by the experience of unexplainable preference and discrimination by an unjust destiny.

The long Jacob composite, comprising Gen 25:21–34; 27:1–33:17* in its original form,³⁴ draws a much more complex picture of the conflict between two brothers. It already starts before and during birth, when the two twins press hard on each other in their mother's womb, and the secondborn, Jacob, grasps the heel of the firstborn, Esau, with his hand (Gen 25:22, 26). The competition between the two is settled when they grow up and develop different characters and skills: Esau loves the open plain and becomes a skillful hunter, while Jacob is well-behaved and prefers to

31. Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical translations are mine.

32. See the frequent epithet "[my, your, or his] brother," which occurs no less than seven times in Gen 4:2–11.

33. The story belongs to the non-Priestly primeval history (Gen 2:4b–8:22*) from the late eighth or early seventh century, which according to my view was integrated into the Priestly one by a post-Priestly redactor. See Rainer Albertz, *Pentateuchstudien*, FAT 117 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 477.

34. Here I follow the influential literary reconstruction of Erhard Blum. See Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 7–203. It was probably formed by using some older material during the ninth century BCE.

stay at home (v. 27). In contrast to Cain and Abel, the conflict between Jacob and Esau is triggered not by God but by the parents. They do not treat their sons equally, but Isaac favors his firstborn, Esau, because of his venison, while Rebecca prefers her secondborn, Jacob (v. 28). According to the story, however, God is not uninvolved. He induces the conflict in the background and uses it for his plan to make Jacob, the younger one, the blessed ancestor of his chosen people, superior to Esau and his descendants, as the birth oracle already indicated (v. 23), the blessing ritual will show (Gen 27:27–29), and later theophanies will make clear (Gen 28:18–22; 33:23–33).

Under hidden divine protection, Jacob develops into a real careerist, who fights for his advantage against his brother and does not shrink from even tricks and frauds. Cold and calculating, he takes advantage of Esau's ravenous hunger and forces him into selling his rights as the firstborn, just for a lentil meal (Gen 25:29–34). The narrator of this little anecdote intends to show that all solidarity and emotional relationship between the two brothers has disappeared. No further word is exchanged during the meal; even the term *brother* is no longer used.

Driven and supported by his mother, Jacob purloins from his brother Esau the paternal blessing (Gen 27:1–45). Feeling the end of his life, Isaac orders his elder son to prepare the ritual farewell meal, receive his blessing, and thus become his follower (vv. 1–4). But his wife, Rebecca, revolts against this normal order; she wants to promote her beloved younger son to highest rank in the family. In the face of this chance, Jacob does not refuse to cheat his old blind father and supplant his brother. Funnily dressed as Esau, he celebrates the ritual meal cooked by his mother; and his father, although having some doubts, solemnly bestows God's blessing on him, which not only includes fertility but also power above his brother and his descendants (vv. 27–29). The narrator depicts Esau's reaction with some sympathy: when the latter discovers that he had been deceived so badly by his brother, he cries and begs his father for some kind of second blessing. But Isaac cannot cancel God's ritually assured bonds to Jacob. Thus, Esau turns all his aggression against his brother; he insults him as a born cheater, alluding to a possible meaning of the name Jacob (v. 36a), becomes hostile to him, and plans to kill him as soon as possible (v. 41). Although blessed, Jacob has to flee from Esau's revenge. His and Rebecca's ambitions result in the destruction of their family (vv. 43–45).

It is impressive to see how realistically the rivalry between brothers is depicted here, and it is astonishing how self-critically the career of Israel's

own ancestor is evaluated in this story.³⁵ But the narrator of the Jacob composite does not end with the hostility and separation of the two brothers. He wants to show the ideal of brotherhood in his composition, too. Thus, he narrates that Jacob, after having become a blessed and rich man in the land of his flight, comes home and meets his brother once more (Gen 32–33). Esau, still angered, confronts him with four hundred men, and Jacob fears an attack. The reconciliation of the brothers, however, becomes possible because Jacob, as the favorite brother, deeply humiliates himself before his deprived brother and presents him a lot of the goods that he earned from God's blessings (Gen 33:1–11).³⁶ Prior to this, he learned through a divine attack at night that he must wrestle with God for his blessing rather than compete with other people (Gen 32:23–33). As the elect one who is ready to reconcile with his disadvantaged brother, Jacob becomes the true ancestor of Israel.

The Joseph novella (Gen 37:3–50:22a*) deals not with relations between two but among twelve brothers, from which the three oldest, Reuben, Simeon, and Judah, and the two youngest, Joseph, of course, and Benjamin play a major role. Even more than the Jacob composite, the Joseph novella is interested in the topic of reconciliation.³⁷ The conflict between Joseph and his brothers is also caused by the preference of their father. Jacob loves Joseph, the child of his old age, more than all his sons, and expresses his love with a special robe for him; therefore, his brothers hate him (Gen 37:3–4). It seems as if Jacob is forced to repeat the faults of his own parents.³⁸ The father's preference, however, is only one reason

35. This aspect is especially emphasized by Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together*, 125–35. That such a realistic depiction of the conflict was no longer borne in later times becomes apparent in the book of Jubilees, where, in spite of Jacob's tricks, both brothers are obliged by Rebecca (Jub 35.1–26) and Isaac (36.1–17) to keep fraternal love; the conflict between the two is much later induced by the sons of Esau (37–38). See Gerhard Langer, "Esau im Buch der Jubiläen," in Langer, *Esau—Bruder und Feind*, 55–61.

36. The act of reconciliation is not questioned by the final separation of the brothers (*pace* Millard, "Konflikte zwischen Brüdern," 19).

37. It contains even two scenes of reconciliation (Gen 45; 50), which may point to a later extension. In its extended form the novella seems to come from the eighth century BCE (see Albertz, *Pentateuchstudien*, 63–68).

38. A force of repetition between generations is observed by psychologists (see Petri, *Geschwister—Liebe und Rivalität*, 145). Although the Jacob and Joseph stories were originally independent, their different authors might have known about it.

for conflict between Joseph and his brothers. Their hate and jealousy are increased by Joseph's ambitious dreams, which indicate his claim to rule his brothers and the entire family (vv. 5–11). Thus, again, the divine world triggers the conflict in a mysterious way. While young Joseph still shows fraternal solidarity, his elder brothers seize the next opportunity to eliminate him. First, they want to kill him in a pit; only Reuben, the eldest, takes some responsibility for his younger brother. Then, Judah proposes to sell him as a slave abroad, referring to their bonds of blood with him. After having disposed of Joseph, the brothers soak the sleeved robe, the symbol of his preference, with the blood of a goat, in order to feign an accident for their father, Jacob. His inconsolable mourning for his beloved son shows the collapse of familial confidence (vv. 17–35).

After this short depiction of a drastic conflict between brothers, the narrator of the Joseph story gives an exhaustive account about how the familial confidence is rebuilt such that a reconciliation of the brothers becomes possible. Once Joseph becomes a governor of all Egypt and meets his brothers among the petitioners who want to buy some corn in the drought, he does not give up his anonymity but subjects them to a hard test to determine whether they have learned to keep fraternal solidarity. He accuses them of being spies and takes Simeon to prison as hostage (Gen 42:5–25) in order to test whether they will give him up as lost or redeem him. He demands that they bring their youngest brother, Benjamin, with them on their next journey, in order to test whether they will be able to overcome the mistrust of their father and guarantee Benjamin's security. Finally, he accuses Benjamin of having stolen his silver goblet (Gen 44:1–12) in order to test whether the elder brothers will give up the younger one as lost once more or will take responsibility for him. Only after the brothers have confessed their earlier guilt (Gen 42:21–22; 44:16) and Judah states that he vouches for Benjamin, despite his being preferred by their father, as was Joseph earlier (v. 20), and that he will be willing to assume the punishment instead of him (vv. 32–34) is Joseph ready to become reconciled with his brothers (Gen 45:1–15). By his political advancement, he regards himself as being commissioned by God to care for his brothers and all the family. Having tight emotional bonds to his brothers, especially to Benjamin, he refuses the subjugation of his brothers but renews his promise of fraternal care for them after their father's death (Gen 50:16–21). At the end, Joseph personifies the ideal of solidarity and responsibility that should govern the relations between brothers.

Thus, from the most prominent brother stories of the Hebrew Bible, which depict the rivalry and conflict between brothers in an extraordinarily realistic way, the ideal of solidarity between them is not completely absent. The Cain and Abel story hints at it briefly (Gen 4:9), the Jacob story profoundly deals with it in its final chapters (Gen 32–33), and the Joseph story reflects on its prerequisites and benefits in great detail (Gen 42–45; 50).

4.2. Promoting Brotherly Solidarity beyond Family Bonds

The Joseph story celebrates solidarity among brothers, which can even—combined with political influence—overcome catastrophes such as a heavy drought. Such an innerfamilial solidarity, however, has its strict limits. It focuses all one's emotional empathy and social responsibility on related people and excludes all unrelated people. Normally, in ancient societies these limits of fraternal solidarity were regarded as natural and were unquestioned. In the Hebrew Bible, however, an extraordinary development concerning the concept of brotherhood can be observed. Probably induced by a longer social crisis, in which many small landowners had lost their soil and more and more impoverished people were no longer supported by their familial social network,³⁹ some influential Judean scribes of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE, who were responsible for the law code of the book of Deuteronomy (Deut 12–26), looked for new religious and social concepts that would help to strengthen the sense of togetherness of their society. Apart from the centralization of all sacrificial cult in Jerusalem, they found that the new idea that all male members of the society are to be regarded as brothers was the most powerful. Lothar Perlitt has pointed out that this idea cannot be derived from the old model of blood relations between the tribes, nor from examples of Israel's environment. It does not have any ethnic or nationalistic intention, but it aims at the consolidation of humanity.⁴⁰

The intention of the legislators can well be observed in the law of the remission of debts (Deut 15:1–3, 7–11), where the term **אָח**, “brother,” is used no less than six times. When the reformers order that in every sev-

39. For the sociohistorical background of the brother ethic, see Otto, *Ethik*, 192.

40. See Lothar Perlitt, “Ein einzig Volk von Brüdern: Zur deuteronomischen Herkunft der biblischen Bezeichnung ‘Bruder,’” in *Deuteronomium-Studien*, FAT 8 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck 1994), 50–73, esp. 57–72.

enth year no creditor should collect the debts from “his neighbor” (רעהו) but release them and modify the term “his neighbor” with “his brother” (ואחיו), they intend to provide their law with a strong emotional motivation. Every wealthy citizen should regard his debtor as his own brother, for whom he is responsible in some way. He should show fraternal solidarity with him and should be ready to renounce his right and to go without his money in favor of him. From verses 7, 9, and 11, where the legislators speak of “your poor brother,” it becomes clear that these acts of solidarity should be done especially in favor of poor countrymen. Thus, the ideal of brotherly care is evoked and extended beyond family bonds in order to create a societal responsibility for needy but unrelated people. Similarly, the legislators demand for fair treatment of debt slaves by calling them “your Hebrew brother” (Deut 15:12) and forbid charging interest from “your brother” (Deut 23:20–21). In public punishments, “your brother” must not be beaten in a degrading way (Deut 25:3). Even the resident alien should profit from this new societal solidarity (Deut 24:14); only independent foreigners are excluded from the brotherly community (Deut 15:3; 23:21).

Among the ideals of familial brotherhood, apart from solidarity and help, honest behavior was also important. Thus, beyond family bonds too, no one of the Judean society should give false witness against “his brother” (Deut 19:18–19), and anybody who finds someone’s lost animals or clothes should not secretly take possession of them but should care for them in order to bring them back to “your brother,” even if one does not know or like him (Deut 22:1–4). Thus, the new brother ethic of Deuteronomy already comes close to the commandment of compassion, for the first time formulated in the Holiness Code (Lev 19:17, 34).⁴¹ The theological ground for this demanding extension of brotherhood can be seen in the belief that YHWH has redeemed all the Israelites, even those now blessed and wealthy, from slavery in Egypt (Deut 15:15) and will honor the unselfish solidarity between them with his further blessings (vv. 10, 18).

5. Concluding Remarks

The reason why the ambivalence of brother relations covers such an extraordinarily wide range in the Hebrew Bible, from realistic depictions of drastic

41. See the other later adoptions of the brother ethic in Lev 25:25, 35–47; Zech 7:9–10.

conflicts between brothers in Genesis and elsewhere to fastidious demands in Deuteronomy of realizing fraternal solidarity even beyond family bonds, has to be sought—according to my view—in Israel’s especially intensive relation to its God. On the one hand, the biblical narrators seem to be very sensitive in sensing God’s acting in human affairs. They observe it especially where the normal human order is turned upside down, for example, when the younger brother becomes more important or successful than the older one. Thus, in all cases discussed above, God is seen to be responsible for inducing the conflict between brothers, more or less. Therefore, rivalry and conflict between brothers became important; they have to do with God and testify his challenging or electing acts in some way. They must not be concealed but can realistically be depicted. The weakness of the involved parents and brothers, their preferences, their jealousy, their faults and sins are not justified by the divine actions behind them, but the biblical narrators do not shrink from depicting them, because they want to show how they deal with divine challenges.

On the other hand, the Deuteronomic legislators are convinced that YHWH has special demands on his chosen people. In their view, he is no longer satisfied by the normal fraternal solidarity within family bonds. Since all Israelite families can no longer support their impoverished members, brother relations must be extended to the entire society, because God has redeemed all his people from slavery. As Perlitt has formulated it: “As a brother, an Israelite demands greater, even the greatest, attention from a fellow Israelite.”⁴² One may ask whether such an immense extension of fraternal responsibility does not overtax many individuals, but it can be stated that the demanding brother ideal developed by the Deuteronomic legislators shows such an influence that human charity beyond family bonds became an attractive trademark of later Judaism and early Christianity in the ancient world.

42. See Perlitt, “Ein einzig Volk,” 64: “Als Bruder verlangt der Israelit vom Mitisraeliten höhere, ja höchste Aufmerksamkeit.”

Where Are Joseph's Brothers? Jacob, Joseph, and the Joseph Novella

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The book of Genesis, in some ways from the beginning and certainly from Gen 11, is a book about a family. In this, it is quite different from what follows, as the gaze of the narrative is thereafter on the *people* Israel.¹ Of course, this is quite explicable, as the *people* is supposed to have descended from the *family*, in the way of such things, but it is nevertheless striking. And, more than the story of a family, Gen 11–50 is the story of family *rivalry*. First, Isaac is elevated over Ishmael, then Jacob over Esau. Genesis 29–30, the story of the birth of Jacob's children (besides Benjamin), is, as John Van Seters notes, transfigured by “the theme of the rivalry between the two principal wives” in which, additionally, each wife's maidservant is used as a pawn.² Then, in Gen 37–50, Joseph is at first cast much lower than his brothers and ultimately rises at least as far above.

It is Gen 37–50 that is the subject of this study, and it has long been acknowledged that this stretch of narrative is set apart from the rest in a number of ways.³ In the context of a discussion of *rivalries*, however, what

1. As Konrad Schmid has recently put it, “Genesis offers a family story; Exodus presents the story of a people.” See Schmid, “Genesis and Exodus as Two Formerly Independent Traditions of Origins for Ancient Israel,” *Bib* 93 (2012): 187–88.

2. John Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 207. See also Andrew Tobolowsky, *The Sons of Jacob and the Sons of Herakles: The History of the Tribal System and the Organization of Biblical Identity*, FAT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 104–10.

3. The identification of the narrative unity of much of the material spanning Gen 37–50 appeared first in the work of Hermann Gunkel and Hugo Gressmann but was emphasized in a study of Gerhard von Rad's. See Gunkel, “Die Komposition der Joseph-Geschichten,” *ZDMG* 76 (1922): 55–71; Gressmann, “Ursprung und Entwicklung der Joseph-Sage,” in *Eucharistērion: Studien zur Religion und Literature des Alten*

really stands out about the Joseph novella is the *cause* of the rivalry between brothers, with its almost deadly consequences, and that is Jacob's favoritism. It may be that Abraham really prefers Isaac to Ishmael, although he puts up at least a pro forma resistance to YHWH's (and Sarah's) preference for the younger boy (Gen 17:18). Isaac, however, actually prefers Esau, for the food he obtains by hunting (Gen 25:27–28). It is Rachel and apparently YHWH who prefer Jacob (Gen 27). Joseph, however, is his father's favorite, from the very beginning, and this is quite specifically the cause of the fraternal conflict that precipitates the narrative action: "His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all of his brothers, and they hated him. And they were not able to speak to him in peace" (Gen 37:4).⁴

In no small part as a result, while every son shunted aside by his father resists his fate—Ishmael, cast out of the light, will be "against everyone" and everyone against him (Gen 16:12), while Jacob must flee to Aram out of a reasonable fear of Esau (Gen 27:41–45)—the Joseph story is the most dramatic of all. His brothers plot to kill him, then sell him into slavery. Only Reuben seems troubled in the least, and when the brothers at last have their grand reconciliation, in Gen 45, it is impossible to know how sincerely anyone feels. At this point, the brothers' lives depend on making amends in more ways than one.⁵

Just as the rivalry between wives obscures certain curious features of Gen 29–30 as narrative, however—for example, that seven years is not enough time to have twelve children (eleven sons and one daughter), even from four women, if no pregnancies overlap—the extraordinary prominence of Gen 37–50's focus on Joseph and his brothers obscures the fact that sometimes it is very much *not* focused on Joseph's brothers at all.⁶ It may be that this reveals the existence of an alternative Joseph narrative, in the mode of the stories about previous generations, in which there are many children but only one favored one. Alternatively, the narrative elision

und Neuen Testaments; Hermann Gunkel zum 66. geburtstage, dem 23. mai 1922, ed. Hans Schmidt, FRLANT 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923), 1–55; von Rad, "Josephsgeschichte und ältere Chokma," in *Congress Volume, Copenhagen 1953* (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 120–27.

4. Translations are my own.

5. That is, they will starve without food, *and* Joseph has the power to put them to death.

6. Van Seters, *Prologue to History*, 206. While Jacob is supposed to have spent fourteen years with Laban, he does not start fathering children until after his second marriage.

of Joseph's brothers at various crucial instances may be meant to reduplicate and underscore Jacob's own favoritism in various subtle ways. Either way, the sometimes quite surprising absence of the other sons of Jacob is an underappreciated feature of Genesis's treatment of the Joseph story.

The Joseph Novella and Its Discontents

The Joseph story, or novella, has long been treated as something of an oddity in biblical scholarship. During the heyday of the traditional Documentary Hypothesis, for example, its length and coherence, suggestive of a single source, troubled conventional understandings of the composition of the Pentateuch. In 1968, for example, Roger Whybray argued, "It would seem that we are forced to make a choice in our interpretation of the Joseph Story between the documentary hypothesis on the one hand and the view that it is a 'novel' ... on the other."⁷ Between the two, Whybray chose the latter and moreover noted that this "can only increase a widespread suspicion that source criticism has been applied too rigidly."⁸

Internally, the Joseph novella has other problems. Scholars are well aware, for example, that two different stories appear to have been merged in the account of Joseph's capture and arrival in Egypt, one in which he is sold or taken by some Ishmaelites (Gen 37:25, 27, 28b), and one in which it is Midianites (v. 28a). There also seems to be one story in which the brothers, led by Judah, actively sell Joseph to the caravan (Gen 37:27) and one in which he is simply picked up after the brothers have left, apparently to let him die.

In this story, Reuben returns to the pit to find his brother gone, and it is only when he tells the others that this has happened, apparently to their surprise as well, that they decide to make it appear as if Joseph has been killed by wild animals (vv. 29–32). On the other side of the novella, various other kinds of interruptions, breaks, and repetitions in Gen 46–50, including the famous and likely originally independent "blessing of Jacob" in Gen 49, have led a number of scholars to argue that the Joseph novella proper really only spans Gen 37–45. I find these arguments compelling.⁹

7. Roger N. Whybray, "The Joseph Story and Pentateuchal Criticism," *VT* 18 (1968): 528.

8. Whybray, "Joseph Story," 528.

9. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37–50: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 22.

Others, without disposing of the traditional novella, have emphasized the existence of redactional elements throughout.¹⁰

Just as striking as the multiple stories about how Joseph got to Egypt, a strange kind of disconnect between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus has already been observed as early as the work of Martin Noth, if not earlier. Specifically, Noth observes how few ripples the story of Joseph and his brothers seems to make:

The Joseph story moved to the goal established from the outset, namely, that “Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.”... Joseph ... has a brilliant career and proves to be the one among his brothers who is especially blessed by God. Viewed in terms of the story’s goals, however, the entire Joseph story is indeed an episode which, oddly enough, has no particular consequences at all. For in the end Joseph in Egypt again recedes into the circle of his brothers.... His descendants thereafter in no way stand out among the other Israelite tribes.¹¹

Certainly, it is fair to say that the Ephraimites at least *do* stand out at various points in the later narrative. Yet, it is just as fair to point out that in at least one version of the exodus story, YHWH and his people have forgotten each other so thoroughly that Moses must ask YHWH how he should explain to the people who YHWH is (Exod 3:13). So, it appears as if the divine intervention that brought the Israelites to Egypt did not have a lasting effect on their historical consciousness, however much it is emphasized in Genesis.

As a result of these and other issues, since the middle of the twentieth century, discussions of a potential narrative disconnect have broadened in certain quarters into a wholesale rejection of the inherent character of the

10. Bob Becking, “‘They Hated Him Even More’: Literary Technique in Genesis 37.1–11,” *BN* 60 (1991): 40–47; Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 229–57; Jan Alberto Soggin, “Notes on the Joseph Story,” in *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson*, ed. A. Graeme Auld, JSOTSup 152 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 337–41; Walter Dietrich, *Die Josephserzählung als Novelle und Geschichtsschreibung: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Pentateuchfrage*, BibThSt 14 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989). See the discussion in Tobolowsky, *Sons of Jacob*, 104–7.

11. Martin Noth, *A History of the Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 212–13.

connection between the patriarchal and exodic traditions, once a foundational element of pentateuchal criticism. The separate origins and late combination of the narratives in Genesis and Exodus respectively is by no means a consensus opinion today, but it has been entertained to varying degrees by an increasing number of scholars.¹²

It is worth saying, too, that seemingly new approaches to the connection between Genesis and Exodus actually have quite deep roots. In many respects, contemporary non-Documentarian approaches, which allow for

12. Many of these discussions, including that in the article by Schmid, orbit around the question of whether the two narratives were connected prior to the work of the Priestly writer, or even by the Priestly writer (see Schmid, "Genesis and Exodus"). See Blum, *Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, 105–11, 169–80; Erhard Blum, "Die literarische Verbindung von Erzvätern und Exodus: Ein Gespräch mit neueren Endredaktionshypothesen," in *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion*, ed. Jan Christian Gertz, Konrad Schmid, and Markus Witte, BZAW 315 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 119–56; Blum, "The Literary Connection between the Books of Genesis and Exodus and the End of the Book of Joshua," in *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, SymS 34 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 96, 105–6; Thomas Römer, "The Exodus Narrative according to the Priestly Document," in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions*, ed. Sarah Shectman and Joel S. Baden, ATANT 95 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2009), 163, 170; Jan Christian Gertz, *Tradition und Redaktion in der Exoduserzählung: Untersuchungen zur Endredaktion des Pentateuch*, FRLANT 186 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Gertz, "Die Stellung des kleinen geschichtlichen Credos in der Redaktionsgeschichte von Deuteronomium und Pentateuch," in *Liebe und Gebot: Studien zum Deuteronomium; festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Lothar Perlitt*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann, FRLANT 190 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 30–45; Eckart Otto, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch: Studien zur Literaturgeschichte von Pentateuch und Hexateuch im Lichte des Deuteronomiumrahmens*, FAT 30 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); Konrad Schmid, "The Late Persian Formation of the Torah: Observations on Deuteronomy 34," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Manfred Oeming, and Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 237–52; Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012); Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 281–307. Even some of those who do argue for a pre-Priestly connection today note a "limited redactional linkage ... accelerating with the more systematic Priestly joins." See David M. Carr, "What Is Required to Identify Pre-Priestly Narrative Connections between Genesis and Exodus? Some General Reflections and Specific Cases," in Dozeman and Schmid, *Farewell to the Yahwist?*, 163–64.

fewer continuities between pentateuchal narratives, are actually a *reflection* of Noth and others'—and especially Hermann Gunkel's—interests in recognizing and reconstructing the smaller units behind the finished text.¹³ As a belief in the durability of oral traditions over time has faded, the possibility that the dividing lines that had been observed in the text are the result of *late literary processes*, rather than early oral ones, has played a substantial role in contemporary Documentary criticism, especially in Europe.¹⁴ Today, it is by no means uncommon to encounter the position that the Joseph novella, which explains how Israel got to Egypt so that Moses could get them out, is a late effort to create a narrative bridge that did not meaningfully exist before.¹⁵

Whatever is true about the development of patriarchal and exodic traditions, and the origins of the Joseph novella, however, there remain underexamined issues. For example: Joseph first earns the ire of his brothers by making unfavorable reports about them to their father (Gen 37:2) but next by exercising his nascent ability in the interpretation of dreams in unwise ways.¹⁶ In one, which he relates to anyone who will listen, the

13. Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Enzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895); Gunkel, *Die Sagen der Genesis: (1. Buch Mose)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901).

14. This basic idea has its foundation in the work of Rolf Rendtorff. See Rendtorff, "Literarkritik und Traditionsgeschichte," *EvT* 27.3 (1967): 138–53; Rendtorff, *Das Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*, BZAW 147 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977); Rendtorff, "Martin Noth and Tradition Criticism," in *The History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and M. Patrick Graham, JSOTSup 182 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 91–100.

15. As Reinhard Kratz observes, "With a very few exceptions ... the primal history and patriarchal history in Genesis 2–35 contains no kind of references forward to the exodus," which makes it plausible that "the expansion of the Joseph narrative in Genesis 45–50 and the hinge in Exodus 1.8–10a, 15–22, produce a literary connection" that did not previously exist (*Composition of the Narrative*, 274–75; see Tobolowsky, *Sons of Jacob*, 108). See also Schmid, who suggests that "the author of Exodus 1, recognized that Exodus 1–15 is not a fitting continuation of Genesis 37–50. In order to compensate, he inserted the short notice stating that the king was unaware of everything that was known about Joseph" ("Genesis and Exodus," 195).

16. As Carolyn J. Sharp observes, there is an irony here since it is Joseph's wisdom and discernment that will later make his dreaming skills so politically effective. See Sharp, *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 55–56.

sun and moon and eleven stars bow down to him (Gen 37:9). This last is too much for Jacob, who rebukes him: "Shall I and your mother and your brothers come to bow down to you, to the ground?" (Gen 37:10). Yet, Joseph's mother is supposed to be Rachel, who has died previously (Gen 35:19). Also, Joseph should not be the "son of his [Jacob's] old age," the reason given for Jacob's favoritism (Gen 37:3); rather, this should be Benjamin. It is possible that in some version of the story, Benjamin's birth and Rachel's death have not yet occurred, but there is little other evidence that this is the case.

Other narrative details are similarly confused. In Gen 46:7, for example, Jacob is said to be accompanied into Egypt by "his sons, and his grandsons, and his daughters and his granddaughters." Sons, grandsons, and granddaughters he may well have, but as far as the rest of Genesis is concerned, he only has *one* daughter, Dinah (Gen 30:21). In addition, there have been many efforts to resolve the discrepancy between the seventy individuals listed in the genealogy of Jacob's children (Gen 46:8–25) and the note that there were "sixty-six persons in all" (Gen 46:26).¹⁷

These various contradictions, repetitions, elisions, and confusions make it relatively clear that there were more stories about Jacob and his children than the one that is most prominent in the book of Genesis. The existence of additional stories would hardly be surprising, though such a possibility has not often been entertained. Certainly, there have been recent attempts to argue that once Jacob had *fewer* than twelve children. This argument is generally based around the possibility, now attracting considerable interest, that the Judahite authors who shaped the biblical accounts of Israel's history did not always think of themselves as Israelite but, instead, simply Judahite.¹⁸ In that case, Judahite authors would have expanded an originally northern account of Jacob's life and children so that it included them.

17. Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, AB 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 344–47; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, WBC 2 (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 442–43; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 597–98; Peter Addinall, "Genesis XLVI 8–27," VT 54 (2004): 289–300.

18. For example, Daniel Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 79–86; Israel Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel*, ANEM 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 141, 153; Nadav Na'aman, "The Jacob Story and the Formation of Biblical Israel," TA 41 (2014): 95–125.

Even these discussions, however, assume a linear model of tradition development in which essentially the same story about Jacob and his sons became a *larger* and more inclusive story about Jacob's sons, rather than that there were simply a wide variety of stories about Jacob's life at various times. The vision of a single story growing or shrinking over time, rather than multiple quite different stories appearing in different places, is based to some degree on outdated assumptions about tradition inheritance.¹⁹ Narrative diversity was not within the compass of mid-twentieth-century approaches because of a specific set of assumptions about the role traditions about a heroic age were supposed to play throughout the entire history of a people. Without those assumptions, the possibility of substantial narrative diversity over time, and at any given time, must be seriously considered. In that case, we would not have to imagine only broadly similar accounts of Jacob's life in which he had more or fewer children but quite possibly very different narratives altogether.

With respect to the biblical authors' imagination of Joseph and his family, and in addition to the surprising references to the survival of his mother and his additional sisters that I mentioned above, we also have to consider one doublet and, finally, some unusual absences. The doublet appears in Gen 41, when, after his successes interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph is put in charge of preparing for the famine he foretells. Although interpreting dreams is not much of a professional qualification for the job of quartermaster to the realm, he does a phenomenally good job. After the seven years of plenty "there was famine in all the lands, but in all of Egypt there was bread" (Gen 41:54). The people of Egypt come to Joseph and ask for food, and Joseph "opened all that was in them and he sold to the Egyptians" (41:56). After that, he sells grain to the entire world, which comes to Egypt "to buy from Joseph because the famine was harsh over all the world" (41:57).

What we need to appreciate about Joseph's elevation to quartermaster is that it is presented in the narrative as if it has been the purpose of all the bad things that have happened to him. Because Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, because he was taken to Egypt, even because he was thrown

19. For useful counterarguments against linear modeling, see John H. Choi, *Traditions at Odds: The Reception of the Pentateuch and Second Temple Period Literature* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010); Eva Mroczek, "The Hegemony of the Biblical in the Study of Second Temple Literature," *JAJ* 6 (2015): 2–35; Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

into prison, he is finally put into a position where he can feed his family when they are starving. YHWH's role is revealed, and the message of the fable along with it: trust in YHWH that even very bad things will lead to the good. After the brothers resolve the issues between them, Joseph settles them in the best land (Gen 47:11) and makes certain that they are well fed (47:12). YHWH's plan, however torturous it may have been for Joseph himself, is now complete.

So why, then, in the very next verse do we read "there was no food in all of the land, the famine was very heavy, and the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine" (47:13)? More importantly, why is Joseph suddenly involved in what we can only call a confidence scheme? From his position of power, Joseph first extracts all the money there is in Egypt, in exchange for grain, and when the people are still hungry, he forces them to trade their livestock too. Once he possesses all the livestock as well, he turns to everyone's land—and leases it back to them for one-fifth of their produce (47:16–24).

So, which is it? Was the purpose for which Joseph was brought to Egypt feeding his family and the nation in its time of need? Or was it to force all Egyptians into a feudal arrangement and vastly enrich Pharaoh in the process? It may be that "both" is a plausible answer, but I am not so certain. Also, I note that the most remarkable aspect of the second scheme is that Joseph's brothers are never even mentioned. Having come to Egypt just as this scene began to unfold, are they too required to sell their property and themselves to Pharaoh in exchange for grain? Are they, who were fed in 47:12, now hungry and destitute in 47:13? It seems unlikely.

The absence of Joseph's brothers in this passage is an intimation of more and greater absences to come. There are plenty of other instances in which we might reasonably expect references to Jacob's other children. For example, when Jacob begins his journey from Canaan, he seems quite alone: "When Israel set out, and all that was his, he came to Beersheba. He sacrificed sacrifices to the god of his father, Isaac" (46:1–2). He has a vision in 46:3 saying that *he* should go down to Egypt, with no one else mentioned, and only in 46:5 does he seem to have his children as companions. It may be that they are included in "all that was his," but the repetitive third-person singular pronouns at least push them to the margins.

Next, and almost as soon as Jacob arrives in Egypt, he begins to die in a lengthy process. When Jacob first feels death approaching, he calls Joseph and only Joseph, asking Joseph to bury him in Canaan (47:29–31). Later, Joseph hears that his father is ill and goes to see him with only his own

sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. On the one hand, in 48:5, Jacob specifies that Ephraim and Manasseh will be counted as his heirs “just as Reuben and Simeon are,” and elaborates on this point in verses 6–7, referencing the rest of the brothers.²⁰

On the other hand, immediately there is a second account of Jacob’s blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, beginning with Israel asking, “Who are these?” (48:8). Joseph’s brothers are never mentioned in this story, in which Ephraim is elevated over the younger Manasseh (48:13–14, 17–20), and ultimately Joseph himself is blessed (48:15–16). This is interesting in light of the fact that Joseph is also blessed in Gen 49, the “blessing of Jacob,” another text that preserves the normative expression of Jacob and his twelve sons. Two blessings in a row are surely not narratively necessary, indicating the independence of this second Ephraim-Manasseh story, both from what proceeds and what follows.

Finally, there are a number of interesting details in the account of Jacob’s actual death and burial in Gen 50. In 49:33, after Jacob has finished blessing all of his children—implying their presence in the room at the time—Jacob at last passes away. But, in 50:1, it is only Joseph who falls on his face, mourning. For the next six verses, Joseph engages in a flurry of activity with no reference to any siblings. He commands that Jacob be mummified, which takes forty days (50:2–3), and the Egyptians weep for seventy days (50:3). When that period of mourning has passed, it is Joseph, and Joseph alone, who asks Pharaoh whether Joseph can fulfill his vow to his father and bury him in Canaan (50:4–6).

In some respects, all of this might be expected, since Joseph is a powerful official in Egypt and plausibly the only one who might speak directly to Pharaoh. However, 50:7 is very clear: “*Joseph* went up to bury his father, and with him went all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt.” “His brothers and the house of his father” are mentioned in the next verse, but it is interesting that they get lower billing than the elders of Egypt. For the next few verses, the point of view bounces around between singular and plural: “His sons did for him as he had charged them” (50:12); “they carried him to the land of Canaan”

20. For an elegant reading of some of the gender dynamics in Gen 48, both in terms of the physical absence of women from this text and their idealized presence in Jacob’s speech, as well as reflections on the Jacob and Rachel story, see Helena Zlotnick, *Dinah’s Daughters: Gender and Judaism from the Hebrew Bible to Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 160–66.

(50:13); "After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt" (50:14). What about his family? Did they not book a return trip?

Thus, there are various peculiarities in the Joseph novella that indicate the existence of multiple different visions of the story of Joseph's family. He should not still have a living mother (Gen 37:10), and he should not have more than one sister (Gen 46:7). He should not have solved the problem of the famine in order to fulfill the purpose for which he suffered so much, then have to solve it again solely for the benefit of Pharaoh. Joseph's brothers should not have been in the room when Jacob died, then vanished when Joseph began mourning. Joseph and his Egyptian retinue should not have been so much the focus of the narrative in which the twelve sons of Jacob all took their father to be buried in Canaan. Each of these cases preserves presentations of Joseph's family in different modes.

The difficult question is whether these problems are caused by the history of the traditions involved or by the narrative interests of the main authors. In other words, do Joseph's brothers consistently slide off the page because they *did not feature* in every source text from which the final account was made? Was there perhaps a story in which Jacob did not have twelve sons, so familiar to us from other stories, but some other number, in which Joseph was the one who really mattered? Or, instead, is the narrative's inability to keep track of the importance of all the sons of Jacob a reflection of the importance of Joseph to those narrators *despite* the normative understandings they brought to the task?²¹ Is it possible that the narrative choices we have discussed are an *external* reflection of the *internal* favoritism toward Joseph, which kicked off the drama in the first place? These are the concluding questions that require our attention.

Conclusions

The idea that there was once a story that was mainly about Jacob and Joseph, and even that it did not contain the charter myth of the twelve

21. In some respects, there has been a growing awareness of the prevailing importance of Jacob within the narrative, troubling the notion of the "Joseph novella" for some time. For a summary of studies in that direction see Friedemann W. Golka, "Genesis 37–50: Joseph Story or Israel-Joseph Story?," *CurBR* 2.2 (2004): 153–77. See also Richard J. Clifford, "Genesis 37–50: Joseph Story or Jacob Story?," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, VTSup 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 213–29.

tribes of Israel, is not as farfetched as it might sound. In every other narrative block in Genesis, from Gen 11 on, each patriarch has more than one child, but one is the favorite and obvious protagonist of the next stage in the story. Abraham actually has a number of children, following his marriage to Sarah with one to Keturah (25:1), but the main point is that Ishmael fades from the story while Isaac takes center stage. Esau is a major player in Gen 25–28 and 32, but Jacob, of course, is the main character going forward.

Thus, the argument need not be that some alternate story about Jacob existed in which he had only one son. Rather, the argument would be that an alternate story simply featured Joseph in the role that Isaac and Jacob have in their stories. This would make sense of the other hints in Genesis that the normative depiction of Jacob's family is not the only one that ever existed, including the survival of Joseph's (unnamed) mother into Gen 37 and the presence of additional daughters of Jacob in Gen 46. Such a hypothesis would also follow an argument, which I have made elsewhere, that the traditions concerning Jacob and his children and those concerning the twelve tribes of Israel actually evolved separately from each other.²²

Indeed, even the possibility that Jacob was not always understood as the father of the tribes of Israel, however ancient traditions about him might be, suggests that it is a little odd for the narrative to switch from a linear framework to a segmented framework that follows multiple branches of the family at once. What is it that makes the twelve sons of Jacob one people while, in every previous generation, every son had been the ancestor of a *separate* people? The possibility that there was a story in which Joseph was Jacob's only child, or main child, in the way that Jacob is Isaac's and Isaac is Abraham's, would also explain other odd features of the narrative, including the fact that, seeing the mourning of the brothers at the threshing floor of Atad, the local Canaanites begin to call the place "Abel Mizraim, the mourning of the Egyptians," for "they said this is a heavy mourning for the Egyptians" (Gen 50:11). It may be that in a different version of the story, the mourners at the threshing floor *were* mostly Egyptians—the Egyptian retinue that attends Joseph on his journey before any of his brothers are even mentioned.

Yet, in honor of Dr. Saul Olyan's always-sensitive and layered approach to familial relationships in biblical literature, I would like to defend the

22. Tobolowsky, *Sons of Jacob*, 188–246.

other possibility I mentioned as well.²³ The consistent winnowing of the focus of the narrative from all of Jacob's children to Joseph alone between Gen 46–50, with the obvious exception of Gen 49, might simply reflect the nature of the bond between Jacob and Joseph that caused all the trouble in the first place. By ignoring Jacob's brothers after the joyful reunion of Jacob and his most beloved son, the authors may simply be echoing the feelings of Jacob himself, as well as, perhaps, justifying them.

After all, however the Joseph novella seems to conclude, it may be difficult for modern readers to interpret this as a story of a mistake and forgiveness, because the mistake is so monumental and the forgiveness is given in such strained circumstances. All it took was a few catty comments for Joseph's brothers to agree to murder him, then to settle on selling him into slavery. Their jealousy is monstrous, and so are the results, and when they seek forgiveness, it is a matter of life and death: Joseph controls the only food they are likely to get and certainly has reason not to give it to them. Were these real people, we would certainly wonder whether the fact that Joseph *does* give them food, and apparently forgives them in the process, is because his own elevation in comparison to them—that they need to beg him for life—is itself such satisfying vengeance that he needs no other. At any rate, this is not a situation in which the brothers' apology is likely to seem genuinely sincere.

In addition to the ways in which the apology scene highlights Joseph's magnanimity, all of the little problems I have pointed out in the narrative are visible, in part, because they exist *outside the main narrative edifice*, the rivalry between the sons of Jacob. The appearance of a second account of Joseph's management of the famine (Gen 47), after his brothers arrive and are fed, is not particularly notable in a book with so many doublets *except that* his work to enrich Pharaoh is so deflating to the apparent purpose of the Joseph novella.²⁴ That the importance of reuniting and saving his

23. For example, Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Olyan, "What Do We Really Know about Women's Rites in the Israelite Family Context?," *JANER* 10 (2012): 55–67; and Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), as well as the edited volume by John P. Bodel and Olyan, *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

24. Although, as Lindsay Wilson notes, one should not stress the role of the divine plan here to the exclusion of recognizing Joseph's own initiative, "making the human characters little more than puppets." See Wilson, *Joseph, Wise and Otherwise: The*

family is the sole explanation for Joseph's tribulations is likewise trivialized by the disappearance of that family for most of the rest of the narrative, save for Jacob and Joseph themselves. We could also read the inclusion of these additional narrative details as a way of deemphasizing the importance of the rest of Joseph's family.²⁵

As a narrative work, then, and whatever the prehistory of its contents, Gen 37–50 repeatedly emphasizes the special nature of the relationship between Jacob and Joseph even in ways that undermine its most obvious purpose, which is expressing the existence of a divine plan even in difficult times. In undermining itself, the narrative builds up the foundations of the relationship at its center, which is not just the cause of what follows but the narrative engine that propels it. Jacob may not have been a very good father to most of his children, but he was devoted in Joseph's case. This son was devoted in return, a model of filial piety, even though there are more *filii* to consider. In the end, Jacob's high opinion of his second-youngest son appears justified.

Intersection of Wisdom and Covenant in Genesis 37–50 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 268.

25. Judy Fentress-Williams observes something similar about Gen 38, the story of Judah and Tamar. Speaking of Gen 37, she notes, "What will become of Joseph? Will he survive? Will his father ever discover the truth? It is with anticipation that the reader turns to the following chapter only to discover that the narrator has shifted gears and is now telling what appears to be a completely different story—one having to do with Joseph's brother Judah." See Fentress-Williams, "Location, Location, Location: Tamar in the Joseph Cycle," *BCT* 3.2 (2007), <https://tinyurl.com/SBL2641b>.

Protective Violence, Punitive Mutilation, Spousal Relations, and Gender Hierarchies in the Legal Case of Deuteronomy 25:11–12

Debra Scoggins Ballentine

When men fight together, a man against his brother, if the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one striking him and she reaches out her hand and seizes him in his *məbūšim*, then you shall cut off her hand, your eye shall not pity.

—Deuteronomy 25:11–12¹

This essay explores a specific intersection of civil “values” and the spousal relationship. I use *values* in scare quotes because values are always culturally contingent. They skew to privilege those calling their own preferences values. Typically, this implies the claim that *our* values are distinct from *their* less-worthy values. Ancient West Asian legal collections are literary corpora that offer a variety of data regarding social mores; familial, social, and economic relationships; material and resource-based aspects of life; and civil values.

I had the delightful fortune of having Saul Olyan as my PhD adviser at Brown University. His scholarship continues to provide an aspirational model, as it is characterized by his attention to detail and ability to balance fine philology with nuanced theorization of the topic at hand. Saul’s work is genuinely enjoyable to read in addition to being thought provoking for scholarly work. From the great breadth of his work, I have especially enjoyed using his early works on angels and Asherah, his substantial work on ritual and social hierarchies, and his more recent work on the topics of violence and friendship. His scholarship and professional guidance have been invaluable to my learning, training, and academic career. With gratitude, I share this essay that features a blend of theorization on social hierarchies, violence and mutilation in legal ritual, and engagement with his work on friendship via the husband and wife relationship.

1. Unless otherwise indicated, biblical translations are mine.

Legal collections frequently overlap with wisdom literature, in that the corpora of both genres exhibit many commonsense standards for how to get along in a family, village, society, and state. Such widespread and broad overlaps between ancient West Asian legal and wisdom literatures are pragmatic. Of course, biblical civil regulations and wisdom traditions share many features with the broader range in their cultural milieu. Similarities across genres and societies within the ancient West Asian milieu suggest a general degree of veracity in the portrayal of social mores. More simply, civil codes plausibly reflect responses to the types of neighborly dilemmas that actually occurred. That being said, legal codes are prescriptive rather than descriptive, so we cannot assume laws were carried out as such. The composition and preservation of legal codes does suggest that the prescriptions they preserve were considered ideal and/or norms, at least for those who composed and preserved them. So while we would not assume that legal codes represent a majority view of how things were nor how they ought to be, they represent a select, elite view that was likely enfranchised and that certainly skews toward the privilege of adult, male, landowning, child-siring individuals.

When casuistic laws are specific to family and spouse relationships, the most common issues are adultery and rape.² For both of these legal examples, the primary concern is how the wrong affects the relevant husband and/or father. I suggest two analytical observations: first, the legal situation reflects and bolsters a social hierarchy; second, in such cases, the woman's

2. There are many volumes on the topic of family in ancient West Asia and in the Hebrew Bible, including treatments of violence within families. However, these do not address a situation such as the case of Deut 25:11–12, in which the wife experiences violence because she has effectively defended her husband. On the family in ancient Israel, see Sabine R. Huebner and Geoffrey S. Nathan, eds., *Mediterranean Families in Antiquity: Households, Extended Families, and Domestic Space* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016); Ken Campbell, *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003); Carol Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," in Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins, and Carol Meyers, *Families in Ancient Israel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 1–47; John J. Pilch, "Family Violence in Cross-Cultural Perspective: An Approach for Feminist Interpreters of the Bible," in *Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods, and Strategies*, ed. Athalya Brenner-Idan and Carole Fontaine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 306–23; Bernard Levinson, Victor H. Matthews, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, eds., *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (New York: T&T Clark, 1998).

status as a woman is key. I emphasize these basic points to highlight that when biblical legal cases specify that the agent is a woman, it is significant. Of course, there are other more general stipulations that apply regardless of whether the agent is identified as a man or woman, and typically the wording uses grammatically masculine nouns, pronouns, and verbs, with the understanding of inclusivity. For example, a general law spelling out the consequence for killing someone would apply to men and women, even though the law uses grammatically masculine forms. The range of examples, described below, from narrative, wisdom, and legal genres also exhibits this basic feature: when a woman is the explicit agent of violence or wrongdoing, her status as a woman appears to be central to how the situation is rendered. Moreover, as Susan Ackerman summarizes, “Biblical law generally indicates a marginalized status for Israelite women.”³

Though brief, the legal case of Deut 25:11–12 provides potential examples of protective violence, punitive mutilation, spousal relations, and gender-based hierarchy:

When men fight together, a man against his brother, if the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one striking him and she reaches out her hand and seizes him in his *məbūšim*, then you shall cut off her hand, your eye shall not pity. (Deut 25:11–12)

The range of examples featuring spousal relationships in biblical narratives, wisdom tradition, and legal materials features no synonymous or

3. Susan Ackerman, “Women in the Ancient Near East,” in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 151; for discussion of this issue, see Elisabeth M. Tetlow, *The Ancient Near East*, vol. 1 of *Women, Crime, and Punishment in Ancient Society* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “Gender and Law: An Introduction,” in Levinson, Matthews, and Frymer-Kensky, *Gender and Law*, 17–24; Frymer-Kensky, “Law and Philosophy: The Case of Sex in the Bible,” in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader*, ed. Alice Bach (New York: Routledge, 1999), 293–304; Victor H. Matthews, “Honor and Shame in Gender-Related Legal Situations in the Hebrew Bible,” in Levinson, Matthews, and Frymer-Kensky, *Gender and Law*, 97–112; Martha T. Roth, “Women and Law,” in *Women in the Ancient Near East: A Sourcebook*, ed. Mark Chavalas (New York: Routledge, 2013), 144–74. T. M. Lemos discusses the implications of biblical representations of women as objects more often than agents in legal corpora for the personhood of women. See Lemos, “‘But He Indeed Will Rule over You’: Violence and the Personhood of Women in Ancient Israel,” in *Violence and Personhood in Ancient Israel and Comparative Contexts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 66.

directly parallel cases to Deut 25:11–12. Nonetheless, I would like to point out a few observations in my summary of the available data that feature spousal relationships and/or women as agents of wrongdoing and/or women receiving punitive sentencing.

Across the biblical anthology there are fewer stories, legal statements, wisdom statements, poems, prophetic quips, and so forth that feature women than those featuring men, so gathering examples yields a broad range of situations across a few exemplars. For example, the wife/woman (*'iššâ*) appears in a few narratives as an agent of potential wrongdoing, though none of these entail explicit violence, with sentencing-type formulas as a response: Eve is sentenced to pain in childbirth and subjection to her husband (Gen 3:16). Lot's wife dies after she disobeys a warning not to look back (Gen 19:17, 26). Tamar is sentenced to burning for adultery, though this is not carried out once she implicates Judah (Gen 38:24). Rachel steals her father's teraphim, but she is never caught and so avoids the potential death sentence that Jacob has uttered (Gen 31). Samson's wife is killed after Samson destroys Philistine agricultural goods when he retaliates for his wife being given to his friend (Judg 14:20–15:8). While we do not have a sentencing formula, the wife is both punished for Samson's actions and appears as a commodity between her father and potential husbands, so her social status vis-à-vis being a woman is key for understanding the story. The woman divinatory specialist in 1 Sam 28 cites a potential judicial punishment for necromancy, so while it is hypothetical within the story, she would be the potential wrongdoer in terms of the king's law. David's concubines are not agents of wrongdoing in 2 Sam 20:3 but rather objects utilized to usurp David's position and to shame him, but they are effectively punished by sentencing to widowhood, relative isolation, and loss of David's intimacy. In the legal cases within narrative involving mothers killing children, in one case the women receive a judgment decision but are not punished (1 Kgs 3), and in another, a woman is the wrongdoer, but the king curses Elijah rather than proceeding with a judicial case regarding the killed son or the women's shared cannibalism (2 Kgs 6:28–29). Jeremiah blames Judean women specifically, along with their husbands and royals, for being disloyal to Yahweh (Jer 44:9, 25), and Jeremiah claims that Judean misfortunes are collective punishment for their disloyalty.⁴

4. Debra Scoggins Ballentine, "The (Mis)Foreignization Problem in Hebrew Bible Studies" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, 23 November 2015).

Within wisdom literature, Proverbs negatively characterizes several types of women: strange, wicked, foolish, indiscrete, shameful, contentious, and adulterous (Prov 2:16; 6:24; 7:5; 9:13; 11:22; 12:4; 19:13; 21:9; 25:24; 27:15; 30:20). Similarly, Eccl 7:26 describes a woman with a snaring net heart and binding hands, who captures men who miss the mark, while men whom the deity considers good escape her. Likewise, Ezek 16 features the metaphorical adulterous wife being punished. There are no direct parallels of behavior for these types of women. Except for the metaphorical woman in Ezek 16, specific punishments for these types of women are not made explicit, since the concern is with warning men to stay away from them or what they might suffer from such women. Two hypothetically relevant intersections are the contentious wife and the loyal wife.

The contentious woman is presumably full of strife against her husband (Prov 19:13; 21:19). However, could this characterization of contentious or strife include the well-meaning wife who meddles in her husband's fighting? The available data do not allow a firm conclusion in either direction. One could argue that the well-meaning wife is interfering and so making the situation worse. Or, one could argue that her well-meaning intent precludes this as contentious behavior. Malachi 2:14 offers a potentially relevant positive characterization of a wife as a loyal ally (*ḥāberet*). Within an accusation that the Judeans have been unfaithful to Yahweh, Judah is characterized as a husband who has left the wife of his youth, who represents Yahweh's holiness (Mal 2:11), and married a foreign woman.⁵ This is the only occurrence of *ḥāberet* as grammatically feminine, and the symbolic wife as ally or associate is contrasted with the symbolic man, representing the Judean people, who has been "unfaithful," "treacherous," or "deceitful" against her (using the verbal root *bāgad*). Similarly, Jer 3:20 characterizes Judah as a "treacherous" wife who has abandoned Yahweh. Occurrences of the grammatically masculine form *ḥābēr* elsewhere do suggest that physical help in time of adversity is characteristic of being a *ḥābēr* (see Judg 20:11; Pss 45:7; 119:63; Prov 28:24; Eccl 4:10; Song 1:7; 8:13; Isa 1:23; 44:11; Ezek 37:16–19). Saul Olyan observes that earlier biblical characterizations of *ḥābēr* do not reference friendship as such, but more so allyship, while the later Judean references in Eccl 4:10 and Ben Sira, as well as the Greek

5. On the potential significance of the foreignness of this woman with regard to the topic of intermarriage, see Nancy N. Hoon Tan, "The Problem of 'Foreign Wives' in Malachi," in *The "Foreignness" of the Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1–9: A Study in the Origins and Development of a Biblical Motif* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 59–63.

translations thereof, do appear to equate *ḥābēr* with a friend and specifically a “fighting friend.”⁶ The data clearly show that the category of *ḥābēr* has a positive connotation and includes physical help against adversity. We may then conclude that being a *ḥāberet* as a wife would have been regarded as positive. While we have only one occurrence of *ḥāberet*, I speculate that it is reasonable to generalize that a wife physically assisting her husband against adversity would be positive behavior. This further points to how curious the case of Deut 25:11–12 seems to be. Why is the case of the wife who seems to be physically helping her husband against physical attack not celebrated as *ḥāberet*, instead of punished with bodily harm?

In legal casuistic and apodictic materials, there are relatively few examples featuring the spousal relationship. Within Deuteronomy, there are only eight cases in which it is explicitly women doing something wrong or potentially wrong, including Deut 25:11, so the focus on a woman as the specific person doing wrong and receiving sentencing for it is rare (see Deut 13:6; 17:2; 22:5, 22; 25:5, 11; 29:18). Since focus on women as agents is sparse, it follows that the peculiar focus on the woman in Deut 25:11 is significant. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch, there are only four additional cases of women as explicit agents in legal texts: Lev 20:16, 18, 27; and Num 5. In Lev 20:27, the text specifies a man or woman, and in the other cases, the characteristic of being a woman is key. The reasons for the characteristic of being a woman being central to each context pertain to issues of sexual activity, menstruation, or social status relative to potential adultery. In terms of experiencing punishment, there are many cases of women among victims of vicarious punishment (as in Judg 21:11; Ezra 10:1–44; Esth 8:11; Amos 7:11; Zech 14:2) or ransom captives (as in 1 Kgs 20; 2 Chr 21:17). Elisabeth Tetlow discusses how vicarious punishments in ancient West Asian law disproportionately affect women.⁷ However, I do not include such examples in this essay in order to focus more narrowly on cases when women are more clearly agents of violence or purported wrongdoing. To reiterate, the range summarized above from narrative, wisdom, and legal genres shows that there are relatively few cases addressing women and that when the explicit agent of violence or wrongdoing is a woman, her status as a woman appears to be central to how the case or narrative consequence is rendered.

6. Saul M. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 88–89, 93, 114, 121 n. 21, 162 n. 11.

7. Tetlow, *Women, Crime, and Punishment*, 212, 214.

For the immediate context of the well-meaning wife's case within Deut 25, we may also consider what aspects of the chapter's other cases might elucidate the wife's scenario. Within Deut 25, there seem to be six topics:

1. avoiding overbeating of the guilty party in a court case between two men
2. ox muzzling
3. the unwilling levirate brother
4. the wife assisting during a fight
5. just weights
6. Amalek's past actions and current relevance.

Of these, there are three casuistic scenarios:

1. the court-case beating penalty
2. the unwilling levir
3. the assisting wife

There are three apodictic formulations:

1. ox muzzling
2. weights in one's bag
3. weights in one's home

Within the whole set, there are five positive commands:

1. within court-case punishment procedures
2. levir obligations
3. fair weights
4. remembrance of what Amalek did
5. blotting out remembrance (*zēker*) of Amalek from the land

Grammatically, the commands that are in the second person are singular, and considering the context, this suggests a collective denotation for the object of the imperatives.⁸ In terms of the themes of the chapter, the three

8. See, for example, David Wright's discussion of the grammatical feature of utilizing second-person verbs as indicating generalized law for a legal code's audience.

casuistic scenarios all involve two men: a court case between two men, the levirate case with two brothers, and the fighting case between “a man and his brother.” The first case features the judge as the third party, and the latter two cases feature the wife as the key figure. In terms of the structures of the six topics, each is distinct:

1. if (a) and (b), then consequence (c), but only (c), lest (d)
2. negative command
3. if (a), positive command, if x refuses, then consequence (b)
4. if (a), then consequence (b)
5. negative command (a), negative command (b), positive command (c)
6. positive command (a), narrative summary, positive command (b), negative command (c)

I include my thematic and structural observations about the chapter because some scholars have focused on the themes and structure of the chapter in their interpretations.⁹ On the possible thematic connection of the well-meaning wife’s case to the levirate case, I note that Olyan remarks on humiliation for wrongdoing and lack of loyalty in the case of the duty of the levir.¹⁰ This offers a nice contrast to the case of the well-meaning wife if she is acting with loyalty as she aims to assist her husband, yet is punished with mutilation and possible humiliation.

For the specific actions of the wife, what do other cases of the two key verbs indicate? First, for the verb “to defend/deliver” from some danger, *lahašîl*, which is the *hiphil* stem of *nāšal*, most passages portray this as a positive act, and many passages are clear that lacking someone to defend/deliver or lacking the ability to defend/deliver is negative (for example, Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 18). The agent doing the defending is nearly always

See Wright, *Inventing God’s Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 183.

9. For example, Duane L. Christensen regards Deut 25 as a chiasmus in which 25:11–15 focuses on the topic of unfair practices, including fighting and business. See Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21.10–34.12*, WBC 6B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 612. Jack Lundbom mentions the interpretation that links the levirate case to the intervening-wife case. See Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 703–4.

10. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 20.

a masculine character, including patriarchs (Reuben and Moses), kings (David), and the deity.¹¹ The only other use of *nāṣal* as grammatically feminine occurs in the exodus story when the women “snatch away” (in the *piel* stem) Egyptian goods (Exod 3:21–22). This action is rendered positively since it is presented as a divine decree, and it benefits the Israelites as they flee, at the expense of their Egyptian neighbors. Second Samuel 14:6 is especially interesting because it features a woman’s two sons fighting and, because there was no one to deliver them by stopping the fighting, one kills the other. The act of intervening to prevent harm while the brothers are fighting is characterized as a positive act. These positive scenes of defending make the wife’s punishment for defending all the more striking. The range of use indicates that even defending via violence is typically portrayed with a positive valence. This implies that the wife’s defending via violence is not condemned because it is defending nor because it is violent.

The second prominent verb is *nāṣāh* in the *niphāl* stem, typically rendered “strive together,” “fight,” or “wrestle.” We can uncover various perspectives on the fighting and intervening in each case. Moses intervenes verbally as two fellow Hebrews are fighting each other (Exod 2:13). The men seem to consider Moses a hypocrite, and this furthers the plot by leading Moses to flee to Midian and contributes to the narrative theme of how the legitimacy of Moses’s authority is questioned during his career. Overall, the story is sympathetic to Moses’s desire for his countrymen not to fight each other when the Egyptians are the real enemy, so his intervention seems positive. The legal case in Exod 21:22 features two men fighting and inadvertently causing a woman to miscarry.¹² The consequence is

11. Of the 217 occurrences, many feature family as well as protective violence: Reuben helps Joseph via scheming, not violence (Gen 37:21–22); David rescues his wives via violence (1 Sam 30); 2 Sam 14:6 implies it would have been good for someone to intervene between the brothers; Hezekiah is taunted as unable to protect his people (2 Kgs 18; 2 Chr 32; Isa 36); Job 5:4 renders negatively the state of having no one to protect one’s children; Hos 2 portrays the extent of the wife’s punishment by including that she has no rescuer; the deity protects (Pss 7; 18; 22; 25; 31; 33–35; 39); the collective needs protecting from the deity’s punishment (Josh 22:31); Moses protects Reuel’s daughters from shepherds (Exod 2:16–19); and Num 35:25 indicates that there is due process for protecting from revenge violence (Num 35:25).

12. Calum Carmichael speculates that the pregnant woman is purposefully hit because she has intervened in a fight. See Carmichael, *The Origins of Biblical Law: The Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 121–22. Jerome T. Walsh observes that this would be a “particularly egregious example

determined by the woman's husband, and payment is to be rendered according to a judge. The violence done to the woman and her enduring a miscarriage is effectively ignored since the consequence seems to be about the loss of the potential child, and the consequence is handled between the men. However, if she experiences further injury, there is to be further consequence, as addressed with the digest of the talion law included in this case (Exod 21:23–25).¹³ The woman has a lesser position than her husband in the very framing of the case, so this would be a structural or systematic expression of the gender-based social hierarchy. Social hierarchy is also highly relevant in the scene of an Israelite fighting a half-Israelite who curses the deity's name (Lev 24:10–11). Ultimately, after discussion leading to the conclusion that the law ought to be the same for Israelites and non-Israelites together, the half-Israelite is stoned (Lev 24:22–23). Second Samuel 14:6, mentioned above, is the only other verse that features both verbs together. The verse occurs within a hypothetical case that Joab has a woman bring to King David in order to convince him to bring back his son Absalom. For the fighting brothers, it is unfortunate, that is, there is a negative valence to there being no one to intervene in their fighting. Once one hypothetical brother is dead, the just rendering is not to take vengeance, either retributive or punitive, on the surviving brother. This decision is considered just because it preserves a status quo or at least is a more stable outcome than if the woman loses both of her sons. The preservation of the guilty party is maintained and privileged over avenging the death. By comparison, the maiming or other punishment of the woman in Deut 25:11–12 is apparently less threatening to the status quo than allowing her actions in defense of her husband.

Generally speaking, biblical narratives certainly feature violence within family relationships as well as consequences thereof among characters who are patriarchs, matriarchs, or otherwise legendary characters in the biblical foundational history. Along with narratives that feature family relationships, the biblical anthology includes wisdom tradition as well as several civil legal collections that represent violence and familial relationships more broadly, providing a better scope of such potential dynamics within society in general. Biblical and other ancient West Asian legal

of violent misogyny." See Walsh, "'You Shall Cut Off Her ... Palm'? A Reexamination of Deuteronomy 25:11–12," *JSS* 49 (2004): 48.

13. On the talion law and interpretation thereof within various biblical texts, see Wright, *Inventing God's Law*, 154–91.

collections make distinctions among various sorts of agents and victims within society. Such distinctions exhibit hierarchical relationships among the sorts of human agents and victims, including free adult males, wives, children, servants, and foreigners. Legal literature features apodictic and casuistic formulations. While many biblical apodictic statements reflect synonymous prescriptions to casuistic statements on the same topic, case law provides more data from which we may reconstruct the literary and/or social normative ideals.

In the intriguing case of Deut 25:11–12, we see what seems to be a positive spousal relationship and yet a legal punishment against the woman spouse. Deuteronomy 25:11–12 presents a hypothetical case of a wife as she tries to aid her husband who is fighting with another man. She grabs the “shameful parts” of the foe. These shameful parts are likely the foe’s genitals.¹⁴ The text directs the audience to sever the wife’s hand after she has grabbed the shameful parts of her husband’s opponent. The audience is not to spare her (Deut 25:12). The biblical corpus does not feature any directly comparable case of a man intervening or receiving such a punishment. Exodus 21 features the following cases that are the closest comparanda: if someone strikes another such that he dies, the one who strikes shall be put to death (21:12); if someone purposefully kills another, the killer shall be put to death (21:14); when fighting, if one strikes the other with a stone or fist without killing the person, the striker should pay for the injured person’s loss of time (21:18–19); if an owner strikes his male or female slave, killing the slave immediately, the owner shall be punished, whereas if the slave dies a couple of days later, the owner’s punishment is simply loss of his own human property (21:20–21); when fighting, if someone inadvertently causes a pregnant woman to miscarry, her husband determines the

14. In his complementary pair of essays, John H. Elliott illuminates the case of Deut 25:11–12 by exploring uses of euphemism and dysphemism, focusing on the Hebrew version in one essay and the Greek version in the other. See Elliott, “Deuteronomy—Shameful Encroachment on Shameful Parts: Deuteronomy 25:11–12 and Biblical Euphemism,” in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 161–76; Elliott, “Deuteronomy 25:11–12 LXX: No Tweaking the Twins; More on a Biblical Euphemism and Its Translations,” in *Kontexte der Schrift*, vol. 2, *Kultur, Politik, Religion, Sprache-Text: Wolfgang Stegemann zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Christian Strecker (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 323–42. For examples of the vocabulary for feet, legs, and thighs, see Elliott, “No Tweaking the Twins,” 329–30.

recompense, whereas if the woman has injury beyond the miscarriage, the talion law applies, as discussed above (21:22–25).

The legal code and judicial mores represented within these examples reinforce a social hierarchy that privileges the free Israelite man. A wife has less privilege than her husband and other men. She seems to have more status than a man or woman who is enslaved and effectively regarded as property. In Exod 21:22–25, the man is obliged according to the talion law to render the equivalent to whatever injury he has caused to the woman. Ultimately, this protects the man from potential disproportionate retribution. For example, the husband would not have legal basis for killing the man who both caused a potential heir never to live and injured his wife. The perpetrator's life would only be under judicial scrutiny and risk if the woman herself actually died ("life for life"). It is especially interesting to compare this case with that of the wife in Deut 25:11–12. The intervening wife is not granted equal protection via the talion law. Deuteronomy 25:11 does not explicitly indicate that the man's genitals are even injured at all, and if they are, it does not indicate whether the injury is permanent or not. If the writer of the scenario intends for us to imagine that the man's genitals are injured permanently, then we might entertain the possibility that the severing of the woman's hand is meant to be equivalent to loss of working genitals for the man.¹⁵ It would affect her wholeness, and in a

15. Eslinger argues that the woman's punishment is genital mutilation, which would constitute a closer application of talion law. See Lyle Eslinger, "The Case of the Immodest Lady Wrestler in Deuteronomy XXV 11–12," *VT* 31 (1981): 273. Walsh responds that this law would be an anomaly as the "one and only one law in the entire Israelite corpus that imposes physical mutilation as a punishment." He argues for the translation "you shall shave [the hair of] her groin," a punishment that constitutes "public genital humiliation" rather than permanent injury of cutting off a hand ("You Shall Cut Off," 47). He cites Olyan's work on forceful shaving of hair as a humiliating ritual act (56 n. 30). See Saul M. Olyan, "What Do Shaving Rites Accomplish and What Do They Signal in Biblical Ritual Contexts?," *JBL* 117 (1998): 611–22. Walsh concludes, "This reading also addresses the problems that divide commentators into two camps. By reducing the severity of the punishment from the permanency of amputation to the temporary humiliation of depilation, it allows the punishment to be seen both as talionic and as responding to the alleged 'shamefulness' of the woman's deed. She has humiliated a man publicly by an assault on his genitalia (presumably without serious injury to them); her punishment is public genital humiliation, similarly without permanent injury" ("You Shall Cut Off," 58). Miriam Shrager also articulates the issue as a matter of injury that prevents future progeny. See Shrager, "A Unique Biblical Law," *DD* 15 (1986–1987): 190–94.

particularly visible way. Any loss of wholeness or functionality for the man would not be visible.¹⁶

Our data for comparison of hand severing include a few items from legal codes from the broader ancient West Asian literary corpora. The legal code of Hammurabi features four cases that lead to cutting off hands or fingers: a son striking his father (195), a surgeon making various mistakes (218), a barber making various mistakes (226), and a thief (253). None of these cases feature parallels for intervening in a fight nor for grabbing genitals. The Middle Assyrian legal code does feature a comparable situation regarding testicles (*išku*):

If a woman should crush a man's testicle during a quarrel, they shall cut off one of her fingers. And even if the physician should bandage it, but the second testicle then becomes infected (?) along with it and becomes ... <?> ..., or if she should crush the second testicle during the quarrel— they shall gouge out both her ... <?>. (MAL A.8)¹⁷

The text features a lacuna such that we do not know what would be gouged out and conjectures include both her eyes or breasts.¹⁸ Similarly, a case from Nuzi features the wife of a slave who injured a man's genitals (*aḥu*)

16. As Walsh observes, scholarly treatments tend to exhibit two interpretations: if the woman's punishment follows talion law, this implies permanent damage to the testicles, possibly including loss of function; if her punishment is not interpreted as a case of talion law, it is considered an issue of "sexual aggression" ("You Shall Cut Off," 49). As I discuss, my arguments regarding social hierarchies as well as exploration of how such a case would affect the spousal relationship would hold for either interpretation. On the potential permanent injury affecting wholeness and thus ritual status in the case, see William Morrow, "The Limits of Social Solidarity: Women in Deuteronomic Law," in *An Introduction to Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 239–48; as well as Sandra Jacobs, *The Body as Property: Physical Disfigurement in Biblical Law* (London: T&T Clark, 2014), 177–78. For the position of loss of functional genitals, see Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1996), 234.

17. Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, WAW 6 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 156–57. See also Marten Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East*, trans. Helen Richardson and Mervyn Richardson (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 667.

18. Shalom M. Paul, "Biblical Analogues to Middle Assyrian Law," in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 336–37; Tetlow, *Women, Crime, and Punishment*, 135, 283–84 n. 57.

when she intervened in his fighting, and while the court required payment, her owner severed one of her fingers.¹⁹ Compared with the biblical case, the Middle Assyrian and Nuzi cases are far more specific in explicitly stating that the genitals have been injured. The Middle Assyrian law presents one crushed testicle as equivalent to mutilation of the hand by severing one finger.²⁰ The biblical punishment is more severe in severing the hand rather than one finger.

If genital injury, permanent or temporary, is what the Deut 25:11–12 scene intends, later interpreters could then analyze and potentially contest, reject, or accept the mutilation and relative inequity. Similarly, scholars studying violence could analyze how the violence is framed, highlight the relative inequity, and contest or reject the violence of mutilation. Generally speaking, the notion that violence is contested is evident in civil legal codes. They exhibit the many ways that an act of harm might be regarded as rightful from one point of view and wrongful from others. For example, someone considered guilty who is punished with loss of status or physical harm might contest the legitimacy of the harm that person experiences. Yet, this same harm is regarded or presented as legitimated and positive movement toward justice by others.²¹ Bringing this to bear on the case in Deut 25:11–12, if the woman has merely grabbed a man's genitals without injuring them, then the punishment of severing her hand is highly disproportionate, by both modern standards and ancient comparanda. This disproportionate adjudication exhibits that such a potential wife would experience disparity of status with the men in the scenario.

Our best indication of how this biblical case was interpreted among the antique audience is contained in select rabbinic commentary, which dates much later than the biblical text and its audience. B. Bava Qamma 28a indicates interpretation of the severing of the wife's hand as figurative. That is, the wife would render payment. Moreover, there is dialogue

19. Cyrus H. Gordon, "A New Akkadian Parallel to Deuteronomy 25.1–12," *JPOS* 15 (1935): 32; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 292–93 n. 4.

20. For additional examples from ancient West Asian legal texts that feature corporal punishment of women, see Tetlow, *Women, Crime, and Punishment*, 68, 70, 139, 165, 197, 199.

21. See my discussion in Debra Scoggins Ballentine, "Violence and the Bible," in *The Prehistoric and Ancient Worlds*, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge World History of Violence*, ed. Linda Fibiger, Garrett G. Fagan, Matthew Trundle, and Mark Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

regarding whether any punishment is just since she is trying to protect her husband. The conclusion is that she must pay restitution if there was some other way to help him, but if grabbing his genitals was the only way to help her husband, then she must pay money. Sifre Devarim to Deut 25:11–12 brings up the possibility that severing her hand might be the only way to save the man from the woman's grasp, which suggests a severity in the possible injury.²² Yet, it also concludes that monetary payment is understood as the meaning. Similarly, Rashi comments that payment is made in accordance with the social status of the men, and that this would serve to ameliorate embarrassment of the man whose genitals she grabbed. As Jerome Walsh discusses, Maimonides "extends it logically to cases where the woman seizes any organ that imperils the man's life."²³ Of course, the rabbinic interpretation of the wife's mutilation as figurative reflects rabbinic analysis, contestation, and rejection of the initial formulation of the literary case in their biblical source materials.

Legal case scenarios included within a society's literature proffer social norms. I do not assume that we can know how such legal postures or actualizations of these legal cases might have affected actual spousal relationships in the ancient world. We simply cannot know that level of detail from the available evidence. Nonetheless, my interest is to speculate about the implicit hierarchies exhibited within the legal case preserved as we have it. Specifically, for the hypothetical wife in this case law, the position of the affected man substantially outweighs that of the wife. Whether it is his honor or social position or anatomy, that is, whatever is being negatively affected by her grabbing, it is given more importance than the wife's honor or social position and certainly her anatomy. This implies a plausible social value: the honor, position, or physical state of the adult free man is primary, at the potential expense of women, children, and nonfree men. Such a plausible social value is reminiscent of Isa 3:12, which describes an inversion of

22. For similar thinking in a modern interpretation, Passameneck reasons that the husband's life must genuinely be in danger because the wife would only be able to reach the other man's genitals if he had the husband pinned down. See Stephen M. Passameneck, "Notes on Violence and Combative Behavior in Jewish Law," in *Jewish Law Association Studies III: The Oxford Conference Volume*, ed. Abraham M. Fuss (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 96–98, cited in Marc Cortez, "The Law on Violent Intervention: Deuteronomy 25.11–12 Revisited," *JSOT* 30.3 (2006): 433.

23. Walsh, "You Shall Cut Off," 50; Eliyahu Touger, trans., *Mishneh Torah: Nezikin, Rotzeah Ushmirat Nefesh* (New York: Moznaim, 1997), 1.8.

preferred social norms that are depicted as a consequence of poor leadership and wrongdoing among the people: “As for my people, his oppressors are childish, and women rule over them! Oh my people, your guides mislead and they confuse the way of your paths.” The hypothetical inversion of hegemonic power structures is presented as a negative outcome of past actions and with negative consequences for the immediate future. The negative portrayal of the inverted social structure ultimately serves to bolster the typical structure in which women do not have such power.

Here I would like to incorporate a theoretical diagramming from the work of Bruce Lincoln on hierarchies within the nuclear family. He begins with an analytical anecdote about family seating arrangements in his childhood home. With this simple example, he illustrates taxonomic structure and hierarchical rank. He shows how the functions of taxonomizers are embedded within systems. He organizes his analysis of the hierarchy as follows:

This system—that of the patriarchal nuclear family—is logically constructed on two binary oppositions, the first based on distinctions of age, the second on those of gender. Moreover, such distinctions are hardly neutral or value free: they never are. Rather, adults (i.e., those who possess the preferential age, that of majority) outranked children (those who lack it), and males (those who possess the preferential gender) outranked females. The result is a four-part hierarchic set, which in those days was commonly accepted as natural and right: (1) father (adult male = + age/+gender); (2) mother (+age/-gender); (3) son (-age/+gender); (4) daughter (-age/-gender). In daily practice this same hierarchy found expression in countless other fashions (rights in conversation, bedtime order, portions at meals, etc.), and it may also be schematized in two analytically convenient forms that hardly occurred to any of us who lived within the confines of this system. These forms, however—a taxonomic tree and a serial ranking—are only somewhat more abstract ways of encoding or representing the same information that was daily enacted within our seating pattern.²⁴

In line with Lincoln’s points, I would like to emphasize that when we are located within social and familial systems, we rarely see the taxonomies

24. Bruce Lincoln, “The Tyranny of Taxonomy,” in *Discourse in the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 131–32.

and hierarchies. If the social structure and related ideologies are successful, such taxonomies and hierarchies appear as natural. Moreover, individuals at every level are implicit in reinforcing their own and others' positions. As scholars, we may interrogate and analyze socially embedded taxonomies and their implicit hierarchies in order to uncover hegemonic power structures bolstered within our data as well as those perspectives that appear disenfranchised or glossed over in our literary depictions of ancient society and family.

More directly related to the case of the intervening wife, in her specific punishment, what order is maintained? What apparent disorder is ameliorated?²⁵ These questions become central once we recognize that it is not her intervening nor her grabbing that is the apparent issue, as I have shown above. Saul Olyan has written extensively on ritual, and I have also theorized regarding the functions of violent and nonviolent ritual. In prior work, I have proposed that many nonviolent rituals move a physical body toward wholeness as an idealized state, whereas violent rituals tend to move a physical body away from wholeness.²⁶ Lincoln proposes a similar notion, though about the social body rather than the physical, and I find these thoughts about ritual affecting the social and physical body simultaneously very apt for recognizing how nuanced our ancient exemplars may be. Lincoln discusses how there are some rituals "through which social integration is maintained or—to put it more actively—con-

25. Marc Cortez precedes me in being interested in the social aspects of this case ("Law on Violent Intervention," 431–47). He asks, if the woman is seeking to save her husband, "should that not mitigate some of the blame for her actions?" (431). He is also interested in the tension between the wife's action and punishment: "While the woman's desire to save her husband from serious physical affliction is without question, this perspective does not adequately explain why the action undertaken was wrong and is therefore dependent on one of the following interpretations for a more complete explanation. If anything, this interpretation only makes the case more difficult. If she is acting to save her husband's life, would her actions not be justified? Why, then, the harsh penalty? If the law is given in order to protect the life of the husband's assailant, why is there no indication that his life is in danger and why is such a severe penalty prescribed based on the mere threat of injury?" (434). Ultimately, he concludes that she became subject to talion law once she injured the man. Cortez provides thorough summaries of prior treatments as well.

26. Debra Scoggins Ballentine, "What Ends Might Ritual Violence Accomplish? The Case of Rechab and Baanah in 2 Samuel 4," in *Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible: New Perspectives*, ed. Saul M. Olyan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10.

tinually reconstructed in its familiar established order.” He compares these sorts of rituals with other types of ritual behaviors that accomplish schisms and social disintegration, including ritual execution of criminals or wayward spouses.²⁷

The case of the intervening wife is intriguing, as it does not fit into this or other possibly expected paradigms because the punitive ritual, we would expect, maintains social order in some way while causing a physical schism via mutilation of the woman’s body and potentially destabilizing the spousal relationship. The order being recovered is social order between the men involved and for the hypothetical audience or society as witnesses. The disorder being ameliorated is that the one intervening and grabbing was a woman. Lyle Eslinger argues that the tactic of grabbing the genitals in particular is primary, though for different reasons than most scholars focus on that detail. He argues that the “villainy” of her act is that “it is a womanly way to fight,” which the Deuteronomist wished to clearly portray with “repugnance.”²⁸ In Greek traditions of wrestling, grabbing or twisting the opponent’s genitals was not allowed, so perhaps it was a tactic done in desperation. What would be the consequence if the fighting husband, rather than his wife, used this tactic? We have no biblical case for that. Cortez refers to this case by the shorthand “the Law on Violent Intervention,” but I think it is more so the law on violent intervention by a woman in particular. Unlike Eslinger characterizing the act as womanly, it is not the tactic itself but rather that it is a woman as the agent. She has disrupted the social hierarchy of the relevant men.

Several scholars and many commentators have interpreted the issue as a problem of immodesty, shame, indiscretion, taboo, or sexual impropriety.²⁹ That is, it would not be the act of intervening nor the act of grabbing

27. Lincoln, *Discourse in the Construction of Society*, 103–4.

28. Eslinger, “Case of the Immodest Lady Wrestler,” 271, 281.

29. For example, Samuel R. Driver’s early and influential commentary summarizes the verses as “Against immodesty in women.” See Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1896), 285; see also Carloyn Pressler, *The View of Women Found in the Deuteronomical Family Laws*, BZAW 216 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 74–77; Calum Carmichael, *Law and Narrative in the Bible: The Evidence of the Deuteronomical Laws and the Decalogue* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 297–99; as discussed by Walsh, “You Shall Cut Off,” 50, 52; W. Gunther Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (Philadelphia: CCAR, 1981); David Daube, “The Culture of Deuteronomy,” *Orita* 3 (1969): 36–37; Samson R. Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch: Deuteronomium* (Frankfurt: Kauffman, 1899); Yael Shemesh, “Punish-

that is the problem, but rather that a married woman is grabbing another man's sexual organs. I am skeptical of retrojecting immodesty, and I notice that there is a tendency for commentators and scholars to insert a sexuality to the wife's grabbing that constitutes scholarly gender bias going far beyond anything in the original text.³⁰ That being said, if these scholars are correct that this is what the authors or audience had in mind, then this impropriety would be another aspect that constitutes a rupture of social norms. My argument would still apply that the judgment disproportionately protects the men involved more than the woman. Whether the disorder is focused on the agent's womanness (as I have argued) or a sexually charged act, the apparent importance of ameliorating this disorder outweighs concern for the woman's physical wholeness, pain, and whatever shame and loss of function results from the severing of her hand. While the data are not explicit, I further speculate that this particular amelioration of the disorder would run counter to positive spousal relations.

By way of conclusion, I would like to place the well-meaning wife's case in conversation with Saul Olyan's discussion of friendship from his book *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*. I mention above the positive role of the wife as *ḥāberet* and that it is intriguing that the wife's assistance is punished when typically a *ḥābēr* does help in a situation of physical attack. As Olyan has discussed, the category of *ḥābēr* is an ally more so than a friend in biblical texts, and likewise, the category of wife is also distinct from yet related to that of friend. As he states:

A man's wife, too, is a distinct social actor, sharing expectations with both relatives and friends (e.g., loyalty and trustworthiness) but exempted from a number of familial duties, not unlike the friend (e.g., the role of redeemer), though the friend's intimacy, like that of kin, is generally understood to be nonsexual, in contrast to that of the wife.³¹

ment of the Offending Organ in Biblical Literature," *VT* 55 (2005): 343–65, 350–52; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 713, 718; P. Eddy Wilson, "Deuteronomy 25:11–12: One for the Books," *VT* 47 (1997): 220–35.

30. For example, while Hirsch is sympathetic to the wife's well-meaning intent to rescue her husband, he ultimately interprets the case as a matter of "shaming" someone (*beschämenden*) and "self-control" (*Selbstbeherrschung*) for Judean women in particular, who ought to stay "aloof from all perky and raw things" ("Fernhaltung von allem Kecken und Rohen"; Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch: Deuteronomium*, 387).

31. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 37. See also his summary of friendship vocabulary for wives and lovers (8–9). On the potential status of wives as friends

Would the wife fall short of loyalty and trustworthiness if she did not assist her husband? As Olyan discusses, “Friendships that fail to fulfill expectations contribute to unstable social relations according to extant sources. For Mic 7:5 and Jer 9:3, untrustworthy friends are representative of a society’s decline, as is the disintegration of marriage and family ties.”³² Intervention fulfills an expectation of an ally or treaty partner,³³ and likewise, friends and family members have the obligation to support and “actively to pursue the welfare of their relatives” (Ps 38:12, Prov 19:7; Job 19:13–14).³⁴ Yet, the legal punishment for the wife suggests that it is regarded as a destabilizing act. Since there is a law punishing the intervening wife, does this mean her intervention is not expected of a wife? How about a mother, sister, or child? We can only speculate about how those cases might be similar.

Olyan provides a concise description of “sexual-emotional” love that is sometimes “portrayed as volatile and intense,” like its antitype hate, which is “described in highly charged emotional terms.”³⁵ Similarly, he mentions the mother who is overcome with emotion toward her infant child under mortal threat (1 Kgs 3:26).³⁶ I speculate that we might place the wife’s apparently exceptional act in defending her husband in the realm of this highly charged type of love and loyalty that Olyan references. Olyan observes that Deut 13:7 gives a list of intimate relationships, including the

within marriage in Greek and Roman literature, see David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 71, 111, 146.

32. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 38. He discusses how friends and relatives sometimes have a “common classification as intimates” indicated by certain shared characteristics, behaviors, and obligations, including loyalty and support in times of need (11); he discusses the position of wives within “gradations of familial intimacy.” Specifically, Lev 21:1–4; 25:48; and Num 27:8–11 indicate that the spouse is not included among the closest family members, while Gen 2:24 and Prov 31:11 indicate closeness between husband and wife that overlaps with some familial and friendship roles, obligations, and privileges, especially loyalty and trust (*Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 11–14). He discusses loyalty with references to Gen 20 and Ruth 1:8 (*Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 16). Burial and mourning are responsibilities shared by a wife and family (21–22).

33. Olyan discusses how the language of family and friends are used in treaty stipulations in order to emphasize expectations of loyalty (*Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 8).

34. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 17.

35. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 16.

36. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 15.

wife, and the context suggests that these relations are “those the addressee would be most likely to shield from the consequences of their actions.”³⁷ If a husband might protect his wife from the consequences of her negative action so much so that the text warns against it, it seems reasonable that a wife might try to protect her husband, even if it were counter to social mores. After the hypothetical event and punishment, however, might whatever social and personal consequences the punished wife experiences also affect the spousal relationship negatively? The case does not address this issue, but I speculate that it could. Would he resent that she intervened? Would she resent that he did not or could not protect her from punitive mutilation? Would her loss of a hand negatively impact their domestic life? Whatever this intriguing but brief legal case is primarily concerned with protecting—whether the men’s honor, status, or anatomy—the wife’s interests and her physical and social and interpersonal well-being are eclipsed in favor of ameliorating the disturbance to the implicit and explicit social hierarchies bolstered within the legal collection.

37. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 26.

Love and Friendship in Elephantine

Bob Becking

A Short Note on Elephantine

Elephantine is the name of an island in the Nile. The island was situated along the southern border of the Persian sphere of influence during the fifth century BCE. On the island, as well as in the nearby Syene at the banks of the Nile, a Persian garrison was established in order to control the Persian interests in the trade going up and down the Nile from the Delta region into sub-Saharan Africa. All this is documented in the many Aramaic and Demotic inscriptions that were excavated on the island in the beginning of the twentieth century. In and around this garrison people from all corners of the Persian Empire lived together with the Egyptian local population and persons from the Persian administration. During greater parts of the fifth century BCE, this cohabitation had a peaceful character. Evidence for intermarriage, combined trade efforts, and the assimilation of the gods associated with other ethnic groups testify to the presence of a Pax Persica that was—as can be expected—cemented by the Persian power, expressed in texts reflecting the ideology of obedience to the ruling power. The Egyptian struggle for independence from Persian rule—present throughout the fifth century—became only stronger after 420 BCE. Their ensuing uprising coincided with the gradual decline of the Pax Persica, which resulted in Egyptian independence from Persia in 398 BCE.¹ In the next three sections, I will analyze three textual genres from

Saul Olyan is not only one of the kindest and friendliest colleagues I have met, but he also wrote a marvelous book on the topic of friendship, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). In a well-structured and clearly argued discourse, Saul arrives at the conclusion that friendship in the biblical context refers to an emotional bond between two or more persons. This bond is

Elephantine in which the theme of friendship is attested: a wisdom text, a letter, and marriage contracts.

Friendship in the Wisdom of Aḥiqar

Among the documents from Elephantine exist two texts that are different from the majority of the letters, contracts, lists, and writings of other types.² They are the oldest known version of Aḥiqar—both novel and proverbs—and an Aramaic version of Darius's Behistun inscription. Both texts were in use for the local education of scribes in Elephantine and should be construed as school texts.³

voluntary, emotionally intimate, and aims at what is really the best for the other party. This bond can be compared with family ties, which are, however, destined by blood relations and unavoidable. The bond can also be compared with love, but love has a greater sexual intimacy. In order to thank Saul for his friendship as well as for his book, I offer him this essay on aspects of friendship, love, and sexuality as present in the Aramaic documents from Elephantine. This paper is a side product of the research conducted within the program "Elephantine in Contexts," sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

1. There is an abundance of literature on Elephantine; I make a selection: Bezael Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Alejandro F. Botta, *The Aramaic and Egyptian Legal Traditions at Elephantine: An Egyptological Approach*, LSTS 64 (New York: T&T Clark, 2009); Hélène Nutkiewicz, *Destins de femmes à Eléphantine au V^e siècle avant notre ère* (Paris: Harmattan, 2015); Gard Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period: Studies in the Religion and Society of the Judaean Community at Elephantine*, BZAW 488 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).

2. A third text is the enigmatic Tale of Hor the Son of Punesh (TAD C1.2). See Bezael Porten, "The Prophecy of Hor bar Punesh and the Demise of Righteousness: An Aramaic Papyrus in the British Library," in *Res Severa Verum Gaudium: Festschrift für Karl-Theodor Zauzich zum 65. Geburtstag am 8. Juni 2004*, ed. Friedhelm Hoffmann and Heinz J. Thissen, StDem 6 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 427–66. The text makes the impression of being an Aramaic version of an Egyptian tale, "the stories around Setne Khamwas," about the quarrel between a king and a servant who, after having been treated badly, utters a spell on the "boats of the king." See Tawny L. Holm, "The Sheikh Fadl Inscription in Its Literary and Historical Context," *ArSt* 5 (2007): 193–224. I leave aside the somewhat hypothetical assumption that the book of Job was written at Elephantine, see George A. F. Knight, *Nile and Jordan* (London: Clarke, 1921), 405; J. Edgar Burns, "Judith or Jael?," *CBQ* 16 (1954): 12–14.

3. This assumption is reinforced by the following facts: (1) Among the already published documents is a heavily damaged copy in three columns whose text parallels

The Aḥiqar text from Elephantine is the oldest version ever found, even if, as is well-known, this text consists of two parts: a narrative around the sage Aḥiqar focusing on the topics of power and loyalty and a collection of proverbs and sayings (*TAD C.1.1*).⁴ The traditions on Aḥiqar have found their way into the lore of a great number of cultures. Demotic fragments from the first millennium BCE are known.⁵ The tale and the sayings

a section of the Aḥiqar narrative, Sachau Plates 40 = *TAD C1.1*. See Herbert Niehr, *Weisheitliche, magische und legendarische Erzählungen: Aramäischer Aḥiqar*, JSRZ NS 2.2 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 6–7. (2) In the boxes of not-yet-published documents from Elephantine, now in the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin, a few fragments of Aḥiqar are present, some of them being duplicates (personal communication, Verena Lepper and James Moore, Berlin). For the view of the Behistun inscription being a school text, see Christine Mitchell, “Berlin Papyrus P. 13447 and the Library of the Yehudite Colony at Elephantine,” *JNES* 76 (2017): 146–47. Next to that, it can be observed that the Aramaic Behistun contains a series of writing errors. On scribes and scribal training in the ancient Near East, see Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Deborah Hobson, “Localized Scribal Systems at Elephantine and Qumran,” *JANES* 33 (2018): 77–100; Irene Madreiter, “Der Raum alltäglicher weiblicher Literalität im Achaimeniden-Reich,” in *Literacy in Ancient Everyday Life*, ed. Anne Kolb (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 113–41.

4. Original edition: Eduard Sachau, *Aramäische Papyrus und Ostraka aus einer jüdischen Militär-Kolonie zu Elephantine: Altorientalische Sprachdenkmäler des 5. Jahrhunderts vor Chr.* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911). Recent translations: Pierre Grelot, *Documents araméens d’Égypte*, LAPO 5 (Paris: Cerf, 1972), 427–52; James M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Ingo Kottsieper, *Die Sprache der Ahiqarsprüche*, BZAW 194 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990); Niehr, *Aramäischer Aḥiqar*; Tawny L. Holm, forthcoming. I will not discuss the complicated question of the order of the columns (see Niehr, *Aramäischer Aḥiqar*, 5). Nor will I discuss the role that the erased customs account could play in this discussion. See Ada Yardeni, “Maritime Trade and Royal Accountancy in an Erased Customs Account from 475 B.C.E. on the Aḥiqar Scroll from Elephantine,” *BASOR* 293 (1994): 67–78.

5. Cairo papyrus published by G. P. G. Sobhy, “Miscellanea,” *JEA* 16 (1930): 3–5; Papyrus Berlin 23729 edited by Karl-Theodor Zauzich, “Demotische Fragmente zum Ahiqar-Roman,” in *Folia Rara Wolfgang Voigt LXV. diem natalem celebranti ab amicis et catalogorum codicum orientalium conscribendorum collegis dedicata*, ed. Herbert Franke (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976), 180–85. On both inscriptions, see Lindenberger, *Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 310–12; Joachim F. Quack, “The Interaction of Egyptian and Aramaic Literature,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identities in an International Context*, ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2011), 375–401. The fragmented Papyrus Berlin 15658 might contain some of the Aḥiqar proverbs. See Karl-

have been translated into various languages up to a recently recorded version in Neo-Aramaic.⁶

The Aḥiqar novella is set at the court of the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon. Although the Aramaic name אַחִיקָר, “my brother is noble,” is attested in a few Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian inscriptions, a court official by that name from the reigns of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal is not known, which makes the Aḥiqar of the wisdom tradition likely a fictitious or legendary character.⁷

The story starts with Aḥiqar. This childless sage has already served as scribe and adviser under Sennacherib, Esarhaddon’s father. Being childless, Aḥiqar adopts his nephew Nadin and trains him for a role at the court. Esarhaddon accepts Nadin as the successor of the aged Aḥiqar.

Theodor Zauzich, “Neue literarische Texte in demotischer Schrift,” *Enchoria* 8 (1976): 33–38; Quack, “Interaction of Egyptian and Aramaic Literature,” 376; Tawny L. Holm, “Memories of Sennacherib in Aramaic Texts,” in *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History, and Historiography*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Seth Richardson, CHANE 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 299.

6. On translations and adaptations, see Niehr, *Aramäischer Aḥiqar*, 33–34; Riccardo Contini and Cristiano Grottanelli, eds., *Il saggio Ahiqar: Fortuna e trasformazioni di uno scritto sapienziale; Il testo più antico e le sue versioni*, StBib 148 (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 2005); Michael Weigl, *Die aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche aus Elephantine und die alttestamentliche Weisheitsliteratur*, BZAW 399 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 1–11; Reinhard G. Kratz, “Mille Ahiqar: ‘The Words of Ahiqar’ and the Literature of the Jewish Diaspora in Ancient Egypt,” *Al-Abhath* 60–61 (2012–2013): 39–58. Arabic: Gregorius Bülus Bahnām, *Aḥīqār al-ḥakīm* (Baghdad: Majma al-Lughah al-Suryaniyah, 1976). Ethiopic: Gianfrancesco Lusini, “The Ethiopic Version of the ‘Story of Ahiqar’ (‘Māḥafā Ḥiqar’),” *RSE* 3 (2011): 219–48. Sogdian: Nicolas Sims-Williams, *Biblical and Other Christian Sogdian Texts from the Turfan Collection*, BTT 32 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 7–111. Neo-Aramaic: Shabo Talay, “Die Geschichte und die Sprüche des Aḥiqar im neuaramäischen Dialekt von Mlahsō,” in *Sprich doch mit deinen Knechten aramäisch, wir verstehen es! Festschrift for Otto Jastrow*, ed. Werner Arnold and Hartmut Bobzin (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 695–712.

7. Already Wolfram von Soden, “Die Unterweltsvision eines assyrischen Kronprinzen: Nebst einigen Beobachtungen zur Vorgeschichte des Aḥiqar-Romans,” *ZA* 43 (1936): 1–31; with Niehr, *Aramäischer Aḥiqar*, 9; Kratz, “Mille Ahiqar,” 44–45. On the name being attested in inscriptions, see Weigl, *Aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche*, 1; Angelika Berlejung, “Aḥi-iaqar,” in *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* 1/1, ed. Karen Radner (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project and the Finnish Foundation for Assyriological Research, 1998), 63; and in the al-Yahudu documents see Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer*, CUSAS 28 (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2014), 8–9.39.

The old scribe then withdraws and starts a quiet life in a mountainous area,⁸ while Nadin becomes involved in a conspiracy against Aḥiqar. The retired scribe is subsequently accused of being part of a revolt against the king. On hearing this news, the king sends the officer נבושמאשכן, Nabusumiskun, to Aḥiqar in order to kill him. Aḥiqar and Nabusumiskun come to an arrangement. Aḥiqar once spared the officer when his life was threatened during the reign of Sennacherib, being accused of treachery. He was reinstated at court after the wrath of the king had disappeared into thin air. Nabusumiskun hides Aḥiqar in his own (Nabusumiskun's) house, until that foreseeable day on which the king once again will be in need of the advice of Aḥiqar and, in return of his wisdom, will restore Aḥiqar to grace. Aḥiqar kills one of the servants of Nabusumiskun. That corpse is presented at the court as that of Aḥiqar. But at this moment of reversal, the text breaks off. The apparent rehabilitation of Aḥiqar, while present in many of the later versions, is not narrated in the document from Elephantine.

The narrative circles around two themes: loyalty and retribution. Loyalty toward the court is the basic attitude that is assumed for courtiers, advisers, sages, and scribes.⁹ Lack of loyalty can lead to removal from the court and its assets or to the death of the disloyal servant. Even a rumor about possible disloyalty can be fatal, as Aḥiqar experienced. Three times, this theme of loyalty, disloyalty, and its implications is narrated in the Aḥiqar story. When Nadin is installed as scribe and adviser, Aḥiqar utters the wish “May he seek the good [–for me]” (Aḥiqar 2.24).

Nadin, however, soon starts spreading rumors about Aḥiqar. The king—lending his ears to the gossip—sends Nabusumiskun in order to end the life of Aḥiqar with the outcome as displayed above. The theme of loyalty to the king is subtly intertwined with the theme of solidarity among scribes and advisers.¹⁰ The narrator quite frankly reports about the subversive actions of Aḥiqar and Nabusumiskun when hiding each other from the royal wrath and misleading the king by presenting a dead body as if that were the body of the disloyal sage. This intertwining of themes indicates the subtle space for maneuvering that scribes and advisers needed at the court and that the scribes in Elephantine needed in

8. I will suppress a comparison with the jubilee of this volume.

9. See also Kratz, “*Mille Ahiqar*,” 45–46.

10. See also Amélie Kuhrt, “The Achaemenid Concept of Kingship,” *Iran* 22 (1984): 156–60.

their negotiations with the Persian power and their ethnic loyalty.¹¹ Inter-human loyalty is stressed at the moment in the story when Aḥiqar makes the arrangement with Nabusumiskun. The sage summarizes his conduct when saving Nabusumiskun from royal wrath as follows: “I cared for you like a man for his brother and I hid you from him” (Aḥiqar 2.48–4.50).¹²

The other important theme in the Aḥiqar novella is that of retribution, which refers to the religious and philosophical concept that human acts are never without consequence or effect. Good deeds will be answered by favorable acts, and bad behavior evokes punishment: “that all good things come to those who make them happen.”¹³ In the story of Aḥiqar, this element is present in the reciprocity of the help that Aḥiqar and Nabusumiskun prove to each other. It is even phrased with words that remind us of the golden rule: “Now, you, just as I did for you, do for me” (4.51–52).¹⁴ The scribes in Elephantine who were reading and rewriting this text were presented with a nice example of the principle *do ut des*.

For several reasons, scholars argue for a Levantine source of the story, despite its widespread distribution throughout the ancient Near East. Arguments for that view are the Levantine Aramaic dialect in which it was written, which deviates from the dialect found in the narrative. Additionally, the collection presupposes a world in which, for example, viticulture, cedar, steppe, and the Phoenician coast are present. It is therefore likely that the collection originated in the south Syriac-Lebanese area.¹⁵ More-

11. See Seth A. Bledsoe, “Conflicting Loyalties: King and Context in the Aramaic Book of Ahiqar,” in *Political Memory in and after the Persian Empire*, ed. Jason M. Silverman and Caroline Waerzeggers, ANEM 13 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 239–68.

12. See Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*, 317–18; Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 18.

13. See, e.g., Bernd Janowski, “Die Tat kehrt zum Täter zurück: Offene Fragen im Umkreis des ‘Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhangs,’ Hartmut Gese zum 65. Geburtstag,” *ZTK* 91 (1994): 247–71; Kratz, “Mille Ahiqar,” 45; Leo Zaibert, *Punishment and Retribution* (London: Routledge, 2016).

14. See Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*, 317–18; Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 18. This moral code to treat the other as you yourself would like to have been treated is an almost universal element in moral reflections. See the essays in Bruce D. Chilton and Jacob Neusner, eds., *The Golden Rule: The Ethics of Reciprocity in World Religions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008); Harry J. Gensler, *Ethics and the Golden Rule* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Kratz, “Mille Ahiqar,” 58.

15. Kottsieper, *Sprache der Ahiqarsprüche*, esp. 241–46; Margaretha L. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language in the Achaemenid Period: A Study in Linguistic Variation*, OLA 68 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 732–40; Kratz, “Mille Ahiqar,” 47; Ann-Kristin Wigand,

over, many proverbs included in that redaction are similar to those of the biblical wisdom tradition. In the Aḥiqar sayings some fables occur that are reminiscent of the fables in Judg 9:8–15 and 2 Kgs 14:9b. Next to that, various connections with the biblical book of Proverbs can also be detected.¹⁶ The proverbs of Aḥiqar can therefore be classified as an example of the international wisdom tradition from the ancient Near East. Two of the sayings are connected to the theme of friendship.

In a saying the borders of friendship are indicated: “Do not reveal your [secrets] to your [friends] so that your name will not be futile to them!” (Aḥiqar 9.41).¹⁷ In the saying and its context, the character of the secrets is unclear. Are they veiled facts about the life of a person, or are they secrets that have been entrusted to the person by a close friend? A third possibility is to assume that the secrets referred to are secrets that a person had received or heard from others. In all three cases the information should be saved with him and he shall not share them with others, not even with friends.

Another saying indicates the delicacy of friendship: friends can betray or leave their friends: “You have left your friend alone and made his life heavy” (Aḥiqar 8.112).¹⁸ This line is a subtle hint to stand by one’s friend in whatever circumstances.

The few and fragmentary references to friendship in Aḥiqar reveal a concept of friendship much akin of the friendship Olyan has discovered in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁹ The Aramaic Aḥiqar is a reflective text that gives directions for daily life. I will now turn to other documents from Elephantine with the question in mind whether these instructions were implemented.

“Politische Loyalität und religiöse Legitimierung,” *WO* 48 (2018): 120–50; but challenged by Niehr, *Aramäischer Aḥiqar*, 14; and nuanced by Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*, 309–11.

16. See Weigl, *Aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche*.

17. See Weigl, *Aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche*, 339–43. For the addition “secrets,” see Lindenberger, *Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 140; Niehr, *Aramäischer Aḥiqar*, 48. In their edition of the text, Porten and Yardeni fill the gap with the word ܬܝܬܝܢܐ, “your sins,” which makes not much sense (*TAD* C42; Kottsieper, *Sprache der Ahiqarsprüche*, 14).

18. For a slightly different reading see Kottsieper, *Sprache der Ahiqarsprüche*, 18.

19. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*.

Friendship in the Documents concerning the Rebuilding of the Temple to Yaho in Elephantine

A first candidate to find clues is the letters from the Elephantine cache. The Aramaic noun רֵחַם, “friend,” occurs twice in the other documents from Elephantine. It concerns two parallel documents, although almost identical copies of a letter written by Yedaniah from Elephantine to Bagohi, the Persian governor over Samaria and Yehud around 400 BCE (*TAD* A4.7 // *TAD* A4.8).²⁰ These letters appear to be duplicates of the official letters sent to Samaria. The text is a carefully written and organized report, composed in courteous language and ending in a request for support for the efforts of the Yehudites to rebuild their demolished temple there.²¹ In 410 BCE this temple had fallen victim to an anti-Persian outburst of the local Egyptian elite in conspiracy with the temporary Persian officer Vindranag. Yedaniah—a leading Yehudite from Elephantine—gives a detailed report of the demolition of the temple of Yaho in Elephantine and the cultic statue in it,²² leading to a rather short but clear request for permission to rebuild the temple.

20. See Thomas M. Bolin, “The Temple of יהו at Elephantine and Persian Religious Policy,” in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaism*, ed. Diana V. Edelman, CBET 13 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 127–42; James M. Lindenberger, “What Ever Happened to Vidranga? A Jewish Liturgy of Cursing from Elephantine,” in *The World of the Arameans III: Studies in History and Archaeology in Honour of Paul-Eugène Dion*, ed. P. M. Michèle Daviau, John W. Wevers, and Michael Weigl, JSOTSup 326 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 134–57; Bezalel Porten, “Settlement of the Jews at Elephantine and the Arameans at Syene,” in Lipschits and Blenkinsopp, *Judah and the Judeans*, 454–56; Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 100–102; Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, LSTS 47 (London: Continuum, 2004), 1:210–12; Reinhard G. Kratz, “The Second Temple of Jeb and of Jerusalem,” in Lipschits and Oeming, *Judah and the Judeans*, 247–64; Angela Rohrmoser, *Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine: Archäologische und schriftliche Zeugnisse aus dem perserzeitlichen Ägypten*, AOAT 396 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), 397–407; Collin Cornell, “Cult Statuary in the Judean Temple at Yeb,” *JSJ* 47 (2016): 1–19; Esko Siljanen, *Judeans of Egypt in the Persian Period (539–332 BCE) in Light of the Aramaic Documents* (Helsinki: Unigrafia, 2017), 231–37.

21. On the courteous language see F. Mario Fales, “Aramaic Letters and Neo-Assyrian Letters: Philological and Methodological Notes,” *JAOS* 107 (1987): 451–69.

22. See Cornell, “Cult Statuary.”

After describing the harm done to the community, Yedaniah summons Bagohi to “Look after those who wish you well and your friends [*rhmyk*], here in Egypt. Let a letter be sent from you to them about the temple of Yahô, the god” (TAD A4.7:23–25 // A4.8:22–24).²³ Both “those who wish you well” and “your friends” refer to persons in Egypt. Two interpretations are possible for the identification of the aforementioned well-wishers and friends: either the Yehudite community or the restored Persian administration. Yedaniah wants Bagohi to write a letter to a group of outsiders (“them”), however, which seems to exclude the former possibility and suggests that he is addressing Persians, more specifically. Yet Yedaniah qualifies the quality of the relations between Bagohi and the Persian administration in southern Egypt in the category of friendship, which reflects the use of formal treaty language. The terms Yedaniah deploys suggests his perception that he and Bagohi were of equal rank or status. Indeed, it is important to note that Yedaniah supposes this friendship as a ground for diplomatic action that would lead to the rebuilding of the temple. In fact, he implores Bagohi “not to leave his friends alone,” thus implying that the Yehudites similarly present themselves as friends of Bagohi, a fact that is underscored by the suggestion at the end of the letter that they will eventually honor Bagohi in the new temple.

The penultimate section of the petitions contains a clear example of *quid pro quo*.²⁴ In case Bagohi acts favorably to Yedaniah’s request: (1) offerings will be made in his name on the new altar in the temple of Yaho; (2) the Yehudite community will pray for his well-being; and (3) he will receive a צדקה before Yaho. The Aramaic noun צדקה is not easily translated or understood. In this context the noun has a specific, developed meaning and should not be rendered with just “righteousness.” With Basile Aggoula, I prefer the translation “share; portion.”²⁵ The word then refers to the concept that Bagohi will have a “righteous share” in the temple of

23. See Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*, 136–40.

24. The label *bakshish*, as proposed by Sachau and Meyer for this act, is too strong. See Eduard Sachau, *Drei aramäische Papyrusurkunden aus Elephantine*, PHAKPAW 1907, 855/856 (Berlin: Akademie, 1907), 36; Eric Meyer, *Der Papyrusfund von Elephantine: Dokumente einer jüdischen Gemeinde aus der Perserzeit und das älteste erhaltene Buch der Weltliteratur* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912), 85. See Max Vogelstein, “Bakshish for Bagoas?” *JQR* 331 (1942): 89–92; Bolin, “Temple of יהו” 129–36; Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*, 136–40.

25. Basile Aggoula, “Studia Aramaica, II,” *Syria* 62 (1985): 64.

Yaho, which implies that he will profit materially as well as mentally from the temple's economy.²⁶

The Curious Case of Ananiah bar Azariah

Friendship also emerges as an important theme in Elephantine in another context: that of marriage, which is a specific form of friendship. Not all marriages, however, are based on a mutual friendship. Quite often, marriages are based on mutual interest between families. This is specifically true for marriages from antiquity that are known through the documents, as serving to regulate the balance of power and possessions of the two parties (families) involved.²⁷ It stands to reason, moreover, that in Elephantine many marriages were contracted among the Yehudites. It is surprising to see that among the Yehudites in Elephantine and Syene, intermarriage was not uncommon. Although the majority of relations clearly mediated between persons of the same ethnic group, the number of exogamous marriages remains so significant—about 10–15 percent—that the pattern is a significant one. I will discuss an example of one of these marriages: the curious case of Ananiah bar Azariah.²⁸

Among the papyri from Elephantine is an intriguing set of documents reflecting the marital life of Ananiah, the son of Azariah.²⁹ Like his father,

26. This interpretation of the noun also applies for its occurrences in two Aramaic stela (KAI 226:2; 228 A:15) and in the warning of Nehemiah against his opponents that Sanballat and his accomplices will not have a “share” in Jerusalem (Neh 2:20).

27. Same-sex relations must have occurred in antiquity, but no documents or contracts regulating such friendships are known. Among Native Americans, same-sex relations were well known. See Qwo-Li Driskill, “Stolen from Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic,” *SAIL* 16 (2004): 50–64. On the interpretation of the friendships between David and Jonathan as well as between Gilgamesh and Enkidu as possible same-sex relations, see Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 19–56; Thomas Römer and Loyse Bonjour, *L'homosexualité dans le Proche-Orient ancien et la Bible*, *EssBib* 37 (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2005), 61–102; Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 69–77.

28. Another famous example are the two marriages of the wealthy woman Mibtaiyah with Pithai the son of Pithai (*TAD* B2.8:1–3) and with Eshor the son of Şeḥa (*TAD* B2.6), both Egyptians.

29. See Boulos A. Ayad, “From the Archive of Ananiah Son of Azariah: A Jew from Elephantine,” *JNES* 56 (1997): 37–50; Simon Schama, *The Story of the Jews: Finding the Words (1000 BCE–1492 CE)* (London: Vintage Books, 2014), 19–22.

Ananiah was a ܐܢܝܐ. This Aramaic noun refers to a certain type of temple servant, probably a custodian.³⁰ In the documents from Elephantine, there is no evidence that Ananiah would have had a military function as well. The impression that evokes is that he was responsible for the continuity of the temple and its cult.

This Ananiah had commissioned a document of wifehood in 449 BCE (*TAD B3.3*).³¹ This document is of importance for various reasons. The bride named inside it is Tamet, an Egyptian ܐܡܬ, “handmaiden; slave-girl,” owned by Meshullam, son of Zaccur. Marriages to slave-girls were not uncommon at Elephantine.³² Also, as a result of the social status of Tamet, the contract is not made up between her father and Ananiah but between Ananiah and Meshullam, her owner. Only a small dowry is mentioned, alongside a list of the meager personal belongings of Tamet (*TAD B3.3:4–7*). Further on, the document includes the standard formulae prescribed for potential cases of death or divorce. It is intriguing to read that Meshullam remains the owner of Tamet, despite her anticipated marriage to Ananiah. This fact is noteworthy, as it remains unconventional in most such contracts in the ancient Near East, where slave-girls became free persons upon marriage.³³ In Tamet’s case the social hierarchy remained unbroken.

In addition to its other features, the end of the document contains a small surprise. One of the stipulations of the contract concerns a boy by the name Pilti. From the context, it becomes clear that Pilti is a son of Tamet and Ananiah as his biological father. As son of the slave-girl Tamet, Pilti thus also falls under the ownership of Meshullam. The con-

30. Porten and Granerød convincingly make a comparison with Akkadian *lahḫinu*, a noun that refers to an official with great responsibilities for the upkeep and maintenance of a temple, including the utensils for the ceremonies and the garments as well as the jewelry of the divine statues (Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 200–202; Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*, 56–58).

31. See, e.g., Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 205–13; Bezalel Porten and Henri Z. Szubin, “The Status of the Handmaiden Tamet: A New Interpretation of Kraeling 2 (*TAD B3.3*),” *ILR* 29 (1995): 43–64; Botta, *Aramaic and Egyptian Legal Traditions*, 59–87; Nutkiewicz, *Destins de Femmes*, 27–30.44–45; Annalisa Azzoni, *The Private Lives of Women in Persian Egypt* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 19–20; Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period*, 49–51.

32. See Nutkiewicz, *Destins de femmes*, 47–53.

33. See Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 206; Nutkiewicz, *Destins de femmes*, 47–53.

tract makes clear that Ananiah accepts Pilti as his son, who is now free from slavery, which implies that Meshullam no longer has any rights or duties concerning the boy except in the case of a divorce between his parents. The fact that Ananiah and Tamet had a premarital child should be interpreted within the social code of their days. Getting together in a marital bond was a private act that, in view of its character, was not always documented. The document of wifehood was probably only made up after the birth of Pilti in order to secure the rights and duties of all parties.³⁴ In the document itself, Ananiah does not give a reason why he wants to take Tamet as his wife. The complex circumstances associated with the marriage obscure our ability to determine whether their relation was based on friendship or not.

Another papyrus, dated twelve years later, documents the sale of a house by Ananiah, the son of Azariah (TAD B3.4).³⁵ The seller is a Caspian soldier, Bagazushta, the son of Bazu, and his wife, Ubil. The house was situated next to the plot of land on which the temple of Yaho was built.³⁶ This would be a very convenient location for Ananiah to inhabit, in view of his task at the temple. The document presents Ananiah as the buying person; mother and son—Tamet and Pilti—are not mentioned in that document.

Three years later, a new document was made up (B3.5).³⁷ The text documents the gift by Ananiah of a part of the house just mentioned to Tamet: “I give you half of the large room, and the chamber of the house which I bought from Ubil and Bagazushta” (B3.5:2–3). The document thus raises an additional set of unanswerable questions. Did the couple not yet live in the house under consideration, as Botta suggests?³⁸ Why would Ananiah give this room to Tamet? Were they living separate lives? Did his marriage to an Egyptian slave-girl compromise his function as a לִחָן? The document itself does not help in answering these questions, and neither do the other papyri of the Ananiah archive. There is, however, one important clue. About the gift of the chamber, Ananiah declares: “I, Ananiah, gave it to you in affection” (B3.5:4).³⁹ The idiomatic expression

34. Azzoni, *Private Lives of Women*, 19.

35. See Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 213–17.

36. TAD B3.4:9–10: “to the west of it is the temple of Yahô, the God.”

37. See Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 217–19.

38. See Botta, *Aramaic and Egyptian Legal Traditions*, 87.

39. See Tal Ilan, “Women’s Archives from Elephantine and the Judean Desert: Law Codes and Archaeological Finds,” in *Structures of Power: Law and Gender across*

Following these points, however, two additional things become clear. First, the document makes no reference to Meshullam, the former owner of Tamet. Second, the document mentions another child: Jehoishma. Her rights and that of her brother Pilti are clearly stipulated (*TAD* B3.5:16–22). As for the question of whether his marriage to an Egyptian slave-girl

41. See, e.g., Héléne Nutkowitz, "Concerning the Verb *śn'* in the Judeo-Aramaic Contracts from Elephantine," *JSS* 52 (2007): 211–25; Arndt Meinhold, "Scheidungsrecht bei Frauen im Kontext der jüdischen Militärkolonie von Elephantine im 5. Jh v.Chr.," in *(Sieben Augen auf einem Stein)* (Sach 3,9): *Studien zur Literatur des Zweiten Tempels*, ed. Friedhelm Hartenstein and Michael Pietsch (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2007), 247–59; Alejandro F. Botta, "Hated by the Gods and Your Spouse: Legal Use of שנא in Elephantine and Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," in *Law and Religion in the Eastern Mediterranean: From Antiquity to Early Islam*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn and Reinhard G. Kratz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 105–29; Amanda R. Morrow, "I Hate My Spouse: The Performative Act of Divorce in Elephantine Aramaic," *JNSL* 43 (2017): 7–25; Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*, 295. That the verb שנא would refer to a demotion of status, as argued by Bezalel Porten and Henri Z. Szubin, is a hardly defensible position. See Porten and Szubin, "Status of the Handmaiden Tamet"; Szubin and Porten, "The Status of a Repudiated Spouse: A New Interpretation of Kraeling 7 (TAD B3. 8)," *ILR* 35 (2001): 46–78.

would compromise his function as a לֶחֶן, it should be noted that in a document dating to 402 BCE, Tamet—now called Tapamet⁴²—is presented as his wife and as a לַחֲנָה זִי יְהוֹ, “servitor of Yahô.” This can be construed as an indication that she was fully assimilated and accepted within the community of the Yehudites. The title, however, is not conclusive for her status. As Annalisa Azzoni remarks, לַחֲנָה could also refer to the fact that she was married to a לֶחֶן.⁴³ Her being Egyptian cannot be construed as problematic for Ananiah’s function at the temple.

The ambiguous character of the relation between Ananiah and Tamet is underscored by yet another document. In 427 BCE, Meshullam had made up a document for testamentary manumission (TAD B3.6).⁴⁴ The document makes clear that Tamet—again called Tapamet—as well as her daughter Jehoishma were by then still owned by Meshullam. The document arranges their manumission from Meshullam on his death. In this document, Jehoishma is three times indicated as “your daughter, whom you bore me” (B3.6:4–5.6.7–8). This expression can be interpreted in two ways: either Meshullam was the biological father of Jehoishma, or, being born from a slave-girl, Jehoishma did not fall under the legal responsibility of her biological father—presumably Ananiah—but was seen as part of the larger household of Meshullam. A remark in the document regulating the gift of a room to Tamet, Pilti and Jehoishma are presented as the two children of Ananiah (B3.5:18). On the other hand, Ananiah is absent in the document for testamentary manumission. All this raises more questions than answers.

In July 420 BCE, he gave a house to Jehoishma (B3.7).⁴⁵ From the description, it becomes clear that this house was located adjacent to Ananiah’s own house. In this document, Jehoishma is referred to by Ananiah as “my child, whose mother is Tamet, my wife” (B3.7:3). The ambiguities in the relationships are either obviated or denied in this document. It might, however, be that Meshullam had died in the meantime and that the social status of both Tamet and Jehoishma had changed. The gift of the house to Jehoishma, however, should be seen in connection with her marriage. In

42. Probably a variant of Tamet’s full name (Azzoni, *Private Lives of Women*, 92).

43. Azzoni, *Private Lives of Women*, 92.

44. See Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 219–21.

45. See Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 225–30; Henri Z. Szubin and Bezalel Porten, “A Life Estate of Usufruct: A New Interpretation of Kraeling 6,” *BASOR* 269 (1988): 29–45.

October 420 BCE, a document has been made up regulating the marriage between Jehoishma and a certain Ananiah, the son of Haggai (B3.8).⁴⁶ The contract is made up between this Ananiah, the son of Haggai, and Zaccur, the son of Meshullam. The absence of Meshullam, the son of Zaccur, might indicate that he had died and that Zaccur, the son of Meshullam, acted on behalf of the family of Jehoishma in absence both of her biological father and her lifelong owner. Ananiah, the son of Haggai, refers to Jehoishma as “your sister,” indicating that Zaccur, the son of Meshullam, was by then the legal representative of Jehoishma. The contract describes the dowry of Jehoishma, which is quite generous. The absence of Ananiah, the son of Azariah, from the document, however, does not indicate his death. In 402 BCE, he was still alive, stating additions for the dowry of his daughter Jehoishma and selling property to his son-in-law, Ananiah, the son of Haggai (B3.11–12).⁴⁷

All these documents make clear that the Yehudite Ananiah, the son of Azariah, has been married to the Egyptian slave-girl. The documents are legal in nature but have clear implications for interpreting their interpersonal qualities: they suggest that their relationship had its ups and its downs. Whether their relation was based on sympathy and friendship or rooted in common interests cannot be established on the basis of the evidence available. Through the chinks the reader assumes some fissures that, unfortunately for the historian, are not elaborated. Ananiah’s marriage was a curious case and certainly not standard for the Yehudites of Elephantine. His case makes clear how difficult it must have been to find a good way between the various loyalties of life.

Friendship in Elephantine

The available documents evidence that the concept of friendship was known in wider circles of the multiethnic community in and around Elephantine. Although only referred to a few times, it can be assumed that the

46. See Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 221–25; Annalisa Azzoni, “‘Where Will Yehoišma’ Go?’ A Reconstruction of TAD B3.8,” in *Puzzling Out the Past: Studies in Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures in Honor of Bruce Zuckerman*, ed. Marilyn J. Lundberg, Steven Fine, and Wayne T. Pitard, CHANE 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–5.

47. See Bezalel Porten and Henri Z. Szubin, “A Dowry Addendum (Kraeling 10),” *JAOS* 107 (1987): 231–38; Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 231–34.

notion of friendship was as a binding-agent part of the cement that held the various groups and ethnicities together. In my opinion, it can have the same function in the present imperfect world with all its unnecessary boundaries between people, and I hope that Saul will agree on this.

Part 2

Social Relations among Israelites

Public Self and Private Self in the World of the Hebrew Bible

Karel van der Toorn

Social theories of personhood often hold that every human individual possesses both a private and a public self. The two entertain a relationship of discrepancy. While the private or inner self is true, spontaneous, and authentic, the public or social self is a mask that hides the real person. In public, the presentation of self is a performance.¹ Two concepts underlie these theories. The one holds that society consists of free individuals bound together by an implicit compact. The second assumes that human activities take place in either the public or the private sphere. The two concepts are intimately related. Whereas the public sphere puts restraints on individual freedom, the private sphere allows its full exercise. The public/private paradigm, then, is the means to reconcile the belief in individual freedom with the fact that we need others to subsist. Humans, as they say, are social animals. They do not live alone. But society, however crucial for survival, imposes limits on individual freedom. Only in private can individuals show their real selves—the person behind the persona. Such, at least, is the prevalent notion in popular psychology publications.

The idea that human beings are first of all individuals most near themselves in the private sphere is characteristic of Western modernity. It is questionable how much other cultures share this view. With respect to the cultural patterns reflected in the Hebrew Bible, the emphasis on the individual is hardly fitting. Corporate identities had greater relevancy, it seems, than individual identity. “It remains likely that the Israelites saw society as an aggregate of groups rather than as a collection of individu-

1. The phrase, as well as the idea for which it stands, is from Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

als,” wrote a critic in a 1989 review of sociological studies of the Bible.² Other authors stress that in ancient society, “a person was not an individual in our sense of the word.”³ If the individual, in the modern sense of the term, was yet to be invented, how about the existence of a private sphere?⁴ Should we go so far as to say that, in early Israel, the entire distinction between public and private was irrelevant because there was no privacy? It sounds like an overstatement. But it is clear that the Israelites negotiated the boundary between public and private, and hence between public self and private self, in other ways than we do. This contribution explores the Israelite perceptions of public and private in an attempt to identify some core values of the culture of the time. It is dedicated to Saul Olyan in tribute to his scholarship and his groundbreaking work on human relations in the world of the Bible.

Family as the Core Group

Although Israelites would not deny that everyone has their own qualities, they hardly had a sense that every human being is unique. In fact, the existence of what Johann Jakob Stamm has called *Ersatznamen* suggests that they believed individuals could be replaced. Examples of such names are Jashobeam (1 Chr 12:7), “Uncle has returned,” and Ahikam (2 Kgs 22:12), “My brother has arisen.” Stamm defines *Ersatznamen* as “personal names that somehow reflect the concept that the bearer of the name is a new embodiment of a deceased family member, and that the latter has appeared again in the former, or has come to life again.” He adds, “This is an intuitive and ancient concept, rooted in tribal thought, which looks at the fullness of a family line, without any theoretical belief in soul migration or reincarnation.”⁵ The occurrence of *Ersatznamen* is not the only sign

2. John W. Rogerson, “Anthropology and the Old Testament,” in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*, ed. Ronald E. Clements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 25.

3. Cornelis H. J. de Geus, “The Individual in Relation to Authority in Ancient Israel,” *RSJB* 46 (1989): 54.

4. See, e.g., Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972); Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

5. Quotes from Johann J. Stamm, “Hebräische Ersatznamen,” in *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, April 1965*, AS 16 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 413, my translation. The original runs: “Personen-

pointing to the precedence of the group—in this case the family or clan—over the individual. To some degree, the practice of naming children after grandparents or other family members reflects a similar idea. More striking, perhaps, is the Babylonian phenomenon where a man used the seal of his father or grandfather to identify himself.⁶ Individual identity was subordinate to family identity, apparently.

The primary group individuals belonged to was, indeed, the family. *Family* is a term that covers several overlapping circles of kinship, running from the nuclear family to the clan. In the world of the Hebrew Bible, family identity embraced the larger group. The archaeology of the Israelite settlements reveals a pattern in which related joint families lived in close vicinity. The clusters of houses they lived in formed a hamlet or made up a compound of a town. These architectural arrangements indicate an organization of Israelite society on the basis of extended family groups. The Hebrew term is *bêt 'āb*. Related extended family groups constituted the *mišpāhâ*, that is, the lineage or clan.⁷ Members of the *mišpāhâ* participated in the regular offerings to, and invocation of, the family dead, and they venerated the same “god of the father.” Late Bronze Age texts from Emar call this group “the brothers” and oppose it to “strangers” or “outsiders” (*nikaru, nakaru*). The land on which related families lived was their joint “inheritance” (Hebrew *naḥālâ*, in Emar texts referred to as the brothers’ “land,” *eršetu*). It is once referred to as “the inheritance of the gods,”

namen, in denen in irgend einer Weise die Anschauung lebt, dass der Namensträger ein verstorbene Familienglied neu verkörpert oder dass dieses in jenem wieder erschienen bzw. wieder lebendig geworden sei. Das ist eine unmittelbare und altertümliche, in Sippendenken verwurzelte und die Ganzheit eines Geschlechtes visierende Anschauung, die da ist auch ohne den theoretischen Glauben an Seelenwanderung oder Wiederverkörperung.” See also Ernst Jenni and Martin Klopfenstein, *Die akkadische Namengebung*, MVAG 44 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1939), 278–306.

6. See Dominique Charpin, “Les divinités familiales des Babyloniens d’après les légendes de leurs sceaux-cylindres,” in *De la Babylonie à la Syrie, en passant par Mari: Mélanges J. R. Kupper*, ed. Önhân Tunca (Liège: Université de Liège, 1990), esp. 62–63 and n. 21.

7. See Lawrence E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1–35; Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel*, SHCANE 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 194–205; Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 39–40. For the Arab terminology, see, e.g., Hani Fakhouri, *Kafr El-Elow: An Egyptian Village in Transition* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 55–61.

meaning the inheritance left by the ancestors (2 Sam 14:16).⁸ This land was inalienable. If for some reason a parcel ended up in the possession of “strangers,” clan members had the right (and duty) to buy it back (the right of redemption or *gə’ullâ*).

As a community, the clan or lineage stood halfway between the individual and society at large. It was neither wholly public nor private—semipublic seems the most appropriate term. Its members relied on the clan for subsistence and support, as well as defense against enemies from without. The clan was a strong in-group under the moral authority of the ancestors and the god of the fathers. Individual members drew their identity, then, from the same ancestors and the same god. Individual identity was subordinate to the corporate identity. Rites of passage into or out of the clan emphasized the acquisition of a new identity or, respectively, the loss of a former one. Marriage was the most common occurrence of the integration of nonkin into the clan. The husband was to cover the bride with a garment—a piece of headgear (the “veil”) and/or a mantle (*beḡed*). The rite invested the woman in a symbolic way with a new identity.⁹ The reverse rite, described in the Emar tablets, was the deposition of the garments on a stool or in a box, to symbolize rupture with the clan. The men or women to whom this happened had become outcasts. Their divestment left them without an identity. They left as nobodies or nonentities.¹⁰

The central importance of the family and its continuity comes to the fore in the way the Israelites—just as many of their contemporaries—thought about the ideal of the good life. Outside the family, there was no good life. Everybody wished for health, vitality, prosperity, and old age, but without a family they would not mean a thing. Psalm 68 celebrates God as the one “who gives the lonely ones [*yəḥīdīm*] a place in a family [*bayit*]” (vv. 6–7).¹¹ In the same vein, Ps 113 says that Yahweh “establishes the childless woman in a family as the happy mother of children” (v. 9). Guests at a wedding wished bride and groom most of all offspring.

8. See Theodore J. Lewis, “The Ancestral Estate (נַחֲלָת אֲבוֹתָיִם) in 2 Samuel 14:16,” *JBL* 110 (1991): 597–612.

9. See Karel van der Toorn, *God in Context: Selected Essays on Society and Religion in the Early Middle East*, FAT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 99–111 (“Veiling and Unveiling”).

10. See van der Toorn, *God in Context*, 289–309 (“The Domestic Cult at Emar”).

11. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children in Ephratah and bestow a name in Bethlehem. (Ruth 4:11 NRSV)

May you, our sister, become
Thousands of myriads;
May your offspring gain possession
Of the gates of their foes. (Gen 24:60 NRSV)

The woman you are presently marrying, O Kirta,
The woman you are taking to your house,
The girl you are bringing into your court—
Seven children she will bear for you,
Nay, eight, she will bear you eight! (Kirta 2.ii.21–25)

Childlessness was a terrible curse, perhaps even more so for a woman than a man. Male infertility was an unfamiliar concept. If a couple remained without offspring, it meant God had closed the womb of the woman. There was something wrong with her. For both partners, at any rate, children were essential. Who would care for them in their old age if not their children? The honor due to parents had a material side in the provision of sustenance (Ruth 4:15; Matt 15:4–6).¹² Plus, there was the attendant duty to honor deceased parents with some monument (normally a stela), to regularly invoke their names, and to give them the offerings due to the dead. Mesopotamian adoption contracts bear out the mutual dependence between the generations. Adoption was not for sentimental reasons but for very practical ones. The adopted were entitled to an inheritance in remuneration of the honor they had to show the adopted parents in their old age and after their death.

If the essence of the good life is to be part of a community, the reverse of the good life is abandonment. To suffer isolation was like an adumbra-

12. The material aspect of honoring comes to the fore especially in Akkadian texts, where the injunction to “honor” (*kubbutu*, the equivalent of Hebrew *kabbēd*) is associated with the provision of food (see, e.g., *BWL* 102–3, ll. 61–62). See also Jonas C. Greenfield, “*Adi balṭu*: Care for the Elderly and Its Rewards,” in *Vorträge gehalten auf den 28. Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Wien 6.–10 Juli, AfO* 19 (Horn: Berger, 1982), 309–16; Rainer Albertz, “Hintergrund und Bedeutung des Elterngabots im Dekalog,” *ZAW* 90 (1978): 348–74.

tion of death. Private correspondence of Arameans and Israelites living in Persian Egypt (fifth century BCE) gives an inkling of the importance attached to loyalty and care among family members. The letters are full of phrases expressing concern or worry about family members left behind.¹³ The famous letter of a Jewish man from Migdol in the Nile delta to his son on a mission to Elephantine, in Egypt's deep south, resonates with the parents' concern: "From the day you went on that journey, my heart has not been happy; just so your mother" (*TAD* A3.3:2). This is how it should be. When family fails to take an interest, the frustration of the neglected family member easily turns into anger (see A3.5:4–5). "How is it possible you [pl.] did not send me a letter? Just when a snake had bit me and I was dying, you did not even send [to inquire] if I was alive or if I was dead! I am sending this letter [to ask] about your [pl.] wellbeing" (A2.5:7–9).

The emphatic inquiries after the well-being of distant family members, as well as the indignation at what was perceived as neglect by family, reveal a concern that goes beyond mere feelings of mutual sympathy. Family is essential. To be separated triggers a fear of abandonment. To end up outside the family amounts to a loss of identity—which is a form of social death.

Early Israel as a Shame Culture

Life in early Israel was regulated by a social code in which etiquette had as large a place as ethics. Shame and honor were leading concepts. Because we take the Bible to be one of the sources of the guilt culture that has marked the West for a long time, it may come as a surprise to find that early Israel was actually a shame culture. In the towns and villages where the family groups lived, public perception and reputation were major concerns. The opposition between shame cultures and guilt cultures gained popular currency under the impact of Ruth Benedict's study of Japanese culture. Having described various key concepts of Japanese social interaction, Benedict concludes Japan has a shame culture: "Shame has the same place of authority in Japanese ethics that 'a clear conscience,' 'being

13. The verb is *yšp* + *l*, "to be concerned about, to worry about" (see *DNWSI* 466, s.v. "*yšp*," with references to relevant passages, especially in the so-called Hermopolis letters).

right with God,' and the avoidance of sin have in Western ethics."¹⁴ Many aspects Benedict highlights in Japanese culture were familiar to the early Israelites. They, too, lived in a society with strong hierarchies where taking one's proper station was essential. Observance of the proper rules of greeting, self-discipline, and clearing one's name were duties inculcated from childhood.

In the village or the quarter of a larger town, everybody knew everybody else. Most secrets were public secrets. This made it mandatory to carefully cultivate a good repute. "A good name is better than fragrant oil" (Eccl 7:1). For a man, the ideal was to have a seat of honor among the elders at the gate (Prov 31:23), showing off his social status by a display of generosity (Job 29:7–25). Numerous offspring contributed significantly to one's social standing. Psalm 127:3–5 depicts the happiness of the man with many sons. "They shall not be put to shame when they contend with the enemy in the gate." The enemy in question is not a military opponent. The gate is the place where the men of the town meet after a day of labor. They discuss the events of the day, share a few stories, test each other's wits by telling a riddle, and settle disputes when the need arises.¹⁵ The "enemies" (*'ôyabîm*) are men of the same town who must have made depreciating comments about the father and his family. His sons will be successful in defending the family's honor.

Family honor was a delicate matter. It might be tainted by so many things, not all of them necessarily of one's own doing. Who was to blame for childlessness? Yet for a woman, to be without children was to suffer *herpâ*, "disgrace" (Gen 30:23). Others might taunt you for it, as though you were harboring a moral defect. In a polygamous marriage, the wife with children could easily turn into the enemy of the barren one. Such was the case for Hannah before she gave birth to Samuel: Peninnah—the other wife—was her "rival" or "enemy" (1 Sam 1:6). The Hebrew word is *šārâ*, here used in the same way as the Akkadian term *šerretu*.¹⁶ In a similar manner, widowhood was experienced as a disgrace (compare the expression *herpat 'almānûtayik*, "the disgrace of your widowhood," Isa 54:4). "In that day, seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, 'We will eat our own food, and wear our own clothes; Only let us be

14. See Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1954), 224.

15. See Ludwig Köhler, *Der hebräische Mensch* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1953), 89–94.

16. See CAD 16:137–38, s.v. "*šerru*," B.

called by your name—take away our disgrace!” (Isa 4:1). As the preceding passage shows (Isa 3:25–26), these women were widows. Could they help it if their husbands had become war casualties? But disgrace is not about guilt. Failure and lack of success were just as detrimental to one’s reputation as morally reprehensible behavior. It is one of the reasons why misfortune in whatever form—illness, bad crops, disease among the cattle—would always trigger the fear of enemies using such bad luck to slur your reputation.

For a married man with sons and daughters, protecting the family’s honor was also an active duty. A son was expected to “honor” (*yəkabbed*) his father the way a slave would honor his master (Mal 1:6). So if a son insulted his parents, there would be no pardon (Exod 21:17). Likewise for the wayward and rebellious son who would not listen to his parents; he had to be taken to the elders of the town, officially declared to be a glutton and a drunkard, and stoned to death (Deut 21:18–21). Whether such draconian laws were actually carried out in practice is unclear. But they do illustrate the price the Israelites attached to family honor. In the story about Miriam’s leprosy—the punishment for the disrespect she showed to Moses—there is a reference to a father spitting in his daughter’s face. The woman would have to “bear her shame” (*tikkālēm*) for seven days (Num 12:14). On the analogy with Miriam’s offence, the daughter had apparently been disrespectful to her parents or her brothers. By spitting in her face, her father had publicly put her to shame. Her seven-day confinement probably implies the spittle had rendered her impure. Another instance of a public humiliation concerns the man who refuses to marry the wife of his deceased brother; the widow is to spit in his face to demonstrate her contempt (Deut 25:9).

Room for Privacy and the Inner Self

While life in Israelite towns and villages occurred mostly in the streets, not everything happened out in the open. The domestic architecture of the early Israelites did explicitly allow for some degree of privacy. In the four-room house that was typical of the Israelite settlements, there was at least one room into which people might withdraw and be alone.¹⁷ This

17. For the Israelite four-room house, see King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 28–35; Cornelis H. J. de Geus, *De Israëlitische stad*, PA 3 (Kampen: Kok, 1984), 61–69.

room is known in Hebrew (as in Ugaritic and Phoenician) as the *heder*, “inner room,” or the *heder miškāb*, “bedroom.”¹⁸ The root meaning of *hḏr* is “inside,” as the opposition between *miḥûṣ*, “outside,” and *mēḥādārīm*, “inside” (Deut 32:25), illustrates. The inner room was situated at the back of the four-room house. An oracle in the book of Isaiah advises people to “go to [their] inner rooms and close the doors” until God’s anger has passed (Isa 26:20). The inner room, then, had its own door. It thereby offered privacy. If you wanted to cry unobserved, this was where you went (Gen 43:30). Words spoken in this room were supposed to stay in the privacy of that room (2 Kgs 6:12; see Qoh 10:20). The *heder* normally served as the bedroom (Exod 7:28; 2 Sam 4:7): it was where husband and wife slept and made love (Judg 15:1; 16:9, 12; Joel 2:16) and where a mother would give birth to her child (Cant 3:4). This secluded space in the typical Israelite house corresponded to a socially accepted need for privacy. The notion of a private sphere, then, was not foreign to the mind of the early Israelites.

In fact, it could be argued that the distinction between private and public was crucial in a culture that put such emphasis on family honor. The walls of the house were like a screen that kept outsiders from intruding on the intimacy of the household. Women were expected to stay indoors. It was a way to preserve their honor. While her husband was enjoying his prominence in the city gate, the virtuous wife was busy at home (Prov 31:10–31). When a married woman left the house, she would normally be in the company of a man of the family or a male servant (2 Kgs 2:24). Only young girls might go out to draw water and find themselves engaged in conversation with a stranger (Gen 24:15–27; see 29:9–14). The role of the house as safeguard of a woman’s honor—and thus the honor of the family—points to a different appreciation of the private sphere from the one we are used to. To the Israelites, the home played a central part in the economy of shame and honor. They did not cherish it as the room for the expression of the private self but as a place to preserve the family honor. We associate the home with freedom; they thought of it as a safe. Indoors was the domain of the women; the outdoors was for men.

The preoccupation with shame and honor does not mean the Israelites were unfamiliar with the notion of an inner or private self. The word most consistently used to refer to the inner person is *lēb* (variant *lēbāb*), “heart.”¹⁹

18. See Rudolf Mosis, “*heder*,” *ThWAT* 2:755–59.

19. On Hebrew *lēb* (variant *lēbāb*) as the inner self, where private feeling and

“Human beings see only what is visible, but Yahweh sees into the heart” (1 Sam 16:7); “The heart alone knows its bitterness, and no outsider can share in its joy” (Prov 14:10)—such and similar phrases would be meaningless if the Israelites did not entertain the notion of an inner self. The rare references to silent prayer in the Hebrew Bible also use the term *lēb*. Abraham’s servant, dispatched to Aram-naharaim to find a suitable wife for Abraham’s son, calls his silent prayer “speaking in my heart” (*dabbēr ’el-libbî*; Gen 24:45). Hannah’s prayer at Shiloh is perhaps the best-known case of silent prayer: “Now Hannah was speaking in her heart [*hî’ mādabberet ‘al-libbāh*]; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard” (1 Sam 1:13). In the temple, such silent or whispered prayer was unusual, as the reaction of the main priest shows. He took the woman to be under the influence—a not unreasonable assumption, as they were celebrating a harvest festival. But Eli the priest was mistaken. He saw the outward appearance, whereas God looked into Hannah’s heart and granted her request. The pious tale demonstrates that the concept of an inner or private self did have currency among the Israelites.

So the Israelites were familiar with the notion of the inner self (the “heart”) and regarded it as the seat of emotions. But when it came to expressing their feelings, they drew the line between public and private in ways that differ from ours. To them, much of what we regard as private was public. An example may help to illustrate the point. To us, grief over the death of a dear one is private. While we commemorate the dead publicly—the obituary in the paper, the funeral service preceding interment—we do not make a show of our emotions. The stifled tear and the muffled sob give only an inkling of the sadness we feel. Mourning in the Middle East, in ancient times and often still today, was a different affair. It was precisely a public display of grief. With the aid of professional mourners, friends and relatives of the deceased staged a public wailing that might last several days. The Hebrew Bible calls these professional women “singers of laments” and “skilled women.”²⁰

thinking take place, see Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments* (Munich: Kaiser, 1973), 68–95.

20. On women in the role of professional mourners, see the data collected by Marten Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East*, trans. Helen Richardson and Mervyn Richardson (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 372–75. For a reference to men as professional wailers (*yōdā’ê nehî*), see Amos 5:16.

Call for the singers of laments, let them come;
 Send for the skilled women, let them come;
 Let them quickly intone a wailing for us,
 That our eyes may run with tears,
 Our pupils flow with water. (Jer 9:16–17 [ET 17–18])

The presence of these professionals of mourning indicates that the manifestations of sorrow were, to some degree, induced. It does not mean the public grief was feigned. But in order for the lamentation to reach the appropriate level of intensity, the bereft resorted to outside help. As Olyan has demonstrated, biblical mourning had ritual and social dimensions that turned it into a public performance that conformed to an unwritten script.²¹

The Private Self of the Individual Laments

One might argue that a shame culture such as ancient Israel is so preoccupied by public perception that it does not foster a sense of interiority the way a guilt culture does. But this is true only to a degree. If those who live in a shame culture are deeply concerned about what others think of them, they are perhaps less troubled by public perception than by what they perceive to be the public perception. Owing to the internalization of the values of honor and shame, the private self is always worrying about the public self. We catch a glimpse of this process in the individual laments of the book of Psalms. Even though these are stock prayers to be used in multiple situations, they mirror the Israelite soul. The texts are full of references to foes and enemies gloating over the misery of the petitioner. The liturgy will often address them. The sufferer faces enemies (*'ōyēb*, pl. *'ōyābīm*), opponents (*šār*, pl. *šārīm*, var. *šōrēr*, pl. *šōrārīm*), wicked ones (*rāšā'*, pl. *rāšā'īm*), evil ones (*mārē'īm*), evildoers (*pō'ālē 'āwen*), and pursuers (*rōdēp*, pl. *rōdāpīm*). Over against them, on the side of the petitioner, are the righteous (*šaddīq*, pl. *šaddīqīm*) and the upright (*yīšrē-lēb*). The terms could be multiplied, for both the enemies and the friends, but it would not change the picture. The rituals of affliction, though performed for the benefit of individual sufferers, turn the private struggle against misfortune into a public battle. Were the enemies present in person or merely in the imagination? Since many of these ritual

21. See Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

petitions must have been spoken in the privacy of the home, the enemies are the internalized enemies.²²

The individual laments also show that personal misfortune and loss of social status went together. Misfortune was shameful. It might elicit sympathy and compassion, but was as likely to trigger derogatory comments and blame. Most people, after all, interpreted misfortune on the basis of the retribution paradigm. This explains the obsession with honor and shame in the prayers of petition.

You men, how long shall my honor [*kābôd*] turn to dishonor [*kəlimmā*]? (Ps 4:3)

Let all those who rejoice at my calamity
Be put to shame and disgrace.
Let those who exalt themselves against me
Be clothed with shame [*bōšet*] and dishonor [*kəlimmā*]. (Ps 35:26)

All day long my dishonor [*kəlimmā*] is before me
And shame [*bōšet*] has covered my face. (Ps 44:16)

On account of you I carry disgrace [*herpā*]
And dishonor [*kəlimmā*] covers my face....
You know my disgrace [*herpā*], my shame [*bōšet*], and my dishonor [*kəlimmā*]. (Ps 69:8, 20)

Let my accusers be put to shame and dishonor,²³
Let those who seek my ruin be clothed in disgrace [*herpā*] and dishonor [*kəlimmā*]. (Ps 71:13 [see Ps 109:29])

As these quotations show, the concepts of shame and honor, on the one side, and the references to enemies, on the other, are closely interrelated. The private petitions of the Psalter dramatize the situation to move the deity to compassion. The sufferer is not just ill but in the throes of death.

22. See the discussion by Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Der bittende Mensch: Bittritual und Klagelied des Einzelnen im Alten Testament*, WMANT 51 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1980), esp. 134–47. Scenes where prophets are involved in the recovery of diseased individuals are often set in a domestic context; see 2 Kgs 4:17–37; Isa 38:1–22.

23. Correcting *yklw* (*yikalû*, “may they perish”) to *yklmw* (*yikkālāmû*, “may they be dishonored”); see Ps 109:29.

Those who did not show any sympathy for his cause are depicted as enemies and evildoers. They are the ones responsible for the sufferer's shame, dishonor, and disgrace. Such, at least, was the reality in the mind of the "I" in whose name these stock prayers were recited.

Conclusion

Although the modern distinction between public self and private self was not unknown in the world of the Hebrew Bible, the pre-Hellenistic Middle East did not share the putative Western belief in the private self as the real self. To most of our contemporaries, the public self is an actor who hides the inner self. The parts we play in public are often foreign to us because we follow a script written by others. We are only truly ourselves when we are alone, or surrounded by friends and family who know who we really are. In the worldview reflected in the Hebrew Bible, on the other hand, it is the public self that is the real self. But perhaps an opposition in terms of real and false is out of place. Although the Israelites did distinguish between private and public self, it never amounted to an opposition. Neither the one self nor the other was fake; they were merely two aspects of the human person. But the side of the human person that ultimately mattered was public. This was the self whom individuals were truly concerned about; this was the self they prayed would be preserved; this was the self they wanted to have honored after death; in autobiographies, this was the self they presented.²⁴ The modern cult of authenticity was foreign to their frame of mind. Since individuals could only attain fulfillment through the group they belonged to, honor and dignity took precedence over self-expression and originality.

Let me add, as an afterthought and perhaps incentive for discussion, that the ancient conception of the human person as primarily part of a group (family, clan, people) has repercussions for the type of religion that was practiced. One of the classics of the modern study of religion is *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, by William James (1902). For James, religion is all about "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to

24. See, e.g., the (pseudo-)biography of Adda-Guppi, such monumental texts as the Zakkur inscription, and the many tomb inscriptions. All of these ego documents were obviously for public consumption and presented the public self.

whatever they may consider the divine.”²⁵ Clearly, this working definition of religion is completely at odds with the realities of religious life in early Israel. James devoted chapters to conversion, saintliness, and mysticism. These are all problematic categories with respect to ancient religion. As Arthur Darby Nock has argued, conversion is a late phenomenon in Mediterranean religion, connected primarily with Judaism and Christianity.²⁶ Saintliness as a kind of self-perfection in solitude was unfamiliar to the Israelites. Mysticism did not occur, either; prophetic ecstasy and visions are not to be classified as mysticism. Religion, in ancient Israel, did not offer a way out of the world. On the contrary, to worship Yahweh was to have a share in his “inheritance” (*naḥālâ*), that is, to be part of *‘am yhw*, “the people of Yahweh” (see 1 Sam 26:19–20). Religion, throughout the Hebrew Bible, served the insertion of the individual into the community of family, clan, and nation. It created community. It served to vindicate the public self rather than to provide the private self with solace.

25. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London: Longmans, Green, 1945), 31–32, italics removed.

26. See Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

Ritual Weeping: Tears, Separation, and Reunion in Biblical Relationships

Susan Niditch

In recent years, scholars have produced a number of thoughtful studies that explore the display of emotion and the description of affect in the literature of the Hebrew Bible. Their writings build on a wide-ranging set of studies concerning the depiction of emotions in literary works from the ancient Near East and beyond.¹ Scholars have analyzed key terminology in the languages of the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Levant that relate to emotions.² They have examined connections between physiology and affective expression and the association between particular organs of the body with, for example, anger or sadness.³ To these ends, they have employed theoretical frameworks rooted in psychology, sociology, anthropology, religion, cognitive science, and other fields.⁴

1. For a good recent bibliography, see Paul A. Kruger, "Emotions in the Hebrew Bible: A Few Observations on Prospects and Challenges," *OTE* 28 (2015): 395–420; Elaine James, "Emotions: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," *EBR* 7:825–27; Christine R. Yoder, "The Objects of Our Affections: Emotions and the Moral Life in Proverbs 1–9," in *Shaking Heaven and Earth: Essays in Honor of Walter Brueggemann and Charles B. Cousar*, ed. Yoder et al. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 73–88; John Corrigan, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Anna Wierzbicka, *Emotions across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and Universals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

2. Kruger, "Emotions in the Hebrew Bible," 396–97, 400, 412; Françoise Mirguet, "What Is Emotion in the Hebrew Bible?," *BibInt* 24 (2016): 444–52.

3. Kruger, "Emotions in the Hebrew Bible," 399, 401–2; Mark S. Smith, "The Heart and the Innards in Israelite Emotional Expression: Notes from Anthropology and Psychobiology," *JBL* 117 (1998): 427–36.

4. For an overview see Kruger, "Emotions in the Hebrew Bible," 395.

Paul Kruger and Françoise Mirguet address some issues that are of particular relevance to the study that follows. Applying a theoretical framework offered by Andreas Wagner (but not seen by Wagner as relevant to the Hebrew Bible itself), Kruger emphasizes that in the Hebrew Bible as in other cultures, emotions seem to operate as a force that may be contained, that may explode, and that may have spatial dimensions.⁵ Moreover, he urges that matters of gender be considered in the analysis of manifestations of emotion in biblical literature.⁶ Similarly, John Corrigan emphasizes the importance of “age, gender, class, and other factors” in assessing the role of emotion in religion.⁷ In one case study, Kruger explores the physiological manifestations of anger expressed in certain types of imagery and associated with particular organs of the body.⁸ Mirguet questions whether concepts of emotion are universal and raises issues pertaining to the Hebrew Bible concerning the identity of a self that responds emotionally, a matter of ongoing interest in biblical studies.⁹ She emphasizes context, the “actions, movements, ritual gestures, and physical sensations” associated with expressions of emotion in particular cultures, and underscores the importance of social hierarchies and social relationships that frame affect.¹⁰

Saul Olyan’s study of mourning rituals shares these interests and grapples with many of the questions raised by these scholars. He asks about “the feelings of individual participants” in mourning rituals, raises critical questions concerning social context, and examines ways in which mourning rituals and attendant behaviors may create, reinforce, or alter

5. See Kruger, “Emotions in the Hebrew Bible,” 405 n. 58; see also Paul A. Kruger, “A Cognitive Interpretation of the Emotion of Anger in the Hebrew Bible,” *JNSL* 26 (2000): 181–93.

6. Kruger, “Emotions in the Hebrew Bible,” 415. See also Melissa Raphael, “Gender,” in Corrigan, *Oxford Handbook of Religion*, 181–99; Daniela Rippl and Verena Mayer, *Gender Feelings* (Munich: Fink, 2008).

7. John Corrigan, “Introduction: The Study of Religion and Emotion,” in Corrigan, *Oxford Handbook of Religion*, 6–7.

8. Kruger, “Cognitive Interpretation,” 184, 186.

9. See Susan Niditch, *The Responsive Self: Personal Religion in Biblical Literature of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 8–9.

10. Mirguet, “What Is Emotion,” 443, 455, 464–65. See also Corrigan, “Introduction,” 6–9; and see Pamela E. Klassen’s attention to “embodiment and physicality” and “social, historical, and cultural networks” in her discussion of ritual and emotion. See Klassen, “Ritual,” in Corrigan, *Oxford Handbook of Religion*, 144.

relationships, marking or ending “bonds between individuals.”¹¹ Throughout his career, Olyan has engaged in the study of what Clifford Geertz called “moods and motivations,” the emotional responses induced by ritual experiences and actions, and the ways in which human beings set in cultures are drawn to participate in certain ritual behaviors. My own essay in Saul’s honor deals with a particular emotional behavior, expressed not only in biblical descriptions of mourning rituals but in a variety of biblical contexts, that of crying.

An ample bibliography deals specifically with the act of weeping.¹² In approach and questions raised, these studies deal with many of the themes explored by Olyan and by those who have grappled more broadly with emotion and religion, as discussed above. Gary Ebersole, a scholar of Japanese and comparative religions, who includes in his study a brief analysis of King David’s weeping (2 Sam 1; 12:16), emphasizes the importance of context, pointing to issues of gender, hierarchy, power, class, and race that may inform the act of weeping under particular conditions.¹³ He writes, “Ritual weeping should be regarded as symbolic activity that marks out the existence or the breach of social and/or moral relationships between beings,” and he includes among those beings animals, humans, and suprahumans.¹⁴ Similarly, Kimberley Patton and John Hawley write that tears “can be ethical, releasing communal tensions or reinstating necessary boundaries.”¹⁵ Crying, as Ebersole notes, may “invite” or “demand” certain responses. He thus explores “the social construction of emotions and the scripting of affective expressions” and suggests that nonspontaneous, “scripted” crying may still be emotionally genuine and heartfelt.¹⁶

11. Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8–9, 148.

12. Tom Lutz, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (New York: Norton, 1999); Gary Ebersole, “The Function of Ritual Weeping Revisited: Affective Expression and Moral Discourse,” *HR* 39 (2000): 211–46; Kimberley C. Patton and John S. Hawley, eds., *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

13. Ebersole, “Function of Ritual Weeping,” 213. See also John S. Hawley, on the gendering of tears, “The *Gopis*’ Tears,” in Patton and Hawley, *Holy Tears*, 95, 107–9. On matters of gender and age, see also Lutz, *Crying*, 151–92.

14. Ebersole, “Function of Ritual Weeping,” 240.

15. Kimberley C. Patton and John Stratton Hawley, “Introduction,” in Patton and Hawley, *Holy Tears*, 3.

16. Ebersole, “Function of Ritual Weeping,” 213, 232–33. The concept of the social

Similarly, Tom Lutz explores the border that may be occupied by crying as a “conventional behavior” and an “expression of feeling.”¹⁷ Attending to the physical dimensions of crying, Ebersole writes, “Tears cross the bodily boundary of interior/exterior and invisible/visible,” and in this way he takes account of the mediating symbolic possibilities inherent in crying. Crying or not crying in certain situations can be empowering, and the shedding of tears may be transformative or transgressive, affirm relationships or dissolve them.¹⁸ Patton and Hawley, and several of the articles in their anthology, point to the role of tears in rites of passage, a matter to which we will turn below.¹⁹ Jacob Olupona notes, for example, that tears may “signify a break in time and space, a rupture in previous relations before new ones are fashioned and set in motion.”²⁰

These themes arise also in relation to the study of tears in the Hebrew Bible. Are certain scenes or type-scenes that portray crying to be defined as culturally shared ritual actions, or are characters described more personally and literarily as emotionally overcome at a moment of trauma or joy or loss?²¹ In other words, is there a script underlying examples of biblical crying? Is a character pictured to cry because ritually he or she is supposed to shed tears, or is he/she so moved? How does crying create, affirm, or alter relationships? How does biblical crying relate to questions of embodiment, physicality, and material religion? Do certain bodily postures formulaically accompany tears, and do some objects serve as triggers for this display of emotion?²² Is crying gendered in the Hebrew Bible, associated, for example, more with women than with men?²³ Do men and women cry under different sorts of conditions? What special terminology and imagery are associated with crying in the

script is developed by Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959); see also Klassen, “Ritual,” 154; Wierzbicka, *Emotions across Languages*, 34. See also Patton and Hawley, “Introduction,” 8–9.

17. Lutz, *Crying*, 194, 214.

18. Ebersole, “Function of Ritual Weeping,” 214, 229.

19. Patton and Hawley, “Introduction,” 5.

20. Jacob K. Olupona with Sola Ajibade, “Bridal Tears in Marriage Rites of Passage among the Oyo-Yoruba of Nigeria,” in Patton and Hawley, *Holy Tears*, 165; see also Tom Lutz, *Crying*, 214–15.

21. See also Klassen, “Ritual,” 151–52.

22. See John Kieschnick, “Material Culture,” in Corrigan, *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*, 226.

23. For a discussion of gendered displays of emotion in the Second Temple period

Hebrew Bible, and does a word study lead to some additional questions or conclusions?²⁴

We begin with a study of key terms and where they lead, offer an initial overview of biblical scenes of or references to crying, and then focus on several biblical scenes of weeping that have special relevance to this volume's theme of relationships. Throughout we apply the theoretical considerations discussed above and drawn largely from the social sciences.

Key Terms

Anna Wierzbicka maintains that there are certain “emotional universals,” for example, that all languages have a word for “feel” or that all languages have terminology that refers to “the expression of good and bad feelings.”²⁵ As a student of sociolinguistics and cognitive sciences, however, Wierzbicka also emphasizes understanding the language, the specific terminology employed in one or another culture to describe particular emotional states and expressions of them, and notes that such words are “culture-specific conceptual artefacts.”²⁶ Similarly, Philip King, a scholar of Classical Hebrew linguistics, points to terminology of crying in the expression of distress, particularly in the Psalms.²⁷ Key words and roots in the Hebrew Bible are *bkh*, “to cry,” and *beki*, “crying”; *dim'â*, the noun, “teardrops,” or the verb *dm'*, “to weep or tear up”; and *'nh*, “to sigh or grown,” or *'ānāhā*, “sighing,” “groaning.”

Tears, crying, and groaning are, as King notes, often associated with mourning a specific death or with lamenting one's sorry condition. Examples from the Psalms are many, and this terminology is frequently employed in late-biblical postconquest texts, the context being national suffering (see, e.g., “tears,” in Pss 6:7; 80:6; Lam 1:2; 2:11, 18; Jer 8:23; 9:17; 13:17; 14:17; Eccl 4:1; “sighing” as a verb in Isa 24:7; Ezek 21:11; Lam 1:8; Ezek 9:4; 21:12 and as a noun in Pss 6:7; 31:11; 38:10; 102:6; Job 3:24;

in relation to Jesus's “ritual performance” at Gethsemane, see Angela K. Harkins, “Ritualizing Jesus' Grief at Gethsemane,” *JSNT* 41 (2017): 177–203, esp. 193–95.

24. See, for example, Wierzbicka, *Emotions across Languages*, 24–31; Kruger, “Cognitive Interpretation,” 182.

25. Wierzbicka, *Emotions*, 275, 282.

26. Wierzbicka, *Emotions*, 22.

27. Philip D. King, *Surrounded by Bitterness: Images, Schemas and Metaphors for Conceptualizing Distress in Classical Hebrew* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 314–42.

Isa 21:2; Lam 1:22). Groaning or sighing adds an aural dimension to the description, a sound that accompanies, signals, and adds to the groaner's experience of the state of woe. Tears also appear as a form of supplication or offering to God, who can compassionately release the petitioner from suffering. God is presumed to be moved by tears. See, for example, 2 Kgs 20:5 // Isa 38:5; Mal 2:13; and perhaps Exod 22:28.

The most common term in the Hebrew Bible associated with crying is *bkh*, and an important context for crying (as with tears and sighing) is mourning ritual (e.g., 2 Sam 13:36; Ezek 27:17; Gen 50:1). Olyan thoughtfully explores such cases of ritual crying in the context of mourning, with attention to embodied gestures and actions that constitute the lexicon of mourning in ancient Israelite culture, for example, the treatment of hair, the wearing of dirty clothing, the "weeping, wailing, and groaning."²⁸ He emphasizes and reinforces a number of the themes found in works by Patton and Hawley, Lutz, and others discussed above concerning scripting and spontaneity, the reversal of ordinary demeanors and actions, the marking of passages, and the relationships represented or transformed by symbolic actions that are undertaken at the death of a relative or member of the community.

A number of biblical cases of crying indicated by *bkh* vocabulary do not, however, indicate responses to death. Some refer to distress, for example, the crying of the baby Moses that moves Pharaoh's daughter (Exod 2:6) or that of Hagar (Gen 21:16). Rachel is pictured weeping for her children, a passage that alludes to the suffering of the conquest, an act of lament by the matriarch taken by the tradition to have a formidable intercessory power (Jer 31:15).

Ritual Tears

In a work originally published in 1938, Danish scholar Flemming Hvidberg explored crying in the Hebrew Bible in the context of ancient Near Eastern ritual, in particular linking a wide array of biblical texts that reference crying to rituals posited for Canaanite tradition and associated with the death and revivification of Baal.²⁹ Hvidberg's work is quite dated from the perspective of the contemporary study of comparative religion. Hvid-

28. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 32.

29. Flemming F. Hvidberg, *Weeping and Laughter in the Old Testament: A Study of Canaanite Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1962).

berg's sort of ideas concerning syncretism or cultural borrowing whereby one tradition is altered (even sullied from a normative, purist perspective) by another³⁰ have given way to concepts of religious fusion, interaction, and the sharing of certain recurring patterns of myth and ritual by groups that have borders or languages in common or that are drawn together by trade, migration, settlement patterns, war, conquest, or other forms of cultural contact. Nevertheless, Hvidberg pulls together a valuable set of biblical texts that involve crying and allows us to consider ritual nuances that might otherwise be missed, even though we might explain and contextualize them differently than he does.

One set of texts involves crying as a manifestation of penitence or supplication as discussed above in relation to tears (Deut 1:45; 2 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 34:27; Neh 8:9; Jer 50:4–5). Joel 2:17 alludes to a ceremonial weeping between the porch and altar of the temple. Relationship issues are relevant here as the penitent calls on his deity to forgive him, to be moved because of their relationship as servant and deity. Implicit is a certain reciprocity and expectation. Hvidberg also discusses sites where ritual weeping is implicit, often by the name of the location rooted in *bkh*, or by reference to activities there practiced (Gen 35:8, the oak of weeping at Rachel's tomb; Judg 2:1–5, the location where the people are said to lament their miscreance). Some references from the biblical writers' normative perspective condemn weeping for Baal (Num 25:6) or Tammuz (Ezek 8:14), and it is on such passages Hvidberg hangs much of his theory about the "original" role of ritual weeping in ancient Israel and the wider Levant. Acts of ritual weeping in the Hebrew Bible are often, for Hvidberg, sanitized or rationalized versions of more ancient traditions concerning the dying and rising god. Indeed, he suggests that before the biblical Rachel, "a greater one than Rachel was housed" in the tomb at the "oak of weeping," namely, a goddess who "shed tears" for her deity lover.³¹ Similarly, for Hvidberg, "the archetype of Jephthah's daughter," who bewails her virginity with females in her age cohort, "is indeed a goddess ... devoting herself to the great weeping over her dead lover."³² Hvidberg is on target in pointing to deep ritual, communal, and culture-revealing resonances in these references to crying. They have to do with relationships and life passages, but not necessarily with the specific story of the rising and dying god.

30. See, e.g., Hvidberg, *Weeping and Laughter*, 135, 139, 142.

31. Hvidberg, *Weeping and Laughter*, 107.

32. Hvidberg, *Weeping and Laughter*, 103; see also 104, 106.

The tomb associated with the matriarch Rachel and the oak of weeping said to accompany it (Gen 35:8) clearly mark a recognized landmark in ancient Israel. The directions given by Samuel to the future king Saul include mention of men whom Saul will meet by Rachel's tomb, a first sign on his journey back home. The site may be one of pilgrimage and/or a locus of divinatory activity, like so many others associated with a sacred grove or tree, for example, the palm of Deborah (Judg 4:5) and the sacred space in Shechem "by the oak of the standing stone" (Judg 9:6).³³ The final resting place of the holy person may serve as a ladder to the divine, a place to pray, supplicate, and ritually cry in various forms of personal and public religious expression. Such sites are known by everyone—hence Samuel's ability to direct Saul by way of the site. Rachel herself is treated by the prophet Jeremiah as a link between Israel and God, one who can cry for her people and intercede on their behalf. The traditional personage and the place where she is believed to be buried maintain the relationship between the people and their God and between all Israelites who know the story behind the site and share belief in its numinosity.

No descriptions of rituals that take place at the tomb are found in the Hebrew Bible, but the image of Rachel inconsolably weeping for her children is richly gendered with ideas of maternal empathy and care, as is the assumption that the male deity responds to a mother's tears. A relationship and obligation of caring is thus maintained and awakened by the associations between Rachel, tears, and the tomb, and a hope is implicitly expressed for transformation and healing. The association of women with forms of lamentation is, as Melissa Raphael notes, extremely common in androcentric cultures due, in her view, to "women's marginal social status, their biological proximity to the beginning of life and their cultural proximity to the end of life, as well as the relational intimacies afforded by a woman's socioreligious obligations to others."³⁴ Another example of lamenting women is found in the tale of Jephthah's daughter and the ritual for which it is an etiology. This case offers descriptive associations between crying, described once again with the root *bkh*, and an explicit ritual context.

The story that frames this example of ritual crying involves war and sacrifice. In a state of religious frenzy induced by the divine spirit, the judge

33. On sacred trees and groves, see Lawrence E. Stager, "The Shechem Temple: Where Abimelech Massacred a Thousand," *BAR* 29.4 (2003): 33–34.

34. Raphael, "Gender," 188.

Jephthah vows to the deity in exchange for victory the first thing he sees upon returning from battle, which of course turns out to be his only child, his daughter. Much has been written on war vows and sacrifice in Israel and the ancient Near East.³⁵ The particular vow as framed in this case induces deep pathos in the receiver of the story and relates to the establishment of a ritual for young women of marriageable age. As noted by Peggy Day, the story has to do with rites of passage in the lives of young women, who will be sent off at a particular stage in life, lost in a sense to family, required to assume adult female responsibilities including life-threatening child-bearing and other anxiety-inducing new roles.³⁶ The traditional tale reflects the way fathers may mourn the loss of their daughters or feel guilt at arranging for their marriages, and the daughters assume the break with their former lives with resignation and, no doubt, a degree of apprehension. The same socio-psychological dynamic may well lie behind some versions of the tales of heroines such as Snow White, Beauty, Rapunzel, and Sleeping Beauty. These heroines, like Jephthah's daughter, have not yet known a man and experience a liminal phase of death-like sleep, or being trapped in a tower, or being held captive by a beast before their marriages.

Jephthah's initial reaction to seeing his daughter upon returning from battle is embodied as he declares himself literally "bent down," the position of defeat. Her response is to ask for two months leave when she and her friends, those who presumably belong to her age cohort, will go to the mountains and cry over her virginity. They remove themselves to a remote location and cry over their virginity, a clear reference to the transition from one stage of life to another. The myth of the daughter is linked to a ritual for all young women, a rule or custom in Israel for young women to go and retell of the daughter of Jephthah for four days each year. The Hebrew verb *tnh* in the MT version suggests sharing a story, the script, but it is interesting that the OG tradition reads "to bewail/sing a dirge," and the OL manuscript tradition reads "to utter cries of lament," capturing ritual actions and the role of crying in retelling and reliving Jephthah's daughter's story.

35. See Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

36. Peggy L. Day, "From the Child Is Born the Woman: The Story of Jephthah's Daughter," in *Difference and Gender in Ancient Israel*, ed. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 58–74.

The story of Jephthah's daughter and the ritual crying associated with it beautifully illustrate the embodiment of emotion, the gendered issues that sometimes surround the act of crying, the role of crying in effecting or marking changes in status, and the place of tears in the formation and severing of relationships. Communal tears in the ritual recalling Jephthah's daughter connect young women of similar age with one another and with the mythic heroine from that early time. They bewail the severing of bonds with the father and patriarchal kin and the expectation of new bonds. The ritual of wailing symbolizes a kind of social death and rebirth, and reflects the anxieties that surround such change and the institutional regularity that eases the transition. Indeed, ritual crying is associated with nuptials in an international fund of cultural traditions.

Olupona points to the role of crying in marriage ceremonies among the Yoruba of Nigeria, noting that the weeping may "provide a medium for expressing anxiety about the unknown and uncertain future," even as such ceremonies demarcate a passage from old status to new status.³⁷ Lutz discusses a wide range of rituals of weeping that accompany nuptials in various cultural settings, noting that such occasions evoke a complex range of deeply felt emotions betrayed by tears. The weeping may well be expected and required of the bride but also heartfelt; tears may be scripted and spontaneous at the same time.³⁸ The story of Jephthah's daughter, and the ritual crying associated with the ritual enactment purporting to be a cultural memory of the daughter's sacrifice, similarly suggest the complex emotions associated with such life passages, the embodiment of one's status in tears, and the relationships between the young women, their families, and their cultural traditions as they exist and evolve.

People still do cry at weddings as they experience a tangle of emotions ranging from fear to sadness to joy, an important reminder that weeping need not be associated only with sadness. A final set of biblical passages employing the root *bkh* within formulaic combinations of language and gesture deals with tears shed upon greeting.

37. Olupona with Ajibade, "Bridal Tears in Marriage Rites," 165; see also Kay A. Read, "Productive Tears: Weeping, Speech, Water, and the Underworld in Mexica Tradition," in Patton and Hawley, *Holy Tears*, 56.

38. Lutz, *Crying*, 214–15.

Greeting with Tears

Charles Wagley's 1977 study of the Tapirapé of central Brazil begins with quotations from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European explorers, one of which follows:

As soon as the traveler has arrived at the Moussacat house [Moussacat means the household head who feeds the visitor] which he had chosen to be his host, the traveler must sit down in a cotton bed [hammock] hanging in the air and wait quietly for a while. Soon afterwards women appear, surround the hammock, squat on the ground and, covering their eyes with their hands, cry. With their tears they welcome the visitor whom they profusely praise.³⁹

Anthropologist Alfred Radcliffe Brown's work with the Andamanese is frequently cited by contemporary scholars exploring "weeping-as-greeting."⁴⁰ Like crying at weddings, crying as a scripted form of greeting is found in many cultures. How is crying at greeting understood and presented in the Hebrew Bible, and to what ends in terms of meaning and message?

The scenes of interest are Jacob's first meeting with his future wife Rachel, daughter of his mother's brother Laban (Gen 29:11); Jacob's reunion with Esau, the brother whose blessing he had stolen (Gen 33:4); Joseph's reunion in Egypt with his younger brother Benjamin (Gen 45:14); the revelation of Joseph's true identity to the brothers who had sold him into slavery (Gen 45:15); and his reunion with his father, Jacob (Gen 46:29).⁴¹

39. Charles Wagley, *Welcome of Tears. The Tapirapé Indians of Central Brazil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), viii.

40. Lutz, *Crying*, 193–94; Ebersole, "Function of Ritual Weeping," 237–38.

41. The treatment of these scenes of crying in classical Genesis commentaries moves in different directions from those of interest here; a number of them are sensitive to matters of characterization and the expression of emotion, while some are also quite amusing. Ephraim A. Speiser, as might be expected, draws comparisons with possible Hittite customs in the case of Gen 29:11 and with the imagery of Enuma Elish 1, ll. 53–54 in the case of Gen 33:4. See Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 223, 258. In discussing Joseph's reunions, Claus Westermann points to the expression of "mature experience," involving, separation, guilt, grief, and reunion. See Westermann, *Genesis 37–50: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 162. Westermann sees the conventional gestures of embracing, kissing, and crying as "essential and indispens-

The encounter involving Rachel clearly marks Jacob as an outsider, a traveler, and visitor. It begins with Jacob's arrival at the well and his conversation with local shepherds. He makes inquiry concerning his maternal kin Laban. The shepherds of Haran reply that Laban's daughter Rachel herself is approaching the well at this moment. We know that Jacob has been sent to Haran by his mother to make a match with kin, and the presence of a young, nubile woman at a well is a common typology indicating a marriage is at hand (so also Eliezer's meeting of Isaac's future wife Rebecca [Gen 24:11–27], so Moses's encounter with Zipporah [Exod 2:16–17]). When Jacob sees the young woman, he removes the stone from the well and waters Laban's sheep, "the sheep of the brother of his mother." A kind of reciprocity and generosity is implied by such scenes. Jacob then kisses Rachel and raises his voice in crying. On the one hand, Jacob may be portrayed as genuinely moved to meet his cousin and kin after a long and stressful journey. As trickster, he may be portrayed as trying to impress her with his capacity to be moved. On the other hand, these displays of affection and emotion may reflect a ritual script, a means of affirming and forming bonds among kin, anticipating a critical life passage. One can explore this possibility by checking whether the same language and emotional gestures are found under comparable circumstances elsewhere in the Israelite tradition.

From a narrative and biographical perspective, Jacob's meeting with his cheated brother Esau comes at the opposite end of his meeting with Rachel, marking his return to Israel rather than his departure. Important verbs/gestures include "meeting," "embracing," "falling upon the neck," and then "kissing" and "crying," as in Gen 29:11. Here the subject of most of the acts of embracing appears to be Esau, so that like the international

able elements of communication." See Westermann, *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 525. Hermann Gunkel points to parallels with Homer and the conventionalized language and content shared with other comparable biblical scenes. He emphasizes the display of emotion at "encountering relatives in a foreign land" as evidence of strong and sentimental family ties, which he writes are still in evidence in contemporary Jewish families (contemporary for him being 1901)! See Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 318. Nahum Sarna notes that the interaction between Jacob and Esau signifies "release from the emotional tension" and "signals the final resolution of the tragic chain of events." See Sarna, *Genesis*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989), 229. Commenting on Jacob's embrace of Rachel, he writes, "Men of the East are less inhibited than Westerners in giving expression to their emotions" (203).

examples with which we began this section, the display of emotion tends to come not from the traveler but from the party who welcomes him. The MT, however, uses the plural for the verb “to cry,” so that at the end of the encounter both men display this sign of emotion. Jacob’s return is fraught with guilt and anxiety and is a critical passage point in his life, as was the encounter with his future wife. That both men cry suggests reconciliation, reparation of the relationship, relief on Jacob’s part and forgiveness on that of Esau. They cry because of the heightened emotions of the encounter with which the author infuses characterization. But perhaps the author also portrays them crying because they are supposed to do so culturally, and because such crying experienced and/or enacted by traveler and welcomer signals bonds and trust between outsider and insider, although here it is purposefully ambiguous who is who. That relatives cry upon seeing long-lost kin is clearly within the expectation of the tradition and signals the maintenance, formation, or reformation of bonds. It is a matter of “conventional behavior” and an “expression of feeling,” and as Lutz notes, these “may simply merge.”⁴²

The most prolific shedder of tears in the Hebrew Bible is surely Joseph, who is pictured weeping numerous times in the complex narrative tradition about him (Gen 43:30; 45:2, 14, 15; 46:29). This tale deals deeply with separation and reunion, family rivalry and reconciliation, home and exile, emphasizing the way in which crying is seen to function as a mediating ritual action. As noted by Hermann Gunkel and others, the Joseph narrative presents emotion in a much more developed and baroque fashion than other traditional tales of heroes and heroines in Genesis.⁴³ Joseph’s tearful reunions with Benjamin, with his brothers, and with his father partake of the conventionalized language and gestures involving tears that we have attributed to ritual crying in the meeting and greeting of relatives who have been separated. This embodiment of emotion once again involves the formation, or, in the case of Joseph and his ritual partners (as in the case of Jacob and Esau), the restoration of bonds. It is instructive to take account of who does the ritual crying, and the pronouns are not always entirely clear.

Genesis 45:14 describes Joseph “falling upon the neck” of Benjamin his brother and crying, and Benjamin for his part crying on Joseph’s

42. Lutz, *Crying*, 194.

43. See Niditch, *Responsive Self*, 123–24.

neck. The two brothers of the same mother Rachel thus echo each other's actions, with the greeter Joseph pictured as enacting the first gesture. In Gen 45:15, Joseph kisses all his brothers and cries on them. As in the case of Esau, the injured party, Esau or Joseph, makes the first move. Joseph sheds tears perhaps not only because he is moved, and not only because he plays the role of welcomer to his new world in Egypt, but also because the tears express forgiveness and reconciliation. In contrast to some traditional tales of brother rivalry, for example, the biblical story of Cain and Abel, the fissure is healed, and the unity of the people Israel is thereby emphasized, a critical theme in the national myth. In the midst of a scene that suggests shock, confusion, trauma, and mixed emotions experienced by all participants, the regularity of language suggesting ritual meeting and the expected actions with kisses and tears allows for mediation, transition, and restoration.

Joseph's reunion with his father at Gen 46:29 once again involves falling on the neck and crying on the neck. It appears that the governing subject is Joseph, who greets his father ritually showing respect and empathy. However, the pronouns in Gen 46:29 could be governed by the switch in subject that introduces Israel whom Joseph greets, and this slight ambiguity subtly enriches the interaction and the emotions of reciprocity between the old man and his favorite son.

Final Thoughts

Scenes of weeping in the Hebrew Bible provide an opportunity to apply theoretical frameworks offered by a rich scholarly corpus that deals with emotion and religion and more specifically with ritual crying. An interdisciplinary and comparative approach has led to a consideration of ways in which formulaic language and conventionalized gestures, images of embodiment, issues of gender and status, the depiction of life passages, and the formation or altering of relationships are at play in biblical scenes of ritual weeping. Such scenes are critical to literary goals of character presentation and theme. Those who weep are moved to do so by circumstances and the immediate narrative context, but the weeping is at the same time scripted, a culturally framed ritual process.

The analysis offered of the ritual for Jephthah's daughter further develops Day's suggestions about nubile women's rites of passage by exploring the role of weeping and its capacity both to form relationships and to emphasize separation. We have also explored ritual crying at the greeting

of kin in a series of encounters in Genesis that affect and represent transitions in family relationships. These scenes, two of which involve brothers whose rivalries had resulted in distrust and fissure, emphasize the importance of reconciliation among Israelites, the healing of relationships within the people of Yahweh.

Sex, Honor, and Civilization in Genesis 1–11

Ronald Hendel

Émile Durkheim observed that every mythology “is a morality and a cosmology, even as it is a history.”¹ The mythology of Gen 1–11 embodies a moral code, or perhaps better a double version of a moral code, with different emphases in the Priestly text and the Yahwistic text. These representations of morality are richly connected to the domains of sex, honor, and civilization. I will explore the interconnections of these domains as they figure in the moral relationships in the stories, and in their different configurations in the two source texts. First I address some preliminaries about myth and morality.

Myth is an apt literary form to articulate the practices and sensibilities of a moral community, since it embeds them in the behaviors of particular individuals and sets them in an era when the world and its distinctive traits were gradually crystallizing into their present form.² Like all narrative, myth focuses the audience’s attention onto the protagonists’ moral emotions through a subjective form of engagement. In this respect, the moral code of Gen 1–11 is expressed through action and dialogue rather than explicit rules, with the occasional exception of God’s prescriptions about morality. The picture of the moral world that develops in these stories is constructed from an assemblage of practices and personal relationships, together with their motivations and consequences. They exemplify what Bernard Williams calls “thick” moral concepts, that is, concepts that are embedded in a particular social world and are not

1. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 279.

2. See Alan Dundes’s convenient definition of myth: “a sacred narrative explaining how the world or humans came to be in their present form.” See Dundes, ed., *The Flood Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

analyzable—without oversimplification—into universal or context-free precepts.³ The myths, with their context-rich particulars, provide a moral education for their characters and audience. They are, in this respect, a mode of narrative ethics.⁴ The terse and subtle narrative style of Gen 1–11, particularly in the Yahwistic stories, is well-suited to the complex shadings of this moral world.

This moral world is laced with gaps, tensions, and ambiguities. Its thick moral concepts follow what Pierre Bourdieu calls “the logic of practice,” whose rules are “rarely entirely coherent and rarely entirely incoherent,” and which supports the diverse needs and relationships of the body, family, and society.⁵ Moral behaviors are “enacted beliefs” entrenched in everyday habits, whose justification usually goes without saying, because, as Bourdieu emphasizes, “it comes without saying”—it comes as one becomes acculturated in a preexisting moral world.⁶ By close attention to the stories’ moral dynamics, we can tease out aspects of their implicit rules, but we cannot understand them apart from their particular forms of life. They do not constitute a rational system, as philosophical or theological ethics often purport to be, but a practical one.

A primary challenge of this type of inquiry is to avoid simple paraphrase or translation into modern categories. The moral world of Genesis is ancestral to the moral world of the modern West, but it would be a mistake to minimize or harmonize their differences. Even when concepts and practices seem to be equivalent, they exist in different configurations and with different accents. As Saul Olyan has shown for the domains of honor and sexuality in the Hebrew Bible, the ancient distinctions differ from modern ones, and we do damage to the texts—and at times to each other—when we conflate the Bible’s moral world with our own.⁷

3. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 143–45.

4. On narrative ethics, see John Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 170–73; and the studies of Greek narrative ethics by Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

5. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 12.

6. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 167.

7. See Saul M. Olyan, *Social Inequality in the World of the Text: The Significance of*

The texts, I will show, have their own distinctive moral orientations, which may, in some instances, seem strange to the modern eye. In some respects the ancient morality may be superior to the modern equivalent, challenging our narrative of moral progress. In other respects, where the biblical view is no longer coherent or viable, it casts our modern equivalent in a pale light, illuminating, in Friedrich Nietzsche's sense, the genealogy of morality.

Sex, Shame, and Guilt

Genesis 2 ends with a brief description of the first human couple: "The two of them were naked, the man and his woman, and they felt no shame before each other" (Gen 2:25).⁸ This terse picture of the appearance and emotions (or lack thereof) of the couple has important resonances and forms a backdrop to the subsequent drama. The outward appearance of the couple's nakedness is contrasted to their inner absence of shame. The verb *yitbōšāšû* ("felt [no] shame before each other") has a reflexive or reciprocal sense,⁹ which simultaneously points inward to the subject's emotions and outward to the proximity of another person. The moral emotion of shame is, in its basic situation, relational, linking a person's self-image with the real or imagined presence of other people. In this case, there is another actual person, but the feeling of shame operates even if there is only an imagined other. Shame is a reflexive emotion that links the individual's self-image to a wider moral community.¹⁰

To be seen naked by others is an elementary instance of shame. As Bernard Williams observes for the ancient Greeks, "The basic experience

Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible, JAJSup 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 17–35, 57–99. I am delighted to dedicate this essay to my longtime friend and colleague, whose lucid scholarship has so enriched our field.

8. Unless otherwise noted, biblical translations are mine.

9. See *HALOT*, s.v. "בוש", "be ashamed in front of each other."

10. For modern literature on shame, see Olyan, *Social Inequality*, 19; Zeba Crook, "Honor, Shame, and Social Status Revisited," *JBL* 128 (2009): 591–611; Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live? The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel*, BZAW 301 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 130–39; T. M. Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 125 (2006): 227–29; Matthew J. Lynch, "Neglected Physical Dimensions of 'Shame' Terminology in the Hebrew Bible," *Bib* 91 (2010): 499–501; and below, n. 15. My treatment is particularly indebted to Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 75–102.

connected with shame is that of being seen, inappropriately, by the wrong people, in the wrong condition. It is straightforwardly connected with nakedness, particularly in sexual connections.”¹¹ The biblical concept of shame is roughly the same, as we see in a variety of genres—narratives, curses, and prophecies.¹² To be seen naked in public is to be exposed, to seem vulnerable or powerless in one’s own eyes and in the eyes of others. In the case of public nakedness in the Hebrew Bible, it is not sexuality as such that is shameful but being seen naked by the wrong others in the wrong places. Such exposure violates the code of modesty, which is part of the code of honor.

There are some people who do not feel shame at the public exposure of nakedness. In the ancient world, this group consisted of so-called barbarians and children, who still live, to some degree, in a state of nature. They are like animals, who do not feel shame at being naked. Normally a person acquires the capacity for shame during the blossoming of sexuality in adolescence. In Gen 2, Adam and Eve lack this capacity for shame, which depends on a kind of body knowledge, as if they are still children. Their nakedness without shame expresses their childlike innocence in the garden, lacking the self-consciousness of mature adults. This is a sign of their physical and moral innocence, a condition soon to be reversed.

When Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, the knowledge they gain triggers the beginning of shame: “The eyes of the two of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed together fig leaves and made loincloths for themselves” (Gen 3:7). The verb for “shame” (*bwš*) is not used here, but the repetition of “naked” (*‘rm*) activates the memory of their situation in Gen 2:25, which is now reversed. The couple now knows that they are naked and feel shame before each other. To cover their nakedness they invent clothing, a key item of human culture. Their newly gained knowledge is, in the first instance, a form of body knowledge, which leads to the birth of shame and civilization.

Shame is a part of civilization. As mentioned above, it links the individual to a wider moral community. Shame and the invention of clothing are steps in the transition from the state of nature to culture, distinguishing adult humans from uncivilized people, children, and animals. The clothes are an outward sign of Adam and Eve’s inner transformation.

11. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 78.

12. E.g., 2 Sam 6:20; 10:4–5; Isa 20:4; see Olyan, *Social Inequality*, 30; Lemos, “Shame and Mutilation,” 233–34.

They have internalized the rudiments of an implicit moral code—the firstfruit of the knowledge of good and evil—for which shame is a regulative emotion.

This elementary form of shame leads the couple to more complicated moral emotions. When they next hear the presence (*qōl*, “voice” or “sound,” Gen 3:8) of God in the garden, they hide from him. But they are not simply hiding their naked bodies, for they are wearing clothes. They are hiding because they *know* that they are naked, and they know what this entails. Adam says, “I heard your sound in the garden and I was afraid, for I am naked, so I hid myself” (Gen 3:10). Adam’s fear is more complicated than his previous embarrassment and has a deeper source. Adam and Eve hide because their self-awareness makes them fear exposure of their guilt, not just their bodies. They know that they have disobeyed God’s command, and so they hide from God. This becomes clear in the subsequent interrogation. In their attempt to hide from God, the shame of public nakedness transitions to another kind of moral emotion—guilt for disobedience.

Their moral self-consciousness broadens here from body knowledge to knowledge of moral obligation, from shame (for public nakedness) to guilt (for disobedience). God exposes their guilt by interrogation—“Who told you that you are naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?” (Gen 3:11). This is a rhetorical question, for their actions betray their guilt. The dialogue is a performance of morality, from shame to guilt to punishment, which casts them out of paradise and initiates Adam and Eve into a moral community in the hardscrabble world after Eden. The performance of the myth also brings the audience into this moral community, providing a moral education for the first couple and their descendants.

I emphasize that Adam and Eve’s moral emotion of guilt is not due to their sexuality or nakedness as such but to their self-consciousness of disobedience. This is patent in their attempts to deflect guilt. Adam blames the woman—and implicitly God for creating her—and the woman blames the snake (Gen 3:12–13). Their exculpatory responses expose their interior guilty emotions.

The difference between shame and guilt in the story is indicated by their discovery procedures, one by sight and the other by hearing. As Williams observes, “The most primitive experiences of shame are connected with sight and being seen, but it has been interestingly suggested that guilt is rooted in hearing, the sound in oneself of the voice

of judgement.”¹³ With their newly opened eyes, Adam and Eve see that they are naked. But their guilt is triggered by hearing God’s “sound,” and their guilt is exposed by his judging voice. Both of these senses relate the internal to the external. Adam and Eve see each other’s bodies, but they also see their self-image with their inner eye. They hear God’s sound and voice, but they also hear their inner voice of judgement, which is why they hide. These senses point to the content of shame and guilt—one has to do with being exposed as diminished or powerless, the other with being judged, and both by others (real or imagined) and by oneself. This is why we refer to the shaming eye and the voice of conscience.

God’s actions confirm the distinction between shame and guilt. He punishes the couple’s guilt, but he helps to remedy their shame. He punishes their disobedience with painful labor—agricultural labor for the man and labor in childbirth for the woman—and with other penalties that reverse their life in paradise, including the woman’s subservience to her man and the couple’s self-consciousness of mortality. After dispensing these punishments, God turns to a compassionate act: “Yahweh God made leather garments for the man and his wife, and he dressed them” (Gen 3:21). This benefits the humans, replacing their rudimentary fig-leaf garments with sturdier material. This leads them further along the path to civilization. By giving them leather clothes, God helps them to survive in their new world. In sum, God punishes their guilt but covers their shame. This gesture of compassion adds a positive note to their moral education.

The dynamics of sex, shame, guilt, and civilization are echoed and amplified in the story of Cain and Abel. The story begins with a sexual union, which realizes the forecast of Gen 2:24, “Therefore a man ... cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Sexuality is an implicit part of the human condition, but it is explicitly accomplished only outside Eden, when “The man knew Eve, his woman” (Gen 4:1). The verb “to know” (*yād’*), used here in the idiomatic sense of “to have sex,” activates the association between sexuality and their newly gained knowledge. This is the body knowledge whose first blush, so to speak, was their awareness of nakedness and their emotion of shame. However, sexual union here has no direct association with shame. It is part of God’s solution to the problem of Adam being alone (2:18). By implication, becoming one flesh with one’s partner is good, perhaps even an aspect of the delight of paradise.

13. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 89.

Yet at the same time self-consciousness of sexuality, as an aspect of knowledge, arises as a consequence of the couple's disobedience. Sexuality has a complicated resonance as a moral good that is not wholly innocent. Like nakedness, it can be a source of shame in the wrong place and with the wrong partner.

After this brief representation of sexuality in the idiom of knowledge, the story turns to Cain, whose misdeeds involve shame, sin, and guilt. The trigger for this sequence is Cain's gift (*minḥâ*) to God, which God does not accept (lit., "not regard, look at," 4:5). The offering of gifts is, as a general practice, an invitation to exchange and reciprocity. However, God refuses to enter into this exchange with Cain, while accepting Abel's gift. This refusal dishonors Cain, who as the older brother is entitled to priority over Abel. As a consequence of this perceived slight, "Cain became very angry, and his face was fallen" (4:5). The phrase "his face was fallen" (*npl + pānâw*) is an idiomatic picture of shame, which in biblical diction is visually associated with the face.¹⁴ This is a common cross-cultural idiom, as with "losing face" in East Asian cultures, or the semantics of face as honor in Bedouin societies.¹⁵ The visibility of honor and shame is indicated by God's looking/not looking and by Cain's lowered face. Cain's inner eye sees himself as others see him, with God's gaze parceling out honor or shame. Honor is highly contested between brothers and in this case leads to Cain's murderous anger.

God's speech to Cain in Gen 4:6–7 is a key moment of moral education, explaining the interactions of shame, honor, and sin. Its terse formulation warrants attention. "Yahweh said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face fallen? Is it not so that if you do well, it will be lifted? But if you do not do well, sin crouches at the door. It desires you, but you can rule over it.'" The first part of God's speech addresses the dynamics of shame and honor, the face fallen or lifted. The second part

14. See the expression "shame of the face" (*bōšet pānim*; Jer 7:19; Ps 44:16). On covering the head as a gesture of shame and mourning, see Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 31. See also the expression "lift your/his face" (*ns' pānêkā/âw*; Gen 19:21; 2 Kgs 3:14; Job 42:8–9), meaning "to honor, show favor or deference." See Mayer I. Gruber, "The Many Faces of Hebrew נשא פנים 'Lift Up the Face,'" *ZAW* 95 (1983): 254–55.

15. See Frank H. Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 99–103; Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

addresses the dynamics of sin. This is the first mention of sin (*ḥaṭṭā't*) in Genesis and is God's sole description of it.¹⁶

God says that the lifting of face, meaning honor and self-esteem, is a consequence of "doing well" (derived from *ṭōb*, "good"). This may imply the reverse, that shame is a consequence of acting badly, but God does not say this. Shame can also be a consequence of other circumstances—false reports, slips of the tongue, accidents. Notably, God does not say why he did not accept Cain's gift but accepted Abel's—the cause of his shame. We are not told whether it was due to Cain acting badly or some other circumstance. But he does say that right behavior will repair Cain's emotions of shame and anger.

This is not a profound analysis of shame and honor, but it points to some deeper issues. God indicates that Cain knows how to do well. He does not need to instruct Cain in the difference between right and wrong behavior. The implication is that this knowledge is available to all humans, either as a natural morality that can be readily perceived or as part of the knowledge of good and evil that Adam and Eve ingested and that is everyone's possession by being descended from Adam and Eve. In the narrative sequence, the inherited possession of the knowledge of good and evil may be implied, but there may be a mixing of traditions in the stories. In any case, this native capacity for moral knowledge sheds light on why Cain has the free choice to do well. Moral discernment is an implicit part of the human condition. In God's exhortation, this goes without saying.

After his brief exposition of the moral code of shame and honor, God turns to the psychological power of sin. His description is couched in metaphor: sin is "crouching" (*rōbēš*) at the door, as if it were a ravenous predatory animal. This evokes a primal fear, with a predator, perhaps even a demon, hungrily eyeing its victim. God describes sin as an interior moral agent, whose strong desire is to consume the self. The language of desire and mastery—"It desires you, but you can rule over it"—describes this inner contest of wills in terms that activate God's punishment of Eve, "You will desire your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen 3:16). This intertextual echo does not mean that sin is a woman, or that women are

16. On later developments in the concept of sin in Judaism and Christianity, see Gary A. Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). On the later concept of original sin (which is anachronistic for Genesis but prominent in its interpretive life), see Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988).

particularly sinful, but rather creates an analogy between the alluring powers of sexuality and sin, which can consume the self if one does not master them. The dialectic of desire and mastery characterizes the interior struggle with the analogous instincts of sexuality and sin. God urges Cain to gain mastery over sin's desire, a piece of moral education that Cain fails to heed.

God's description of the interior struggle with sin has a striking resemblance to Sigmund Freud's psychodynamics of guilt, probably as its precursor. For Freud, the "it" (German *id*), is the instinct of primitive desires that tries to overwhelm the "I" (*ego*), against the moral dictates of the "above-I" (*superego*), which is the conscience and originally the parental voice.¹⁷ God describes this psychological dynamic as a specifically moral struggle, with the interior "it" as sin and the task of the ego as mastery over it. God's instructing voice is the "above-I," which the moral person internalizes as the voice of conscience.

Cain does not heed God's attempt at moral education. His shame and anger lead to his acquiescence to sin, and his guilt is exposed by the voice of judgment. In this case, the first voice is that of Cain's victim. God says, "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil" (Gen 4:10). This is an implicit accusation of violent bloodshed, indicated by the plural word for "blood" (*damîm*), meaning "blood shed in violence." Abel's postmortem voice of accusation leads to God's voice of judgment, which curses Cain from the soil and condemns him to be a ceaseless wanderer. Cain's response reflects on the enormity of his guilt: "My sin/guilt [*ʿāwōnî*] is more than I can bear" (Gen 4:13). The expression "to bear sin/guilt" (*ns' + ʿāwōn*) often includes its consequences, that is, punishment. Baruch Schwartz argues that "the phrase is a metaphor for the sinner's unrelieved guilt," motivated, in this case, by Cain's realization that the consequence will be his death.¹⁸ Gary Anderson emphasizes the thing-like quality of sin in the metaphor of "bearing sin/guilt." Sin and its consequences are a weight on Cain's shoulders. "Once confronted by God," Anderson writes,

17. E.g., Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 100–103.

18. Baruch J. Schwartz, "The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 9; Schwartz, "'Term' or Metaphor: Biblical עון/נשא/נשא/חטא/חטא," *Tarbiz* 63 (1994): 166.

“the full extent of his crime came into view. In Cain’s case, it is not clear whether the burden can ever be removed.”¹⁹ Cain’s cry of complaint about the weight of his sin/guilt/punishment is relieved somewhat by God’s mark on Cain, which will prevent blood vengeance. But it confirms that Cain will bear the weight of his guilt throughout his ceaseless wandering.

In Cain’s case and elsewhere (e.g., the Joseph narrative), the rivalry for honor among brothers can lead to violence. The father-son relationship is differently structured. The implicit rule is made explicit in the command, “Honor your father and mother” (Exod 20:12 // Deut 5:16). The father’s honor is key in the story of Noah and his sons, when “Ham, Canaan’s father, saw his father’s nakedness, and he told his two brothers outside” (Gen 9:22). The dishonor is twofold: first, seeing the father naked, and second, telling his brothers about it. As in the garden of Eden, the exposure of one’s nakedness to the wrong people or in the wrong place is shameful. When Noah wakes up, he perceives his shame and curses Ham’s son Canaan. While some nuances of this story are obscure, the association between shame, nakedness, and the authority of the father are clear. The code of honor and shame is part of the connective tissue of the family and is regulated by punishment. These are rules of morality and behavior that go without saying until someone violates them. Then the implicit rules become visible.

Turning back to the Cainites, the strange case of Lamech is a negative foil to the moral code of honor, shame, sin, and guilt. Lamech lacks the capacity for shame and as such stands outside the norms of civilized society. In Gen 4:23, he boasts to his wives: “I have killed a man for cutting me; a boy for bruising me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.” Lamech publicly confesses his murderous acts and takes delight in them. Although the details of his boast are rather obscure, due to the intensifying rhetoric of parallelistic poetry, he seems to say that he has avenged himself for the slightest of wounds and is proud to be a greater murderer than Cain. This is a bizarre boast, turning upside down the moral code of honor and shame. Lamech does not care whether people see his shame or hear his guilt, since he lacks the inner eye of shame and the interior voice of conscience.

Lamech represents the extremity of moral evil, the tendency of humans to succumb to the desire of sin. As such, he exemplifies the dark side of humanity, serving as a prelude to the cataclysmic consequence of

19. Anderson, *Sin: A History*, 26.

the flood, when “Yahweh saw how great was the evil of humans on the earth, for every design of their hearts was only evil all day long” (Gen 6:5). Lamech’s boast describes a Hobbesian state of nature, characterized by an absence of law or justice, “and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death.”²⁰ It is a world that lacks a moral community and the internal compass of honor, shame, and guilt.

Civilization and Its Discontents

As we have seen, the development of moral emotions and sensibilities in the myths of Gen 1–11 is linked to the development of civilization. The first couple experiences shame at their nakedness, and to solve this problem they invent clothing, which God later replaces with sturdier leather clothes. The invention of culture is due to human ingenuity, with some divine supplement, in the face of difficulty. The next item of culture has a different origin. As a consequence of their guilt for the sin of disobedience, God punishes the man with painful agricultural labor, including the cultivation of a new kind of food: “By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread” (Gen 3:19). As Robert Kawashima observes, this is the introduction of cooked food, a distinctive mark of civilization.²¹ In the garden of Eden the humans ate fruit, which is natural and raw. Bread is cooked and cultural, and the result of hard agricultural work. Here culture has a negative valence, of bread eaten with sweat, not a sweeter condiment.

As we have seen, there is also a link between sexuality and civilization, as in the transition from nakedness to clothing, suggesting an analogy with a child’s transition from innocence to sexual and cultural awakening. A similar transition is experienced by the wild man Enkidu in the *Gilgamesh Epic*: after having sex with a prostitute for seven days, he is rejected by the animals and has a changed self-knowledge. The prostitute then initiates him into wearing clothes, eating bread, and drinking beer. He then has a shave by a barber and anoints himself with oil. His development as a fully cultured person is completed when she takes him to the city of Uruk to encounter his counterpart, Gilgamesh the king.²² The awakening of sexu-

20. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 76.

21. Robert S. Kawashima, “*Homo Faber* in J’s Primeval History,” *ZAW* 116 (2004): 488.

22. See Aage Westenholz and Ulla Koch-Westenholz, “Enkidu: The Noble Savage?,” in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G.*

ality plays a central role in Enkidu's transformation and sets him on the path to human culture. These themes echo in the transformation of Adam and Eve from their innocence in the garden to their acquisition of self-consciousness and culture.

The movement toward civilization in Gen 1–11 features many of the same cultural items as Enkidu's ascent—making and wearing clothes, cooking and eating bread, creating and drinking liquor (beer for Enkidu, wine for Noah), and constructing and living in cities (Gilgamesh's Uruk, Cain's city, and Babel). These indicate a common tradition of the rise of human culture. But there is a key difference in moral tone. For Enkidu, the ascent to civilization is an unalloyed good, as he confesses later to Gilgamesh on his deathbed. In Gen 1–11, civilization has its discontents. People eat bread by the sweat of their brow. Cain and the children of Lamech are the inventors of cities, herding, tents, music, and metalwork (4:17–22). Noah's invention of wine leads to his shame. The tower of Babel casts urban life in a negative light; it is a building project driven by the human desire for glory, which God is compelled to destroy. These stories suggest something troubling about civilization. Julius Wellhausen aptly describes the ambivalence of civilization in these stories:

In all this we have the steps of man's emancipation; with his growing civilisation grows also his alienation from the highest good; and—this is evidently the idea, though it is not stated—the restless advance never reaches its goal after all; it is a Sisyphus-labour; the tower of Babel, which is incomplete to all eternity, is the proper symbol for it.²³

The tower of Babel depicts the global spread of civilization, which in the present world is characterized by disunity, dispersion, and mutually unintelligible languages. Civilization—at least in its extreme form—seems to be a threat to the proper relationship between the human and divine domains, much like the first transgression in the garden of Eden. There the first humans become “like gods” with respect to knowledge, and God casts them out lest they gain the divine trait of immortality. In Babel, the people

Lambert, ed. Andrew R. George and Irving L. Finkel (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 437–51.

23. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. John S. Black and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh: Black, 1885), 303.

seek to build their city up to heaven and are cast down so that they do not pursue their lofty ambitions to become, in a sense, godlike.

The builders of Babel have as their motive a desire for honor, which ironically causes their shame: “They said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower with its top in heaven, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered over all the earth’” (Gen 11:4). The desire for a “name” (*šēm*) means a desire for glory and honor, like the ancient warriors, “the men of renown” (*šēm*, “name”), in Gen 6:4. The idea that one earns honor from building or restoring great cities and temple towers is an old trope of Near Eastern kingship. In this case, the desire to achieve honor in this way is seen as self-aggrandizement and encroachment, and God strikes them down. Rather than achieving honor, God scatters them over the earth to prevent their future encroachment.

Notably, the people’s unchecked ambition—their shame—is exposed when “Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower that the sons of man had built” (Gen 11:5). God sees the shame of the “sons of man” (*bənê hā’ādām*). This phrase has an echo of the first man, Adam (*’ādām* or *hā’ādām*), suggesting that humankind, as a collective, is in some sense reactivating the transgression of their ancestor. God’s sight of the people’s collective shame is followed by his punishment, which implicates their sin (of pride, *hubris*) and guilt. The unfinished tower is an emblem of shame rather than undying honor.

The ambivalence of civilization is a striking feature of Gen 1–11. As Rainer Albertz observes, in these stories humankind “not only increases life with the work of culture, but also continually endangers it.”²⁴ Civilization is an ascent and a diminishment. Some of this ambivalence may stem from ancient Israel’s identity as a people on the periphery of the great civilizations of the Near East. The city of Babel is, after all, Babylon, the most famous of ancient cities. Cain’s city is “east of Eden” (Gen 4:16), another distant place. From Israel’s standpoint, these cities were foreign as well as ancient. The predominantly village-based society of ancient Israel may have looked with suspicion on great cities, where warrior-kings such as Nimrod held sway (Gen 10:8–12). In this sense, civilization is dangerous because its great exemplars are foreign, including imperial cities where

24. Rainer Albertz, “Die Kulturarbeit im Atramḥasis im Vergleich zur biblischen Urgeschichte,” in *Geschichte und Theologie: Studien zur Exegese des Alten Testaments und zur Religionsgeschichte Israels*, ed. Ingo Kottsieper and Jakob Wöhrle, BZAW 326 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 20.

power is concentrated. The city of Babylon evokes the violence and hubris of ancient empires, to which Israel was usually subjugated. From the view beyond the metropolis, civilization can be an ambiguous gift.

The Image of God

So far I have focused on the Yahwistic (or non-Priestly) stories in Gen 1–11. The Priestly text has a different orientation on the moral world and the intertwining of sex, honor, and civilization. As in their respective creation accounts, the Priestly text has a more theocentric and architectonic orientation, in contrast with the Yahwistic text's attention to the messy complexities of the human world. In the Priestly text, sex, honor, sin, and civilization are related, in varying ways, to the larger order of the cosmos. The human world is nested in this larger cosmic order, in some respects as a microcosm. God creates the human world as a harmonious part of the larger cosmic order, but due to creaturely imperfections it comes into disharmony. To solve this problem, God issues new commands, setting into motion a sequence of covenants, which provides a structure of moral and ritual laws that protect this fragile harmony.²⁵

Human sexuality in the Priestly text exemplifies a dual position of humans in the created order: they are living creatures created by God, and they are representatives of God on earth. When humans are created on the sixth day, God gives them the blessing to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). The sea and air creatures receive this blessing when they are created on the fifth day (Gen 1:22), and it extends implicitly to the nonhuman land animals on the sixth day (Gen 1:25). Since it is a blessing, sexuality is consonant with the goodness of all creatures and creation (Gen 1:21, 25, 31). Sexuality, in a sense, continues God's work of creation, following his command to “fill the earth” with life.

In the context of the covenant with Israel at Sinai, when God announces his plan to dwell in Israel's midst, the laws clarify that aspects of human sexuality are incommensurate with the divine presence. Therefore, in order to enter the sacred precincts of the tabernacle and participate in its rites, Israelites who have had sex or other sexually related conditions—including childbirth, menstruation, and ailments of the sexual organs that

25. See further Ronald Hendel, “Abram's Journey as Nexus: *Literarkritik* and Literary Criticism,” *VT* 69 (2019): 588–89.

mimic sexual fluids—must perform rites of cleansing (Lev 15). Notably, these purity laws only affect Israelites, since only they can enter the sacred precincts. Human sexuality is only problematic when it comes in contact with God's presence (*kābôd*, lit., "honor, glory"). Outside this charged space, human sexuality is a normal part of the order of things. The laws that regulate Israelite sexuality in the presence of God constitute a ritual code of modesty in relation to God's transcendent honor.²⁶

Perhaps paradoxically, human sexuality not only marks people as different from God, but it is also part of what makes them like God. The duality of humans as male and female is the final line of the poetic triplet in Gen 1:27: "God created humans in his image, in God's image he created him, male and female he created them." The phrase "male and female" specifies what "humans" // "him" consist of, and it is also syntactically parallel with "in God's image." While the meaning of this parallelism is unclear, there is an implied relationship. In some respects, male and female is part of the condition of humankind as God's image on earth.²⁷ Somehow the human duality of male and female is valorized in their high status as images of God. This underlines the positive connotation of human sexuality in both of their aspects, as pertaining to living creatures and images of God.

Both of these aspects coalesce in the procreation of children. As the "book of the generations of Adam" in Gen 5 relates, Adam, who is created in God's likeness, "fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image" (5:3). The repetition of these key words suggests that the divine image is somehow passed along in the act of being fruitful and multiplying. The chain of generations also seems naturally to produce the diversity of human languages and cultures. The refrain of the Priestly Table of Nations in Gen 10 lists the descendants of Noah's sons "according to their families, languages, lands, and nations" (10:20, 31). The increase of civilization is not ambivalent, as it is in the Yahwistic text, but a natural consequence of

26. On the analogy of ritual purity and social etiquette, see Karel van der Toorn, "La pureté rituelle au Proche-Orient ancien," *RHR* 206 (1989): 339–56.

27. On the semantic resonances of "image of God," see W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Annette Schellenberg, *Der Mensch, das Bild Gottes? Zum Gedanken einer Sonderstellung des Menschen im Alten Testament und in weiteren altorientalischen Quellen*, ATANT 101 (Zurich: Theologischer, 2011).

God's command to "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth" (1:28). Sexual fruitfulness entails the development of civilization.

Personal honor is attributed to two humans in the Priestly primeval narrative. Enoch and Noah are both described as having "walked with God" (Gen 5:22–24, 6:9). This expression signifies virtue and honor. In a sense, human honor is a companion to God's *kābôd* ("honor"). The description of Noah emphasizes the sense of moral excellence as godlike: "Noah was a man of virtue, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God" (6:9). The metaphor of walking with God belongs to the same family of concepts as being created in God's image. Human moral capacity seems to be a part of being made in God's image, even if only the greatest can achieve "walking with God." In the covenant with Abraham in Gen 17:1, God commands Abraham to "walk before me and be blameless," echoing the excellence of Noah and Enoch. Moral goodness derives, in this sense, from human propinquity to God, as his images on earth.

Moral evil surfaces in the flood story. God says to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them" (Gen 6:13). Unlike the Yahwistic flood story, the moral corruption in the Priestly story comes not from humans alone but from "all flesh," that is, all living creatures. God perceives that "all flesh had ruined its way on earth" (6:12). The specific content of the creatures' violent ways only becomes visible in the Noachic covenant after the flood, when God gives laws to regulate killing and murder. Humans—and by implication other animals—are now allowed to kill for food, but humans must not eat the blood, since, as explained in Lev 17:11, "the life of flesh is in the blood." In addition, the violent bloodshed of humans is prohibited. In a poetic triplet in Gen 9:6, God says: "Whoever sheds a human's blood, by a human will his blood be shed; for in God's image he made humans." Shedding human blood is prohibited because all humans are made in God's image. This rule links together the domains of honor, sin, and punishment, but in a different configuration than in the Yahwistic stories. The central concept is that humans are made in the image of God. The beginnings of a code of morality and honor stem from this central core. The laws of the Noachian covenant, which hold for all animals and humans, foreshadow the extension of this code in the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 17 and its sequel at Sinai. For the Priestly source, the image of God is the touchstone of human morality as elaborated from creation to covenant.

Conclusions

The myths of Gen 1–11 present a complicated and nuanced picture of the emergent moral world, laced with the interactions of sex, honor, and civilization. The stories articulate the moral education of the characters and draw the audience into its moral horizons. For ancient Israel, the stories exemplify shared norms, including the codes of honor and modesty, that were an everyday part of the lived world and entrenched in everyday practices. In the modern world, where social hierarchies and the forms of family and economy differ markedly from the ancient world, many of these norms no longer seem natural, and the invitation to inhabit these horizons can be problematic. For instance, the subordination of women (Gen 3:16) is widely seen as a violation of moral norms, and it is virtually unthinkable to have slaves (9:26). Yet many other features of morality in Gen 1–11 are not only thinkable but still seem vital, such as the challenge of self-mastery over sin (or a modern synonym), or the capacity for shame and the ideal of honor and self-esteem. It seems to be the case that an implicit code of honor is necessary to living in any family or society, which is to say that moral practices are embedded in our forms of life. In this sense, humans share a basic range of moral commitments, even as they are configured and entangled differently from place to place. In Gen 1–11, these commitments are configured differently in the Yahwistic and Priestly sources.

In the Yahwistic myths, the moral orientation is decisively shaped by the moral emotions of shame and guilt, as perceived by the inner eye and ear and by other persons. As Williams observes, using ancient Greek texts as a touchstone, each “involves an internalized figure. In the case of shame this is . . . a watcher or witness. In the case of guilt, the internalized figure is a victim or an enforcer.”²⁸ This is analogous to the Yahwistic myths. Adam and Eve see their nakedness before each other and experience shame. They hear God’s sound and voice and experience guilt. The complementary senses—sight and hearing—are the respective discovery procedures for shame and guilt. Public sexuality—or the exposure of nakedness to the wrong persons in the wrong place—is a trigger for shame, but as the story also shows, it is also a basic part of the human condition and is wholly good in the right place and with the right partner. The first step toward

28. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 219.

civilization also stems from the experience of shame, with the invention of clothing.

In the Yahwistic text the human capacity for moral (and immoral) actions derives from the fateful act of eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This transgressive act seems to awaken self-consciousness, sexuality, the capacity for shame and guilt, and the need for civilization. The consequences of transgression are not wholly negative—as in the theology of original sin in St. Paul or Augustine—but rather the ambivalent world of mature human experience, which exposes everyone to good and evil, honor and shame.

The interplay of sex, honor, and civilization continues throughout the Yahwistic myths, with the exploration of shame and sin in the story of Cain and Abel, the recurrence of nakedness and shame in the story of Noah and his sons, and the ambiguous value of civilization recurring in the inventions by the Cainites and the infamy of the tower of Babel. Civilization is an ambivalent invention, where we eat bread, but by the sweat of our brow.

The Priestly myths present a different orientation to the moral world and the entanglement of sex, honor, and civilization. Where the Yahwistic stories explore the psychology of moral emotions, the Priestly stories derive our moral sensibilities from the condition of being created in God's image. Male and female are aspects of this condition, as is the sexual activity of procreation, which seems to pass the likeness and image to future generations. Civilization is a consequence of being fruitful and multiplying. The moral problems of violence and murder are part of the shared legacy of "all flesh" (including other animals), requiring both the cleansing of the earth in the flood and the laws of the Noachian covenant. The ground for prohibiting human bloodshed is the same as other moral issues: humans are created in God's image. As is the Priestly text's tendency in other domains, moral concepts are systematized around this principle. In some respects, the older, thick moral concepts are "rationalized" (in Max Weber's sense) by priestly intellectuals, yielding a hierarchy of values organized around God's image.²⁹ The Priestly text's moral world is theocentric and, in its way, systematically ordered.

29. On P's tendency toward "disenchantment of the world" (Weber's *Entzauberung der Welt*), see Konrad Schmid, "Von der Gegenwelt zur Lebenswelt: Evolutionäre Kosmologie und Theologie im Buch Genesis," in *Cosmologies et cosmogonies dans la littérature antique*, ed. Therese Fuhrer and Michael Erler (Geneva: Droz, 2015), 70–73.

The modern world owes many of its moral commitments to the Bible, sometimes radically transformed. In the early modern period, political philosophers such as Hugo Grotius translated the Priestly concept of image of God as a core moral principle into the modern concept of universal human rights. From this comes Thomas Jefferson's formulation "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." This is a further rationalization of the Priestly text's moral system. The psychodynamics of Freud, as suggested above, owe a good deal to the Yahwistic text's picture of interior moral struggle. These are (generally unseen) legacies of the moral world of Gen 1–11. There are also aspects of modern morality that are antithetical to the moral practices in Gen 1–11, not only the treatment of women, gay people, and slaves, but also our valorization of civilization and technology (including skyscrapers "with their tops in heaven," and machines that "corrupt the earth"), and the high status attributed to wealth and fame instead of (or in the absence of) personal honor and virtue. Some of these changes are dangerous and threaten our good stewardship of the earth. It is plain to see that there is gain and loss—not a unilinear tale of moral progress—in the changes of moral practices and sensibilities since the world of Genesis.

Defect or Blemish? Cultural-Historical Readings and Lexicography of *mûm* in Leviticus 21:17–24; 22:17–23

Klaus-Peter Adam

The Holiness Code's exclusion of priests with physical impairments from making sacrificial offerings in public is pivotal for the study of disability in ancient Judaism. Saul Olyan writes: "According to Lev 21:17–23, priests with physical 'defects' such as blindness, lameness, damaged genitals, or broken limbs ... constitute a distinct, secondary, stigmatized, and, in part, marginalized category of priests who are not allowed to perform the central, most highly esteemed priestly function according to this source: offering the deity sacrifices."¹ As Olyan notes, the exclusion is in tension with the explicit inclusion of individuals with physical differences in, for instance, the prophetic tradition of Isa 56:3–7.² It also cuts across the ethos in other passages of the Holiness Code, such as the urge to respect and to interact fairly with the blind and the lame in Lev 19:14, and it is apparently in tension with the Priestly text's requirement of circumcision, objectively a physical alteration.³ One solution to the problem of reconciling the exclusion of priests with physical defects in the Holiness Code from public offerings with the protection of lay members with physical disabilities is to credit the differences to their respective social positions. The chapter headings of Lev 17–26 support the distinction between ordinary community members and priests as a genuinely used category for the degrees of holi-

1. Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5, 130 n. 1.

2. See also the contesting of the stigmatization of disability in Deut 27:18; Ps 146:8; on YHWH's special concern for the blind and other dependent sufferers, see Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 11.

3. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 36–38.

ness in the Holiness Code.⁴ Whereas a deaf or blind community member of Lev 19:14 remains a person of respect, Lev 21:18 excludes a blind or lame priest from sacrificial labor (“drawing near to God”), that is, from public appearance on the occasion of an offering. Assumedly, in the honor-shame society of Judah at the time of the Holiness Code, a מום in a priest while exercising a sacrificial role in public would cause a form of dishonor vis-à-vis the deity or vis-à-vis the public. In his search for a native category that would designate the construct of disability, Olyan carefully considers the term מום, used five times in Lev 21:17b, 18a, 21ab, and 23a. He renders it with the context-specific “defects.” I will now briefly ponder the cultural historical developments that inform the category of מום that, in the landscape of an honor-shame society, I suggest be rendered as “blemish.”

מום in the Holiness Code: Leviticus 21:16–24

Embedded in Lev 21:1–22:16, on the personal matters of the sons of Aaron, Lev 21:16–24 lists twelve physical deviations from an ideal. Two aspects inform the specific function and rationale of this list. First, the exclusions concern the priesthood as addressees; second is the position of the peculiar clauses מום/כִּי־מום בּוֹ אֲשֶׁר הִיָּה בּוֹ מום. The relative phrase in 17b, אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בּוֹ מום, serves as the heading for the following list of defects. The short nominal version מום בּוֹ אֲשֶׁר (v. 21a) is placed after the list. A source-critical analysis of the Holiness Code would require a more comprehensive legitimization; suffice it for this purpose to assume that the list’s current form may best be explained as an older core of five pairs of rhythmically, evenly shaped clauses of two-unit lines in verses 18b, 19, 20a, 20b, 21by, and 22aa.⁵ The clauses in verses 17b and 21a are part of the framing verses of a bookending that now complements the fairly evenly structured list of the twelve defects in verses 18b–20.⁶ The passage in verse

4. See the different addressees in the headings (Lev 19:2; 21:1, 17). On the various degrees of holiness, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1718.

5. I follow Karl Elliger in assuming a hypothetical original list. See Elliger, *Leviticus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966), 283. See also the overview in Milgrom suggesting two parallel panels, each introduced with the key term מום in 21:17b, 21a (*Leviticus* 17–22, 1837).

6. Compared with their alleged source (*Vorlage*), the current bookending of the list exhibits six specifics (see Elliger, *Leviticus*, 283). First, the introductory formula closes with a simple לְאָמַר, found in H only in 23:24, 34; but see Lev 4:2; 6:18; 7:23, 29;

18a repeats the principle already stated in verse 17b, before verses 18b–21 follow and extrapolate the specifics, and before the concluding section, verses 21 and 23 repeat “a blemish is in him.” The repetitive, redundant bookending clauses differ from the actual list of the physical defects. They use the taxonomic category, seemingly native to Hebrew, three times in a cumbersome syntactical construction of a relative clause. The statements in Lev 21:17–23 are thus best explained through the assumption of an older source (*Vorlage*) in verses 17–23, potentially with evenly built stichoi (2+2) that were edited. A redaction bookended a list of physical impairments introducing new wording. The laws on the quality of sacrificial animals in Lev 22:17–23 exhibit an analogous arrangement, plausibly explained as the result of redaction.⁷

How would such secondary categorization of physical impairment reveal a cultural shift and a change in thought processes in Second Temple Judaism? The newly introduced category of “blemish” clarifies that the

12:2. Second, even more peculiar is the use of the single addressee Aaron in 23:17a, who as such would not be expected in light of the content; a close parallel is found only in Num 8:2. Third, the idiomatic “a man who” + imperfect corresponds to the syntax in Lev 20:9–21. Fourth, the idiom “from his descent” in 23:17 seems to allude to “his seed” in 21:15. Fifth, “generation for generation” (לדורות) is new, as in 22:3; it is otherwise known from the idiomatic לדרת עולם in Lev 3:17; 6:11; 7:36; 10:9; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 31, 41; 24:3. “To bring bread near to his god” is also found in 21:6, 8 and in 22:25. Finally, the two bookending passages are coherent and repetitive.

7. Elliger labels this redaction Ph³, ascribing the legislation on priests to three subsequently emerging strands (*Leviticus*, 284–87). First, the oldest, Ph², adds the short executive summary in Lev 21:24, mentions Aaron and his sons and all Israelites (see Lev 17:2), and thus creates an inclusion spanning from Lev 17 to 26; Ph² also drafted 21:1–15 and edited Lev 20. Second, emphasis on the sanctity of the priests is the focus of a layer that comes at priestly laws with a strong interest in cult that added an old cultic saying on the twelve physical impairments that exclude a man from priestly office. Ph³ conceptually alters the rhythmic saying about the eligibility for priestly office that now, in its second part, secures the income of those ineligible for priestly office. Hence 21:18b–20*, 21by, 22aa now come to stand in the middle of 21:16–23. Ph³ is also the author of 22:17–23, originally the continuation of 21:16–24. Ph³ highlights the role of the high priest as extant in Ph² in 21:10–15. When he rearranges Lev 20, which was originally the continuation of Ph²’s high priest law, Ph³ inserts a new introduction in 20:1, together with his arrangement of the two priestly laws at the end, and the final closure of the entire unit with 21:24. Potentially he also drafted the law about the “whoring” priestly daughter in 21:9 and 20:27; the identification would be based on stylistic similarities. Third, without any source, 22:1–16 was drafted by another hand, Ph⁴, featuring stylistically to a lesser extent an independent style and language.

listed physical impairments will affect the priest's reputation in public. They dishonor him and, consequently, in the eyes of those redactors, discredit the perception of the cult at large. This assumption of a shift in outside perception of cultic rites performed by priests with physical impairments, with this being seen as dishonorable, gains more plausibility if this public perception ties in with the larger context of Lev 21. The passage in 21:1–24 can be described as the sequel of three subsections, each pondering the requirements for eligibility for priesthood.⁸ The first part, verses 1bβ–15, lists conditions of the personal behavior of priests arranged in three subthemes: handling of dead bodies (vv. 1bβ–6), marriage (vv. 7–8), and the promiscuous daughter (v. 9). Divided in two subsections, verses 10–15 add a passage on the high priest: the handling of deaths (vv. 10–12) and marriage (vv. 13–15). The following passage (21:16–24) reflects on the physical appearance of the priest, with an introduction (vv. 16–17a), exclusion of priests with defects (vv. 17b–20) from bringing sacrifices, and inclusion in the priestly provision.⁹ In this context, the arrangement of the rules in verses 16–24 is of threefold relevance: First, they are a subset in a larger section that distinguishes the requirements on the personal level for ordinary priests, when handling deaths and marriage and in the case of a promiscuous daughter. Second, as an isolated passage, the lexicography substantiates the source-critical distinctions in 21:16–24. Passages that exclude priests from the sanctuary use vocabulary that is largely different from Lev 21:1–15. Third, the arrangement of the passage suggests a late relative dating of these laws on the physical appearance of priests as the second stage after verses 1–15. The oldest stratum of priestly law would be found in verses 1–15, consisting of family laws for priests and high priests.¹⁰ Subsequently, the emphasis on the holiness of the priests prompted an editor to supplement rules relevant to the cult, namely, a list of twelve mostly visible physical

8. Following Elliger, *Leviticus*, 279–280. Notwithstanding this outline, others perceive 21:22–23b as an interpretive addition to the concentric structure of 21:17b–21. See Andreas Ruwe, “Heiligkeitgesetz” und “Priesterschrift”: *Literaturgeschichtliche und rechtssystematische Untersuchungen zu Lev 17,1–26,2* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 264.

9. The theme of 22:1–16 is the consumption of the priestly provision; the passage is broken down into an introduction (22:1–3aα), and exclusion based on impurity (22:3aβ–9) or shifts in status (22:10–16).

10. In his redaction-historical analysis, Elliger ascribes this to Ph² (*Leviticus*, 287).

defects that exclude a man from priestly service in public.¹¹ The editor-writer Ph³ combines 21:18b–20, 21by, and 22aa with rules for priestly income, closing Lev 17–21 with the final clause of 21:24.¹² This source-critical suggestion narrows down the time window and the origin of what in modern terminology could be referred to as disability regulations. They are the work of one particular editor in the Holiness Code, Ph³. His cultural framework suggested that, when acting publicly, priests would have to follow a set ideal of physical appearance. Prior to the work of Ph³, H would not have required priests to meet such conditions of physical integrity in order to serve in public. Isolating the activity of Ph³ thus allows for a discourse in the Holiness Code by way of identifying specific voices concerning the law on priests. At the same time it answers the question of whether the cultural-historical background would “stigmatize and would seek to marginalize disabled persons” by pointing to an apparent shift in the public perception of physical impairments within the Holiness Code in Second Temple Judaism.¹³

Contextualizing this particular shift concerning priestly impairments being seen as dishonorable in the public perception is a multilevel task. One explanation of Ph³’s idealization of the priest’s blameless body is to contextualize it in an honor-shame-discourse. Erhard Gerstenberger points to the analogy of the exclusion of imperfect bodies from the royal court.¹⁴ The encounter of priests with the deity would require physical integrity, which was a widespread requirement for priestly service in numerous ancient cultures surrounding Israel.¹⁵ It is attested for the *bāru*,

11. On the fact that the crushed testicles, while not visible, still constituted a blemish in light of the priestly construct of the deity’s potential to see, see Jeremy Schipper and Jeffrey Stackert, “Blemishes, Camouflage and Sanctuary Service: The Priestly Deity and His Attendants,” *HBAI* 2 (2013): 458–578, esp. 463.

12. The alleged author of 22:1–16 is different from that of the *Vorlage* of 21:16–24 and may be inferred from the key phrase “to eat from the holy” in Lev 21:16 (Elliger, *Leviticus*, 287). The passages in 22:1–16 and the bookending verses around 21:18b–20 belong to the same source, a redaction of H. Mutually referential, these passages, like Ph³, presuppose an identical concept of a correspondence between physical perfection and the bodily perfection of God.

13. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 119.

14. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Das Dritte Buch Mose: Leviticus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 289.

15. The requirement of physical integrity of priests is broadly received in the reception history of Lev 21:17–23; see, for instance, Olyan and Milgrom, pointing to

the diviner, in Mesopotamia,¹⁶ as well as for priests in Athens. For the latter context, Plato's *Laws* 6.759 requires both physical and moral integrity from the priest: "First, as to whether he is sound and true-born, and secondly, as to whether he comes from houses that are as pure as possible, being himself clean from murder and all such offences against religion, and of parents that have lived by the same rule."¹⁷ The critical qualifications of the priest are first their own "cleanliness" (ὁλόκληρος) and their being "legitimate, genuine" (γνήσιος); second, their kin of origin must exhibit the appropriate moral or ethical quality. The conditions include purity (καθαρεύω) and integrity, excluding, for instance, involvement in homicide or comparable matters, such as offenses of a religious nature ("against the divine things"; εἰς τὰ θεῖα). Analogous demands for integrity also apply to the priest's parental generation. Plato construes a hierarchy of criteria for priestly eligibility, holding the moral shortcomings of priests, including their kin, to be more severe, while physical blemishes are only secondarily relevant. Greek tradition highlights the ideal of the priest as an exemplary human with a perfect body in other contexts, too. The priest was supposed to be ἀφελής, that is, he had to exhibit the perfect body mass: "one who has neither too much nor too little in his body."¹⁸ The combination of moral and physical qualities of priests offers a close parallel to priestly law; Lev 21 specifies by way of excluding a מום. LXX renders with the participle μῶμος ("blemish") in Lev 21:17, 18, 21 (2×), a term that denotes in Classi-

the expanded parallels for this requirement in the Qumran texts (Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 110–18; Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1822–23). 1QS^a II, 4–9 and 4Q266 deal with rules specifically for priests. This rule is further complemented by the exclusion of mentally or physically challenged persons from the community; see the discussion in Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 102–10.

16. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1842; Karel van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Mesopotamia* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985), 29. See the references to a Sumerian text requesting physical and moral integrity concerning the installation of an Enlil priest, dated not earlier than the end of the second millennium BCE. See Klaus Grünwaldt, *Das Heiligkeitgesetz Leviticus 17–26: Ursprüngliche Gestalt, Tradition und Theologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 268–70.

17. δοκιμάζειν δὲ τὸν αἰὶ λαγχάνοντα πρῶτον μὲν ὁλόκληρον καὶ γνήσιον, ἔπειτα ὡς ὅτι μάλιστα ἐκ καθαρευουσῶν οἰκῆσεων, φόνου δὲ ἄγνων καὶ πάντων τῶν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα εἰς τὰ θεῖα ἁμαρτανομένων αὐτὸν καὶ πατέρα καὶ μητέρα κατὰ ταῦτα βεβιωκότας. See the reference to the passage in Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1821.

18. Quoted from Marcus M. Kalisch, *Leviticus Part II, Chapters XI–XXVII* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1872), 468.

cal Greek the moral or ethical categories of “blemish” and only in the LXX designates physical “defects.” The syntax of its use in Hebrew suggests that the מום clauses that function as heading and subscript provide a generic category for deviations from an ideal. Yet, unlike the term’s equivalent in Classical Greek, Lev 21 lists physical deviations from an ideal norm. Do these observations also hold for מום when used for impairments of sacrificial animals in Lev 22?

Blemish of Sacrificial Animals Leviticus 22:17–33

Passages in Lev 22:20, 21, 25; Num 19:2; and Deut 15:21 (2×); 17:1 use מום for the sacrificial animal introduced with the idiomatic היה מום ב. Leviticus 22 represents the most elaborate passage among those rules. The Holiness Code embeds it in the wider context of rules about sacrificial animals in 22:17–33. The section breaks down to two subunits, the first of which is devoted to the adequacy of sacrificial animals in 22:17–25; the second, verses 26–33, adds special rules.¹⁹ As it is thematically and lexicographically reminiscent of Lev 21:16–24, Elliger’s source-critical model ascribes the pivotal parts of Lev 22 to the same editor-writer. Ph³, with its particular interest in the cult and related themes,²⁰ embedded a list of twelve physical deviations from the norm as source, introducing 22:17–22, 25b as the new main part of the Holiness Code after having also inserted 21:24 as the closure to Lev 17–21. He intends to secure the adequacy of the sacrificial animals as a way of ensuring the validity of the sacrifice as such. As a consequence, the quality of the sacrificial animal is an integral criterion in this consideration.²¹ Ph³ also mentions the addressees of the passages. He adjusts to the earlier heading of 21:1 (“Aaron and his sons”) the subscript of 21:24 and modifies 21:1 in 22:1 and in 22:17. With these modified headings, Ph³ points to the distinctions between target audiences

19. Elliger, *Leviticus*, 295.

20. While the source-critical differentiation cannot be discussed in detail, a number of aspects support the distinction of this layer from its wider context. For instance, we see in the surrounding context the concentrated use of the root for “desecration” (חלל) in Lev 21:1–22:16: 21:4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, 23; 22:2, 9, 15, 32. This root is not often found in passages of Ph³, except for 21:23; Ph³ uses more frequently “impurity/defilement” (טמא; see 21:1, 3, 4, 11; 22:3, 4, 5, 6, 8).

21. Elliger, *Leviticus*, 298.

when he excludes any “defect/blemish.”²² Leviticus 22:17–25 arranges the three offering types after an introduction:

verse 18a	introduction
verses 18b–20	burnt offerings
verses 21–24	peace offerings
verse 25	offerings from a foreigner

The lexicographic peculiarities of the passage are found in the bookending phrases verses 21bβ and 25b, which frame peace offerings and offerings from a foreigner with the idiomatic **לא יהיה־בו בל־מום**. LXX verse 21bβ renders this idiom almost literally: *πᾶς μῶμος οὐκ ἔσται ἐν αὐτῷ*. In verse 25b, it renders the Hebrew **בם מום ... כי** as *μῶμος ἐν αὐτοῖς οὐ δεχθήσεται ταῦτα ὑμῖν*. It is analogous to the laws for priests in Lev 21, which the Greek homonym *μῶμος* (LXX) designates “defect/blemish.” As for Lev 21, a pivotal question is why “defect/blemish” in the sacrificial laws refers specifically to a physical defect in the sacrificial animal. The six physical defects that the section about the peace offerings in verse 22 lists correspond to those mentioned for the priests in 21:18–21. The arrangement of the six defects follows the row of the twelve defects in Lev 21:18–20: “blind,” “fracture,” “deformity,” “inflammation,” “scab,” and “itch.”²³ This suggests that the law shares the intention of Ph³, namely, to ensure the quality of the offerings in order to ensure their validity. For the clarification of the meaning of *blemish*, it is relevant that these laws on the burnt offering and on the peace offering are about private offerings brought as fulfillment of a vow (**נדבה**, vv. 18, 21) or fulfillment of a freewill offering (**נדבה**, vv. 18, 21). They were brought on behalf of individuals, not on behalf of the collective’s official cult,²⁴ and, consequently, the responsibility for the sacrificial gift is with the donor. Priests would need to credit

22. Elliger, *Leviticus*, 287. Notwithstanding their shared ideal of physical perfection of both priests and animal offerings, the criteria for blemishes of animals and of priests also show differences. Sacrificial animals needed to be “perfect” (**תמים**, Lev 22:19) in order for the offering to be to the liking of the deity; *perfect* was not a term used for priests.

23. Elliger, *Leviticus*, 296; also, on the meaning of the individual defects, see 299.

24. The context of the personal offerings in the temple state of Judah during the Persian period requires clarification. Private gifts to the priests, who, in the Persian system, self-identified as servants of the governor, were naturally perceived in comparison with tribute brought to the governor; see below on Mal 1:6–13.

them (חשב, Lev 7:18) as gifts on behalf of the donor. The sacrificial animal is only valid for the purpose of an offering when it is without physical defect—a “blemish” caused through a physical, not a moral, defect jeopardizes the sacrifice’s efficacy. It expresses a lack of honor toward the deity.²⁵ As in any exchange of goods, the defect of the animal falls back on the donor. In an honor-shame society it disgraces the donor.²⁶ As Pierre Bourdieu writes: “The gift is a challenge which honours the person to whom it is addressed, at the same time putting his point of honour (*nif*) to the test.... Compliance with the rule demands, in each case, that the recipient should be left the chance to respond.”²⁷ The law expresses that the responsibility for the animal’s status is with the donor. Its introductory phrase in verse 18b highlights this: “Every man ... who brings his offering gift.” The animal’s physical status indicates the lack of value of the sacrificial animal, which ultimately demonstrates the lack of honor (כבוד) toward the deity. Malachi 1:6–13 illustrates such lack of honor in the interaction by boldly comparing it to a presentation of a blind, lame, or sick animal as tribute to the governor. A physical defect is not as such dishonorable, yet when an animal with a defect is brought as an offering it becomes dishonorable. “When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not wrong? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not wrong? Try presenting that to your governor; will he be pleased with you or show you favor?—says YHWH of hosts” (Mal 1:8).²⁸ Malachi 1:13aβb compares this to the sac-

25. The devaluation of a deformed sacrificial animal is also of relevance in regard to the third category of offerings: the gift of a sacrificial animal with a physical impairment (“any of these,” 21:25) from a foreigner, which is discredited for the same reason, as the final verdict states: The animal has a “blemish,” which is then substantiated through the additional explanation of the blemish: “because משחתם is in them.” The reading as ambiguous form of both nouns *marring* and *anointing* in Isa 52:14 is an educated guess. See Dominique Barthélémy, “Le grand rouleau d’Isaïe trouvé près de la mer morte,” *RB* 57 (1950): 546–47; William H. Brownlee, “The Servant of the Lord in the Qumran Scrolls I,” *BASOR* 132 (1953): 10–12.

26. On the fundamental mechanisms of gift exchange, see Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reasons for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 1990), especially 18–22, on the gift to the gods. See also Pierre Bourdieu, “The Sense of Honour,” in *Algeria 1960: The Disenchantment of the World; The Sense of Honour; The Kabyle House and the World Reversed: Essays*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 95–132.

27. Bourdieu, “Sense of Honour,” 106.

28. Translations are from NRSV, partly modified.

rifice of the YHWH-priests: “You bring a stolen, lame or diseased animal, you bring that as an offering! Am I to accept this from you?—says YHWH of hosts.” A sacrificial animal’s physical impairment would fall back on the donor, a case that Deut 17:1 and 15:19–23²⁹ equally make. They designate such animals with the merism “the lame and the blind,” a rhetorical trope used to designate any type of what was perceived as a physical impairment. This function as a generic idiom is analogous to the generalizing idiom “[or] any other bad blemish [כל מום רע].” Deuteronomy 15:22 clarifies that instead of their use for a sacrifice, which would compromise the honor of YHWH, animals with a blemish could still be eaten in a communal meal, which would not indicate a lack of honor toward the deity.

In conclusion, the barring of animals with a defect/blemish of physical nature seeks to ensure honor toward the deity. In this respect, the translation of the term מום in the LXX is insightful. As noted above, Lev 21:16, 19, 21; 22:21, 25 (LXX) render the Hebrew word with the homonym μῶμος, a term elsewhere reserved for moral blemish, that is, dishonorable behavior.

29. A number of literary-historical and religious-historical contexts mirror such dishonorable behavior, for instance, Deut 17:1: “You must not sacrifice to YHWH your God an ox or a sheep that has a blemish in it, anything wrong; because it is abhorrent to YHWH your God.” Deuteronomy 17:1 seems not to be the source of Lev 22 (Alfred Cholewiński, *Heiligkeitgesetz und Deuteronomium* [Rome: Biblical Pontifical Institute, 1976], 304), but is a later element of Deuteronomy. For an exilic date of the laws of the officials in Deut 16:18–18:22, see Norbert Lohfink and Georg Braulik, *Deuteronomium* (Würzburg: Echter, 1986), 1992; Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger, “Der deuteronomische Verfassungsentwurf: Theologische Vorgaben als Gestaltungsprinzipien sozialer Realität,” in *Bundesdokument und Gesetz: Studien zum Deuteronomium*, ed. Georg Braulik (Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 110; Reinhard G. Kratz, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 138.

Kept in idiomatic language, Deut 15:19–20 first presents the case of a firstborn animal eaten in the presence of YHWH, then 15:21–23 presents a subcase. See Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 200. The subcase 15:21–23 specifies the rejection of “the lame and the blind”; see this merism in Deut 17:1; 2 Sam 5:6, 8 (2x). See the modification “the lame or the sick” (Mal 1:8, 13), as an inadequate option for a sacrifice. In Jer 31:8, the blind and the lame are in parallel with the pregnant woman and the woman with a young infant. These groups would find it difficult to move fast when traveling long distances. Job 29:15 uses the merism “blind/lame” as a token for the integral needs of the physical functions of an individual. It serves as a prototypical designation of physical challenges, corresponding to the “poor/needy” (אֲבִיּוֹן, 29:16) as a typical vulnerable individual.

While a more detailed source-critical analysis would be necessary to fully clarify the outline of this passage,³⁰ “blemish” in Lev 22:20b, 21b is a generic term to categorize the subsequent list of physical impairments for which the passage does not use the stock merism “lame or blind.” Instead, Lev 22:21b features the nominal clause “there shall be no blemish in it” as a generic heading, referring in its current context to a (traditional) list of six physical deviations.³¹

The Lexicography of מום

How do these readings inform the lexicography of the pivotal Hebrew term מום?³² A caveat is the lack of an etymology of this root and a poten-

30. Multiple factors play into the analysis of the passage. Source-critically, the relationship of the subcase to the main case is not entirely clear: 22:17–18a, introduction; subcase (1) 22:18b–20, burnt offering; subcase (2) 22:21–24, peace offering; subcase (3) offerings by foreigners. The subcases are not on the same levels. Also, 22:21 starts with an interrupting introduction “But if there is a ‘blemish,’ *be it lame or blind*, or any bad blemish, one shall not sacrifice it to YHWH your God.” This interrupts the flow of the case that was previously introduced, supporting, as a consequence, its character as a later insertion, in Elliger’s model pertaining to the redaction of Ph³ in H, or perhaps the author interrupted their own thought process, as writers so often do. Furthermore, some parts seem to be reworked, for instance, subcase 22:24–25a extends to include additional cases of castrated animals, assumedly a sign of further reworking. See a possible reconstruction by Elliger, *Leviticus*, 296.

31. Especially in light of this difference of Lev 22:17–22 from a more frequent idiom, the use of the Greek homonym μῶμος in other contexts in MT (for instance, Deut 32:5) would require consideration, but also deviating renderings for the Hebrew, for instance, ῥύπος (filth, dirt) in LXX Job 11:15, and see below.

32. On the Hebrew lexicography, see Roland K. Harrison and Eugene H. Merrill, “מום,” *NIDOTTE*, 870. Milgrom suggests physical deformity (Deut 17:1; 2 Sam 14:25; Song 4:7; Dan 1:4) to be the original meaning, and “moral deficiencies” as the secondary meaning in Prov 9:7 and Job 11:15, separated from use in the “moral sense” (Deut 32:5; Job 11:15, 31:7; see Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17–22, 1823). See this distinction also in Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, 18th ed., ed. Herbert Donner (Heidelberg: Springer, 2013), 643. Studies in disability prominently discuss this term as a designation for physical disabilities. See David T. Stewart, “Leviticus-Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible and Disability: A Commentary*, ed. Sarah J. Melcher, Mikeal C. Parsons, and Amos Yong (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017), 57, 67, 69. This has bearing on the interpretation of the term in Heb 9:14, with the understanding of Jesus’s offering himself to God in analogy to the sacrificial animal as individual “without blemish,” pointing to his bodily integrity. See

tially related homonym **מַאֲוָמָה**.³³ Proverbs 9:7–12 illustrates that the Hebrew term and its LXX equivalent can denote a moral failure, that is, an imposition of dishonor or a loss of social status based on dishonorable behavior,³⁴ yet Lev 21–22 uses “blemish” in headings that introduce a list of physical differences. In Dan 1:4, a Hellenistic text, **מוֹם** designates both a moral and a physical blemish. Daniel and his friends are “youths in whom is no blemish, [who are] of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with insight, understanding wisdom, and who have the strength

Martin C. Albl, “Hebrews and the Catholic Letters,” in Melcher, Parsons, and Yong, *Bible and Disability*, 450.

33. **מַאֲוָמָה** also lacks an etymology. Whether it may be a cognate and, in selected instances, carry a notion of moral blame or dishonor requires further study. Suffice it to make a few preliminary remarks that may point to a connection. In 1 Sam 12:4–5, in an encounter between Samuel and the people, the prophet declares his innocence and blamelessness in defense of potential accusations of fraud committed against the people. The translation “blame/dishonor” thematically matches this particular context. In 1 Sam 20:26, 39, the secret between David and Jonathan vis-à-vis Saul plays a critical role in the plot. In lieu of rendering **מַאֲוָמָה** as “anything,” the notion “dishonor” highlights David’s blame in the hierarchical setting of the royal court; the ruler would expect his servant at the table, yet refrains from an official declaration of the incident as an official disdain: “But Saul did not declare: ‘A dishonor!’” The words of the boy in 1 Sam 20:39 would then refer to the loss of honor. First Samuel 25:7, 15, 21 prominently feature the term in a quintessential narrative between David and the men of Nabal themed on honor and shame. The men of David attest that “they have not encountered any ‘blemish’ or ‘dishonor’ through men” (25:7); 25:15 repeats the idiom, and see also 25:21. The episode about David as a mercenary of the Philistines in 1 Sam 29:3 uses the term in a statement about David’s blamelessness. In Judg 14:6, **מַאֲוָמָה** seems to designate a physical injury.

34. Notably, Emanuel Tov lists the term under “legal terminology.” See Tov, “The Septuagint Translation of the Torah as a Source and Resource for the Post-Pentateuchal Translators,” in *Handbuch zur Septuaginta/Handbook of the Septuagint*, ed. Eberhard Bons and Jan Joosten (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2016), 3:322. Proverbs 9:7 uses **מוֹם** as a generic category “blemish” without reference to the physical deviation from a norm: “Whoever corrects a non-compliant [לֵץ] wins dishonor [קִלְיוֹן]; who rebukes the wicked: [to] his own shame [מוֹמוֹ]; *μωμήσεται ἑαυτόν*.” The parallelism **מוֹם** קִלְיוֹן supports further the meaning of the former term in the honor-shame context and its meaning “blemish.” The use of **מוֹם** in Prov 9 indirectly confirms the approximate date of origin of Ph³ as layer in H, emerging tentatively at the end of the Persian or in the Hellenistic era. Parts of Prov 1–9 originate as late as the Hellenistic era; for dating in this period with an assumed *terminus ante quem* of Ben Sira at the beginning of the second century BCE, see, for instance, James A. Loader, *Proverbs 1–9* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 9.

to stand in the king's palace" (my trans.). Syntactically similar to Lev 21–22, Dan 1:4 features the introductory clause "in whom is no blemish," a nominal construction, with a negation. Compositionally, as in the case of Lev 21–22, the sentence functions as a heading for the subsequently specified deviation from the ideal of physical appearance, in this case also including personal skillfulness, ethical integrity, and cognitive talents alongside the social reputation necessary to muster the stamina of standing in the ambit of the royal court. Such an unconventional synthesis of physical appearance with personal qualities presents a striking analogue to the use of the term for priests and sacrificial animals. The cumbersome idiom "in whom there is a מום/in whom there is no מום" suggests an analogous combination of a "blemish/defect" as shortfall from a physical and moral ideal.³⁵ The priest's blemish would specifically cause a lack of honor vis-à-vis a further unspecified public. In the case of the sacrificial animal, the moral blemish would refer to the lack of an expression of honor vis-à-vis the deity through the donor, not the animal. Read through the lens of Dan 1:4, the connection in the laws of the Holiness Code between physical damage and other imperfections causing "blemish" emerges against the backdrop of the general aesthetics that perceive beauty as one aspect of the ideal of a good and beautiful person analogous to Dan 1:4. Classical Greek writers designate this ideal as *kalokagathia*.³⁶ Deeply rooted in Greek culture, the concept of physical beauty in general is rooted in the Greek ideal of the human body. The ephemeral human body was seen in contrast to the "super-body" of the gods, a comparison that marks the human body "with the seal of limitation, deficiency, and incompleteness, ... that make it a sub-body. This sub-body cannot be understood except in reference to what it presupposes: corporeal plenitude, a super-body, the body of the gods."³⁷ The facets of the meaning of Hebrew מום relate to

35. Philo confirms this interpretation, reading the rules about physical perfection as symbols for a perfect soul (*Spec.* 1.80). Likewise Paul Heinisch suggests that the physically ideal state is referring to the moral integrity of the priests. See Heinisch, *Das Buch Leviticus übersetzt und erklärt* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1935), 99.

36. Walter Jaeger condenses the concept as "the chivalrous ideal of the complete human personality, harmonious in mind and body, foursquare in battle and speech, song and action." See Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 13. See, on beauty and perfection, Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 21–22.

37. Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Mortals and Immortals," in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 31.

some extent to the meaning associated with and derived from the Greek term and the underlying concept of physical beauty. A notable difference is that in Classical Greek, the particular verb is limited to the designation of moral imperfection. Outside the LXX, *μομάομαι* with the meaning in the middle “to blame, reprove” does not denote a physical defect. The participle *μῶμος* (“blamed, reproven, dishonored”) refers to the social notion of a person lacking honor or esteem and consequently being shamed, a devaluation that by default follows a public verdict in a conflict settlement. When reading the laws about priests and sacrificial animals in Lev 21–22 against the backdrop of the ideal of *kalokagathia*, however, it becomes apparent that they add a key aspect of the cultural context from a time when LXX uses the term to designate both physical and moral qualities. Historically, the origin of the set expression of *kalokagathia* in the second half of the fifth century BCE in Athens³⁸ is compatible with an influence on the biblical use in late Persian and Hellenistic times. The independent redaction-critical reflection on מום ascribed to Ph³ in the Holiness Code substantiates this reconstruction. Different from the remainder of the Holiness Code, Ph³ inserts the synthetic view of physical and moral failure that renders a priestly individual “defective” or “blemished,” lacking honor and thus being unable to approach the altar. A “blemish” of a sacrificial animal would render it part of a dishonorable act and as improper for sacrifice.

A further explanatory level of מום supports the influence of the cultural-historical maxim of *kalokagathia* in the Holiness Code. The translator’s choice of the Greek homophonic equivalent of the Hebrew root is significant. The above evidence suggests that מום is a loanword in Hebrew created as a homonym of its Greek equivalent. It is the phonetic transliteration of the Greek *μῶμος*, “shamed/blemished,”³⁹ an adjective also found

38. In Athens, it first appears with the Sophists; the supposed origin of the form is in Sparta, where it was used to describe outstanding military achievements. Under the influence of Socrates, the term took on an ethical meaning, and Aristotle interpreted it as a comprehensive moral and civic virtue attainable only by a social elite. See Mischa Meier, “Kalokagathia,” *BNP* 7:9–10; Félix Bourriot, *Kalos Kagathos—Kalogagathia: D’un terme de propaganda de sophistes à une notion sociale et philosophique* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1995), 113–21.

39. Friedrich Hauck, “μῶμος, ἄμωμος, ἀμώμητος,” *TDNT* 4:820–30. The transcription of Hebrew words in the LXX has been the subject of much scholarship. See most recently the overview of Katrin Hauspie, “Transcription of Hebrew Words,” in Bons and Joosten, *Handbuch zur Septuaginta*, 172–81, with bibliography. Another

in Aramaic. Lacking other cognates and without etymology in Semitic languages, its frequent use in the Holiness Code is one example of the relevance of Greek language and culture in the rewritten Torah at a point in time when the terminology in Lev 21:17–24; 22:17–22, 25b and Deut 23:2 originated. The blatant contrast in the subject matter between these passages and references such as Lev 19:14 or Isa 56:1–8 from the prophetic tradition further substantiates the above conclusion. The discourse about the physical and mental differences of priests and sacrificial animals takes place in the late Persian period. At this point in time, Isa 56:1–8 would represent the inclusive heritage of Judean prophetic tradition, while a layer in the Holiness Code, Ph³, would subscribe to the ideal of *kalokagathia* typical for the time and found in other contexts, such as Dan 1:4 and Song 4:7.⁴⁰ The suggested influence relates to the fact that in the Achaemenid period, and more fully during the Hellenistic period, Judah found itself increasingly exposed to practices associated with foreign cultures,⁴¹ to which it reacted with remarkable diversity. It perceived some foreign traditions to be in tension with Yahwism, while absorbing others, such as the concept of *kalokagathia* for priests and animal offerings in the Holiness Code, for which it coined a Hebrew term based on a Greek word.⁴² By creating a loanword for this subject matter, this term denotes the physical “defects” of priests (Lev 21:16–24) and sacrificial animals (22:17–23). At the same time

Greek loanword or allusion to a Greek equivalent in Prov 31:27 is the term for wisdom צופיה (“she looks”). See Arndt Meinhold, “Proverbs, Book Of,” in *Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 10:475.

40. See Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 5. In 2 Sam 14:25, מוֹם designates Absalom’s overall physical beauty with the merism “from his feet to his head,” suggesting it to be a physical rather than an ethical descriptor. The setting of Absalom’s description in 2 Sam 14:25 as a potential successor to the royal throne adds to this notion of his embodiment of the ideal of the beautiful (יָפֵה) an honorable man in the sense of *kalokagathia*, an interpretation substantiated through LXX’s rendition with μῶμος. Second Peter 2:13 uses the term with the meaning “insult,” for men thought to be a disgrace to society.

41. For instance, H positions itself in Lev 18:22, 20:13 in a separatist move, in contrast to practices associated with Greek culture, such as male-male sexual interaction, which was also condemned in the Persian Avesta epos. See Thomas Römer and Loyse Bonjour, *L’homosexualité dans le Proche-Orient ancien et la Bible*, EssBib 37 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2005), 48.

42. While there may be forerunners of this concept, the allusion to Greek terminology points more narrowly to this cultural concept.

in Proverbs, the participle *μῶμος*, and its phonetic equivalent in Hebrew, *מוֹם*, describe a despicable character, similar to “shame” in classical Greek, as the result of reproving or blaming someone for a particular behavior, as the primary meaning of *μομαδομαι*.⁴³

This brief cultural-historical reading has yielded two results. It isolated the context of one specific layer in the Holiness Code, which, assumedly in the late Persian period, marginalized a category of priests by way of excluding them from the public offerings by creating the Hebrew term *מוֹם*.⁴⁴ This thus illustrates the relatively specific time period for this development of a Semitic taxonomy for disability in Second Temple Judaism in the priestly tradition. The term was subsequently widely accepted in Hellenistic Judaism to denote the lack of honor caused through the deviation from an ideal.⁴⁵ Second, my analysis demonstrated that the

43. See Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden: Brill 2015), 1375. The deviation of the use of a Greek term in LXX would need to be established based on the meaning of the word in Greek texts. See Jan Joosten, “The Vocabulary of the Septuagint and Its Historical Context,” in *Septuagint Vocabulary: Pre-history, Usage, Reception*, ed. Jan Joosten and Eberhard Bons (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 3.

44. This will hopefully inspire further nuances when dating the various layers of H. Suggestions for dating of H have varied from a preexilic origin (Knohl, Milgrom, tentatively also Joosten), to an Achaemenid-era origin as late Priestly composition (among many others, Nihan). See Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1361–64; Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17–26*, VTSup 67 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 167; Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 546.

45. See Cant 4:7; Dan 1:4; Sir 20:24 (23) and the Dead Sea Scrolls that perpetuate the biblical ideas of Lev 21–22. See Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 101–18; Laie B. Miras, “*מוֹם*,” *Theologisches Wörterbuch zu den Qumrantexten*, ed. Heinz-Josef Fabry and Ulrich Dahmen (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 3:595. For instance, 4Q271 3, 7–9 dovetails with the above result for a combination of physical defect and moral blemish. It suggests that a father would declare to his future son-in-law his daughter’s “blemishes,” i.e., her decrease in honor. This raises the interpretive question of whether a physical blemish can be distinguished from a figurative one (see Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 110). The remainder of the fragment refers to sexual transgressions, and, as a consequence, the “blemish” of the daughter is the result of a physical encounter with an inappropriate partner. Its effect is best interpreted as lack of honor. Suffice it to add one extension of the term in 1QM VII, 4–6 beyond priests to exclude anyone with a disability from entering the camp. The concept of dishonor in 1QM shares the

ideal of the perfect human body that informs Lev 21:16–24 emerged against the backdrop of an honor-shame discourse at a particular point in time. In this discourse, the Priestly text's countercultural construct of circumcision as ritually and socially enabling prescribed body procedure intrinsically challenges the concept of *kalokagathia*. This tension within the Priestly text's version of Judaism points ahead to a fault line that becomes more fully visible in Judaism's second-century BCE cultural involvement with Hellenism.⁴⁶

term's expression of lack of honor, which could be the result of a variety of reasons. The metaphoric use of "dishonor/blemish" in these Qumran writings thus mirrors the concept of *kalokagathia*, in which an increase of blame would affect both physical and moral qualities. The above reconstruction challenges any general understanding of wholeness and completeness as the paradigmatic qualities in biblical thought that were characteristic *throughout* all of biblical Judaism for the concept of holiness. See, for instance, a universal assumption of a symmetry between wholeness and holiness in Mary Douglas's reconstruction: "The perfect physical specimens point to the perfectly bounded temple, altar, and sanctuary." See Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," in *Myth, Symbol and Culture*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Norton, 1971), 77; see also Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible*, 93.

46. See the Hellenists' reconstruction of the foreskin in order to conform with a Hellenistic ideal when engaging in the games in the *gymnasion* under Antiochus IV (1 Macc 1:15; Josephus, *A.J.* 12.241).

The Faithful Priest of 1 Samuel 2 and Priestly Lineage Relationships

Stephen L. Cook

God challenges Eli in 1 Sam 2:35 that he will replace him and his priestly house with a faithful priest. Immediately we encounter here priesthoods in tension within Israelite religion. Names such as Eli and idioms such as “faithful priest” interconnect with competing ancient Israelite priest-hoods. Thus, the Deuteronomistic History attests to competing priestly lines, including the Zadokite Aaronides of Jerusalem and the Elide Lev-ites of Shiloh.¹ At points, it correlates the rise and fall of priest groups with this prophetic oracle in 1 Samuel. Thus, it contains texts such as 1 Sam 22:18–23 and 1 Kgs 2:27 that point to ancient understandings of the oracle’s meaning for societal and ritual politics.² Reexamination of these

1. I introduce nomenclature for two of Israel’s priestly lines on which I later expand. On the Zadokite priesthood, see below. Eli’s line at Shiloh was an inner-Levite lineage, which lost power at the town’s destruction (Ps 78:60; Jer 7:12; 26:6; Finkelstein) and at the massacre at Nob (1 Sam 22:11, 18–23). See Israel Finkelstein, “Shiloh,” *ABD* 5:1069–72; Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel*, ANEM 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 23–25. The Aaronide genealogy of the Elides assumed in 1 Chr 24:3 (which connects the Elide Ahimelech to Aaron’s son Ithamar) is an artificial construct, a focused grafting of Eli’s line into Ithamar’s branch of Aaron’s genealogy (see below). Apparently, the Chronicler tidied up the history to remove the scandal of officiants not descended from Aaron sacrificing at Shiloh. The Elides and their town Anathoth are also claimed as Aaronide in Josh 21:18; 1 Chr 6:60 (MT 6:45), but again this is a late bit of systematizing. See Mark Leuchter, *The Levites and the Boundaries of Israelite Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 73 n. 60, 110.

2. Roland de Vaux sketches the story of Eli’s line from Shiloh, through its destruction, through the murders at Nob (1 Sam 22:11, 18–23), and on to Abiathar’s alliance with David (1 Sam 22:20–23). See his *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 359. On the history and politics of Abiathar’s career, con-

texts is a desideratum. Some long-held scholarly interpretations of them (of 1 Kgs 2:27 in particular) are quite problematic. In particular, we need to ask whether the consensus view that 1 Kgs 2:27 refers back to 1 Sam 2's oracle about a faithful priest is correct or not (see 1 Sam 2:35). Let us begin with the faithful priest oracle in 1 Sam 2.

"I will raise up for myself a faithful priest," God declares to Eli after announcing the downfall of his house in 1 Sam 2:35; "he shall go in and out before my anointed one forever."³ Who is this faithful priest who will supplant Eli's line? Scholars commonly assume he is Priest Zadok.⁴ Along with Abiathar, Zadok was one of King David's two chief clerics. He was head of a Jerusalem-based priestly lineage (1 Kgs 4:2; 1 Chr 6:8–15; Ezek 40:46; 44:15; 48:11–12; Ezra 3:2).⁵ The longevity of his clerical dynasty, the Zadokite priesthood, seemingly fits the language of perpetuity in 1 Sam 2.

Julius Wellhausen defended what has become the classic argument to this effect, namely, that 1 Kgs 2:27 describes the fulfillment of 1 Sam 2:35 and its prophecy of a faithful priest.⁶ He argued that the text identified Zadok's ascension as sole chief priest in Jerusalem as the prophecy's

sult especially Leuchter, *Levites and the Boundaries*, 109–14, and the bibliography cited therein.

3. All biblical quotations in this essay are from the NRSV unless specifically noted otherwise. I cite a variety of translations, including the CEB, NABR, NJPS, NET, and NLT.

4. See Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 203; George B. Caird, "The First and Second Books of Samuel: Introduction and Exegesis," *IB* 2:862–63; and the bibliography in nn. 10–11, 19 below.

5. For arguments about the origins of the Zadokite priesthood, see Leuchter, *Levites and the Boundaries*, 109–14; Stephen L. Cook, *Ezekiel 38–48: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 22B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 17–18. The Zadokites were *not* the only Aaronide lineage with altar rights (although Ezek 40–48 upholds exactly that ideal). Thus, according to Ezra 8:2, the priest Ezra journeyed from Babylonia to Jerusalem accompanied by priests with altar privileges of two different lineages. One, presumably a Zadokite, was a descendent of Eleazar (through Phinehas). The other, Daniel, was a descendant of Aaron through Ithamar (also see Neh 10:6).

6. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, SPRTS (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 126. Also consult, e.g., Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, NAC 21A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 304, and the bibliography in their n. 235.

denouement. Zadok's line must be God's approved priesthood, destined to be an enduring dynasty. This understanding makes little sense.

As Deut 18:1–8 attests, those traditionists aligned with Deuteronomistic thinking and theology supported the Levitical lineage and upheld the priesthood of all Levi's tribe.⁷ They denied all alternative hierarchical claims of priestly groups wishing to reserve altar rites for themselves. Indeed, Levites themselves arguably played a major role in the composition of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History.⁸ And Eli's house, condemned in 1 Samuel, is none other than this circle of authors, "the Mushite priesthood, rooted in Moses, identified with the Levites, and embodied subsequently in the person of Abiathar."⁹ Would Deuteronomism's Levitical tradents, embodied in the person of an Elide priest, really have understood Zadok as the ideal priest—Zadok, the founder of a rival priesthood originally based in Hebron, not Shiloh?

Richard Friedman puts the problem this way:

1 Samuel 2–3 recounts the subordination of a priesthood that formerly was preeminent to another—which turns out to be the subordination of Abiathar to Zadok, which is then made explicit in 1 Kings 2:27. For those of us who see the Deuteronomistic historian as connected to the non-Zadokite (Mushite) priesthood, the question has been: why would someone from that community develop this story that is critical of his own priestly ancestors?¹⁰

7. See, e.g., Stephen L. Cook, "Those Stubborn Levites: Overcoming Levitical Disenfranchisement," in *Levites and Priests in History and Tradition*, ed. Mark A. Leuchter and Jeremy M. Hutton, AIL 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 162–63.

8. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 233 n. 62, 234; Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 17–18, ch. 1 n. 36; Cook, "Those Stubborn Levites," 157 n. 4; Leuchter, *Levites and the Boundaries*, 28 n. 113, ch. 5, esp. pp. 157–64. John O. Akao defends the specific argument that the Deuteronomic movement originated with the descendants of Abiathar in their opposition to the Zadokite priesthood of Jerusalem. See Akao, "In Search of the Origin of the Deuteronomic Movement," *IBS* 16 (1994): 174–89.

9. Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Int (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 23. "Mushites" were Levites tracing decent to Moses (see Judg 18:30), with major shrines at Shiloh and Dan. See Leuchter, *Levites and the Boundaries*, 73, and n. 13 below.

10. Richard E. Friedman, *The Hidden Book in the Bible* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 320.

Answering this key question begins to clarify the relationship of priest-hoods in the Deuteronomistic History.

Several scholars have attempted an end run around this problem of an anti-Levite oracle lodged firmly within a pro-Levitical scriptural composition. They interpret the oracle of the faithful priest in 1 Samuel as a non-Deuteronomistic addition to its context. Many, such as Walter Brueggemann, judge it to be a polemical interpolation, “an intrusive allusion to a later priesthood.” Paul Hanson states that 1 Sam 2:27–36 is “a Zadokite addition to the history of Eli” intended “to discredit the lineage of their Levitical opponents.”¹¹ Friedman goes beyond the idea of a simple polemical addition, identifying the oracle instead as an integral part of an extensive “hidden book” lying within the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History. The “hidden book,” it appears, is oriented on the Yahwistic source,¹² thus on the Jerusalemite temple theology of Aaronides and Zadokites.

These positions do not really remove the interpretive challenge of our oracle. Such explanations fail to grapple with how, as Mark Leuchter has aptly observed, our anti-Eli speech is deeply indebted to the Deuteronomists. In particular, it develops the figure of the faithful priest within the contours of a pro-Mushite Mosaic typology.¹³ What is more, they

11. Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 24; Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 224. De Vaux also argued that 1 Sam 2:27–36 was added by “someone from the Zadokite camp” (*Ancient Israel*, 376–77). So too, Jon D. Levenson writes that this text was redone at a later time to reflect Zadokite aspirations. See Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*, HSM 10 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1986), 155 n. 44. See also Richard D. Nelson, “The Role of the Priesthood in the Deuteronomistic History,” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 186.

12. See Friedman, *Hidden Book*, 320.

13. Mark Leuchter, “Samuel: A Prophet like Moses or a Priest like Moses?,” in *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History: Portrait, Reality, and the Formation of a History*, ed. Mignon R. Jacobs and Raymond F. Person Jr., AIL 14 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 155, 157. The ideal priest at Shiloh fits a Mosaic pattern. For example, the key terms *faithful* and *house* in 1 Sam 2:35 fit the Mosaic typology in Num 12:7 (E). So too, the pattern of call-answer-thunder in both 1 Sam 7:9–10 and Exod 19:19 (E) sets Samuel parallel to Moses (Leuchter, *Levites and the Boundaries*, 83, 101). Jeremiah 15:1 pairs Moses and Samuel as preeminent covenant mediators. Also see below.

do not account for why the Deuteronomists authenticated the oracle at 1 Kgs 2:27, where they utilize it within their characteristic proof-from-prophecy rhetoric.

Even if, against all likelihood, the anti-Elide oracle of 1 Sam 2 had its origins outside Deuteronomistic tradition, interpreters must still account for how the Deuteronomistic History affirms the present deployment of the text. Editors allied with Levitical tradition have preserved an affirmation of God's judgment on a Levitical house, the Mushite Elides of Shiloh, and have later authenticated it at 1 Kgs 2:27. What possessed them?

Apparently, disenfranchised Levites, though entirely sympathetic with Abiathar, their Davidic-era leader, saw no point in denying their lineage's fateful history. Shiloh was destroyed, Abiathar exiled, and the Levitical line given the cold shoulder at Jerusalem.¹⁴ It appears that they were willing to let their forebears shoulder culpability for all of this. In fact, according to Jer 7:12, 14; 26:6, 9, Scripture's preeminent Levitical prophet—Jeremiah, a Mushite relative of Abiathar and a key proponent of Deuteronomy—freely acknowledged God's judgment on Shiloh.¹⁵ The Levitical composers of the Asaphite psalms did so also, accepting God's judgment and their responsibility (Ps 78:60–64).¹⁶ Shiloh surely suffered judgment, but this did not erase its onetime preeminence as God's shrine (Ps 78:60; Jer 7:12). At Judg 18:31 the Deuteronomists affirm this preeminence. The Chronicler later follows suit by assigning an Aaronide priestly pedigree to Eli's house, including Abiathar.¹⁷ In a similar move, Chronicles grafts Samuel, who was surely originally an Ephraimite, into the company of the descendants of Levi and Kohath (1 Chr 6:25, 28 [MT 6:10, 13]; contrast 1 Sam 1).¹⁸

14. On Shiloh's destruction, see Ps 78:60; Jer 7:12, 14; 26:6 and n. 1 above. On evidence of tensions between Solomon and Levite groups, see Leuchter, *Levites and the Boundaries*, 76, 111–14.

15. On Jeremiah as a Levite, see, e.g., Mark Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah* 26–45 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 265–66 n. 19.

16. On the Levitical identity of the Asaphite psalmists, see Stephen L. Cook, *The Social Roots of Biblical Yahwism*, StBibLit 8 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 53–57, 236–39, and the literature cited there.

17. See the discussion in n. 1 above; consult also de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 388, 396; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 208. Through such moves, Levenson writes, some priests “previously excluded” are able to be “legitimized” (*Theology of the Program*, 133).

18. Thus, as de Vaux writes, Samuel posed a problem for the Chronicler, since at first blush he appeared to be an Ephraimite (1 Sam 1), but he wore the priest's loin-

Though willing to take responsibility for Shiloh's divine judgment, Levites such as Jeremiah and the Asaphites were no defeatists or fatalists. They were far from resigned to accepting God's judgment on Shiloh as a permanent demotion or rejection. God had not wiped his hands clean of Elides or Mushites, never mind of Levites as an entire tribe. There is no evidence that any such understanding of 1 Sam 2 was ever widespread in antiquity. I want to flag my particular disagreement with James Sparks that the Elides still suffered ubiquitous condemnation at the time of the Chronicler.¹⁹

Look again at 1 Kgs 2:27, since on close examination the text is nowhere near as permanently damning of the Mushites as many scholars assume. Rather, 1 Kgs 2:27, by announcing a definitive denouement of God's judgment on Shiloh, actually liberates future Mushites for reinvestiture. It anchors the judgment in past history—that is, in Solomon's era—and thus opens up the prospect of rapprochement. As Richard Nelson stresses, the prophecy-fulfillment pairs of the Deuteronomistic History “focus on a single act of fulfilment.”²⁰ The fulfillment accomplished, history may move on. And move on it did.

As early as 1 Kgs 11:29, a representative of the Levite group of Shiloh, Ahijah the Shilonite, appears as an authorized agent of God. That the gentilic “Shilonite” connects him to the Elide Mushites is confirmed by 1 Kgs 14:4, which speaks of Ahijah's house at Shiloh. Though not specifically mentioning Mushites, 2 Chr 29:34 celebrates Levites of Hezekiah's time as more conscientious than Aaronides. Operative about a century later, Jeremiah, a Mushite relative of Abiathar, is recognized in the Hebrew Scriptures (including by a substantive Deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah's book)

cloth (1 Sam 2:18) and offered sacrifices (1 Sam 7:9; 9:13; 10:8; see de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 361). Such genealogical flexibility could have allowed other postexilic non-Eleazarites to become legitimate altar priests. As we have seen (n. 5), the Ithamar lineage appears to have remained an active priestly line through the time of Ezra's return from Babylonia.

19. James T. Sparks, *The Chronicler's Genealogies: Towards an Understanding of 1 Chronicles 1–9*, AcBib 28 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 79, 82. As I am about to argue, a key link in Sparks's train of thought is invalid, namely, that God's faithful priest arose from the dominant Aaronide line of Eleazar and Phinehas.

20. Nelson, “Role of the Priesthood,” 186. Nelson notes in addition how the Dtr pares down and simplifies 1 Samuel's originally complex oracle, so that it becomes a “simple expulsion from priestly office” (“Role of the Priesthood,” 185). After 1 Sam 2, we hear no more about a coming absence of old men (1 Sam 2:31) or exclusion from Israel's prosperity (2:32). The vitriol of the original judgment fades considerably.

as a divine agent in Judah's final several decades. In postexilic times, Malachi, we shall see, advocated a distinctly Levitical understanding of 1 Sam 2's promised faithful priest.

Let us return to the actual content of 1 Kgs 2:27, to what it says and to what it does not say. Wellhausen was correct that the text cites 1 Sam 2:30–36, finding a partial fulfilment of the oracle in the events of Solomon's purge. It declares a part of the oracle fulfilled in Solomon's dismissal of Abiathar, heir of Eli's priestly house.²¹ That the text defers to Zadok and elevates his line, however, is nowhere near as clear. In fact, on closer inspection, this oft-repeated conclusion proves illusional.

Zadok is conspicuous by his absence from 1 Kgs 2:27. Solomon, the Deuteronomistic History *elsewhere* acknowledges, did retain Zadok as chief priest (see 1 Kgs 2:35), but that act is described separately from any announcements of fulfillment of the oracles of 1 Samuel.²² Indeed, the Deuteronomists nowhere proclaim that God raises up Zadok in fulfillment of these oracles as the prophesied faithful priest. Rather, they leave open the question of who exactly takes up that identity. As I shall argue, this move is likely intentional. It allows for the faithful priest to be a *role* rather than an individual. Such an ideal role may be ongoing, open for occupation in any given generation. Having such a role in place within Israel may be deemed necessary by the Deuteronomists for the safeguarding of the ongoing covenant between God and Israel.

Operative prior to Solomon and Zadok, the figure of Samuel presents itself as the Deuteronomistic History's first faithful priest. The man of God's oracle to Eli in 1 Sam 2:27–36, as Leuchter observes, represents a Deuteronomistic expansion of an original prophecy given by God to Samuel in chapter 3.²³ The Deuteronomists likely moved their version of

21. On Abiathar's lineage, see Cook, "Those Stubborn Levites," 162 n. 16, citing Hutton. Notably, Abiathar is not killed but sent to Anathoth, where his priestly descendants and relatives apparently flourished for centuries (see Jer 1:1). That Abiathar was not the sole Eliide survivor of Shiloh and Nob is evinced, as we have seen, by Ahijah the Shilonite.

22. Nelson, "Role of the Priesthood," 186: "Mention of Zadok's appointment as priest is saved until 1 Kgs 2:35b, almost as an afterthought." Again, Nelson observes: "Even after he is deposed, Abiathar remains beside Zadok in the list of 1 Kgs 4:4, after which Zadok himself disappears. Zadok's total absence from the temple construction and dedication is striking" ("Role of the Priesthood," 186).

23. Mark Leuchter, *Samuel and the Shaping of Tradition*, BibRef (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 38. Leuchter notes that the original prophecy to

this oracle to its present position, back prior to Samuel's election as God's faithful priest, in order to emphasize that it predicts *him*, not some future priest such as Zadok.

At 1 Sam 3:20 the Deuteronomistic History confirms this identification, speaking of *Samuel* stepping up to the plate as God's faithful one. The pertinent term in 3:20 is נֶאֱמָן, the selfsame Hebrew participle appearing in 1 Sam 2:35.²⁴ There is something of a play on words here, with 1 Sam 3:20 affirming that Samuel is both a "trustworthy" servant of God (NRSV, CEB, NABR, NJPS) and one "confirmed" as God's servant (NET, NLT). It is no coincidence that the same paronomasia occurs in 1 Sam 2:35. Further, the Deuteronomistic History uses the diction "faithful one" sparingly—only of Samuel and David—so the clue is weighty. Samuel's identification with the role of faithful priest is further buttressed by his mother's dedication of him to the Lord permanently, בְּלִי־יָמִים (1 Sam 1:28). This phrasing reverberates with identical language in our oracle at 1 Sam 2:35.

As Samuel takes up his role, the narrative portrays him as the priestly successor of Shiloh's Elides. With Shiloh destroyed by the Philistines, he founds a new sanctuary at Mizpah, where he performs libation rites, enacts a fast, and sacrifices (1 Sam 7:6–9).²⁵ Later, at a second assembly there (1 Sam 10:17), he draws up terms for priest-king relations to be stored in the shrine (10:25). As the story continues, texts such as 1 Sam 8:1–3 continue to characterize Samuel as the new Eli. The Chronicler later understood him as such (1 Chr 6:22–23, 28).

To gain a wider perspective on the overall Levitical and Deuteronomic understanding of God's ideal, faithful priest, it is instructive to turn outside the Deuteronomistic historical work to the postexilic prophecies of Malachi. In the midst of the Persian era, this late priestly prophet operated in the midst of major conflict between priestly houses.²⁶ He articulated

Samuel fulfilled its own prediction of a faithful priest by raising up Samuel "to the helm of the cult."

24. See Levenson, *Theology of the Program*, 155 n. 44; Leuchter, *Samuel and the Shaping*, 38; Gershon Hepner, *Legal Friction: Law, Narrative, and Identity Politics in Biblical Israel*, StBibLit 78 (New York: Lang, 2010), 365.

25. Leuchter, *Levites and the Boundaries*, 83, 100 n. 8; Ann E. Killebrew, "Israel during the Iron Age II Period," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant: C. 8000–332 BCE*, ed. Margreet L. Steiner and Ann E. Killebrew, OH (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 595–60.

26. As Saul M. Olyan points out, Malachi treats blemished temple sacrifices as a

an understanding of the conflict oriented directly to Deuteronomy and related texts, including 1 Samuel. Malachi 2:10–16, his third disputation, begins in verse 10 by zeroing in on the betrayal of a certain covenant of Levi, which he previously cited in Mal 2:4, 8—a covenant of most interest for the present investigation.

In Mal 2:10, the prophet holds both sons of Aaron and sons of Levi, including himself (note the pronoun “we”), accountable to a single priestly covenant, which God calls “my covenant with Levi.” The prophet finds it natural to enforce this covenant in the present struggle between priestly houses, since in Deuteronomic thinking the category “Levites” is inclusive of the sons of Aaron and Zadok.²⁷ According to Malachi’s sources, the Aaronide altar priests whom he indicts share a common vocation with their Levite brothers (Mal 3:3; see Deut 18:1; 33:10b; Josh 21:4; see also Deut 17:9, 18; 21:5; etc.).

Malachi demands his fellow clerics clean up their act and behave like good siblings, mutual sons of “one father” (Mal 2:10). If they do not reform themselves, they will be purged in God’s coming apocalyptic smelting and refinement of all of Levi’s descendants (3:2–3). A time is imminent, Malachi announces, when God will scrub all priests clean, making them fit for altar ministry. Cleansing all filth away with the strongest of lye soaps, God will set Judah and Jerusalem permanently right.

The temple priesthood of Malachi’s time is slated for apocalyptic purging (Mal 3:3–4), but not utter termination. Although Malachi is aghast at the altar priests’ profanation of the Levi covenant (Mal 2:10), he stops short of declaring that covenant void. According to Mal 2:4, the Lord desires the Levi covenant to “hold” (NRSV). That is, God wants it to “endure” (NJPS,

serious source of defilement, which severely ups the ante in contemporary tensions between clerical groups. See Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 105.

27. Thus Malachi’s source in Jer 33:18 speaks of “Levitical priests.” Here, the “priests” who “minister” (שרת) are Levi’s descendants in general (לויים). All are enfranchised. Tellingly, Isa 66:21 uses the terms *priests* and *Levites* found in Jer 33:21 in a notably alternative manner. *Priests* is an individual subject in Isa 66:21; priests *and* Levites serve God as distinctive groups. A double dative goal marked by two *lameds*, as here, is biblically attested elsewhere, in Mic 1:6. Note that some Hebrew manuscripts and the Peshitta read “priests *and* Levites” in Isa 66:21 (with *waw*); see the LXX and Vulgate (also see 2 Chr 5:5 LXX). If Third Isaiah were speaking of “Levitical priests” (see NJPS), the Hebrew phrasing would be לכהנים הלויים, as in Jer 33:18.

NABR).²⁸ The divine will, God declares, is to “affirm my intention to maintain my covenant with Levi” (NJB).

As a faithful Levite,²⁹ Malachi trusts in God’s promise of an enduring priestly covenant with his clerical lineage. To which scriptural texts do we turn to find this priestly covenant?³⁰ Might 1 Sam 2 be at issue? We shall pursue that idea, but let us look first at Jer 33:17–22, which specifically guarantees Levi’s line and its priestly role to be secure for “all days,” בְּלִי־הַיָּמִים. Surely here we have reference to the “covenant with Levi” to which Malachi refers. But note also that this is the very diction we have seen in both the oracle of the faithful priest and in Samuel’s assumption of that role.

Here lies a way forward in interpreting the faithful priest of 1 Sam 2:35 as an ideal role open for occupation in each era. When we closely examine Jer 33:17–22, the covenant with Levi, we find another strong parallel with 1 Sam 2:35 alongside language of “all days.” Both Jer 33:17–22 and 1 Sam 2:35 address not simply the promise of a faithful priesthood but, in fact, a divine assurance that encompasses two great Israelite institutions, one sacerdotal and the other monarchic. This double assurance that both God’s appointed clerics and monarchs will endure “all days” interconnects the two texts.

The vocabulary of 1 Sam 2:35 describes faithful priestly service firmly established in Samuel, established for בְּלִי־הַיָּמִים. The vocabulary must have

28. The *BHS* critical apparatus proposes substituting ח for ה and reading “preserve,” “revive,” instead of “continue to exist.”

29. See Stephen L. Cook, “Malachi,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2:34–41.

30. Scholars rightly point to texts such as Deut 18:5; 33:8–11; and Jer 33:17–22. For present purposes, the latter text is of particular interest. Mark Leuchter argues cogently for dating Jer 33:19–22 to the Josianic period, when the prophet Jeremiah found himself highly supportive of both king and priests (*Polemics of Exile*, 77–79). The entire section is absent from the LXX of Jeremiah, however, raising suspicions about a preexilic dating. Some European scholars date such “MT pluses” very late, later than the third century BCE. In my view, that both Third Isaiah and Malachi reference Jer 33:17–22 speaks against a very late dating, which in any case would need to be argued in specific terms for the case at hand, since it would be difficult to sustain an assumption that LXX Jeremiah and MT Jeremiah lie on a unilinear textual continuum, never mind a continuum of linear textual expansion alone, never development through parablepsis or abridgement. I wish to thank both Dr. Harald Samuel and Dr. Jeremy Hutton for separate conversations on this topic.

strongly affected Jer 33:18,³¹ which speaks not merely of an individual's lifetime of priestly service but of an expansive line of sacerdotal succession extending into the future. Here, כל־הימים is understood to mean "continually" or "forever." Some modern English translations actually paraphrase 1 Sam 2:35 along Jer 33:18's lines. The NLT reads, "They [the faithful one's successors] will be priests to my anointed kings forever" (see NIV).

Despite how similar 1 Samuel and Jeremiah sound in translations such as the NIV and the NLT, Jeremiah's echoing of 1 Sam 2:35 represents innerbiblical interpretation, not literal citation. In Jeremiah's construal, God promises continually to raise up faithful priestly descendants of Levi *in each new era*. As the NET translates the view at issue, "David will by all means always have a descendant to occupy his throne as king and the Levites will by all means always have priests who will minister before me."³²

The prophet Malachi picks up and extends this same line of interpretation, pushing it forward apocalyptically. In Malachi, God's priest is God's *messenger* (Mal 2:7), who, he asserts, must confront each new generation, preserving knowledge of God, instructing the people in God's covenant. At every stage of clerical succession "it is the duty of priests to teach the true knowledge of God. People should go to them to learn my will, because they are the messengers of the LORD Almighty" (Mal 2:7 GNT). At history's apocalyptic climax, Malachi prophesies, comes the ultimate priest-messenger. Although, the Israel of every era must have messenger-priests, the ultimate such cleric has been slated by God to appear on the last day.

Malachi projects the covenant with Levi down through history to the fiery, eschatological appearance of God's covenantal, clerical "messenger."³³ "The messenger of the covenant whom you desire—see, he is coming! says the LORD of hosts" (Mal 3:1–2a). Is not this priestly messenger the ideal instantiation of the archetypal faithful priest of 1 Sam 2:35? That Mala-

31. Consult Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, 304.

32. The noun *priests* here stands parallel to "a son" earlier in the verse and is not appositional. Leuchter correctly observes that the phrase "the Levites, the priests" never occurs in the Levitical literature of the HB or, for that matter, anywhere in Scripture, but understands Jer 33:21 to be using the very phrase as an example of Seidel's law (*Polemics of Exile*, 78).

33. Judaism and Christianity also eschatologized the Davidic monarch of Jer 33:14–26, as outlined by Armin Lange. See Lange, "Between Messiah and Halakhah—Jeremiah 33:24–26 and Its Reception in Judaism and Christianity" (opening address at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Vienna, 2014).

chi draws on Jer 33's covenant with Levi, its sure promise of Israel always having a priest of God's presence, suggests that he is. The Levi covenant itself draws on and interprets 1 Sam 2:35.

It now appears increasingly probable that for Levites such as Jeremiah and Malachi, the faithful priest, the messenger of the Lord, came to be seen as a *role*, not a single individual. As the promise of a faithful priesthood took on new life, it resisted any tendency to historicize it, to pin it definitively on an individual such as Zadok. Thus, Jer 33:18 does not think of one contingent context but interprets the faithful successor of 1 Sam 2:35 as any man (שׂרָם) who appears within the verse's arcing line of promise.

Recall that in laying out a divine plan for a series of Mosaic messengers, one for each new generation,³⁴ Deut 18 emphasizes intermediation. God's presence on Horeb was intolerable; the covenant had to be revealed indirectly, through the messenger Moses. Strikingly, the idea of intermediation reappears in Mal 3:1, in the notable priestly appellation "messenger of the covenant." For Malachi, God's "faithful priest" is clearly a covenant intermediary, a figure supporting a primarily *Mosaic* function. In this light, it is worth observing the use of Mosaic rhetoric in 1 Sam 2. As Leuchter notes, the faithful priest replacing the Elides is "Mosaic in typology, a quality that is nowhere ... applied to Zadok, the Zadokites, or the Aaronides more generally."³⁵ The language of God "raising up" a successor is the same in Deut 18:18 and in 1 Sam 2:35.³⁶ So too is the emphasis on the successor's

34. Moses's role continues in Joshua (e.g., Josh 5:15), Elijah (e.g., 1 Kgs 19:8), and Elisha (e.g., 2 Kgs 2:8, 14). Jeremiah, the greatest prophetic proponent of Deuteronomy's theology, was perhaps the ultimate bearer of the Mosaic mantle. According to Jer 1, the Lord stretched out the divine hand, touched Jeremiah's mouth, and inserted the divine word (1:9). Mirroring Moses's precedent, Jeremiah directly receives God's revelation—*hand delivered* (see Deut 18:18).

35. Leuchter, "Samuel: A Prophet like Moses," 157; also see Leuchter, *Samuel and the Shaping of Tradition*, 38.

36. The faithful priest, when he appears, may on some occasions be one and the same as his era's Mosaic covenant enforcer promised in Deut 18:15–19. Thus, Samuel, arguably the first faithful priest, was simultaneously a Mosaic intermediary in the view of the Deuteronomists. Note how 1 Sam 12:23 describes him instructing the people in the covenant after the manner of Moses in Deut 6:18; 12:28. On the Moses/Samuel parallel in Jer 15:1, see Leuchter, "Samuel: A Prophet like Moses," 149. Leuchter also points out how the Mosaic prophet, like the Mosaic priest, is שׂרָם (Num 12:7; "Samuel: A Prophet like Moses," 156). Cross argued that Moses, not Aaron, is the dominant priest of the oldest Israelite traditions (*Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 197). Psalm 99:6 speaks of both figures in the same breath.

pure alignment with God. In addition, in each case language of a single ideal figure applies to an entire coterie.

According to Deut 18:15, God alone picks the prophets who succeed Moses—only God raises them up (here, see 1 Kgs 14:14). One might then ask whether it is also God alone, not hereditary succession, who “raises up” (1 Sam 2:35) the faithful priest of each new generation? “How could this work?” it may be objected. How can this square with God’s promise to the faithful priest of a sure house (בית נאמן)?

Jeroboam, despite receiving the same assurance as that in 1 Sam 2 of a בית נאמן (1 Kgs 11:38), has his succession yanked away (14:10–11; 15:29).³⁷ So too, God revealed (גלה) God’s self in Egypt, electing Eli’s lineage (1 Sam 2:27), only to later reveal (גלה) the divine self elsewhere and elect Samuel at Shiloh (3:21). God’s fresh self-revelation signals that Samuel has superseded the Elides despite God’s previous word. God expressly admits as much. As the NET puts it, “I really did say that your house and your ancestor’s house would serve me forever.” But now the Lord says, “May it never be!”³⁸ Despite its divine establishment, Eli’s house perishes (1 Sam 2:30–31).

If 1 Sam 2:35 is not about establishing an immutable priestly house, it is probably ill advised to render the verse’s phrase בית נאמן as “secure dynasty” (NET) or “perpetual succession” (REB). Although language of a strong house in West Semitic culture can signal the idea of a lasting dynasty, it can also signify a general blessing of security and honor. In Exod 1:21,

37. Robert Polzin argues that the fate of Eli’s house strongly reflects the tragic, burdened history of the Israelite and Judean monarchies. He writes: “The fate of Eli’s house shimmers with reflections of the sardonic picture of Jehoiachin in chains in 2 Kings 25, who finally ‘put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he ate bread at the king’s table, and for his allowance a regular allowance was given him by the king, every day a portion, as long as he lived’ (2 Kings 25:29–30). Eli’s descendants will beg to be put ‘in one of the priest’s [= king’s] places,’ and indeed will get more, and less, than they request: Jehoiachin is given ‘a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon’ (2 Kings 25:28). At the same time, the irony is that, however improved his situation after prison, Jehoiachin—like Israel—ate the bread of bondage as long as he lived.” See Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History*, part 2, *1 Samuel*, ISBL (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 45.

38. Saul M. Olyan aptly illuminates the issue of reciprocal honor at stake here in God’s determined judgment against Eli’s line. See Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 205.

for example, the female midwives are hardly said to found patrilineal successions.³⁹ Rather, in receiving “houses,” they are blessed with honor and a legacy (see Ruth 4:11; Ps 127:5; Prov 27:11). Samuel, like the midwives, never founded a hereditary dynasty but initiated a series of faithful priests who bore his role. (Priesthood, at least in premonarchic Israel, was historically male and patrilineal.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the text is silent about any priestly descendants of Samuel. First Samuel 8:1–3 characterizes Samuel’s sons, whom he appointed as “judges,” as just as unworthy of succession as Eli’s sons.)

Jeroboam’s son dies as a harbinger of the end of his father’s royal line (1 Kgs 14:12–13, 17–18). Eli’s sons likewise die, thereby presaging God’s ending of the Elides’ line (1 Sam 2:34; 4:11, 17). Knowing this history, Malachi assumes that God can always appoint a successor faithful priest of God’s own choosing.⁴¹ The Lord may terminate the ministry of Yehud’s contemporary altar priests just as easily as God ended the lines of Eli and Jeroboam. Robert Polzin rightly speaks of the “instability of the ‘sure house’ of Eli’s successor.” “It is as though hope must spring eternal in the divine breast.”⁴² Given the instability, clerics should never rely blithely on their established priestly houses.

39. See Carol Meyers, *Exodus*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37, and the bibliography cited there; Cynthia R. Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

40. See Cook, *Social Roots*, 245–48.

41. Centuries earlier, Hosea brought the selfsame threat against the cult officials of his time. God will end their priestly line, “forget” their children (Hos 4:6). How hard this threat might have hit home is suggested by the image of father and son priests on a contemporary Babylonian stone stela. See “Commemorative Stone Stela,” British Museum, <https://bit.ly/2XeA1GT>. The targeted officiants had reason to take Hosea’s threats seriously, given the success of the northern Dan sanctuary in first rivaling Shiloh with its own Mushite pedigree and then outliving it (Judg 18:30–31). Consult Jeremy Hutton, “Judges 17–18, Levitical Aspirations and Sainly Foundation Stories” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, 2012).

42. Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 48. Polzin writes further, “Given the dishonor, the burden, the heaviness that will characterize Israel and its kings to the very end, how can the Glory keep on promising all his ‘forevers’? And given the royal scraps finally bestowed upon Jehoiachin ‘as long as he lived,’ the triumphant side of the oracle seems betrayed by a history too burdened to end the cycle with any conclusive certainty” (*Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, 48).

In Egypt God revealed (גלה) God's self to Eli's ancestor, Levi, electing the Elide line (1 Sam 2:27). Later, however, God had no problem abandoning the Elides to judgment. Replacing them, God revealed (גלה) God's self to Samuel (1 Sam 3:21), placing him at the helm as chief Levite (1 Sam 2:35). Yehud's contemporary altar priests of Malachi's time should wake up and change. God is full of surprises and can make a Levite even out of a Zuphite from Ephraim (1 Sam 1:1). Just as in the days of Samuel, so now in the Persian era, God may again be saying, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle" (1 Sam 3:11).

Part 3

Relations between Israelites and Others

The Neighbor and the Alien in Leviticus 19

John J. Collins

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is asked by a scribe which is the greatest commandment. His answer is twofold: “The first is, ‘Hear O Israel: the Lord your God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:28–31).¹ The Gospel of Matthew adds: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (22:40). Here Jesus combined the Shema (“Hear O Israel”) from Deut 6:4–5 and the command to love one’s neighbor in Lev 19:18. The parallel passage in Luke 10:25–28 turns the question back to the questioner, who runs the two passages from the Hebrew Bible together.

These passages are the earliest ones to accord this exalted status specifically to Lev 19:18. Philo had grouped the obligations of the law under two headings, piety toward God and *philanthropia* and justice toward human beings, but he does not speak specifically of love (*Spec.* 2.63).² Rabbi Akiba is said to have regarded Lev 19:18 as *a* great general rule, not necessarily the greatest.³

1. Translations of biblical passages are based on the NRSV but adapted to reflect the original more accurately in some cases.

2. On Philo’s understanding of *philanthropia*, see Katell Berthelot, *Philanthropia Judaica: Le débat autour de la “misanthropie” des lois juives dans l’Antiquité*, JSJSup 76 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 233–321.

3. Sifra Qed. 4. See John P. Meier, *Law and Love*, vol. 4 of *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 514–15. Jacob Milgrom takes the saying of R. Akiba to mean “this is (the most) basic law.” See Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1656.

It is clear that by the first century of the Common Era Lev 19:18 had attained an exalted status as an especially important commandment. But what exactly did it entail? In Christian tradition, it has generally been assumed to apply universally to all humankind. The range of application and the precise meaning of the original commandment, however, remain very much in dispute.⁴

The Context in Leviticus

Leviticus 19 is part of the Holiness Code (Lev 17–26). It is characteristic of the Holiness Code that moral laws are interspersed with ritual ones.⁵ The chapter is introduced by the commandment to be holy because the Lord is holy. The remainder of the chapter is usually divided into two panels, verses 3–18 and 19–36. Both panels included diverse commandments. The first one begins by repeating the commandments about parents and Sabbath from the decalogue, followed by instructions about *שלמים* sacrifices. Then follow instructions on gleanings, followed by laws against stealing, false oaths, exploitation of the disabled, false judgment, and slander. Then the panel concludes in verses 17–18: “You shall not hate your brother [אֶחִיד] in your heart; you shall reprove your kinsman [עֲמִיתךָ], and not incur guilt because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people [בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ], but you shall love your neighbor [רֵעֶךָ] like yourself; I am the LORD.”

The second panel is equally diverse. It begins with statutes against crossbreeding, or mixing different kinds of seed or cloth. This is followed by regulations governing sexual relations with a slave woman, fruit trees, eating with blood, bodily marks, prostitution, and mediums. Verse 32 demands respect for the aged. Then verses 33–34 consider the case of the resident alien (*גר*): “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the

4. For a recent, thorough overview, see Kengo Akiyama, *The Love of Neighbour in Ancient Judaism: The Reception of Leviticus 19:18 in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the Book of Jubilees, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the New Testament*, AGJU 105 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

5. Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17–26*, VTSup 67 (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

native born [אֲזֵרָח] among you; you shall love the alien like yourself [בְּמוֹד], for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.” The chapter ends with commandments against cheating and a general exhortation to keep the statutes.

There are then two love commandments, each positioned toward the end of a panel. The first commands the addressee to love “your neighbor” (לְרֵעֵךְ), the second to love the “alien” (גֵּר). We shall consider each in turn.

The Neighbor

Most contemporary scholars agree that the neighbor (רֵעַ) in Lev 19 refers to fellow members of the Israelite or Judahite community.⁶ This view has been challenged by Richard Friedman,⁷ who points out, correctly, that the word רֵעַ is in no way restricted to Israelites elsewhere in the Bible. It is used in Gen 11:3 in the context of Babylonians speaking to each other and resolving to build the tower. In Gen 38, Judah has a friend (רֵעַ) called Hirah the Adullamite. In Exod 11:2, the same word is used for the Egyptian neighbors whom the Israelites are instructed to ask for silver and gold before the exodus. Of course, Friedman admits that the word can also refer to Israelites, as it does in Exod 2:13, in the context of one Hebrew striking his fellow. But as Harry Orlinsky argued half a century ago, the context is determinative in Lev 19:18.⁸ The preceding verse says not to hate “your brother” (אָחִיךָ) in one’s heart (NRSV renders “any of your kin”) and warns that one must reprove “your kinsman” (עֵמִית; NRSV renders “your neighbor”). The exact sense of עֵמִית is uncertain. BDB offers “associate, fellow, relation” (s.v. “עֵמָה”), while HALOT suggests “one of the same community, fellow-citizen” (s.v. “עֵמִית”). In this passage, it is used interchangeably with רֵעַ. Finally, and most decisively, Lev 19:18 reads, “you shall not bear a grudge against any of your people [בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ], but you shall love your רֵעַ like

6. E.g., Ernst Simon, “The Neighbor (*re’á*) Whom We Shall Love,” in *Modern Jewish Ethics*, ed. Marvin Fox (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), 29–56; Milgrom, *Leviticus* 17–22, 1654.

7. Richard E. Friedman, “Love Your Neighbor—Only Israelites or Everyone?,” *BAR* (September–October 2014): 48–52.

8. Harry M. Orlinsky, “Nationalism-Universalism and Internationalism in Ancient Israel,” in *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament: Essays in Honor of Herbert Gordon May*, ed. Harry T. Frank and William L. Reed (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 206–36, especially 210–11.

yourself.” It seems clear from this that the רע in view is one of the בני עמך, a fellow Israelite. No doubt, the author was thinking primarily of males, but presumably it also applies to women and children by extension.⁹ At the same time, it should be noted that רע is more inclusive than the familial term אח and broadens the scope of concern beyond blood relations.¹⁰ Friedman objects that in Lev 19 all the laws “come mixed in with one another. No line can be judged by what comes before or after it.”¹¹ But all the laws in Lev 19 are addressed to Israelites and are concerned with the Israelite community. This does not mean, of course, that Leviticus is saying that one should *only* love one’s fellow Israelite,¹² but the fellow Israelite is the primary object of concern. Even in the Decalogue, where the word is used in connection with false witness (Exod 20:16; Deut 5:17) and the neighbor’s wife (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:18), innercommunal relations are the primary, if not the exclusive, concern. Context cannot be disregarded, at the risk of lapsing into ahistorical and uncritical interpretation.

To love this fellow Israelite is to be concerned for his welfare. This again is clear from the context. According to Lev 19:15–16, “You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your עמית. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your רע.”¹³ Earlier, we read in Lev 19:13 that one should not oppress the רע or defraud him in any way. Love, then, is not a matter of emotion, but of justice. As Kengo Akiyama puts it, “love is seen in concrete actions,” and this is why love can be commanded, as feeling and emotion cannot be.¹⁴ In the immediate context, to love is contrasted with to “hate in your heart” and to “bear a grudge.”¹⁵

9. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 41.

10. Ronald E. Clements, *Loving One’s Neighbour: Old Testament Ethics in Context; The Ethel M. Wood Lecture, 4 March 1992* (London: University of London Press, 1992), 21.

11. Friedman, “Love Your Neighbor,” 52.

12. Friedman’s caricature of the opposing argument (“Love Your Neighbor,” 52).

13. So NRSV. Literally, you shall not stand on the blood of your neighbor. The meaning is ambiguous. Milgrom translates, “You shall not stand aloof beside the blood of your fellow” (*Leviticus 17–22*, 1645).

14. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 37; compare Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1653.

15. Abraham Malamat notes that the object is indirect (לרע) and suggests that the אהב in this case be translated “to be of use to,” “assist,” or the like. See Malamat, “You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself: A Case of Misinterpretation,” in *Die Hebräische*

Like You

The most difficult part of the formulation in Lev 19:18, however, is the use of the word כַּמוֹךָ. Debate here has centered on the question whether it should be construed adverbially or adjectivally. Either reading is grammatically possible. The traditional interpretation, found already in Ibn Ezra, takes it adverbially, qualifying how one should love the neighbor: in the same way you would love yourself.¹⁶ It is commonly supposed that כַּמוֹךָ here is equivalent to כַּנַּפְשְׁךָ, “as yourself.” Compare the use of נַפְשׁוֹ in the statements of Jonathan’s love for David in 1 Sam 18:1, 3; 20:17. Andreas Schüle objects that if the two expressions were equivalent we would expect them to be used interchangeably more often.¹⁷ In fact, the nuance is different. No one supposes that one should love one’s neighbor the way Jonathan loved David. Schüle describes the latter as “stellvertretende Selbstpreisgabe,” a willingness to give one’s life for the other (cf. 1 Sam 20:17: בִּי אֶהְבֵּת נַפְשׁוֹ אֶהְבּוֹ, “for he loved him as he loved his own life”).¹⁸ But the adverbial reading of כַּמוֹךָ does not depend on equivalence with כַּנַּפְשְׁךָ, and indeed there is no cogent objection to the adverbial reading. At most, we may grant that it is not inevitable.

The alternative, adjectival interpretation takes the phrase to mean “you shall love your neighbor who is like you.” This interpretation is most famously associated with Martin Buber, although it had earlier precedents in Jewish interpretation.¹⁹ This interpretation was introduced into the modern discussion by Arnold Ehrlich in 1909. Ehrlich reasons that if the

Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65 Geburtstag, ed. Erhard Blum, Christian Macholz, and Ekkehard W. Stegemann (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 111–15. The suggestion is philologically dubious and unnecessary in any case.

16. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 55–56. For a defense of the traditional interpretation see Hans-Peter Mathys, *Liebe deinen Nächsten wie dich selbst: Untersuchungen zum alttestamentlichen Gebot der Nächstenliebe (Lev 19,18)*, OBO 71 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 29–31.

17. Andreas Schüle, “‘Denn er ist wie Du’: Zu Übersetzung und Verständnis des alttestamentlichen Liebesgebots Lev 19,18,” *ZAW* 113 (2001): 521.

18. Schüle, “Denn er ist wie du,” 522.

19. Martin Buber, with Franz Rosenzweig, *Die fünf Bücher der Weisung* (Berlin: Schneider, 1930) 326; Hermann Cohen, *Der Nächste* (Berlin: Schocken, 1935), 17. Mathys traces this translation to a commentary on Leviticus in 1782 by Naftali Herz Wessely (*Liebe deinen Nächsten*, 6–7).

author had intended to say *how* one should love one's neighbor, he would probably have used כנפשך, but it is gratuitous to prescribe what an ancient author should have said, and in any case we have seen that the nuance is different. Ehrlich describes the use of כמוך as "epexegetisch" and takes it to mean "who is an Israelite like you."²⁰ Takamitsu Muraoka takes the preposition with suffix not as strictly adjectival but as nominal, in apposition: "a person who is like you."²¹

Deuteronomy 13:7 warns against being enticed to worship other gods by close relatives or by רעך אשר כנפשך, which the NRSV renders plausibly as "your most intimate friend." In this case, the adjectival use is signaled by the use of אשר. Again, the use of נפש signals a more intimate bond than is implied in Lev 19. The closest parallel to the use of the preposition כ in Lev 19 is provided by Deut 18:15, 18, where Moses tells the Israelites that God will appoint "a prophet like me" (כמוני), which clearly means a prophet who is like Moses, not that God will appoint a prophet in the way Moses does.²² But in this case, the force of the preposition is to make a distinction between a prophet who is like Moses and all other prophets. If we were to interpret Lev 19 analogously, it would mean that we are commanded to love only those neighbors who are like us. Since we have seen that the רע refers in this context to members of one's community, the further qualification is either unlikely (if it implied a distinction between members of one's community) or unnecessary (if it were meant to distinguish between neighbors who were members of one's community and those who were not). One could perhaps argue that the implied phrase is causal: you shall love your neighbor because he is like you. The Greek text of Ben Sira observes, "Every living thing loves what is like it, and every person his neighbor. All living beings associate with their own kind, and people stick close to those like themselves" (Sir 13:15–16). The word for "neighbor" here is πλησίον. The Hebrew, however, bears less similarity to Leviticus: "all

20. Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel: Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches. 2. Leviticus, Numeri Deuteronomium* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1909), 65: "der wie du ein Israelit ist"; Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 61.

21. Takamitsu Muraoka, "A Syntactical Problem in Lev. XIX. 18b," *JSS* 23 (1978): 294–95.

22. Akiyama cites other cases of the type "who is like you?" or "there is no one like you," but these are not comparable since there is no governing verb (*Love of Neighbour*, 60).

flesh loves its kind, and every person the one who is like him.”²³ Ben Sira is offering an observation about human nature, not a commandment to do something that does not come naturally.²⁴ In any case, the understanding of the expression as “who is like you” will be complicated by the second love commandment in Lev 19, where the object is not the neighbor (fellow Israelite) but the alien.

Akiyama objects that the adverbial reading is “anachronistic and heavily coloured by later interpretation.”²⁵ He argues that it only acquires the adverbial sense when it is juxtaposed with the Shema. Commands to love the Lord are typically qualified with adverbial phrases indicating how one should love: with your whole heart and soul and might (Deut 6:5; 11:13; 13:4; 30:6). He is right that juxtaposition requires the adverbial reading, but the fact that the two commandments were juxtaposed shows that both were already being read analogously. Later interpretation, on this point, was not necessarily wrong.

The Alien

The second love command in Lev 19 appears in Lev 19:33–34: “When an alien [גר] sojourns with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. The alien who sojourns with you shall be to you as one of your native born, and you shall love the alien like yourself [כמוך], for you were aliens in the land of Egypt, I am YHWH your God.” Christophe Nihan comments, “V. 33–34 seem to combine the two laws of 19:13–14 and 17–18 from the perspective of the גר, the resident alien: he must not be ‘oppressed’ or ‘exploited’ (ענה Piel), because of his inferior social status (v. 13, although there with עשק), but he must instead be loved ‘as a native/citizen’” (באזרח).²⁶

The word גר occurs ninety-two times in the Hebrew Bible, referring to someone who lives in Israel as a resident alien.²⁷ Twenty-one of these occurrences are in Leviticus, primarily in the Holiness Code. The

23. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 78.

24. For a possible reflection of Lev 19:18 in Sir 27:30–28:7, on forgiveness of one’s neighbor, see Katell Berthelot, *L’humanité de l’autre homme dans la pensée juive ancienne*, JSJSup 87 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 252–65.

25. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 57.

26. Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus*, FAT 2/25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 464.

27. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 45.

term does not apply to all foreigners. The “overall term for all forms of residency by aliens, whether they have permanent rights or just limited permission,” is תושב; foreigners who do not intend to stay in Israel are נכרי; זר refers to foreigners who are not admitted to the cult or the Israelite community.²⁸ The גר, in contrast to these other categories, is one who has settled in the land for some time and has special legal status. In the words of Jan Joosten: “It is practically a technical term: the *ger* is a person (possibly a family or group) conceded a certain juridical status because of the fact that he has settled among a foreign tribe or people.”²⁹ Leviticus repeatedly commands that the גר be treated like the native born, but he is still different.³⁰ Laws pertaining to defilement of the land or the sanctuary apply both to native born and to aliens. Laws relating to specific events in Israel’s history (Sukkoth and Passover, for example) are optional for the גר.³¹

Some scholars have argued that the “aliens” in Leviticus and Deuteronomy were either displaced Israelites after the collapse of the northern kingdom or disenfranchised Judeans in the period after the exile.³² Mary Douglas suggests that they were “other descendants of Jacob, not descended from Judah nor from Levi or Benjamin, but those other remnants of the twelve tribes who had been defeated and scattered by invaders and who still lived in Canaan during and after the exile in Babylon. His

28. Reinhard Achenbach, “Gêr-nâkhri-tôshav-zâr: Legal and Sacral Distinctions regarding Foreigners in the Pentateuch,” in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz, and Jakob Wöhrle, BZABR 16 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 45–46.

29. Joosten, *People and Land*, 55.

30. Rolf Rendtorff, “The Ger in the Priestly Laws of the Pentateuch,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 81; Joosten, *People and Land*, 63, 69–70.

31. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 53–54.

32. On the former, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 75. Henri Cazelles argued that the “aliens” were people who had just returned from exile. See Cazelles, “La mission d’Esdras,” VT 4 (1954): 113–40. Christiana van Houten reversed that thesis. See van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law*, JSOTSup 107 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 151–55. The returnees were the true Israelites, and those who had stayed in the land were the aliens (Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 47–48; Joosten, *People and Land*, 56–57). The idea that the aliens were displaced Israelites is rejected by Mark A. Awabdy. See Awabdy, *Immigrants and Innovative Law*, FAT 2/67 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 15–24. Awabdy’s study is primarily devoted to Deuteronomy.

special status at law would be precisely that he was neither a foreigner nor a Jew.”³³ The more persuasive view, however, is that they were foreigners, living permanently in Israel or Judah.³⁴ Since the work of Alfred Bertholet at the end of the nineteenth century, some scholars have viewed the גר as a foreigner who wanted to join the Israelite cultic community,³⁵ but this is not necessarily so. Akiyama sums up the discussion: “The גר in Leviticus is a technical term that refers to a non-Israelite (ethnically and thus religiously) who has for one reason or another left his homeland and settled among the Israelites.”³⁶ While the גר in Deuteronomy appears to be indigent, he is relatively independent in Leviticus, but he is still a vulnerable member of society.³⁷

Since the גר by definition is not an Israelite, many scholars have concluded that כמוך here cannot have an adjectival force (the alien who is like you).³⁸ This objection cannot be evaded by appealing to the theory that the “aliens” are either displaced northern Israelites or southerners who have been disenfranchised. The fact that they are called גרים shows that they are not accepted by the author as ethnic Israelites. Akiyama raises a more significant point when he asks about the intent of the law: “since the purpose of the love command is to preempt hateful acts and economic oppression of the vulnerable, כמוך is not used simply to state a fact in the indicative,” but is aspirational.³⁹ “The tenor of the command then,” he writes, “is not ‘love your neighbor and the גר insofar as you or your community considers him as someone like you,’ but rather ‘love your neighbor and the גר, for

33. Mary Douglas, “The Stranger in the Bible,” *AES* 35 (1994): 286. Her suggestion is endorsed by Rendtorff, “Ger in the Priestly Laws,” 86.

34. Rainer Albertz, “From Aliens to Proselytes: Non-Priestly and Priestly Legislation concerning Strangers,” in Achenbach, Albertz, and Wöhrle, *Foreigner and the Law*, 59; Christophe Nihan, “Resident Aliens and Natives in the Holiness Legislation,” in Achenbach, Albertz, and Wöhrle, *Foreigner and the Law*, 131.

35. Alfred Bertholet, *Die Stellung der Israeliten und der Juden zu den Fremden* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1896), 174–75. So still Christoph Bultmann, *Der Fremde im antiken Juda: Eine Untersuchung zum sozialen Typenbegriff “ger” und seinem Bedeutungswandel in der alttestamentlichen Gesetzgebung*, FRLANT 153 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992).

36. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 55.

37. Joosten, *People and Land*, 60–63.

38. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1655.

39. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 63.

they are indeed like you in the eyes of YHWH.’”⁴⁰ But in this case there already is a supporting clause giving the reason why Israelites should love the aliens: for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. This reason is often given in support of concern for the alien: Exod 22:20; 23:9; Deut 10:19; 23:8. It is not a matter of ontology, and is not grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image of God.⁴¹ In that case, there would be no reason to distinguish between the גר and other kinds of foreigners. It is a matter of analogous experience and calls to mind the golden rule: one should treat others as one would wish to be treated oneself.⁴² כַּמֹּךָ, then, is adverbial, which is to say that it clarifies how one should love the גר: by regarding him as like the native-born addressee of the text. This is in accordance with a principle that is stated repeatedly in the Holiness Code and the Priestly text: “You shall have one law for the גר and for the native born” (Lev 24:22).⁴³

In all of this a few things are clear. First, the love command is not universal. It is primarily concerned with relations within the Israelite community. Second, the preposition and suffix כַּמֹּךָ is used adverbially to indicate how one should love the neighbor or the alien. Love here is not a matter of feelings but of practice. To love one’s neighbors (fellow-Israelites) as like oneself is to treat them as you yourself would wish to be treated. To treat aliens as like oneself is to treat them as one would native-born Israelites.

Early Interpretations

In both Lev 19:18 and 19:34 the LXX translates כַּמֹּךָ as “as yourself,” ὡς σεαυτόν. Scholars almost invariably take this as “a reflexive, adverbial modifier that defines the manner in which one should love.”⁴⁴ Akiyama

40. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 63.

41. Schüle does not appeal to the “image of God,” but takes the passage as an appeal to shared humanity (“Denn er ist wie Du,” 529).

42. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1655. On the golden rule, see Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 508–19; Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton, ed., *The Golden Rule: The Ethics of Reciprocity in World Religions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008). Meier points out that the golden rule does not use the language of love (*Marginal Jew*, 4:480).

43. Compare Exod 12:49; Num 9:14; 15:15, 16; 15:29; Joosten, *People and Land*, 69–70.

44. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 68.

strains to question this understanding. He acknowledges that the phrase is clearly reflexive but questions whether it is adjectival, on the grounds that $\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ + pronoun can have an adjectival sense. As with the Hebrew usage, Deut 18:15, where Moses says that the Lord will raise up “a prophet like me,” provides the closest analogy, since it has a verb with an object and a modifier “like me.” As in the Hebrew, the modifier serves to make a distinction within the object (a prophet like me as opposed to one who is not). Such a distinction is implausible in the case of Lev 19 and encounters the same problems as the Hebrew in the case of the גר . Akiyama’s argument depends on his assumption that the Hebrew would have been read as adjectival, and this assumption does not hold.

The adverbial understanding is also clear in Jubilees: “Practice brotherly love among yourselves, my sons, like a man who loves himself, with each one desiring what is good for his brother and doing things together on the earth. May they love one another as themselves” (Jub 36.4).⁴⁵ Jubilees makes several allusions to the love commandment, in the stories of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and the exodus. Remarkably, however, it does not cite the commandment to love the גר and seems to have restricted its application to the Jewish people.⁴⁶

The Damascus Document (CD) in the Dead Sea Scrolls also fails to cite Lev 19:34. The text clearly alludes to Lev 18:19 at CD 6.20, which instructs each man to love his brother as like himself ($\text{לְאַהֲבֹה אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיּהוּ כַּמֹּהוּ}$).⁴⁷ This passage is followed, however, with instruction “to support the poor, destitute, and גר , and to seek each man the peace of his brother.” Akiyama infers that the גר is given the status of brother, who is to be loved and cared for.⁴⁸ By the time of the Scrolls, the גר is most probably a proselyte, but much remains unclear about the גר in the Scrolls.⁴⁹ The גר does not appear

45. Translated by James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees 2: A Commentary on the Book of Jubilees 22–50*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 953. This passage is cited incorrectly by Milgrom as Jub 30.24 (*Leviticus 17–22*, 1655).

46. Atar Livneh, “Love Your Fellow as Yourself: The Interpretation of Leviticus 19:17–18 in the Book of Jubilees,” *DSD* 18 (2001): 173–99; Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 79–95.

47. Meier does not accept this as a citation of Lev 19:18b, since the object of love is not the רֵעַ but the אָח , which he takes to mean a member of the Essene community (*Marginal Jew*, 4:504).

48. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 120.

49. See Katell Berthelot, “La notion de גר dans les textes de Qumrân,” *RevQ* 19 (1999): 171–216; Yonder M. Gillihan, “The גר Who Wasn’t There: Fictional Aliens

at all in Serek ha-Yahad, the Community Rule. Akiyama concludes that “CD takes another step toward considering the גר as someone ‘who is like you’ (כמוך),”⁵⁰ but it is not clear that the sectarian author understands the word in Leviticus adjectivally. He simply follows biblical usage.

In the New Testament, Jesus cites the LXX translation, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” in Mark 12:31. The adverbial meaning of “as yourself” is generally accepted in the New Testament context. John Meier points out, however, that nothing in the text suggests a different frame of reference from the original reading in Leviticus. Rather, in the context, the understanding of “neighbor” as “fellow Israelite” is natural.⁵¹ The parallel in Luke, which provides the setting for the parable of the good Samaritan, broadens the horizon. The most striking innovation in the Gospels is undoubtedly the command to love one’s enemies (Matt 5:44b; Luke 6:27b). Again, the command concerns actions rather than feelings: “Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6:27cde), or alternatively, “pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:44b). This commandment is exceptional in ancient literature, and is not repeated in the New Testament.⁵² In the Johannine tradition, the love command is directed to the disciples, to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12; see 13:34). The purpose seems to be to sustain a group of Christians who feel besieged by a hostile world and are convinced that the world hates them.⁵³

Conclusion

Despite occasional attempts to read the commandment to love one’s neighbor in Lev 19:18 as universal, it is clear from the context that the neighbor in question was primarily the fellow Israelite. The extension of the commandment to the גר is not universal, either. It applies only to one

in the Damascus Rule,” *RevQ* 98 (2011): 257–306; Kengo Akiyama, “The Ger in the Damascus Document: A Rejoinder,” *RevQ* 107 (2016): 117–26; Akiyama, “The גר and Interpretive Integration in the Damascus Document 6:20–21 and 14:3–6,” *JJS* 67 (2016): 249–66.

50. Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 121.

51. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:493.

52. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:548.

53. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 4:562. For fuller discussion of the love commandment in the NT, see Victor P. Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972); Akiyama, *Love of Neighbour*, 134–208.

class of foreigner, which had a special status in Israelite law. The range of the commandment is broadened in the New Testament, but even there the universal application is not consistent.

Recent scholarship has tended to favor the adjectival understanding of the word כַּמּוֹךְ, traditionally translated as “like yourself,” taking it to mean “who is like you.” This interpretation encounters problems in the case of the גֵּר, who by definition is not an Israelite. It is clear from the context that the force of the commandment is that the resident alien should be treated like the native born, although he does not actually belong to that category. There is to be sure a measure of similarity, which in Lev 19:34 is grounded not in creation but in the memory of the sojourn in Egypt. The point is not that the גֵּר is like the Israelite, but that he should be treated as if he were. This usage is better categorized as adverbial than as adjectival, as it refers to the manner in which the alien should be loved rather than to his ontological status.

The command to love one’s neighbor as oneself is undoubtedly one of the great contributions of the Hebrew Bible to the ethical development of humanity. The application of the neighbor would in time be extended to all people and grounded in the recognition of shared humanity. But the book of Leviticus was not quite there yet. It was primarily concerned with the cohesion and identity of a particular people in light of its historical experience.

There's a Stranger in My House: The Use of Foreignness Language in Disruptions of Close, Intimate Relationships

Brian Rainey

There are a number of passages in the Hebrew Bible in which a man complains that he is being treated like a “stranger” or “foreigner” by his own family. One famous individual complaint from the Psalter uses this kind of language to depict the complainant’s suffering: “It is because of you that I have borne a reproach; an insult covers my face. I have become estranged [*mûzār*] from my kinfolk [*’aḥay*, ‘brothers’] and a foreigner [*nokrî*] to my mother’s children” (Ps 69:8–9 [ET 69:7–8]).¹ Job 19:13–19 serves as another example of the same idea:

As for my kinfolk [*’aḥay*], [God] has rendered them far away from me. And as for those who know me, how they have been estranged [*zārû*] from me. My closest relatives have failed me and intimates have forgotten about me. As for the resident aliens [*gārê*] of my household and my slave women, they think of me as a stranger [*zār*]. I have become a foreigner [*nokrî*] in their sight. To my own slave I call, but he does not respond. I beg him for favor out of my own mouth! My breath is a stranger [*zārâ*] to my wife. I am loathsome to the children of my loins. Even youngsters spurn me. When I arise they speak against me. All my confidants abominate me, and those whom I have loved have turned against me.

The language of foreignness to express estrangement in close relationships can also be used with respect to women, as Leah and Rachel complain to Jacob that their father Laban has disinherited them: “Is there any portion

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical translations are mine.

or inheritance left to us in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners [*nokrîyôt*]? For he has sold us and he has been using up the money given for us. All the property that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you" (Gen 31:14–16).

The roots that appear in these passages to refer to strangeness and foreignness are *zûr* and *nkr*, words that are frequently used to denote someone or something ethnically foreign—that is, non-Israelite.² These instances are unusual in that people use these words to refer to estrangement from their own family members and friends. The question we will engage here is whether these terms carry a special meaning when used to refer to estrangement experienced in intimate relationships or whether the terms play off the association with ethnic foreignness for effect, or some combination of these themes. This is all complicated by the fact that the language of the familial, on the one hand, and the language of foreignness and nativeness, on the other, overlap.

These two roots are used because they do often depict ethnic foreignness, and these passages play on the overlap of familial terms and terms for foreignness. The use of *zûr* and *nkr* relates the suffering of the person to one of the most disenfranchised members of Israelite society: foreigners (*nokrî/nokrîyâ* and *ben-nēkār*). The treatment of the complainant as a foreigner is a socially unnatural scenario in which those who are supposed to be held in high esteem are instead treated like those who are supposed to be held in low esteem. From the perspective of a fully enfranchised member of society, and even the wives of those who ought to be fully enfranchised, such as Leah and Rachel, foreignness communicates the devastation the complainants feel about their undeserved loss of wealth, power, and prestige.³ We can speculate that the use of foreignness to depict a loss of power and prestige resonated deeply with the elite for whom biblical literature—especially wisdom literature—was composed.

2. For my own perspective on how to define ethnic foreignness and ethnicity, see *Religion, Ethnicity and Xenophobia in the Bible: A Theoretical, Exegetical and Theological Survey*, RSBW (London: Routledge, 2019), 19–45.

3. Thanks to friend Javier Atayde, who through personal communication directed me to the idea that Job's perception and expectations of God are, in part, influenced by his privileged position (after all, Job owns slaves).

Review of *zûr* and *nkr* in the Hebrew Bible

In many of these passages, forms of *zûr* and *nkr* appear in parallelism, suggesting that they are closely related terms. Of course, words that appear in parallelism are not necessarily synonyms in the strictest sense, so there may be some subtle difference between the two roots.⁴ In passages in which *zûr* and *nkr* appear together in a couplet, *nkr* always follows *zûr*, suggesting that *nkr* helps supplement, intensify, clarify, or even delimit *zûr* in some way. The best definition of *zûr* on a basic level is “that which does not belong,”⁵ and this root is often used of people and objects that stand outside a socially salient grouping or category. With respect to objects, illegitimate fire that is not fit for the incense altar of Yahweh is called *’ēš zārâ* (“strange fire”), and illegitimate incense is called *qatōret zārâ* (“strange incense,” Exod 30:9; Lev 10:1–2; Num 3:4; 26:61). Legitimate fire and incense belong to the category “objects that are holy to Yahweh,” but fire and incense that stand outside that category are denoted by *zûr*. Consequently, ethnicity is just one of the categories outside of which the person or object signified by *zûr* can stand (see, e.g., Isa 25:2, 5; 61:5; Jer 5:19; 30:8; 51:51; Joel 4:17 [ET 3:17]; Obad 11). Additionally, it is possible for *zûr* to refer to “another,” as in “someone else.” For example, some traditionally understand *zār* in Prov 27:2 as referring to “another person”: “Let another man [*zār*] praise you and not your own mouth, a stranger [*nokri*] and not your own lips.”

With the root *nkr*, things are bit more complicated. As a noun and adjective, this root refers to ethnic foreignness (*nokri*, *nokriyâ*, *nēkār*) or things that are non-Israelite, most often, and so its use in these kinds of domestic scenarios is more jarring. But this root does not always refer to ethnic foreignness, either. In some instances, such as *zûr*, the word *nokri* might simply refer to “another” as in “someone other than the subject” (e.g., Jer 2:21; also Prov 27:2; Qoh 6:2).⁶

4. See discussion on parallelism in Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 18B (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 493–94. Also relevant are Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); James Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

5. Lambertus A. Snijders, “זֶר/זָר,” *TDOT* 4:55.

6. Helmer Ringgren, “נָכַר,” *TDOT* 9:425.

Adding to the complexity, both roots are used to refer to household or kinship boundaries, but household and kinship terminology can also represent ethnic boundaries in certain contexts. In Deuteronomistic texts, *nokrî* is used often to denote non-Israelites, but Israelites are also understood to be “brothers” or “kinfolk” (*’āḥ*), showing that the language of ethnicity and family often overlap (Deut 14:21; 15:2; 17:15; 23:21). In at least one instance, Deut 25:5, *zûr* refers to someone outside a smaller kinship unit; a person outside the immediate family is referred to as a “stranger” (*zār*). Along the same lines, in Priestly and Holiness texts, *zûr* is used to denote those who do not belong to a priestly lineage; those who stand outside priestly descent are referred to as “strangers” (*zār*, Exod 29:33; 30:33; Lev 22:10–13; Num 1:51; 3:10, 38; 17:5 [ET 16:40]; 18:4, 7). An even more intimate setting in which *zār* is used appears in the famous story of women who go before Solomon to adjudicate their dispute over the true maternity of a child. In that story, the women declare that they were alone in their house—“there was no stranger [*zār*] with us in the house” (1 Kgs 3:18). In this case, the stranger is someone who might come from outside the house, which is occupied by just two women and their two children. The two women who form a *bayit* are notable, since most of the boundaries and categories that involve *nkr* and *zûr* center on institutions dominated by men, such as the household, clan, or priesthood. Women are often deeply connected to these institutions as insiders as well, but usually as dependents of men—something I will discuss in more detail below.

To muddy things further, *nkr* can denote ethnic foreignness and someone *within* the household of an Israelite at the same time, as shown by the use of household (*bayit*) and foreigner (*ben-nēkār*) together in Gen 17:

At eight days old, every male belonging to you will be circumcised, throughout your generations. The slave born in your household [*yālîd bāyit*] and the one bought with money from any foreigner [*ben-nēkār*] who is not among your descendants. (17:12)

all the men of his household [*’anšê bêtô*], the house-born slave and the one bought with money from a foreigner [*ben-nēkār*] will be circumcised with him. (17:27)

As a foreign slave, and property of an enfranchised Israelite male, this particular non-Israelite male is clearly designated a member of an Israelite household. Exodus 12:43–49 adds that a foreigner (*ben-nēkār*) who

is a slave of an Israelite and has been circumcised may eat the Passover sacrifice, but other foreigners may not (12:44). This Passover law is sure to mention that the sacrifice is to be enjoyed only within the Israelite man's household (12:46), once again connecting *bayit* and *ben-nēkār*. The foreign male slaves of the household can participate in Passover, if circumcised, because they are dependents of Israelite men. Like women, they are intimately associated with the institution as insiders only by virtue of their relationship with a free man.⁷

The "woman stranger" (*'iššā zārâ/zārâ*) portrayed in Prov 2:16–22; 5:1–23; 6:20–35; 7:1–27 is another case in which *zûr* and *nkr* appear in close proximity (2:16; 5:10, 20; 7:5), as in Prov 5:20: "Why should you wander astray, my son, with a woman stranger [*zārâ*] and embrace the bosom of a foreign woman [*nokrîyâ*]?" (see Prov 2:16; 7:5). Among modern scholarly interpreters (as well as late antique and medieval interpreters), there is no agreement on what the *'iššā zārâ* or *zārâ* represents, but plenty of proposals.⁸ Various interpreters have argued that the woman stranger refers to a non-Israelite woman, a sex worker (or so-called prostitute), an allegory for folly, or a representation of misogynistic Israelite views of women's sexuality, among other suggestions.⁹ NRSV even translates *nokrîyâ* in Prov 2:16; 5:20; 7:5 as "adulteress." In some of the woman stranger references in the Prov 1–9 collection, she is indeed painted as an adulteress and compared to a *zônâ* (Prov 2:17; 6:26; 7:10, 19; also 23:27).¹⁰ The uses of *bayit* in the

7. Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 96–97.

8. See Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, AB 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 254–62, for a review of the different readings both medieval and modern.

9. Even if the woman stranger is meant to be symbolic, the symbol plays off social conventions around marriage and the family depicted in biblical texts. For a comprehensive bibliography of the various interpretations of the woman stranger, see Nili Shupak, "Female Imagery in Proverbs 1–9 in Light of Egyptian Sources," *VT* 61 (2011): 311 n. 3.

10. A verse that compares the woman stranger (*zārâ*) to a *zônâ*. This verse comes from a different collection of sayings within the book of Proverbs that is possibly earlier than the material in Prov 1–9 (see discussion in Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 499–506).

Compare Jer 3:4 with Prov 2:17—in both passages the expression "friend of her/my youth" appears (*'allûp nā'ûray/nā'ûrêhâ*). In the former, Judah, personified as a woman, acts like a *zônâ*. Though "my father" appears in Jer 3:4, Judah's behavior with respect to Yahweh is shameless, adulterous, false, and faithless—which contrasts sharply with her claim that Yahweh is the "friend of my youth." In the latter case, the woman stranger abandons the friend of her youth.

woman-stranger passages indicate that she is strange partially because she comes from outside the addressee's household, and he will become entangled in a household that is not his own. The sage warns his son: "Make your path far from her. Do not come near the door of her house [*bêtāh*], lest you give your honor to others, your years to the merciless, lest strangers [*zārīm*] become sated with your strength and your labors go to the house of a foreigner [*bêt nokrî*]" (Prov 5:8–10). One wonders whether a fear of inheritance complications lies behind the concerns that the sage expresses to his son. The people to whom the honor, years, strength, and labors will go are indicated by masculine or masculine plural terms—especially the strangers (*zārīm*) and the foreigner (*nokrî*). Who will these male recipients of the addressee's labors be? Whose house will get the man's goods? The woman stranger's sons?¹¹ At any rate, themes of the house(hold) stand out in this passage, and the household appears to be the boundary outside which the woman stranger is located.¹² As Katharine Dell observes of Prov 5: "There is an underlying contrast also between the dangers from outside (which may well sap a man's strength and resources) and the security from inside, in that a good wife is a protection against such dangers and safeguards a man's seed."¹³ Moreover, the woman stranger has her own house and is clearly married (Prov 5:8; 6:26, 29). Consequently, the woman is also strange because she acts like a *zōnâ*, a social figure who acts outside the conventions of the patriarchal household in ancient Israel.¹⁴

11. If the woman stranger serves as a metaphor for folly, perhaps the passage means that by pursuing folly, a man can expect to lose his wealth to others. See also 5:16–19. For a recent defense of the idea that the woman stranger as well as woman Wisdom are metaphors that "represent sets of abstractions" for "rival ethical systems that compete for the allegiance not just of the young but of all humans," see Daniel J. Estes, "What Makes the Strange Woman of Proverbs 1–9 Strange?," in *Ethical and Unethical in the Old Testament: God and Humans in Dialogue*, ed. Katharine J. Dell, LHBOTS 528 (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 151–69.

12. Fox is right to say that "every wife is an *'iššah zarah* to all men but her husband." Yes, all wives are "strange" to men other than the wife's husband, but the social institution of the household also establishes the concrete boundary between familiar and strange (full discussion in Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 140–41).

13. Katharine J. Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 41.

14. Pace Fox, who argues that "nothing whatsoever in any of the lectures indicates that the Strange Woman is a foreigner or even a social outsider"; rather, the antithesis of the woman stranger is the addressee's wife (*Proverbs 1–9*, 140). How-

I suspect that the caricature of the woman stranger in Proverbs plays off anxieties that men in the ancient Near East had about women whose husbands were absent. A number of Mesopotamian law codes attempt to regulate the circumstances under which a woman could find another man if her husband were away. These are notable instances in which women can exercise some agency, albeit within strict guidelines. For example, according to the mid-eighteenth-century Code of Hammurabi, if a husband leaves for military service and he is captured, if there are not sufficient provisions in the house, his wife may find another man (CH 133a–35).¹⁵ Should there be enough provisions in the home, and she pursues another man, she has legally committed adultery. The Laws of Eshnunna, also composed around the mid-eighteenth century, and the Code of Hammurabi allow a husband who has been captured on military service to reclaim his wife when he returns, even if she has married another man and had children with him (LE 29; CH 135). The Code of Hammurabi clarifies that the children of this second marriage inherit from their own father (the woman's second husband), not her first husband. The eleventh-century Middle Assyrian Laws, on the other hand, say that a woman must wait two years before she can abandon a husband who has been captured, and if there are not sufficient provisions, the city must provide them to her for two years (A.45). Both the Code of Hammurabi and Laws of Eshnunna say that if a husband abandons the city (it is unclear what this means, exactly), his wife can find another man and the ex-husband, upon his return, cannot take his wife back (LE 30; CH 136).

These Mesopotamian laws express the concerns of ancient patriarchal societies. They recognize that when a husband leaves home, a wife has the opportunity to exercise some agency, so they regulate the circumstances under which a woman can pursue other men. In these codes, she can find another man only when her husband has been captured during military service and only if he abandons the city—however this would have been understood or proven. Different societies appear to have had different ways of responding to the problem of an absentee husband. Their legal traditions enact different stipulations on how long, and under what circumstances, a woman must wait for a captured husband. The scenarios

ever, it is my view that the *zōnâ* is a socially marginalized figure, even if she is not an ethnic foreigner.

15. All citations of Mesopotamian law codes are from Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, WAW 6 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

outlined in the law codes are not roadmaps for understanding Israelite practices, nor should we assume that legal collections from the ancient Near East actually represent the lived experiences of men and women. But these laws are concerned with the responsibilities and rights of wives when husbands leave home, and the complications that can arise with respect to remarriage, children, and inheritance.

With that in mind, it is probably no accident that Prov 7 mentions that the strange woman's husband is away: "The husband is not with his household [*bābêtô*]; he has gone on a long journey. He took the bag of money into his possession [*bāyādô*]; on the full moon he will come [back] to his household" (7:19–20). Aside from the double reference to the husband's *bayit*, which reminds the listener that the woman is strange because she belongs to another man's household, the woman stranger is sure to tell the young fool that her husband is gone. It is unclear how long he has been away; the reader only knows that he will return fairly soon. The detail of the money bag must be relevant. It may indicate that the husband's journey was so long that he needed to take money with him. Alternatively, the woman might be insinuating that her husband has not left her with enough tangible cash for her upkeep.¹⁶ By mentioning that her husband has taken the money, the woman stranger could be trying to play off of the young fool's sympathies or could be implying that her husband has been derelict in his responsibilities to her—perhaps similar to the absentee husband found in Laws of Eshnunna 30 and Code of Hammurabi 136. The woman stranger's reference to the luxuries in her house (7:16–17) not only belies any possible claim that she has been left with insufficient funds; the contradiction may also underscore her duplicity. She may, indeed, have no cash (*kesep*), but she admits that she has resources. If the young man were to be taken in by her words, he would be a fool indeed.

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding her husband's absence, the woman stranger is not just telling the young fool that there is ample

16. If *šārôr hakkesep* is definite, as in "he has taken *the* bag of money into his possession," it could mean that the husband has taken all of the household cash. This is a very contestable rendition, as there can be ambiguity in interpreting definiteness and indefiniteness. The translation "a bag of money" (indefinite) is certainly possible. I am taking the syntax of the construct chain very literally; the *nomen rectum* is definite. Song 1:13, where *šārôr* appears in construct with *hammôr*, seems to convey indefiniteness, while *šērôr* in construct with *haḥayyim* seems to convey definiteness. See *IBHS*, 156–57 (§9.7.a), 241 (§13.4.c).

opportunity for a liaison in Prov 7:19–20. Rather, the woman stranger represents the danger that can stem from a woman's agency, especially when her husband is away. She exemplifies the worst that can happen, in the imagination of a patriarchal society, when a wife is left to her own devices. In Prov 7's portrayal, the woman stranger loudly and aggressively pursues lovers in the street while her husband is gone, which seems to be an egregious violation of the decorum expected of free, married women.¹⁷ The strict parameters found in Mesopotamian law codes suggest that a husband's long absence is a precarious time in which wives might pursue other men. Biblical law codes do not mention this scenario, nor do they stipulate a woman's rights when her husband abandons his city. Yet, through the woman stranger, Prov 1–9 seems to convey men's anxiety about the precariousness that surrounds a husband's long journey from home. If true, the woman stranger is also strange because she seeks other men at a time in which the male head of household is particularly vulnerable. At this time, a woman can transgress the social boundary of her husband's household to cross into another man's household, or as the Code of Hammurabi puts it, "enter another's house [*ana bīt šanīm erēbum*]" (CH 133b–136).

For the sage of Prov 1–9, a liaison with the woman stranger amounts to adultery (*n'p*, 6:32). Two biblical law codes mandate the death penalty for adultery (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22), but actual practices may have been considerably less straightforward.¹⁸ Though the sage gives general

17. It appears as though, in ideal situations, married women are supposed to be at home (Prov 7:11–12), not in the street (*hūš*) or by the road (*derek*). The verb *h̄zq* in 7:13 conveys the strange woman's aggressiveness. Some texts are extremely suspicious of women in the street or by the road. In the HB, Tamar is able to deceive Judah on the roadside (Gen 38:12–23). In MAL, the street is associated with sexual assault and with married women who trick men into adultery by concealing their marital status (A.12, A.14). If a married woman does go into the street, she must be veiled (A.40). The street is somewhat positively associated with a woman's desire in Song 3:1–5. Here the woman pursues the lover for whom she longs passionately in the streets. While this is a positive portrayal, it does seem that the street is still associated with a woman's intense sexual desire, which ancient writers often mistrust (compare Song 5:6–8). It is also unclear that the woman in Song of Songs is married.

18. Raymond Westbrook uses the *zōnā* and adultery rhetoric in prophetic discourse to argue that adultery may not always result in the death of both parties. Rather, the husband could "in his discretion choose a lesser penalty, such as mutilation." Indeed, Yahweh does not always kill his unfaithful wife in prophetic metaphors. In Hos 2:4–5, for example, Yahweh threatens to strip his wife naked and abandon her in the desert (to die naturally), and in Jer 3:8 Yahweh simply abandons and divorces

warnings about death and destruction that may befall the young man if he allows the woman stranger to seduce him (Prov 2:18–19; 5:5–6; 7:23, 27), he also claims that the young man will lose social status, wealth, and honor (5:10–14).¹⁹ The sage further cautions that money cannot assuage a jealous husband's anger: "For jealousy is a man's fury. He will show no pity when he takes revenge. He will not show partiality for any money, and will not accept it, even if you make the payoff large" (Prov 6:34–35).

That monetary compensation comes up at all intimates that payouts could have been a possible resolution for disputes between husbands and their wives' lovers (and their families?).²⁰ Mesopotamian law codes allow for the husband of a wife who committed adultery to spare his wife the death penalty, and possibly any penalty, so long as he does the same for her lover. Do references to multiple consequences for adultery in Proverbs suggest that an adulterous man could escape death at the discretion of the offended husband, as Mesopotamian laws allow? The multiple consequences suggest that in spite of the demand for execution in biblical law codes, how Israelites actually handled adultery varied. If an adulterer were to pay a hefty sum to the offended husband, the *bêt nokri* that receives the wealth of the young man would be that of the offended husband, and the *zārīm* would be the members of *his* household. If payments are an

his wife. In Ezek 16:37–41, the unfaithful wife's lovers are the ones who actually strip and kill her. See Westbrook, "Adultery in Ancient Near Eastern Law," *RB* 97 (1990): 560–62.

19. Some Egyptian wisdom literature, such as the Instructions of Ptahhotep (third millennium BCE), the Instructions of Any (mid second-millennium BCE) or the Instructions of Ankhsheshonq (100 BCE), warns that death is a consequence of adultery, but these warnings do not appear to mean the death penalty as a judicial matter. Often, the death is a result of an angry husband's extrajudicial retaliation. Adultery is a great sin in Egyptian texts, but there may have been a variety of ways in which Egyptians handled it over the span of Egyptian civilization. Famous New Kingdom texts from Deir el-Medina suggest that accusations of adultery might have led to loss of reputation and social shame. These texts preserve public lawsuits accusing officials of adultery, which are then used to undermine their fitness to hold office. See Pnina Galpaz-Feller, "Private Lives and Public Censure: Adultery in Ancient Egypt and Biblical Israel," *NEA* 67.3 (2004): 154–57; Christopher J. Eyre, "Crime and Adultery in Ancient Egypt," *JEA* 70 (1984): 92–105.

20. Westbrook uses Prov 6:34–35 as part of his argument that, generally in the ancient Near East, aggrieved parties would often accept a ransom but could exact corporeal revenge to the point that the law allows (death, mutilation, etc.; "Adultery in Ancient Near Eastern Law," 564–65).

option, one can imagine that costly lawsuits, feuds between families, and general social discord would result from a long, drawn-out legal battle around extramarital liaisons.²¹ The sage admonishes his addressee that the safest course of action is to stay with one's own wife in one's own household (Prov 5:15–19) rather than pursue another woman who belongs to another household (7:19–20).

Zûr and *nkr* in Psalm 69:8–9; Job 19:13–19; and Genesis 31:14–16

The various uses of *zûr* and *nokri* above provide several options for interpreting the use of these roots in Ps 69:8–9; Job 19:13–19; and Gen 31:14–16. The terms could represent

1. “another person” or a “stranger” as in someone else or someone unfamiliar;
2. a person who comes from outside the household, or someone outside a smaller kinship structure;
3. an ethnic foreigner; or
4. someone who does not belong to or stands outside a category that is unclear from the text.

I am going to exclude “another” as in “someone else” as a potential interpretation first. While I acknowledge that *zûr* and *nkr* might in a few cases simply refer to “another,” we should consider that they almost always refer to people or objects outside a socially salient boundary or category of some kind, particularly household or kinship boundaries. This would be especially true if there are actually references to the household or kinship nearby—as in all three of our examples above, as well as in the case of the woman stranger of Prov 5. Psalm 69:8–9 references kinfolk and “the children of my

21. One text from Deir el-Medina records the case of one man who takes another wealthier man to court over his affair with his wife. The circumstances of the case are interesting in their own right, but most important, Galpaz-Feller writes, it indicates that “the local court served more as an institution for mediation or hearing testimony rather than as a judicial institution with the power to impose punishment” (“Private Lives,” 157; see Eyre, “Crime and Adultery,” 100). Eyre further takes note of the New Kingdom inscription of Mes, among other texts that show “the interminable length to which legal disputes could extend, trials and judgments failing time and time again to produce a lasting conclusion” (“Crime and Adultery,” 103).

mother.” Household language litters Job’s complaint. And Leah and Rachel refer to their father and their “inheritance.”

The complaint of Leah and Rachel opens up another discussion about women’s relationships with the social boundaries that inform *zûr* and *nkr*:

Is there an allocated inheritance [*hēleq wənaḥālā*] for us in our father’s house [*bēt ’āb*]?²² Are we not considered foreign women [*nokriyôt*] to him? For, he has sold [*mkr*] us and he has eaten up our money [*keseq*]. But all the wealth [*’ōšer*], which God has removed from our father, belongs to us and our children. So now everything that God has said to you, do it.

The terms *naḥālā*, *hēleq*, *’ōšer*, and *keseq* suggest that Laban was supposed to bequeath both landed property and possibly other liquid assets to his two daughters but instead “ate up” (*’kl*) all their money (*keseq*, Gen 31:14–16). The word *naḥālā* in particular suggests that some kind of landed property, however small, was expected to be part of the sisters’ inheritance. Because their father has mismanaged the inheritance in their eyes, they have become dependent on Jacob (Gen 31:16) and agree to Jacob’s plan to break away from Laban. It is remarkable that the daughters exclaim that they are entitled to property at all. The only obvious instance of women inheriting property in the Hebrew Bible occurs when a man has no male heirs.²³ Zelophehad’s daughters inherit their father’s *naḥālā*, which here refers to his patrimonial estate (*naḥālat ’ābiḥem*, *naḥālat ’ābōtênû*, etc.; Num 27:1–11; 36:1–12). But Laban clearly has male heirs (Gen 30:35; 31:1), which means that Leah and Rachel are not expecting an inheritance because there are no males to claim a *naḥālā*.

Some modern exegetes argue that the sisters are indignant because Laban has used up the *mōhar*, or bride wealth, that the bridegroom or his family pays to the wife’s family to compensate the loss of value the father incurs from the loss of his daughter (Exod 22:16; Deut 22:28–29; 1 Sam 18:25).²⁴ Customarily, the father might enjoy the usufruct of the bride

22. Taking *hēleq wənaḥālā* as hendiadys, as noted by Sarah Shectman, “Rachel, Leah and the Composition of Genesis,” in *The Pentateuch*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

23. Compare Laws of Lipit-Ishtar b.

24. Gerhard von Rad connects the sisters’ complaint with the bride price but notes that they may be indignant because Laban gave them no inheritance, which they might expect in the absence of male heirs—seemingly contradicted by Gen 30:35;

wealth, but would not touch the capital because it is frequently returned to the wife as a dowry. This seems, though, to be at the father's discretion.²⁵ Jacob paid his bride wealth by working for Laban (though *mōhar* is not used; compare 1 Sam 18:25–29, where labor also serves as bride wealth) and in the process accumulates wealth for Laban—part of which Leah and Rachel feel should belong to them. There are elements of the story that fit this interpretation. Laban's wealth to which Leah and Rachel feel entitled does certainly come from Jacob's labor for their bride wealth. Ironically, Laban loses this money to Jacob due to his own fraud.

Another possibility is that Leah and Rachel expect a more substantial dowry, independent of the bride wealth, from their father. The wealth that Leah and Rachel expect to receive is like the *šeriktu* or *nudunnû* that appear in Mesopotamian law codes or marriage contracts from the Old Babylonian period—a gift a daughter receives from her parents when she gets married.²⁶ In some instances, a daughter might receive land as well as other valuables such as slaves, furniture, clothes and jewelry (CH 176b, 178–184; compare Neo-Babylonian Laws 9–13).²⁷ The only clear mention of a dowry in the Hebrew Bible appears in 1 Kgs 9:16, when the pharaoh of Egypt gives the Canaanite city of Gezer to his daughter “as a dowry [or parting gift]” (*šillūḥîm*). Notably, the dowry that the pharaoh gives his daughter is also land, though one could argue that this is an exceptional case because it involves a king, and a non-Israelite one at that. Another example of land as a dowry might be found in Judg 1:11–15, when Caleb

31:1. See von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 306. Claus Westermann (*Genesis 12–36*, 492) notes the relationship between *hēleq wənaḥālā* and political disaffiliation in 2 Sam 20:16 and 1 Kgs 12:16, but also argues that Laban has violated the customs surrounding the *mōhar*.

25. John Van Seters, “Jacob's Marriages and Ancient Near East Customs: A Reexamination,” *HTR* 62 (1969): 392.

26. The custom seems to have carried into the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods (Van Seters, “Jacob's Marriages,” 393).

27. Stephanie Dalley, “Old Babylonian Dowries,” *Iraq* 42 (1980): 53–74. Indeed, in one marriage contract a daughter takes as a dowry “36 square meters of land with a house built on it,” which is inherited from her mother and is located beside the house owned by a certain Bēlessunu, another woman (BAP 7/BM 92550/HG 3:486; Dalley, “Old Babylonian Dowries,” 59–60). In another contract, a woman named Elmešum receives four acres, which will belong to her brothers upon her death (YOS 13:325; Dalley, “Old Babylonian Dowries,” 65). Grants of land are not as common in these particular contracts, but most of them list slaves as a part of the dowry.

gives his daughter territory following her marriage—though it is not clear whether this is a marriage gift. Once again, Mesopotamian texts are not roadmaps for Israelite practices. It is not that the specific regulations or customs outlined in law codes and contracts are clearly evident in the sisters' complaints; rather, these Mesopotamian examples support the possibility that it would not have been far-fetched for Israelite women from wealthy families to expect property and money from their parents when they got married.

The two sisters receive women slaves, Bilhah and Zilpah, upon their respective marriages to Jacob (Gen 29:24, 29), which could be reasonably interpreted as a dowry. According to them, however, Laban owes them more. This seems to be the more likely reason for their complaint. Considering Laban's former wealth, the gift of just a woman slave would be pathetic indeed. Laban's dowry is so unacceptable that, in the sisters' estimation, he has effectively sold them, and treated them like foreigners, perhaps even foreign slaves.²⁸

Sarah Shectman contends that *hēleq wanaḥālā* is not to be taken literally here. For Shectman, the complaint of Leah and Rachel is like the cry of Sheba in 2 Sam 20:1 or the exclamation of Jeroboam in 1 Kgs 12:16 that they have no inheritance or portion in David. These two rebels are not "referring to a literal inheritance of land or possessions from David or his successors" but rather are "illustrating, through the use of metaphor, their political and social disenfranchisement from the Davidic kingdom."²⁹ Likewise, for Leah and Rachel, the reference to their allotted portion is a statement of disaffiliation with the *bēt 'āb* of Laban and their allegiance to Jacob's newly formed *bēt 'āb*. Shectman's point about the political implications of *hēleq wanaḥālā* is well-taken, though the expression may not be entirely nonliteral. With respect to Sheba and Jeroboam, royal disruption of patrimonial estates (*naḥālôt*) due to demands for forced labor and taxation could be a major catalyst for their respective rebellions (1 Sam

28. Some make a convincing distinction between a marriage that involves bride wealth and an actual "purchase-marriage" or "bought marriage" (Van Seters, "Jacob's Marriage," 393–94; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 466, 492). Based on Neo-Assyrian examples, Van Seters notes that a purchase marriage is characterized by the kind of language that accompanies "documents of purchase agreements having to do with slaves and land," as opposed to the terminology typically found in marriage contracts ("Jacob's Marriage," 393).

29. Shectman, "Composition of Genesis," 216.

8:10–18; 1 Kgs 21:1–4; Isa 3:13–15; 5:8–10; Mic 2:1–2, 9).³⁰ And the reference to actual money and wealth in the complaints of Leah and Rachel (*’ōšer, kesep*) also suggests that their protest deals with tangible inheritance. It seems that *hēleq wənaḥālâ* both is an expression of sociopolitical disaffiliation and is connected with the loss of actual assets that serve as a pretext for the disaffiliation. Because their father has alienated them with his treatment of their portion, the sisters declare political allegiance to Jacob. Like the woman stranger of Proverbs, when foreignness language is used to refer to women in Gen 31, the notion of foreignness is tied to the women's relationships with men. In this very different scenario, the sisters proclaim that they have been treated like foreigners by their father, on whom they are dependent.

There are two other reasons for seeing *nkr* and *zûr* as typically related to social boundaries as well. First, there is a perfectly good Hebrew word for just “another person” (*’aḥēr*) that does not carry all of the connotations of foreignness and boundaries that *zār* and *nokrî* do. It is very possible that an author selected *zār* and *nokrî* instead of, or in addition to, *’aḥēr* on purpose.³¹ The use of *zār* or *nokrî* probably conveys a different sense of alterity from *’aḥēr* alone, and perhaps a relationship with boundaries and categories is what separates the former from the latter. Second, the totally autonomous individual was probably not a concept biblical writers would have recognized. The Israelite man, designated by the word *’iš*, is intrinsically relational and probably always understood as part of a larger group of some kind.³² Consequently, when proposing a contrast between self and other, it will always be necessary to take the inherent, inextricable social embeddedness of the Israelite man into account.³³

30. Gail A. Yee, “‘He Will Take the Best of Your Fields’: Royal Feasts and Rural Extraction,” *JBL* 136 (2017): 821–38.

31. For an example of *’aḥēr*, *zār*, and *nokrî* appearing together, recall Prov 5:9–10. One might speculate that the words increase in intensity with respect to the kind of outsider and the boundaries they describe. For sources supporting the idea that terms that parallelism can enhance, delimit or reinterpret terms, see n. 4.

32. David E. S. Stein, “The Noun שׂר (’iš) in Biblical Hebrew: A Term of Origins,” *JHS* 8 (2008): 1–24.

33. We might add here Saul M. Olyan's argument about finding evidence of a concept of the self in the Hebrew Bible. While a reader may be able to perceive “aspects of the individuality, subjectivity, and uniqueness of the particular persons” who wrote biblical texts by looking at their unique artistry and particular arguments on theological topics, writing is a social convention that conveys “representations of

In this light, the anonymous *nokrî* who enjoys the man's (ʿîš) wealth in Qoh 6:2 could refer to someone from outside the man's household—similar to the male strangers who might enjoy the addressee's wealth in Prov 5:10, 16–17. In this case, however, Qohelet claims that this happens not as a result of cavorting with a woman stranger, but just because of the overall “vapidity,” “evil,” and “terrible sickness” that is a part of the world. After all, immediately following Qoh 6:2, the sage mentions children and a proper burial, two things closely associated with the household. Additionally, Prov 27:2, another example in which *zûr* and *nkr* appear to mean “another,” could also suggest that adulation from someone from outside one's family, even a foreigner (if the author wants to exaggerate the contrast even more), is better than adulation from one's own mouth. After all, Prov 27 does contain a couple of other extreme contrasts in “B is better than A” style, such as “open reproach is better than hidden love,” or “a close neighbor is better than a kinsperson far away” (27:5, 10). Also notably, LXX Prov 27:2 translates *ho pelas* (neighbor) for *zâr*, suggesting that this particular translator at least thought that the *zâr* here is a “stranger” from outside the household.³⁴

Some biblical passages refer to a reversal of fortune in which foreigners are elevated above the fully enfranchised member of Israelite society, usually as a punishment. This seems to be presented as an extraordinary state of affairs and something that is not supposed to happen when things are functioning normally: “The resident alien [*gêr*] who is in your midst will rise above you higher and higher. But as for you, you shall descend lower and lower. He will loan to you, but you yourselves will not loan to him. He will become the head, but you yourselves will become the tail” (Deut 28:43–44). Other examples in which foreigners take possession of things that rightfully belong to Israelites because of punishment include Isa 1:12; Ezek 30:12; Obad 11; and Lam 5:2. The elevation of the resident alien (*gêr*) appears with other dramatic and devastating reversals in Deut 28, such as the rain turning to dust (v. 22), building homes but being unable to dwell in them (v. 30), loss of children (vv. 32, 41), planting but being unable to enjoy the yield (vv. 30, 38–40, 42), and that people not known will enjoy the fruits of their

the subjective experience intended for public reception.” See Olyan, “The Search for the Elusive Self in the Texts of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, ed. David Brakke, Michael L. Satlow, and Steven Weitzman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 40–50.

34. Fox, *Proverbs 10–30*, 1050. Fox argues that the term refers to “another person, someone not properly belonging to a situation” (see also 139).

labor (v. 33), as well as boils and other diseases (vv. 21–22, 27–28, 35). Job, who suffers similar travails, also complains that his own resident aliens (*gārê bêtî*) treat him as a stranger (*zār*) and foreigner (*nokrî*). Indeed the socially unnatural inversions Job experiences are so far-reaching that it is Job who must curry favor with his slave, the opposite of what is socially expected.

One notable aspect of Ps 69:8–9; Job 19:13–19; and Gen 31:14–16 is that the complainants accuse God of allowing them to suffer unfairly. The speakers of Ps 69 and Job 19, in particular, are “unjust sufferers” who argue that their tribulations are not their own fault and further contend that God should do something to change their terrible circumstances.³⁵ In Ps 69, the subject has suffered because of his dedication to God, yet thus far God has not delivered him.³⁶ He complains, “My eyes have grown dim from waiting for my God” (v. 4), and he begs God to save him from the dishonor, reproach (vv. 7–8), insults, and slander (vv. 21–22) that have come about because of his very commitment to God. Ultimately, the sufferer wants God to take vengeance against his enemies, whom he equates with God’s own enemies (vv. 23–30), and in return he will make sacrifices to God (vv. 31–32). Job, who is labeled righteous in the prologue to the book, more forcefully accuses God, and it is clear that he perceives God as the one directly causing his suffering (19:5–12). Indeed, Job accuses Yahweh of treating him as an “adversary” (*šār*) against whom he has sent his military forces (vv. 11–12).³⁷ Similarly, but in a wholly different genre, when Leah and Rachel say that their father has treated them as foreign women, God is also the agent of their loss (Gen 31:16).

35. Though the complainants may not be entirely innocent in every way, the implication is that they do not deserve the kind of punishment God is currently inflicting on them. Some argue, for example, that the speaker in Ps 69 confesses sin to Yahweh but nevertheless expects deliverance. See Christiane de Vos and Gert Kwakkel, “Psalm 69: The Petitioner’s Understanding of Himself, His God, and His Enemies,” in *Psalms and Prayers: Papers Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society of Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België, Apeldoorn August 2006*, ed. Bob Becking and Eric Peels (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 167–70.

36. Adele Berlin argues that the aggrieved party in Ps 69 consists of mourners over Zion who are mocked by friends and family (Isa 61:2–3; Zech 7:3–5). See Berlin, “Psalms and the Literature of Exile: Psalms 137, 44, 69 and 78,” in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 74.

37. For details about how Job portrays God as someone who has become his enemy, see Choon-Leong Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 795–802.

The association of the foreigner's elevation with judgment partially explains why foreignness language might be used in righteous sufferer passages. Because God is perceived to be the ultimate agent of the complainant's suffering, the rising of an alien above a fully enfranchised member would support the sufferer's expressions of indignation. When a foreigner rises above an Israelite, it signals God's punishment. Conversely, the unjust sufferers of Ps 69 and Job 19 contend that they do not deserve divine punishment in this fashion. To be sure, it is not just ethnic foreigners who could usurp the wealth, power, or inheritance of fully enfranchised men as a result of punishment. People who are just outside the man's household or his smaller kinship group could cause such devastation as well (Prov 5:9–10; Ps 109:11). Nevertheless, the elevation of the ethnic *zār* and *nokrî* over the Israelite is most often, and most graphically, associated with divine judgment.

The overwhelming misery and distress that appear in Ps 69 and Job 19 seem to require equally dramatic references and contrasts to illustrate that misery. The sufferer asserts that he is like a *zār* and *nokrî* to his closest family and friends. For these words to simply mean "stranger," "another," or even someone outside the complainant's household does not seem to fully capture the profound suffering conveyed in these chapters. However, role reversals between Israelite and foreigner that come about as a result of judgment might capture the kind of immense social breakdown that the sufferer perceives. Not only are the speakers of Ps 69 and Job alienated and estranged from their families, but they are alienated in the strongest possible way: they are treated *like ethnic foreigners* by those who should treat them like peers or authority figures. In this way, the sentiment can be compared to verses in which someone feels so disrespected that he asks, "Am I a dog, that ..." (1 Sam 17:43; 2 Sam 3:8). Obviously, the offended person is not a dog, but he rhetorically and hyperbolically asserts that he is being treated like one. Similarly, the speakers of Ps 69 and Job assert that they are being treated like some of the most marginalized members of Israelite society.

Indeed, with respect to Job, his perception that he is treated like a foreigner by the people closest to him is preceded by the unhelpful advice of his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar in previous chapters. Job's friends are supposed to be acting as "comforters," which, as Saul Olyan points out, is an official social institution in the ancient Near East (Job 2:11–13).³⁸

38. Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 46–49.

Among comforters' various responsibilities, they are expected to actually *console* the grieving person (16:5).³⁹ Yet, Job's friends fail miserably in this respect; their words are perceived by Job as more humiliation (e.g., 19:1–6; 21:3). They do the exact opposite of comforting, as attested by Job elsewhere when he exclaims, "You are all terrible comforters" (16:2), and, "How will you comfort me with vapid things [*tənaḥāmûnî hābel*, 21:34]?" The breakdown of the important relationship between mourner and comforter frames Job's insistence that his close confidants have treated him like a foreigner.

Recall that Gen 17:9–14 and Exod 12:43–49 discuss the foreigner (*ben-nēkār*) in relation to the Israelite household. The *ben-nēkār* can serve as a slave in the Israelite household, a situation in which he would be of low rank but nonetheless able to participate in some privileges of the household, such as the Passover sacrifice. Alternatively, the *ben-nēkār* can be disenfranchised from the privileges of the household, if he is not a circumcised dependent of an Israelite head of household. As a result, we might ask whether the experiences of foreignness in these unjust-sufferer passages refer to a foreigner within the household or a foreigner outside the household. To put it another way, are the speaker of Ps 69, Job, Leah, and Rachel suggesting that they are being treated like the foreign slaves of an Israelite household? Or are they saying that they are being treated like foreigners outside the household? The latter scenario would seem to underscore the chasm between the position the complainant is supposed to hold and how the complainant actually feels, at least in Ps 69 and Job 19. The sufferer should, in normal circumstances, be treated as an enfranchised member of the household—and in some cases the head of the household. However, those who claim to be treated as foreigners by their family members and friends assert that they are being treated as outsiders with no privileges associated with the household whatsoever—like the uncircumcised *ben-nēkār* of Exod 12:43–49. If read with Gen 17 and Exod 12:43–49 in mind, the disrespectful treatment that Job receives from even his resident aliens and slaves makes sense. Because Job is alienated from the Israelite household as a foreigner, the slaves have no reason to treat him as a fellow member of the household in this rhetorical scenario.

39. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 48. Other responsibilities include participating in the mourning rituals and sharing in the grieving party's pollution, or helping the griever come out of mourning. See also Olyan's section on comforting a petitionary mourner (88–89).

Conclusion

The roots *zûr* and *nkr* have a wide range of meaning, and I have argued that these roots, when used nominally or adjectivally, almost always refer to people or objects that stand outside a socially salient boundary or category. For passages in which the roots appear to denote “another person,” as in “someone else,” these roots seem to intensify the alterity of the person designated by *zâr/zârâ* or *nokrî/nokrîyâ* in a way that the word *’ahêr* cannot precisely because of their association with boundaries and categories.

When speakers object to their treatment as a *zâr* or *nokrî/nokrîyâ* by family members and friends, they are expressing indignation over the fact that they are being treated like ethnic foreigners who are not members of a household. Genesis 17 and Exod 12:43–49, which deal with the *ben-nêkâr* in relation to the Israelite household, indicate how this might have been conceptualized. These passages simultaneously deal with both foreignness and rank within the home, and outside the home. In Exod 12:43–49, especially, the *ben-nêkâr* who stands outside the Israelite male’s household is not entitled to participate in the religious life of the household, in contrast to the *ben-nêkâr* who is. This kind of total alienation from the household seems to best fit the level of despair and grief expressed in Ps 69 and Job 19. In addition, extraordinary, socially unnatural role reversals by which foreigners are elevated above fully enfranchised Israelites are associated with the judgment and punishment of God. The association of these types of role reversals with divine punishment seems to reinforce the speakers’ perception that their situation is unjust, since from their vantage point they have done nothing to deserve that kind of treatment. With respect to Leah and Rachel, it is unclear whether they think their father has treated them like foreign (slaves) who live in the household or foreigners who stand outside it.

The use of *nkr* and *zûr* in the disruptions of personal relationships does seem to be gendered. For women, these roots appear to relate, in a fundamental way, to their dependency on the men in their lives. The protest of Leah and Rachel is very similar to the men’s complaints in Ps 69 and Job 19. But the source of the sisters’ unnatural, role-reversing misfortune is their father—the head of their *bêt ’âb*, who is ostensibly in authority over them. The “foreignness” and “strangeness” of the woman stranger in Prov 1–9 stem from the fact that she belongs to another male head of household. The woman is strange and foreign to the sage’s addressee because in order to interact with the woman, he must cross the boundary of his own household and intrude on the household of another man.

The rhetorical and hyperbolic charge that a person is being treated like a stranger and foreigner by their family and intimates also plays off some peculiarities of these two roots and ethnic terminology in the Hebrew Bible. Both *zûr* and *nkr* can refer to people who stand outside the household or a smaller kinship group and also to ethnic foreigners. Additionally, in the Hebrew Bible, ethnicity is frequently expressed in familial terms (e.g., *’āh*, *bayit*). *Zûr* and *nkr*, then, are fitting terms that can capture both alienation from the household and treatment like an ethnic foreigner at the same time—like the situation of the uncircumcised *ben-nēkār* in Gen 17 and Exod 12:43–49. Indeed, if a household treats someone like a foreigner, they are treating them as the lowest ranking member of the household, or as someone who is not a part of it. Both situations would represent an extraordinary social reversal for the male head of household, but also a significant reversal for the daughters of a male patriarch.

A Sinful People, an Angry Deity, and a Nauseated Land: A Triadic Relationship in the Hebrew Bible through the Lens of Land Defilement

Andrea Allgood

Notions of purity and impurity are key to social relationships in a variety of biblical texts. Saul Olyan has cogently demonstrated how the binary unclean/clean reinforced normative social behaviors and produced social difference by determining who had access to the sanctuary and to socially significant cultic rites.¹ He has also shown that purity ideologies were utilized in the project of community formation and protection.² Ascribing pollution to people, objects, and practices cast as foreign in some texts served to stigmatize and marginalize “alien” people and practices as a part of social identity formation.³ In brief, purity ideologies in the Hebrew Bible helped forge, reinforce, and police social relationships in a variety of ways.

This essay draws and expounds on sections of my doctoral dissertation, completed under the guidance of Saul Olyan, and is indebted to his scholarship in many ways. I am exceptionally grateful for having had the opportunity to learn from Saul these past years and am continually impressed by his insight, clarity of thought, and generosity as a mentor and a scholar.

1. Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 37–62.

2. Saul M. Olyan, “Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community,” *JSJ* 35 (2004): 1–16.

3. See Saul M. Olyan, “Stigmatizing Associations: The Alien, Things Alien, and Practices Associated with Aliens in Biblical Classification Schemas,” in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz, and Jakob Wöhrle, BZABR 16 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 20–23; see also the survey of texts in Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 19–44.

In what follows, I comment on the ways impurity is applied to land. Specifically, I address how conceptions about the susceptibility of land to certain kinds of impurity factored into broader discourses about the relationships among humans, the land, and YHWH. I suggest that purity rhetoric is used in some texts to elucidate and sharpen the rhetoric of obedience to YHWH/reward/blessing the land on one hand and disobedience to YHWH/expulsion/cursing the land on the other. I argue that so-called moral land impurity was endemic to the land of Israel, which allowed cultically oriented authors to articulate these frameworks in specifically Israel-focused ways.

Land impurity has often been viewed as integral to distinguishing purity systems in the Hebrew Bible.⁴ Moral impurity, the argument states, affects land, while ritual impurity does not.⁵ While I disagree with this starkly delineated view of land impurity as solely moral,⁶ it is clear that

4. Identifying mutually exclusive systems within purity texts has been a trend in scholarship for a century, and especially since Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966). See especially Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21–42. Recently, some have questioned the enterprise of depicting impurity in the Hebrew Bible in such clear, systemic terms by identifying points of internal inconsistency among the systems, texts that defy categorization in such terms, and texts that draw on multiple conceptions of purity for specific purposes. See T. M. Lemos, "Where There Is Dirt, Is There System? Revisiting Biblical Purity Constructions," *JSOT* 37.3 (2013): 265–94; Olyan, "Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah"; Andrea Allgood, "Foreign Lands—Multiple Perspectives: Foreign Land Impurity in the Hebrew Bible, Its Context, and Its Ideological Underpinnings" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2014), 26–89; Yitzhaq Feder, "Contagion and Cognition: Bodily Experience and the Conceptualization of Pollution (*tum'ah*) in the Hebrew Bible," *JNES* 72 (2013): 151–67. I believe that there is still utility to employing organizing terms such as Klawans's "ritual" and "moral" impurity, but oversystemization should be avoided. It seems there were multiple purity traditions or conceptions evident in biblical texts, and biblical authors could at times draw from multiple purity conceptions for rhetorical purposes.

5. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, 30. Hayes unequivocally states, "The impurity that accrues to land—all land—is without exception moral impurity that derives from the impurity of idols, idolatrous worship and immoral and defiling acts understood by the Bible to be attendant upon idolatrous worship" (*Gentile Impurities*, 43).

6. An exclusively moral categorization of land pollution does not account for texts that use language, images, or ideas drawn from a ritual impurity conception as polluting (e.g., female menstruation [Ezek 36:17] or corpses [Jer 16:18; see Deut 21:22–23])

multiple texts conceive of human deeds polluting the land of Israel. A key text in this regard is Lev 18:24–30. Leviticus 18:1–5 (without using purity language) implores the Israelites to follow the statutes and ordinances of YHWH, and not to follow the practices of Egypt or of Canaan so that they may live. Verses 6–23 list such proscribed foreign practices, detailing forbidden sexual relations and forbidding child sacrifice. Introducing the notion of defilement, verses 24–25 state, “Do not defile yourselves in any of these [ways], for it is in all these [ways] that the nations that I am casting out before you defiled themselves. Thus the land became defiled [וַתִּטְמָא הָאָרֶץ], so I punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.”⁷ The ascription of agency in these verses alludes to a three-way relationship between people, deity, and land. The proscribed actions are said to defile *humans* in Lev 18:24, 30, and the penalty of כרת in verse 29 punishes any individual who commits these “abominations” (תועבות). The actions are said to defile the *land* in Lev 18:25, 27, and this pollution is linked with the consequence of national exile in verses 25 and 28. This text suggests that after the inhabitants pollute themselves and the land through their actions, YHWH initiates the punitive action, by calling *the land* to account for *its* iniquities. The land, in turn, responds by vomiting out its inhabitants for polluting it.⁸

On one hand, Lev 18 casts the proscribed, polluting activities as foreign in origin, which establishes a contrast between native (Yahwistic) practice and foreign practices that are cast as defiling. On the other hand, the focus of this text is not merely on community building along the lines of Israelite/pure versus foreign/polluting, but rather on establishing

in describing land as defiled by sin. Furthermore, Klawans and Hayes presume that when *foreign* lands are called defiled, this is necessarily the same type of (exclusively) moral pollution that adheres to the land of Israel, but this does not fit the evidence. Ultimately, the ways in which impurity is described to affect both domestic and foreign lands demonstrate that there was a significant amount of overlap and play among purity traditions. On these issues, see Allgood, “Foreign Lands—Multiple Perspectives,” 13–89, 215–53, 368–85.

7. Translations are my own. Compare to the similar passage Lev 20:22–27, which does not describe the land as defiled and does include the characteristic H call for the Israelites to be holy (absent from Lev 18). Also see Lev 19:29, where a human misdeed is said to fill the land with depravity (though not explicitly defile it).

8. While the connection between the land being viewed as iniquitous and polluted is difficult to determine from context, this passage depicts the deity as punishing *the land* for its pollution, which in turn leads the land to punish its inhabitants.

standards of behavior expected of all within a specific territory. Not only Israelites are subject to exile from the land as a result of morally defiling it, but so too were the previous occupants of the land (vv. 24–25), and verse 26 enjoins both natives and resident aliens to avoid doing the abominations described *because* these sins defile the land. Thus, this text implies that it is the land that has a special status, not the people.⁹ The idea that foreign practices are polluting is a vehicle this text uses to describe actions that pollute the land of Israel, whoever may commit them.

A variety of other texts refer to the land of Israel being polluted by the misdeeds of its inhabitants. Numbers 35:33–34 contends that illegitimate bloodshed (murder or unintentional homicide) pollutes the land, and furthermore suggests that the reason this pollution is forbidden is that YHWH also lives there, among the Israelites. Like Lev 18:24–30, Ps 106:34–41 suggests that practices learned from the Canaanites defile the land of Israel.¹⁰ This psalm links pollution of the land (v. 38) and people (v. 39) with bloodshed, “idolatry,” and sexual misconduct (referring metaphorically to infidelity to the cult of YHWH). The consequence of this moral defilement is national defeat and exile (vv. 40–48).

Several important references to moral impurity polluting the land of Israel are in the book of Ezekiel, which itself has affinity with the Holiness source.¹¹ Ezekiel 22 calls for judgment on the “bloody city,” polluted by illegitimate bloodshed and by “idols” (vv. 3–4), which will consequently suffer shame (vv. 4–5), exile (v. 15), and destruction of the land (v. 30). In Ezek 36:16–38, the people are said to have defiled their land with conduct before YHWH “like the impurity of a menstruating woman” (v. 17).¹² In response, YHWH “poured out his wrath upon them because of the

9. This focus on the special status of the land (rather than the Israelites) potentially accounts for the omission of the call for the Israelites to be holy in Lev 18, which is present in Lev 20:26 (where the land is not said to be defiled), though this is highly speculative.

10. Unlike Lev 18:24–28, Ps 106 does not suggest that the Canaanites *also* defiled the land through their actions, though these practices, cast as Canaanite in origin, seem to be conceived as the source of the land defilement in Ps 106:38.

11. See Lewis B. Paton, “The Holiness-Code and Ezekiel,” *PRR* 26 (1896): 98–115; Michael A. Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel’s Use of the Holiness Code*, LHBOTS 507 (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 76–110.

12. Multiple aspects of this passage connect to ritual impurity traditions as well as the idea of moral impurity. For discussion, see Allgood, “Foreign Lands—Multiple Perspectives,” 235–38.

blood they had poured upon the land, and because of their ‘idols’ [גִּלּוּלִים] with which they had defiled it, and [YHWH] scattered them among the nations” (vv. 18–19). The solution of exile was imperfect, however, because YHWH’s name was “profaned among the nations” (vv. 20–23).¹³ As a result, the text states that YHWH will act to demonstrate his status as a powerful deity, (re)sanctifying his name, gathering the exiles, purifying them (vv. 25, 29), and ultimately restoring the fertility of the land (vv. 29–38). Interspersed with the account of the rectification of the relationship among people, land, and deity are descriptions of YHWH providing abundant food so that the people will not suffer famine (e.g., vv. 29–30) and allowing the deserted and ruined areas of the land to be rebuilt, replanted (“like the garden of Eden”), and repopulated (vv. 33–37). The parallel ideas of the fruitfulness of people and fruitfulness of the land, linked with divine approbation even in Gen 1:22, are here connected to the idea of purification from moral impurity.¹⁴ The message of Ezek 36 depends on the idea that the land of Israel is a focal point for YHWH’s activities and honor, with moral purity as the fulcrum on which the relationship of people, land, and deity all hinge.

Three passages in the book of Jeremiah shed light on the causes and ramifications of moral land pollution. Jeremiah 16:10–18 (like Ezek 36) depicts YHWH using exile and return as tools to demonstrate his power to the Israelites and to other nations, and it is in this context that Jer 16:18 states that the Israelites have defiled his land with the “corpses” of the Israelites’ detestable things (“idols”).¹⁵ In Jer 2:7, YHWH states that the Israelites defiled his land (וַתִּטְמְאוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ) and made his inalienable

13. On YHWH’s concern about his name being profaned abroad, see also Ezek 20:9, 14, 22; 22:16; 39:7. Note that Ezek 36:32 and Jer 3:3 suggest Israelites should be ashamed, and spectacle and public ridicule are sometimes part of divine punishment (e.g., Deut 28:37; Jer 24:9; Ezek 16:56–57, 22:4–5; Lam 1:8–9). In texts such as Ezek 36:16–38, the land of Israel is a stage where human and divine honor/shame are performed or demonstrated.

14. Only people (not the land) are said to be purified in Ezek 36:25 (compare 37:23), though the connection between the ideas of moral purity, the welfare of the land of Israel, and the well-being of its inhabitants are depicted as interrelated in this text.

15. This passage draws on multiple purity traditions, but it is clear that human misbehavior is central to the land impurity, linking it to a moral impurity framework (see Allgood, “Foreign Lands—Multiple Perspectives,” 243–44). The statement that the Israelites have defiled the land uses the root חָלַל rather than חָנַף or טָמָא.

possession an abomination (ונחלתי שמתם לתועבה). This chapter is replete with imagery drawn from ideas of agriculture and sustenance (Jer 2:3, 6–7, 13, 15, 18, 21, 31), and the contrast between the desert out of which YHWH led the Israelites and the fruitful land of Israel is especially vivid in verses 6–7.¹⁶ The implication of Jer 2:7 is that the impurity the Israelites brought to the land was antithetical to its YHWH-granted fertility. Jeremiah 3:1–10, casting Israel and Judah as sisters in a marital relationship with YHWH, suggests that the land is polluted when YHWH’s “spouses” are cultically unfaithful (vv. 1, 2, 9).¹⁷ Israel was unfaithful to YHWH (v. 6) and was therefore divorced (v. 8).¹⁸ Judah, rather than learning from the destruction of her sister, committed adultery “with stone and tree”¹⁹ and thereby polluted the land (v. 9). Suggesting that land pollution results in environmental consequences, verses 2–3 state that because the land is polluted, the rains are withheld. Each example in Jeremiah presumes that moral land impurity is located within Israel as YHWH’s territory and that exile or a barren land are the consequences of this defilement.

One exceptional case is Isa 24:1–13, which globalizes moral land impurity, rather than locating it within the territory of Israel.²⁰ This passage describes the world as being withered and utterly laid waste due to YHWH’s judgment, and verse 5 notes, “The earth is polluted under its inhabitants” (והארץ חנפה תחת ישיביה). The consequence is a curse that “devours the earth” and the dwindling of its inhabitants (v. 6). As Hans Wildberger observes, this universalization seems to be the result of a tendency within the Isaiah Apocalypse to globalize (without significant

16. The land through which YHWH brought the people is described as “a land of deserts and pits,” “a land of drought and shadow,” and “a land that no one passes through, where no one lives” (2:6). Israel, in contrast, is “the plentiful/fruitful land” (ארץ) (הכברמל), to which the Israelites are brought “to eat its fruit and its good things” (2:7).

17. Compare Ps 106:39; also see Hos 5:3; 6:10, which state that “Israel is defiled” (נטמא ישראל) through improper cultic activity, construed as sexual misconduct. In the related passage Deut 24:1–4, remarrying a twice-divorced woman “makes the land, which YHWH gave to you as an inalienable inheritance, err” (24:4), which connects land pollution to the iniquity of the land itself (see Lev 18:25).

18. This reference to the destruction of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians potentially links national defeat and exile to land defilement.

19. Alluding to Jer 2:27.

20. This is clear from the use of the term תבל in parallel structure with ארץ in 24:4.

modification) what elsewhere in biblical literature had been applied to Israel specifically.²¹ Hence, this text is not evidence that moral land impurity could be generally attributed to lands outside Israel; rather, the distinctive, universalizing aspect of Isa 24:5 demonstrates that moral land impurity was perceived to apply to the land of Israel as a matter of course.

While it has often been presumed that when *foreign* lands are labeled impure, it is necessarily a moral impurity,²² there is no clear case of foreign land impurity resulting from human misbehavior on foreign soil within the biblical anthology.²³ Hosea 9:3 and Ezek 4:13 imply that foreign lands may be ritually impure in order to speak to the difficulties of exile and heighten the rhetoric of the authors.²⁴ Amos 7:17 explicitly labels a foreign land as impure in the context that the priest Amaziah is condemned to die in an “impure land,” suggesting this is a ritual impurity used to sharpen the pronouncement of the author against the maligned priest (who ostensibly would have guarded his ritual purity carefully). Joshua 22:19, which seems to suggest that the Transjordanian Israelite territory was potentially impure, speaks to the cultic concerns of the text as well as a territorially circumscribed view of YHWH’s domain.²⁵ Each of these texts addresses intra-Israelite issues and behavior; there is no hint in any text of foreign lands becoming impure due to the “idolatrous” practices of the foreigners who live on them. Therefore, there is no case to be made for foreign lands being subject to moral land impurity of the kind that multiple texts ascribe to the land of Israel.

21. Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 478–80.

22. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 30; Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 43–44.

23. See detailed discussion on Allgood, “Foreign Lands—Multiple Perspectives,” 35–39, 368–82.

24. Allgood, “Foreign Lands—Multiple Perspectives,” 35–40.

25. For different interpretations of each of these cases, see Hayes, though I find her arguments that biblical land impurity was solely moral unconvincing (*Gentile Impurities*, 44). David Frankel dates the idea of foreign land impurity to later strata of texts but dubiously suggests that it was the development of monotheism that led to the idea that worship of YHWH became problematic in foreign places. See Frankel, *The Land of Canaan and the Destiny of Israel: Theologies of Territory in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 177–200. See critique of such a framing in Saul M. Olyan, “The Territoriality of YHWH in Biblical Texts,” in *Strength to Strength: Essays in Honor of Shaye J. D. Cohen*, ed. Michael L. Satlow (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 45–46.

Realizing that moral land impurity seems to have been described as adhering specifically to the land of Israel allows for observations about the way in which this phenomenon exists within a broader complex of traditions about the relationships among land, people, and deity, especially traditions related to exile and/or the fertility of the land as signs of divine judgment on humans. As seen above, in texts about land impurity, divine approbation or censure of inhabitants is often played out on the theater of the land. Texts such as Lev 18:24–30 and Ps 106:34–41 link land defilement to national exile from the land of Israel, while Jer 2:5–7 and 3:2–3 link this impurity to the fertility of the land and the possibility that it will become barren or drought stricken. Ezekiel 36:16–38 ties *both* the ideas of national exile and the fruitfulness of the land to notions of land purity and impurity, affected by the inhabitants who dwell there. These cases utilizing purity conceptions exist within a much larger ideational milieu linking obedience to YHWH with land occupation/blessing the land and disobedience to YHWH with exile/cursing the land. Exploring these links will demonstrate that land defilement was one possible, specific articulation of divine sanction realized “on the ground.”

It is important to note that land impurity is often predicated on the idea that the land of Israel belongs to or is inhabited by YHWH, to whom impurity would be antithetical. Numbers 35:33–34 forbids defiling the land, adding that YHWH lives there among the Israelites. In Jer 2:7, YHWH states the Israelites defiled “my land” (ארצי) and made “my inalienable possession” (נחלתי) an abomination. These are part of a wider tradition about YHWH’s ownership of the land of Israel.²⁶ The ability of the Israelites to live and work the land of Israel is described as a gift from the deity in numerous texts.²⁷ The relationships consequently forged among deity, people, and

26. The land is also called YHWH’s נחלה in Jer 16:18, 50:11; 1 Sam 26:19; 2 Sam 20:19; 21:3; Zech 2:16 [ET 2:12]; Pss 68:10 [9]; 79:1. It is called “the land of YHWH” (אדמת יהוה) in Isa 14:2, “my land” in 2 Chr 7:20, “my dwelling/resting place” (מנוחתי) in Ps 132:14, and the “holding of YHWH” (אחזת יהוה) in Josh 22:19; and Exod 15:17 brings together multiple expressions of YHWH’s connection with the territory.

27. There is a diversity of ideologies concerning this in biblical texts. Genesis 13:5; 17:8; 48:4 suggest the land grant is unconditional; Deuteronomy perceives occupation of the land as contingent on obeying YHWH’s laws, articulated as a *lex terrae* in texts such as Deut 12:1. See discussion in Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 5 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 58. Exile as a consequence of failure to fulfill the covenant is a threat seen in ancient

land potentially helped the very idea of ancient Israel as a nation emerge,²⁸ and the emphasis some texts place on YHWH's stake in the land allows for specific articulations of the people's responsibilities while living there. Leviticus 25:23 states that the Israelites are forbidden to sell the land because it belongs to YHWH, and the Israelites are merely residents or tenants (גרים ותושבים).²⁹ This tenancy/conditional-occupation model means that any maltreatment of YHWH's space may be grounds for eviction. Various texts bolster Israelites' obligations to YHWH with the threat of exile, which is among the covenant curses (e.g., Lev 26:33; Deut 28:36, 41, 64) and is invoked as a national punishment (without purity language) in texts such as Ezek 33:25. The special status of the land (rather than people) is also articulated by the contention that the Canaanites were expelled in favor of the Israelites because of their "abhorrent" behavior within the land (not only in Lev 18:24–25, 27–28, but also in texts such as Deut 9:5; 18:9–12).

The utilization of a purity ideology in conjunction with the widespread literary motif depicting exile as punishment in texts such as Lev 18:24–30; Ezek 22:15; 36:17–19; and Ps 106:38–41 may have had a dual effect. First, it possibly served to bolster the argument that "sinful" behavior merited exile, perhaps analogous with the idea that certain (ritually) impure people were to be excluded from the camp of the Israelites.³⁰ Second, the language of impurity could have added rhetorical force to the condemnation of proscribed activities, even a degree of disgust, especially within cultically oriented circles, where texts about land pollution are most commonly

Near Eastern vassal treaties (e.g., the treaty between the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhadon and Baal king of Tyre). See SAA 2:27, text 5.r.iv.14–17.

28. Regarding concepts of nationality, see the interesting suggestions of Steven Grosby on the connection between people and land as foundational for a nation and the connection between the concepts of sacred space and the territory of the deity. See Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality Ancient and Modern* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 67, 69–91. Grosby suggests that sympathy between people and land was facilitated by the belief that the power of YHWH was dispersed through both, connecting them (83).

29. These terms emphasize Israel's mere residency, not ownership of the land. The term גר is usually reserved for resident aliens, and תושב is often used similarly (e.g., Gen 23:4; see Num 35:15).

30. See Lev 13:46; 14:3; Num 5:1–4; Deut 23:10–12; and esp. Num 12:14, which casts being shut out of the camp for a period of time as a punitive measure for one who bears shame because she has offended her father.

found (e.g., H and Ezekiel).³¹ The image of a land so appalled by its own defilement that it vomits out the offending parties is a vivid one.³² These suggestions about the utility of purity language are speculative.³³ It does seem clear, however, that the idea of land defilement resulting in exile does not exist in a vacuum. It seems to be one cultically oriented formulation of a broader conception of how disfavored behavior may result in national punishment in biblical texts.

The premise that the productivity of the land is dependent on the approbation of YHWH is a second area in which moral land impurity intersects with broader biblical traditions regarding the relationships among humans, land, and deity. Many texts suggest that if one offends the deity, the land may be affected in such a way that those who depend on it lose access to food and/or water. Covenant blessings and curses often hinge on the idea that if the inhabitants are favored, their land will be bountiful (e.g., Deut 28:4, 11–12; Lev 26:4–5), while disobedience brings a curse, a plague, or some other destructive force that reduces the arable land to a barren wasteland and deprives inhabitants of food (Deut 28:18, 23–24; Lev 26:19–20).

The idea that the relationship between the people and the land is guided by divine approbation occurs in a biblical text placed near the beginning of the Pentateuch. Genesis 3:17–19 states that “the ground is cursed [ארורה והאדמה]” because of Adam’s misdeed, meaning that it will produce inedible “thorns and thistles,” and he will have to toil in order to eat from it, contrasting the ease with which food was procured in Eden. That Adam is said to labor to eat bread “until you return to the ground [אדמה], for out

31. On the rhetoric of disgust in purity discourse, see Thomas Kazen, “Disgust in Body, Mind, and Language: The Case of Impurity in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Mixed Feelings and Vexed Passions: Exploring Emotions in Biblical Literature*, ed. F. Scott Spencer (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 97–115. Kazen uses conceptual metaphor and blending theories to frame disgust in purity discourse, while Yitzhaq Feder addresses physical, social, and moral disgust as aspects of purity discourse using theories of embodiment and conceptual integration in “Contagion and Cognition,” 151–67. Their methods and conclusions are distinct, yet it is becoming apparent through such recent scholarship that disgust factored into purity ideologies in some way.

32. This animation of the land in Lev 18:25, 28 connects with the idea of a personified Jerusalem in texts such as Lam 1:9 and Ezek 22:3, though the personification of the land here seems less explicit.

33. Note that Lev 20:22–23’s description of the vomiting land does not explicitly label the land impure.

of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you will return” emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between the human and the earth from which he was formed, as well as the difficult relationship between them after his disobedience to YHWH. By placing these ideas in the primeval history, this text suggests that a key indicator of divine displeasure was a curse on the land, raising the specter of hunger or an acrimonious relationship with the earth itself.

A general biblical motif suggesting that divine sanction can be reflected in the fertility of a given territory is intensified by textual traditions extolling the unparalleled natural resources of Israel. Many texts exalt the virtue of the territory of Israel, a “land of milk and honey.”³⁴ Furthermore, Deut 8:7–9 expounds at length on the natural resources of the land; Deut 11:10–12 states that, unlike Egypt, Israel thrives from natural rainwater because YHWH continually looks after it; and Ezek 20:6, 15 calls it the most glorious of all lands. Deuteronomy notably exhibits the view that “the transformation of the earth is a consequence of the curse that comes on the land because of disobedience.”³⁵ In Deut 8:6–20, admonitions to follow YHWH’s commands and keep the covenant are interspersed with descriptions of the reward for doing so—the bountiful land that YHWH is giving to Israel, where they may eat to satiation and not experience scarcity of sustenance. This is contrasted with descriptions of the desert as a wasteland, where YHWH sustained the Israelites through extraordinary means (vv. 15–16), and is capped by a declaration that if the Israelites fail to obey and exclusively worship YHWH, they will perish (vv. 19–20). Deuteronomy 11:13–21 states that if the Israelites follow the commands of YHWH, rain will come regularly and crops will flourish, but if the Israelites worship other gods, YHWH will stop the rain so that the land will yield no produce, and the people will “perish quickly from the good land” that YHWH is giving to them. The curses listed in Deut 28:15–68 to a large degree focus on the idea of extreme famine and hardship. For example, Deut 28:23–24 states YHWH will turn the sky to bronze, the earth to iron, and the rain to dust until the people are destroyed, in contrast to the blessing of abundance in Deut 28:12.³⁶ Similarly, Lev 26:19–20 states

34. Among other examples, see references in Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; 14:8; Deut 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 31:20; Jer 11:5; Ezek 20:6, 15.

35. Jan Bergman and Magnus Ottosson, “ארץ,” *TDOT* 1:398.

36. Among others, see also Deut 28:38–40, describing produce being wasted rather than consumed.

that YHWH will make the sky like iron and the earth like bronze so that neither the trees nor the land will yield fruit, and Lev 26:32–35 links the desolation of the land with exile. Jeremiah 23:10 states that the land is full of “adulterers” (adultery is a cause of moral land impurity in Jer 3:9) and states, “Because of the curse, the land mourns, the pastures of the wilderness are dried up.” In Zech 5:3, a scroll in a prophetic vision is said to be “the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land.” Though in this case, the curse that blankets the land affects people, not produce (see Jer 11:3; Dan 9:11). The punishment of people and place are linked in 2 Chr 34:24, as YHWH states, “I will indeed bring evil upon this place [מקום] and upon its inhabitants: all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah,” potentially referencing the curses of Deut 28, which concern depravation of agriculture as well as disease and death. Conversely, the renewal of positive relations between YHWH and his people is connected to the growth of food or the lifting of a famine in passages such as Hos 2:23–25 (ET 21–23) and Hag 2:18–19.

The link between the idea of YHWH cursing the land and the defilement of the land by human misbehavior is apparent in texts such as Jer 3:2–3, which links moral land impurity with the withholding of rain (though the term *curse* is not used).³⁷ Ezekiel 36 suggests that moral land impurity results in the destruction of the land (v. 30)³⁸ and vividly describes the restoration of the land to a bountiful “garden of Eden” state upon the reestablishment of good relations between the people and YHWH. Isaiah 24:5–6 provides a clearer combination of the ideas of curse and defilement. Because the land is defiled by human actions, “a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt” until the population dwindles.³⁹

That Isa 24 is distinct in applying the idea of moral land impurity to areas outside Israel is potentially significant, as the motif of a curse

37. Compare Jer 6:8; 12:4, 11, which link land desolation with human misconduct, though without purity language.

38. See also Ezek 12:19, which states that because of their violence, the inhabitants of Jerusalem will eat and drink with trepidation, because the land will be stripped of “its fullness/abundance” (מלאכה).

39. See discussion in Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 479–81. Joseph Blenkinsopp compares this curse that causes infertility with the Greek concept of *miasma* and finds biblical parallels in Num 35:33 and Ps 106:38 (though, *pace* Blenkinsopp, neither of those texts suggests that a curse results from land defilement and causes infertility). See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 352.

devouring a land populated by “wicked” people is likewise not limited to the land of Israel. Similar to Isa 24:5–6, Ps 107:33–34 is nonspecific in terms of the location it describes as being turned into a “salty waste” due to the “evil” of its inhabitants. Other texts, such as Jer 51:32; Mal 1:3; and Ezek 35:4, 7, 9, describe the desolation of specific foreign places, such as Babylon and Edom, on the orders of YHWH in judgment of the inhabitants living there. In Gen 19:24–25, YHWH “rained sulfur and fire from YHWH out of the sky” on Sodom and Gomorrah and overthrows not only the cities, their environs, and their inhabitants, but also “what grew on the ground [צמח האדמה].” Neither the language of cursing the land nor of land impurity is used in Gen 19, but it is apparent that this is part of the same conceptual framework that views the destruction of a place and especially its produce as related to the conduct of the people who live there. Additionally, in Gen 6:11–12 the Priestly version of the flood story states that the land was “corrupt” (שחת) and full of violence, which is given as the reason for the flood. As Christine Hayes observes, this “evokes the purity/defilement model,” even though the language of purity is not present.⁴⁰ It is possible that the global nature of the story accounts for the omission of characteristic Priestly terms relating to defilement. If, as I have argued, cultically oriented sources and passages that explicitly utilize moral land impurity apply this to the land of Israel specifically, then Gen 6:11–12 is distinct from texts such as Lev 18:24–30 and Num 35:33–34, because it deals not with the pollution of YHWH’s specially chosen land but with the corruption of the entire world through condemned behaviors. Several texts suggest that various territories could be cursed or destroyed if YHWH was angry with their inhabitants; however, linking this phenomenon to the idea of moral land impurity seems to be an Israel-focused articulation of the idea.

The connections between exile and/or a curse on the land and moral land impurity show that this concept was part of a larger conceptual system casting the well-being of humans, deity, and land as interdependent relationships. Not all texts dealing with land impurity, however, are concerned with its practical consequences (e.g., Num 35:33–34); the rhetorical force of impurity language could be applied independent of concerns regarding exile or famine. The rhetorical use of moral land impurity is most often found in texts exhibiting a cultic orientation, potentially because authors

40. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 43.

focused on cultic matters would be more likely to appeal to concepts of purity and because priestly circles had a special interest in protecting YHWH's geographic sphere from impurity. Both casting the practices that defile the land as foreign in texts such as Lev 18 and also depicting occupation of the land as contingent on maintaining its purity status heighten intra-Israelite discourses regarding permitted and prohibited actions in socially significant ways, especially by couching them in cultically charged terms. By depicting the multilateral relationship among the people, land, and YHWH as predicated on maintenance of moral purity, not only are disobedient Israelites susceptible to exile because YHWH is angry with them, but they *must* be removed from Israel because they are a polluting influence on YHWH's territory. When YHWH acts against the land in response, the land itself may act, as in Lev 18:28, vomiting out its polluting inhabitants.

The Relationship between the Philistines and the Israelites in the Ark Narrative

Thomas Römer

The Philistines in the Hebrew Bible

In the Hebrew Bible, the Philistines appear as the “aliens” par excellence. This is especially the case in the stories about Saul and David in the books of Samuel, where the Philistines are called the “the uncircumcised” (ערללים; 1 Sam 14:6; 17:26, 36; 31:4; 2 Sam 1:20; see also Judg 14:3; 15:18). And, indeed, according to a passage from the book of Jeremiah it appears that most of the inhabitants of the Levant practiced circumcision:¹ “See, days are coming, says YHWH, when I will attend to all those who are circumcised in the foreskin [מול בערלה]: Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all those with shaven temples who live in the desert” (Jer 9:24–25a; ET 9:25–26a). Included among these inhabitants are also the Phoenicians, since the oracle of judgments in Ezek 28 threatens the king of Tyre that he will die the

In several publications Saul M. Olyan has investigated social and societal issues of the Hebrew Bible. See Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Olyan, “The Ascription of Physical Disability as a Stigmatizing Strategy in Biblical Iconic Polemics,” *JHS* 9 (2009): 1–15; Olyan, *Social Inequality in the World of the Text: The Significance of Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible*, JASup 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011); Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). In the following I would like to enter into a conversation with Saul about the construction of the Other. See Olyan, “Stigmatizing Associations: The Alien, Things Alien, and Practices Associated with Aliens in Biblical Classification Schemas,” in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz, and Jakob Wöhrle (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011). It is a pleasure and an honor to offer these ideas to a highly esteemed colleague and a very good friend.

1. Translations follow the NRSV and are modified when necessary.

death of the uncircumcised: “You shall die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of foreigners” (Ezek 28:10). This passage also shows that there is a sense of superiority with circumcised people compared to uncircumcised people.² The Philistines or the so-called Sea People/s, coming from different parts of the Aegean islands and Anatolia,³ have quite quickly assimilated to the culture of the southern Levant, but without adopting the practice of circumcision, as also shown by representation of uncircumcised phalli (ex-voto objects?) in Gath.⁴ According to the Bible, King Saul urges David, who wants to marry his daughter, to bring him the foreskins of the Philistines whom he shall kill in battle.⁵ Ralph Klein considers this biblical episode to reflect an “ethnic humor” of sorts.⁶ However, the topic may reflect a custom of bringing a portable part of each killed enemy, as shown by a relief from the mortuary temple of Ramesses III in Medinet Habu, which represents the counting of penises cut off of Lybian soldiers.⁷

In the stories about Samson in Judg 13–16 and in the stories about Saul and David and the rise of the monarchy, the Philistines are clearly depicted as the Others and Israel’s worst enemies. A similar picture also appears in other prophetic texts: Jer 47 (MT) and Ezek 25:15–17 feature the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel receiving oracles of judgment and destruction against the Philistines; and Amos 1:6–8 and Zeph 2:4–7 announce the divine wrath against the Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron, which are depicted as invaders and slave traders.⁸

2. Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2000), 64–68.

3. Assaf Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and Aegean Migration at the End of the Late Bronze Age* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Shirley Ben Dor Evian, “Ramesses III and the ‘Sea-Peoples’: Towards a New Philistine Paradigm,” *OJA* 36 (2017): 267–85.

4. Aren Maeir, “A New Interpretation of the Term ‘opalim (עפלים) in the Light of Recent Archaeological Finds from Philistia,” *JSOT* 32 (2007): 23–40.

5. 1 Sam 18:20–27 (MT) mentions two hundred foreskins; LXX has one hundred, which probably reflects the older text.

6. Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, WBC 10 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), 190.

7. José das Candeias Sales, “The Smiting of the Enemies Scenes in the Mortuary Temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu,” *OS* 1 (2012): 85–116. For a comparison with 1 Sam 18, see William J. Webb and Gordon K. Oest, *Bloody, Brutal, and Barbaric? Wrestling with Troubling War Texts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 275–76.

8. Samuel Amsler, “Amos,” in *Osée, Joël, Amos, Abdias, Jonas*, in Edmond Jacob, Carl-Albert Keller, and Samuel Amsler, *CAT XIa* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1992), 173. That Gath is not mentioned any more may indicate that these texts were written at a

Although the Philistines are often depicted as hostile aliens, they are also Israel's and Judah's neighbors.⁹ For this reason, the negative picture of the Philistines is likely counterbalanced by the stories in the patriarchal narratives, according to which Abraham and Isaac sojourn in the territory of Abimelech, who is depicted as the king of the Philistines (Gen 26:1). This king offers hospitality to the patriarchs, invites Abraham to stay in his country (20:15),¹⁰ and recognizes Isaac as the blessed of YHWH (26:28). In Gen 20:3, God appears to Abimelech in a dream, and the Philistine king acts in a perfectly adequate way to the divine message. He is even depicted as the image of the God-fearing *goy* (20:4); and although a conflict arises between the patriarchs and the Philistine herders over the use of wells in a shared territory, a peaceful solution is found, which results in both Abraham and Isaac founding the site of Beersheba, which is claimed by the authors of Gen 20 and 26 as Judean.¹¹ The quite positive picture of the Philistines in the patriarchal narratives may be explained by the ideology of these stories that try to promote a cohabitation of all the different people in the Levant, in which conflicts should be resolved by negotiation (see also Gen 13; 31).¹²

In any case, the pictures of the Philistines in the Abraham and Isaac stories differ considerably from their presentation in the stories of the

time when this city was no longer important, after its destruction by Hazael at the end of the ninth century BCE or after the earthquake and the Assyrian conquest in 701 BCE. See Aren Maeir, "Gath," *EBR* 9:1022–23. For a possible Judean occupation of Gath under Hezekiah, see Hermann M. Niemann, "Nachbarn und Gegner, Konkurrenten und Verwandte Judas: Die Philister zwischen Geographie und Ökonomie, Geschichte und Theologie," in *Kein Land für sich allein: Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebir nâri für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ulrich Hübner and Ernst A. Knauf, OBO 186 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2002), 76–77.

9. Niemann, "Nachbarn und Gegner."

10. Abraham is depicted as a *gēr* in Gen 21:34.

11. Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 418. Blum locates these texts in the Hellenistic period; Matthias Köckert places them in the Persian period. See Köckert, *Abraham: Ahnvater–Vorbild–Kultstifter*, BG 31 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017), 190. But territorial conflicts between the Philistines and the Judahites can refer to an earlier context. In any case, it is quite clear that the original story about the territorial conflict with the Philistines can be found in Gen 26 (see Köckert, *Abraham*, 189–90).

12. Jacques Pons, "Confrontation et dialogue en Genèse 12–36," *ETR* 65 (1990): 15–26.

origins of the Israelite and Judahite monarchy. In these stories one finds, however, another narrative in which the Philistines appear in a more nuanced light. This is the so-called ark narrative, to which we now turn.

The Original Ark Narrative

The idea that 1 Sam 4:1–7:1 and 2 Sam 6 constitute an independent ark narrative comes from Leonhard Rost.¹³ In his book about the succession narrative, he argued against earlier research affirming that the chapters, which narrate how the ark was captured by the Philistines and then returned to Kiriath-Jearim before David brought it to Jerusalem, were originally an independent story, written by one of the priests of the ark during the reign of David or Solomon.

According to Rost, this story is characterized as having the same vocabulary, style (many speeches and many questions), and theology. YHWH is presented as a god who strikes his enemies and (eventually) brings help and salvation to his people. This hypothesis was accepted by many scholars, including Martin Noth, who assumed that the Deuteronomistic History had integrated these older traditions in its history about Samuel and the origins of the monarchy.¹⁴ There were voices, however, quite critical of Rost's theory, especially in regard to the idea that the original ark narrative ended in 2 Sam 6. One of the first problems observed was that the story about David's transfer of the ark to Jerusalem in 2 Sam 6 is now separated from the former narrative. Both parts are quite different and do not really belong together:

1. If 2 Sam 6 directly followed 1 Sam 7:1, David would appear without any introduction.
2. The names of persons and location differ.¹⁵

13. Leonhard Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids*, BWNT 42 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926). According to Rost, this story consisted of 1 Sam 4:1b–18a, 19–21; 5:1–11b1, 12; 6:1–3b1, 4:10–16; 4:19–7:1; 2 Sam 6:1–15, 17–20a.

14. Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (1943) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 54; English translation, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOT-Sup 15 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 77.

15. 1 Sam 7:1 mentions Eleazar as Abinadab's son; 2 Sam 6 speaks of Uzza and Ahio; 2 Sam 7:1 has Kiriath-Jearim; 2 Sam 6 speaks of Baale Yehuda (MT) or Baalah (according to 2 SamQ).

3. The style and the vocabulary between 1 Sam 4:1–7:1 and 2 Sam 6 are also different. Both units only share four of the fifty-four words and expressions that Rost considered to be typical for the so-called ark narrative.¹⁶
4. Jerusalem as the final destination of the ark is not hinted at in 1 Sam 4:1–7:1, which would be expected if, from the beginning, the ark narrative was the *hieros logos* of an ark shrine in Jerusalem.

For these reasons, several scholars have challenged the idea that 2 Sam 6 was the end of an independent ark narrative,¹⁷ so with them I separate 1 Sam 4–7:1 from 2 Sam 6.

The question remains, however, whether one can consider 1 Sam 4:1b–7:1 as an independent story. According to Nadav Na'aman, “The ark narrative is inseparable from both the story of Eli and Samuel in chaps. 1–3 and from the episode of Samuel’s victory over the Philistines in chap. 7; it was never an independent entity.”¹⁸ But here one needs to recognize that Samuel never shows up in the ark narrative. The only link between Samuel and the ark is made in 1 Sam 3:3, which reads: “Samuel was lying down in the temple of YHWH, where the ark of God was.” All commentators agree that this statement is a gloss or a redactional insertion in order to create a link between Samuel and the ark,¹⁹ which originally did not exist.

There is also a difference in the presentation of Eli and his sons in 1 Sam 2–3 and 1 Sam 4. In 1 Sam 2:22–25 and 2:27–34, Eli’s sons are heavily condemned, and a prophet announces the end of the house of Eli. But in the story of 1 Sam 4, where we learn about the death of Eli’s sons and of Eli himself, there is no negative remark made about them. Also, a Deu-

16. Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger, “Beobachtungen zur Landgeschichte und zur Komposition der Samuelbücher,” in *Freiheit und Recht: Festschrift F. Crüsemann*, ed. Christof Hardmeier, Rainer Kessler, and Andreas Ruwe (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1995), 328.

17. Franz Schicklberger, *Die Ladeerzählungen des ersten Samuel-Buches: Eine literaturwissenschaftliche und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung*, FB 7 (Würzburg: Echter, 1973); Patrick D. Miller and Jimmy J. M. Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the “Ark Narrative” of 1 Samuel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Peter Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes im Alten Testament und in den Texten vom Toten Meer*, BZAW 397 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).

18. Nadav Na’aman, “The Pre-Deuteronomistic Story of King Saul and Its Historical Significance,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 654.

19. Walter Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, BKAT 8 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2010), 177.

teronomistic note explaining that their death happened according to what YHWH had previously announced through his prophet is lacking in 1 Sam 4, which means that the comments about Eli and his sons in 1 Sam 2–3 are later additions.²⁰

The only link between 1 Sam 2 and 1 Sam 4 is the mention of the birth of Ichabod in 1 Sam 4:19–22, which creates a link with the prophetic announcement of 2:33: “The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep out his eyes and grieve his heart; all the members of your household shall die by the sword.” But here again, scholars would agree that the episode of Ichabod’s birth does not belong to the original story of 1 Sam 4 but was added later in order to create a link with the foregoing oracle.²¹ In 1 Sam 4, Eli’s sons Hophni and Phinehas are represented as guardians of the ark, and their death is not described in a negative way.

The independence of the ark narrative is further confirmed by the fact that—with exception of the gloss in 1 Sam 3:3—there is no explanation of how the ark arrived in Shiloh. At the end of the book of Judges the ark appears in the sanctuary of Bethel (Judg 20:27). In all other texts in the book of Joshua that mention the ark, there is no explanation about its installation in Shiloh. This is another indication for the original independence of the ark story and of its original *Sitz im Leben* at the sanctuary of Shiloh.²²

According to Naʿaman, “the narrative cannot abruptly start in 4:1b.”²³ But if we follow the Greek version we have a perfect introduction: “In those days the Philistines mustered for war against Israel, and Israel went out to battle against them; they encamped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped at Aphek” (1 Sam 4:1b LXX). Interestingly, the Greek text does not mention Samuel at all, which is another indication that the MT’s version of 1 Sam 4:1 (“And the word of Samuel came to all Israel”) is a later revision. In contrast to the Greek version,²⁴ the MT attributes the initia-

20. Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, 246.

21. Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 140–41.

22. Shiloh is mentioned in Josh 18–22 in late Priestly post-Dtr texts, together with the tent of meeting; Judg 18:31 mentions the “house of God” in Shiloh; Judg 21 also speaks of Shiloh, but none of these texts ever mention the ark.

23. Naʿaman, “Pre-Deuteronomistic Story,” 654.

24. The Greek introduction “In those days” is the equivalent of *וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָהֵם*, which introduces new stories in Exod 2:11; Judg 19:1; and 1 Sam 28:1, and is therefore an appropriate beginning of an independent narrative.

tive of the battle to the Israelites. This may be understood as a theological modification in order to explain that the Israelites lost the war and the ark because they had not consulted YHWH before waging war. The Philistines play different roles here, according to the (likely) older Greek version, as they initiated war against the Israelites, whereas in the MT, as we will see now, the Philistines, in 1 Sam 4, appear as YHWH's tool.

The Philistines as YHWH's Agents and Godfearers in 1 Samuel 4 and 6

First Samuel 4:1–18 speaks of two catastrophes that are related: the capture of the ark by the Philistines and the death of the priest of Shiloh, Eli, preceded by the death of his two sons. The two passages are related because they show that the sanctuary of Shiloh is no longer considered legitimate. It does not host the ark anymore, and its priestly dynasty has disappeared. The addressees of the narrative understand that the Israelites have been defeated and that the ark has been captured by the Philistines. However, a closer look at the story shows that they are never mentioned directly as being the agent of Israel's defeat and the loss of the ark. All the comments about this topic are put into a passive voice. According to the narrator, "Israel was defeated, ... and the ark of God was captured" (1 Sam 4:10–11). When the messenger informs Eli about the loss of the ark, he similarly states, "The ark of God has been captured" (1 Sam 4:17). Also in the later addition (see above) about the birth of Ichabod, the wife of Phinehas explains his name as follows, "The glory has departed from Israel, because the ark of God had been captured" (1 Sam 4:21, repeated in v. 22). These formulations clearly suggest a divine passive and the idea that the Philistines did not take the ark by their own strength; rather, they were YHWH's tool. That means that Israel's defeat and the loss of the ark should be understood as the will of YHWH.²⁵

Because of this particularity in 1 Sam 4 (1 Sam 5:1 mentions the Philistines as having captured the ark), some scholars imagine that the original ark narrative was limited to a *Katastrophengeschichte* in 1 Sam 4:1–2, 10–18, a story recounting how the ark was lost in a war with the Philistines.²⁶ According to these authors, 1 Sam 5:1–7:1 would have been added much later, to transform the defeat into a glorious victory.

25. Walter Brueggemann, *Ichabod toward Home: The Journey of God's Glory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 32.

26. Schicklberger, *Ladeerzählungen*, 25–73; Porzig, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 141–42.

However, it is difficult to imagine such an independent story that leaves so many unresolved questions and ends with a defeat. It seems more logical to imagine that the original story spoke about the loss of the ark and its sojourn in Philistine territory before reaching a new home in Kiriath-Jearim. That the divine passive is not used anymore in 1 Sam 5:1 does not indicate a different author, because the reader or listener of the story can now surmise that YHWH is behind the travels of the ark. Thus 1 Sam 5 demonstrates the superiority of the God of the ark in a distinctive way.

As for 1 Sam 4, the Philistines are not only presented as God's tool; they are also presented in a later addition as knowing about the exodus narrative. When the Israelites bring the ark to the camp, the Philistines become afraid and deliver a long speech:

When the ark of YHWH (LXX)²⁷ came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded. When the Philistines heard the noise of the shouting, they said, "What does this great shouting in the camp of the Hebrews mean?" When they learned that the ark of YHWH had come to the camp, the Philistines were afraid; they said, "A god has come into the camp." They said, "*Woe to us!* For nothing like this has happened before. *Woe to us!* Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with every sort of plague in the wilderness.²⁸ Take courage, *and be men*, O Philistines, in order not to become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; *be men* and fight." So the Philistines fought; Israel was defeated, and they fled, everyone to his home. (1 Sam 4:5–10)

There are several indications that the allusions to the exodus tradition in verses 8–9 are later additions. Whereas verse 7 speaks about one god, verse 8 uses the plural in order to transform the Philistines into polytheists (which contradicts 1 Sam 5, where the Philistines speak about the ark of the god of Israel). The idea that the Hebrews are slaves of the Philistines is not at all presupposed by the original narrative. There is a

27. There are important differences between the Greek and the Hebrew version in the ark narrative. The original story spoke about the ark of YHWH or the ark of God; the titles "ark of the covenant" and "ark of YHWH who is enthroned on the cherubim" are later Dtr and post-Dtr revisions (Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, 211 and n. 81).

28. The location of the plagues in the wilderness is somewhat astonishing. It could be that this is an allusion to the miracle at the Sea of Reeds, which was located in the wilderness where the whole Egyptian army perished (Exod 13:18).

Wiederaufnahme in the beginning of verse 8 (“Woe to us!”) and also at the end of verse 9 (“be men”).²⁹ One may also observe a tension between verse 6aßb and verse 7: verse 6aßb implies that the Philistines already learned that YHWH had come to the rescue of the Hebrews, but this is not so in verse 7, where there is only mention of “a god.” Moreover, these passages are also doublets. Therefore verse 6aßb is probably an insertion that was added after verses 8–9a in order to correct the plural in verse 8.³⁰ The original passage only contained verses 5–6aa, 7, 9b, 10–11.

In the addition the Philistines appear, according to Walter Dietrich, as “Jhwh-fürchtige Kenner der Heilsgeschichte Israels.”³¹ This is partly right. The Philistines never use the Tetragrammaton when they speak of the god of Israel. Yet the intention of the redactors was also to depict the Philistines as knowing about the exodus tradition, suggesting parallels between the exodus and plague traditions and to present them in a better light than the Egyptians.

This is also the case in another addition. After the ark brought plagues in Philistine cities, the rulers consulted their religious specialists in order to know what to do with the ark:

And they said, “What is the guilt offering that we shall return to him?” They answered, “Five gold tumors and five gold mice,³² according to the number of the lords of the Philistines; it is the same plague for all of you and your lords. You must make images of your tumors and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps he will lighten his hand on you and your gods and your land. Why should you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? He acted wantonly with them, so that they released them, and they went away? Now then, get ready a new cart and two milch cows

29. The imperative “be courageous” reminds one of the (Dtr) divine speeches in the book of Joshua; see Josh 1:1–9, etc.

30. There is no allusion in the ark narrative to the Israelites being slaves of the Philistines. This statement can also be understood as an attempt to present the Philistines as Egyptians. Note that 4:6, 9 are the only texts in the whole ark narrative that use the term *Hebrews*.

31. Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, 212.

32. There is some confusion over whether the plagues that the ark brought to the Philistines were “tumors” (the Masoretes interpreted them to be hemorrhoids) or rats/mice. The latter play a more prominent role in LXX. It is possible that there were two (oral?) variants of the plagues that were combined differently in the Masoretic and Greek manuscripts.

that have never borne a yoke, and yoke the cows to the cart, but take their calves home, away from them.” (1 Sam 6: 4–7)

It is quite clear that verse 4b and verse 5a are doublets. Verse 4b mentions a Philistine Pentapolis, which does not concord with the presence of just three cities (Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath) mentioned in the narrative. Verse 5b introduces the topic of the superiority of the god of Israel and probably belongs together with verse 6. That means that the original story contained 1 Sam 6:4a, 5a, and 7. Verse 5b, a passage that can be compared to Exod 12:12, can be understood as a redactional technique used to prepare the reader for the motif of the hardening of the heart in verse 6, which is typical of the J (or better Dtr) exodus tradition. The Philistine priests and diviners advise their compatriots not to act as stubbornly as did the Egyptians; so the Philistines follow their advice and prepare for the “exodus” of the ark of YHWH. That means that the Philistines acknowledge the power of the god of Israel, in contradistinction to Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

The Philistines Experience the Superiority of the Ark over Their God Dagon (1 Sam 5)

The power of YHWH, the god of the ark, manifests itself after the ark has been deported to Ashdod. The practice of the deportation of the ark can be compared to the deportation of divine statues, a practice that is attested in cuneiform sources since the Old Babylonian period until the time of the Neo-Babylonians.³³ The capture of the deities of enemies was meant to demonstrate the superiority of the victor’s deities. In the Annals of the Assyrian king Sennacherib one finds the following statement: “Sidqa, king of Ashkelon, who had not submitted to my yoke, the gods of his father-house, himself, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his brothers, ... I tore away and brought to Assyria” (2.60–64).³⁴ An inscription of Sargon II, the Nimrud prism, which was redacted in 706 BCE and refers to the destruction of Samaria, mentions “the gods in which they had put their trust” among the booty. This inscription should be juxtaposed with two Neo-Assyrian bas-reliefs on which one can see soldiers of Sargon and

33. Mathias Delcor, “Jahweh et Dagon (ou le Jahwisme face à la religion des Philistins, d’après 1 Sam. V),” *VT* 14 (1964): 136–54.

34. Daniel D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), 30.

of Sennacherib respectively, transporting statues of gods among their war loot. Interestingly, in both of these reliefs there is one deity, smaller than the others, who appears to stand on a box, quite similar to the biblical *'arôn*.³⁵

Sargon's statement stresses the weakness of the enemies' gods. And this disparagement of the gods of the enemies can even lead to the denial of their divinity via the destruction of the divine statues. Assurbanipal records that he put into pieces the Elamite deities: "I smashed their gods and thereby soothed the heart of the lord of the lords."³⁶ The author of the ark story knows about these practices and takes them up, sometimes in order to construct a counterhistory. In 1 Sam 5, when the ark is placed in the sanctuary of Dagon, the statue of Dagon is smashed through YHWH's power:

The Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and placed it beside Dagon. The people of Ashdod rose early the next day (and went to the house of Dagon):³⁷ there was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of YHWH. So, they took Dagon and put him back in his place. And they rose early on the next morning: Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of YHWH, and the head of Dagon and the two soles of his hands were lying cut off upon the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. (1 Sam 5:2–4)

On the first night Dagon falls down before YHWH as if he would worship him. Rather than YHWH paying homage before the Philistine deity, it is Dagon who prostrates himself before YHWH. On the second night, however, the statue of Dagon is dismembered in a way that reminds one of the destruction of divine statues at the hands of the Assyrians.³⁸

35. Christoph Uehlinger, "'... und wo sind die Götter von Samarien?' Die Wegführung syrisch-palästinischer Kultstatuen auf einem Relief Sargons II. in Horsabat/Dur-Sharrukin," in *"Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf...": Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient; Festschrift O. Loretz*, ed. Manfred Dietrich, Ingo Kottsieper, and Oswald Loretz, AOAT 250 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1998), 739–77; Uehlinger, "Hanun von Gaza und seine Gottheiten auf Orthostatenreliefs Tiglatpilesers III," in Hübner and Knauf, *Kein Land für sich allein*, 92–125.

36. Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh's*, VAB 7 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916), 50, lines 119–20.

37. Missing in the MT; only present in LXX.

38. This contradicts Zwickel's assertion that this practice of amputation is not attested during the Iron Age. See Wolfgang Zwickel, "Dagons abgeschlagener Kopf (1 Samuel V 3–4)," *VT* 44 (1994): 246. For the relief from Sargon II's palace in Dur-

What happens in 1 Sam 5 to Dagon can be compared to a strategy that Saul Olyan has labeled the “ascription of physical disability as a stigmatizing strategy in biblical iconic polemics.”³⁹ The falling down and dismembering of Dagon is used to stress his loss of any power in the presence of the ark of YHWH. One may understand this episode as a counterhistory,⁴⁰ which uses practices of deportation and smashing of divine statues in order to demonstrate that the deported ark did not show allegiance toward the deity in the temple to which it had been deported. On the contrary, the ark was so powerful that it caused the fall of the deity to whom it was supposed to show allegiance. Interestingly, the Philistines seem to accept this divine judgment.

The Philistines Recognize YHWH’s Power and Accept the Limitations of Their Territory (1 Sam 5 and 6)

After the incident in Dagon’s temple, the Philistines recognize that YHWH’s “hand” or strength is “heavy” on them and their god Dagon (1 Sam 5:7). That means that they accept that the god of Israel is more powerful than the god of Ashdod.⁴¹ They also understand that YHWH’s ark is so powerful that they all risk their lives by keeping it in their territories (1 Sam 5:11).

In the episode about the ark’s travel throughout Philistine cities and the Philistines’ decision to send it back, the expression “hand of YHWH” is a key phrase that appears seven times (1 Sam 5:6, 7, 9, 11; 6:3, 5, 9), which may allude to the exodus tradition (see Exod 9:3; see also 6:1; 13:3, 6; 14:31), as is sometimes argued.⁴² One should not forget, however, that the “hand of YHWH” is a very common topic and occurs frequently also

Sharrukin (Khorsabad), see Paul-Emile Botta and Eugène Flandin, *Architecture et sculpture*, vol. 1 of *Monuments de Ninive*, ed. Paul-Emile Botta (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1849), pl. 140.

39. Olyan, “Ascription of Physical Disability,” 1.

40. For the concept see Amos Funkenstein, “History, Counter-history and Memory,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution,”* ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 66–81.

41. The narrative does not speak about the gods worshiped in Gath and Ekron. An inscription attests to the worship of a goddess in Ekron. See Alexander Fantalkin, “Toward the Identification of the Goddess of Ekron,” *JANER* 17 (2017): 97–115.

42. Fritz Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel*, ZBAT 9 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981), 47; Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, 267.

in other contexts, as it does, for instance, in Isa 40–66. In any case, it is noteworthy that the Philistines (and not only the narrator) acknowledge the strength of YHWH's hand.

There is, however, one clear allusion to the exodus narrative in 5:12, which refers to the cry of a city, namely, Ekron. This phrase has a close parallel in Exod 2:23 (P):⁴³

Exod 2:23 ותעל שועתם אל־האלהים

1 Sam 5:12 ותעל שועת העיר השמים

Apparently 1 Sam 5:12 belongs to a quite late insertion (5:12–6:1) that interrupts the discussion about sending the ark back to the Israelites. The redactor knows the Priestly exodus story and quotes from it. However, he replaces the word *God* with *heaven*, perhaps in order to remain somewhat vague about the receiver of the cry of the Ekronites. In any case, by quoting Exod 2:23 the redactor shows a parallel between the Philistines and the oppressed Israelites, suggesting that all the events that happened since the capture of the ark are under the control of the god of Israel. The redactor wanted to promote the same theology as the Priestly writer of the exodus narrative. The allusions to the exodus tradition continue in the insertion of 1 Sam 6:5b–6 (see above), where the Philistines again appear in a better light than the Egyptians. In the original story of the return of the ark to Beth-Shemesh, the Philistine lords also behave in the right way. They accompany the ark to the border of Beth-Shemesh (1 Sam 6:12) and then return after the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh have taken the chest with the ark (1 Sam 6:15).

The political background of this episode is the claim that Beth-Shemesh does not (any longer) belong to the Philistines but to Judah or Israel.⁴⁴ According to the narrative, the Philistines accept that it is now an Israelite

43. These are the only texts that combine the rare word שועה with the verb עלה.

44. Beth-Shemesh is located on a border and was sometimes under Philistine control (see also 2 Chr 28:18); but apparently in the eighth century it was under Israelite sovereignty (see 2 Kgs 14:12–14). See Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, *Tel Beth-Shemesh: A Border Community in Judah: Renewed Excavations 1990–2000; The Iron Age*, MSSMIA 34 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016).

city, although it will turn out that Beth-Shemesh is not the appropriate place for hosting the ark, but that is another matter.⁴⁵

Conclusion

In many texts of the Hebrew Bible the Philistines are depicted in a very negative way as hostile others; the narratives about Abraham and Isaac sojourning among the Philistines present another picture, according to which friendly contacts are possible. In the ark narrative that ended originally in 1 Sam 7:1, the Philistines are still Israel's enemies, but they are also presented in some positive ways. In the original account, they appear as YHWH's tool, since the story of the Philistines' capture of the ark suggests that the real agent of this event was the God of Israel.

The later revisions of the narrative strengthen the parallels between the plagues caused by the ark and the plagues of Egypt according to the Priestly and non-Priestly exodus narrative in Exod 1–15. The Philistines and their leaders behave in a much better way than Pharaoh and the Egyptians: they understand that YHWH has manifested his power through the plagues and thus send back the ark to its territory, contrary to the king of Egypt, who refused to let the Hebrews go. The Philistines remain the “others,” but they are aliens who can understand the power of the god of their neighbors.

45. According to the MT, YHWH strikes the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh because they have looked at the ark. This remark perhaps reflects the idea that they opened the ark and saw what was inside it (which brings us back to the question of the content of the ark). The narrator of 1 Sam 6 wants to demonstrate that Beth-Shemesh is not the appropriate place for the ark. The competition between Beth-Shemesh and Kiriath-Jearim may reflect the political situation of the eighth century BCE, when the ark was brought to Kiriath-Jearim under Jeroboam II. For more details see Thomas Römer, Christophe Nicolle, and Israel Finkelstein, “Les fouilles archéologiques à Qiryath Yéarim et le récit de l'Arche d'Alliance,” *CRAI* 2 (2018): 983–1000.

Neither Mice nor Men: Dehumanization and Extermination in Mesopotamian Sources, *Hērem* Texts, and the War Scroll

T. M. Lemos

For historians of violence, no question is more pressing than why violence emerges when it does and why it takes on particular forms in certain situations and contexts and not others. This article relates to these pivotal questions as they concern how violence is described in a disparate set of sources from ancient West Asia, namely, biblical texts featuring *hērem* (often translated euphemistically as “the ban”), particularly the book of Joshua; Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions dating primarily to the first half of the first millennium BCE; and the War Scroll from Qumran. While similarities between the book of Joshua and the War Scroll from Qumran are readily apparent and have at times been discussed by scholars,¹ it is a less common enterprise to compare violence in the War Scroll with the violent treatment of enemies depicted in ancient Mesopotamian sources. One might wonder whether this comparison is a natural one or even worthwhile, considering the rather large chronological gap between the War Scroll and Neo-Assyrian materials, not to mention the linguistic and cultural differences between the settings that produced the War Scroll and the

For Saul, my mentor, friend, and conversation partner in matters of violence.

1. See, e.g., Alex P. Jassen, “Violent Imaginaries and Practical Violence in the War Scroll,” in *The War Scroll, Violence, War and Peace in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature*, ed. Kipp Davis, Kyung Baek, and Peter Flint (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 194; Ian Werret and Stephen Parker, “Purity in War: What Is It Good For?,” in Davis et al., *War Scroll, Violence, War*; Hyung Dae Park, *Finding Herem? A Study of Luke-Acts in the Light of Herem*, LNTS 357 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 74; and Thomas B. Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 6B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 320, 331.

Mesopotamian sources in question. Although these cautionary instincts are understandable, it is my stance that bringing these texts into conversation raises some very interesting questions about the way violence against foreign others is described in a wide array of ancient sources. This essay will focus on one of these questions in particular: Why is it that dehumanization of enemies is described so regularly in earlier ancient West Asian texts, including many Israelite ones, but is not very prominent in Joshua and the War Scroll, when in many ways the violence discussed in those texts is much more totalizing? I will propose here that the authors of these texts do not use the animalizing language of earlier sources because their understanding of the relationship between humans and different animal species shaped their view of violence between human groups and limited the applicability of earlier metaphors of dehumanization to their own genocidal texts. The implications of this treatment are in my view far-reaching, touching on the history of violence against foreign others, and thus relations between natives and foreigners; why “religious” texts describe violence the way they do; and the origins of genocidal imaginaries.

War-as-Hunt:

The Prevalence of Animalization Metaphors in Ancient West Asia

In the influential work *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson write:

Metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.²

Drawing on the cognitive-metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson and other frameworks, I argue in *Violence and Personhood in Ancient Israel and Comparative Contexts* that in a large number of ancient West Asian sources depictions of violence are undergirded by the following master

2. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3.

metaphor: WAR IS A HUNT, or more broadly, POWER IS A HUNT.³ In this metaphor, which is clearly found not just in Mesopotamian sources but also in ancient Egyptian and Israelite sources from the second and first millennia BCE, conquering males are depicted as raging lions or other wild beasts who slaughter victims described as prey animals or submissive domesticated creatures. For example, we read in an inscription of the Assyrian king Assurnasirpal II: “[I,] Ashurnasirpal, strong king, king of the universe, unrivalled king ... the king who subdues those insubordinate to him ... strong male, who treads upon the necks of his foes.... I am a lion, I am virile.... I erected a pile [of corpses] in front of his gate, I flayed as many nobles as had rebelled against me [and] draped their skins over the pile.”⁴ Assurnasirpal is certainly not alone in using this type of language or in subjecting his enemies to animalizing violence. Assurbanipal, for example, not only slays his enemies “like pigs,” but does so “upon actual slaughtering tables.”⁵ The annals of Sennacherib compare foreigners to a wide variety of animals, including “young pigeons,” “fat steers,” wild asses, and pigs, while Sennacherib says of himself: “Like a lion I raged.”⁶ The language in New Kingdom-era Egyptian royal inscriptions is quite similar.⁷ We see in both sets of sources that conquered enemies are not just

3. T. M. Lemos, *Violence and Personhood in Ancient Israel and Comparative Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

4. A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC (1114–859 BC)*, RIMA 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 194, 196 (101.1).

5. Seth F. C. Richardson, “Death and Dismemberment in Mesopotamia: Discorperation between the Body and Body Politic,” in *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. Nicola Laneri (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007), 197.

6. For Sennacherib speaking of himself as being like a lion, see Daniel D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), 44 (V.67). For the comparisons of foreigners to animals, see Luckenbill, *Annals of Sennacherib*, 47 (VI.29–30); 45 (V.88); 38 (IV.33); and 87–88 (Nebi Yunus Inscription [H4], ll. 34–36). See also A. Kirk Grayson and Jamie R. Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704–681 BC)*, RINAP 3, 2 vols. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012–2014), though their translations of the lines quoted do not differ significantly from those of Luckenbill.

7. For example, Ramesses II states on his inscription recording the battle of Qadesh that among his enemies he was “like a fierce lion in a valley of wild game.” See Kenneth A. Kitchen, trans., “The Battle of Qadesh—The Poem, or Literary Record,” COS 2.5A:33–34. Amenhotep II, on the Memphis and Karnak stelae, states that he is “like a lion” and reports that on his campaign to Shamashu-Adom he captured “35

described as prey animals but are treated like prey animals by conquerors described as predatory beasts.

Various Israelite texts exhibit this same metaphor of violence. One of the clearest examples is found in the first chapter of Judges, where Adoni-Bezeq, who had cut off the thumbs and big toes of his enemies and made them pick up scraps underneath his table, himself has his thumbs and big toes cut off. Thus, domination, violence, and animalization are clearly joined together in the dismemberment of enemies here. In Jer 34, those who transgressed a covenant through which they had agreed to free the slaves of Jerusalem are threatened in the name of Yahweh with these words:

And the men who transgressed my covenant, who did not carry out the terms of the covenant which they made before me, I shall make [like] the calf which they cut into two and between whose parts they passed. As for the officials of Judah and the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all of the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf, I shall give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those that seek their lives. And their corpses shall be food for the birds of the heavens and for the wild beasts of the earth.⁸

Thus, a threatened reassertion of dominance over the transgressive involves explicitly animalizing violence. The metaphor associating dominance and violence with predation is also apparent in Jacob's blessing of Judah in Gen 49: "Judah ... your hand will be on the neck of your enemy.... The whelp of a lion is Judah. From prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches, he stretches out like a lion; like a lioness, who would dare rouse him up?" According to this text, Judah will dominate his foes like a lion dominates his, or her, prey.

live Asiatics and 22 bulls." See James K. Hoffmeier, trans., "The Memphis and Karnak Stelae of Amenhotep II," *COS* 2.3:20. This symbolism appears not to be an invention of the New Kingdom era, since in the Middle Kingdom-era Instructions of Amenemhet I, the Egyptian monarch boasts to his son: "I captured the Medjai. I made the Asiatics do the dog walk" (trans. Miriam Lichtheim, *COS* 1.36:67).

8. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted. For a brief discussion of the textual issues presented by this passage, see T. M. Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 125 (2006): 238.

Hērem Texts and the War-as-Hunt Framework

Naturally, not all of the hundreds or even thousands of ancient West Asian texts, biblical or otherwise, depicting violence conform to this metaphor. There were other imaginaries of violence available to people in this region, and these are present in biblical and other ancient Near Eastern sources.⁹ Nonetheless, many biblical texts do draw a connection between violence, dominance, masculinity, and dehumanization. It is precisely because this connection is so common in first-millennium sources from the ancient Near East that it may strike one as curious that animalization of foes is *not* more obtrusive in certain texts where one might expect to find it. For example, why do texts from the Hebrew Bible and elsewhere in the Levant that speak of the genocidal violence of *hērem* not go further in dehumanizing those groups that they see as worthy of slaughter? If, in ancient West Asian sources, the killing of one foe is frequently portrayed using frameworks of animalizing violence, would one not expect the totalizing violence of *hērem*, which often involves the killing of every member of particular groups, to be depicted in *especially* dehumanizing terms? Part of the reason one could hold this expectation is because of the use of dehumanizing rhetoric during the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide in the early nineties. For example, the Nazis referred to Jews as “vermin” and “lice,” and Hutu genocidal propaganda referred to Tutsis as *inyenzi*, “cockroaches.”¹⁰ In fact, the organization Genocide Watch classifies dehu-

9. On the violent imaginary, see Bettina E. Schmidt and Ingo W. Schröder, “Introduction: Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices,” in *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*, ed. Bettina E. Schmidt and Ingo W. Schröder (London: Routledge, 2001), 1–24. They write: “Violence needs to be imagined in order to be carried out. Groups do not strike out at random at the next accidental bystander but follow cultural models of appropriate action” (9). This issue will be addressed more below. Jassen uses the language of the imaginary in “Violent Imaginaries and Practical Violence,” especially 182. Of course, it was Lacan who popularized the use of the term *imaginary*, though he did not invent it. See Suzi Adams et al., “Social Imaginaries in Debate,” *SI* 1 (2015): 18. Jean-Paul Sartre had earlier used this term in *L’Imaginaire: Psychologie phénoménologique de l’imagination* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940).

10. See, e.g., Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 439, 562, 567; Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 142; Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*, 50–51; T. M. Lemos, “Dispossessing Nations: Population Growth, Scarcity, and Genocide in Ancient Israel

manization as one of the eight stages of genocide.¹¹ This being so, since the violence described or commanded in many of the *ḥērem* texts of the Hebrew Bible, including Deut 7 and 20 and Josh 1–12, is classifiable as genocide according to either broad or narrow definitions of genocide,¹² it would be reasonable to expect to see clearly dehumanizing language used in these texts. This expectation is reasonable especially because clear dehumanization of enemies is widespread in ancient West Asian literature for hundreds or even thousands of years.

Despite this, *ḥērem* texts largely disappoint us on this score. While one finds hints of dehumanization in the Mesha inscription and stronger animalizing symbolism in Isa 34,¹³ it is patently the case that the most paradigmatic *ḥērem* texts in the Hebrew Bible—Deut 7 and 20, and Josh 6 and 7—do not contain the type of clearly animalizing violence found in so many Neo-Assyrian inscriptions or in such biblical texts as Judg 1 or Jer 34. Deuteronomy 20:16–17, for example, reads: “From the cities of these peoples that Yahweh your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall surely annihilate them [החרם תחרים] ... just as Yahweh your God has commanded you so that they may not teach you to do any of the abominations that they do for their gods, and you thus sin against Yahweh your God.” Deuteronomy and Joshua certainly vilify the groups slaughtered but do not describe them as prey animals, domesticated animals, or as vermin. They are not sheep to be slaughtered or pigs to be tied up. They are, rather, villainous peoples responsible for potentially leading one away from one’s god or for acts of aggression and iniquity against one’s group in the present or in the past. In twentieth-century genocidal propaganda, dehumanization, and vilification were *both* utilized as strategies of justification for geno-

and Twentieth-Century Rwanda,” in *Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible: New Perspectives*, ed. Saul M. Olyan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 35.

11. See <http://genocidewatch.net/2013/03/14/the-8-stages-of-genocide/>.

12. See Lemos, “Dispossessing Nations.”

13. Whether the Mesha inscription contains dehumanizing symbolism hinges on one’s translation of גר and גרת (see Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*, 51–54). A connection between human victims and animals is made more clearly in Isa 34:5–7: “For it is satiated, my sword in the heavens. / Behold, upon Edom it descends and upon a people my *ḥērem* [descends] for judgment. / The sword of Yahweh is full of blood; it is engorged with fat, / From the blood of lambs and he-goats, from the fat of the kidneys of rams. / Because there is a sacrifice for Yahweh in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom. / And wild oxen have descended with them, and steers with bulls.”

cide—Jews, for example, were regarded both as vermin and as capable of essentially superhuman villainy¹⁴—but not so in the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua.

Animalization of Enemies in the War Scroll: A Curious Absence

This lack of emphasis on dehumanization is arguably a curious feature of *ḥērem* texts—and is an equally curious feature of the War Scroll from Qumran. Interestingly, the root metaphor of war-as-hunt was certainly present in Judean sources from the Hellenistic and later periods. For example, 1 Macc 3:4 presents a description of Judah Maccabee that seems to evoke Gen 49: “He was like a lion in his deeds, like a lion’s cub roaring for prey.” Second Maccabees 11:11 also says of Judah and his followers: “They hurled themselves like lions against the enemy, and laid low eleven thousand of them and sixteen hundred cavalry, and forced all the rest to flee.”¹⁵ Of course, there are many examples in Hellenistic and Roman-era sources of victims’ bodies being subjected to dehumanizing treatment, such as dismemberment and flaying.¹⁶ This is not in any way to aver that ancient West Asian and Greco-Roman imaginaries and practices of violence were equivalent (if one is allowed to crudely aggregate and then contrast the cultures of these regions for heuristic purposes), but merely to take note of the fact that the writers of 1 and 2 Maccabees could and *did* draw on a metaphor of violence in which conquerors were fierce predators and the conquered prey to be torn apart. This metaphor was an old one but still alive and well in the Hellenistic period, it appears.

The writers of the War Scroll had access to many or perhaps even all of the same sources as the writers of Maccabees, and since the former is a text entirely focused on warfare and the elimination of enemies, one could realistically expect to find, if anything, more language of animalization in the War Scroll than one finds in 1 or 2 Maccabees. Yet this is not the case. Rather, this text presents a highly ritualized framework of violence that is

14. On the association of Jews with the demonic, see Eric Kurlander, *Hitler’s Monsters: A Supernatural History of the Third Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). The book contains evidence that some did associate Jews with supernatural evil.

15. Translations of 1 and 2 Maccabees follow the NRSV.

16. Examples may be found in 2 Macc 7; 4 Macc 9; and the account of Rabbi Akiva being flayed in b. Ber. 61b.

more liturgy of slaughter than actual description of slaughter.¹⁷ In many ways, the text is very vague in its account of violence where the actual violence is concerned, a feature that stands in stark contrast to its almost bizarrely detailed descriptions of wartime banners and other accoutrements. While the text clearly draws on Josh 6, it is in no way a retelling of Josh 6. It uses the term *hērem* in 1QM IX, 7 and XVIII, 5, and quotes from Deut 20 in 1QM X, 2–5, but oddly enough, not from the verses that command the totalistic slaughter of the seven Canaanite nations, despite the War Scroll's own focus on eliminationist killing.

For the most part, the War Scroll tends to describe violence with vague lines such as “we will treat kings with contempt” (XII, 7) that do not make clear which contemptuous treatments would be utilized.¹⁸ One exception to this is found in 1QM XI, 1, the line that most clearly approaches dehumanization in the work: *ובכוח ידכה רוטשו פגריהם לאין קובר*, “And by the strength of your hand their corpses have been abandoned (or: dashed in pieces), with no one to bury them.” Note that *רטש* can mean either “to forsake or abandon” or “to dash or tear in pieces.”¹⁹ The latter meaning is more strongly animalizing—to tear apart bodies is an activity far more regularly performed on animal bodies than human ones—while the former would be rather more subtly so because the bodies of animals are often left to rot, while the custom and expectation is for human bodies to be buried. Still, in not one place in the War Scroll are enemies explicitly compared to animals, nor are the conquering sons of light compared to predators. Further, the main epithet used of enemies in the text—“sons of darkness”—is not animalizing in any discernible way, nor are other epithets used of the groups targeted for destruction, such as *גויי הבבל*, “useless nation,” *גויי רשע*, “nations of wickedness,” and *גדודי בליעל*, “hordes of Belial.”²⁰

17. In fact, “a good half of the [War Scroll] as we possess it is a liturgy,” as Robert North writes. See North, “‘Kittim’ War or ‘Sectaries’ Liturgy?,” *Bib* 39 (1958): 84. It is only fair to note, as Jassen does, that the War Scroll is “exceptionally unrealistic in its outline of the war” (“Violent Imaginaries and Practical Violence,” 182).

18. However, the parallel line reads “derision and mockery for the warriors,” which seems to imply taunts more than tortures.

19. The root appears just a handful of times in Biblical Hebrew, in each case meaning “dash in pieces” and usually referring to children being dashed in pieces. However, in Mishnaic Hebrew the verb can mean “abandon,” which is frequently its meaning in Targumic Aramaic, even in the *ithpaal* (which would correspond with the *pual* here; see *HALOT* 2:1223).

20. See, e.g., 1QM IV, 12; IX, 9; XI, 8–9; XIV, 7.

One can say yet more, however, on the War Scroll's depiction of enemies and how it deviates from key biblical and ancient West Asian models. Consider the line from 1QM XII, 11: *תן ידכה בעורף אויביכה ורגלכה על במותי* חלל, "you will place your hand on the neck of your enemies and your foot on the piles of the slain." The first part of this, *תן ידכה בעורף אויביכה*, seems to quote verbatim from Gen 49:8: *ידך בערף איבך*—the phrasing is identical except for the imperative. Genesis 49, however, goes on to speak of Judah's dominance using the metaphor of power-as-hunt: "The whelp of a lion is Judah. From prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches, he stretches out like a lion; like a lioness, who would dare rouse him up?" The authors of the War Scroll, by contrast, choose not to draw on this metaphor or quote this other verse from Gen 49. While the lines in the War Scroll perhaps involve some animalizing or dehumanizing aspects, they do not fit the war-as-hunt framework as clearly as one might expect. After all, one does not usually strangle animals to death with one's hands. While one might wring the neck of a pigeon, for example, placing hands on a neck in rage is more suitable for a human victim. Similarly, placing a foot on a pile of corpses is certainly a gesture of dominating triumph, but not exactly a behavior one would regularly perform on animals.²¹ Enemies, we are told in the War Scroll, will lick the dust off the feet of the victorious righteous (XII, 14–15). This is absolutely a submissive behavior but could have been expressed in a much more clearly animalizing fashion, for example, "your enemies will lick your feet like dogs," which would be more reminiscent of the language of Neo-Assyrian inscriptions. Yet this is not what we find. Thus, while the language of the War Scroll expresses dominance, the text's authors either consciously chose not to use the animalizing frameworks present in Gen 49 or failed in their attempt to do what earlier West Asian sources had done with such clarity and verve.

21. In support of this one may point to the line from the inscriptions of Assurbanipal II quoted above, as well as to this example from Tukulti-Ninurta I's annals: "I seized Kaštilašu, king of the Kassites, (and) trod upon his lordly neck with my feet as if it was a footstool" (A.0.78.5:60–63 ; translation from A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC [to 1115 BC]*, RIMA 1 [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987]; see <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/riao/corpus>). Notice that the text does not compare this action to what one would perform on an animal. There is also a relevant line in the Babylonian Epic of Creation: "Which man has drawn up his battle array against you?/ And will Tiamat, who is a woman, attack you with (her) weapons?... Soon you will tread on the neck of Tiamat!" See Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, MC 16 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 71, tablet 2, ll. 144–45.

Explaining the Absence of the War-as-Hunt Framework in *Ḫērem* Texts and the War Scroll

It is worth considering whether the War Scroll and the *ḫērem* texts dating to the first half of the first millennium might have avoided the metaphor of war-as-hunt for the same reason. One possibility relates to the totalizing nature of the killing. While familiarity with the propaganda of certain modern genocides would lead one to expect that texts promoting eliminationist slaughter be all the more likely to feature animalizing language, this line of reasoning is likely flawed. To describe why this is, one must return to the war-as-hunt metaphor. If one were an ancient hunting wild oxen or lions or gazelles, one would not expect to kill every single ox, lion, or gazelle. If one were slaughtering sheep, one would not seek to kill every last sheep. On the other hand, if Sennacherib were describing his pursuit of a rebellious vassal king, then comparing that king to a gazelle being hunted would make sense because the manner in which one pursues individual rebels is like the manner in which one pursues individual gazelles. Likewise, describing the killing of the subordinate king's soldiers as being like the killing of sheep would make sense because sheep are domesticated animals, submissive and reared for human use and human consumption, and in the eyes of Mesopotamian kings, subordinate kings, too, should be submissive. But if one were an ancient writer composing a text describing or calling for the killing of an entire group of people, down to the very last man, woman, and child, comparing this to the hunting of a wild ox or the killing of sheep would not in fact work conceptually because it was not the practice of ancient groups to kill off whole herds, leaving no ovine survivor. To the contrary, with herds of domesticated animals, one aims to have one's sheep and eat it, too.

In support of these points, one may look again to Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. While Assyrian violence is often quite brutal, it is not typically genocidal. Still, there are examples of violence in these inscriptions that is eliminationist in nature, and these do shed light on the subject at hand.²² Interestingly, when Assyrian inscriptions describe, for instance, the massacre of an entire city—rather than ethnocidal in character, these

22. The more eliminationist cases are Neo-Assyrian, though one perhaps finds hints of this in the Middle Assyrian period, as well. One possibility is from the inscriptions of Shalmaneser I; see n. 25 below. Also, in the inscriptions of Tukulti-Ninurta I, that king claims: "The entire land of Qutu I turned into a heap of ruins" (A.0.78.1,

episodes are often urbicidal—they are far less animalizing in their language than they are when describing the slaughter of one rebellious king or the soldiers of a rebellious king. For example, the annals of Sennacherib repeatedly describe the bloody fate of the city of 𐤅𐤴𐤭𐤤𐤌𐤎:

I put to the sword the population of the city 𐤅𐤴𐤭𐤤𐤌𐤎, a dangerous enemy who since time immemorial had not submitted to the kings, my ancestors, and I did not leave one alive. (Sennacherib 1.58)

I put to the sword the population of the city 𐤅𐤴𐤭𐤤𐤌𐤎, a dangerous enemy, and I did not spare a single one. I hung their corpses on poles and placed (them) around the city. (Sennacherib 4.16)²³

While hanging corpses on poles can be interpreted as animalizing because hanging up animal carcasses is a regular part of the transformation of animal bodies into meat products, there is no explicit comparison of the bodies of the slain to sheep or other nonhuman species, as is so commonly found in Sennacherib's inscriptions. Elsewhere in this king's inscriptions, one finds: "I destroyed, devastated, (and) bur[ned] with fire his cities, (and) made (them) like ruin hill(s) (created by) the Deluge" (Sennacherib 19.ii' 12'). Note that there is metaphorical language here, but it relates to Mesopotamian mythology and not to the war-as-hunt symbolic paradigm. The war-as-hunt framework is also missing in the more eliminationist (though hyperbolic, historically speaking) language found in this king's description of his conquest of Babylon: "On my second campaign, I marched quickly to Babylon, which I planned to conquer, and (then) I blew like [the onset] of a storm and enveloped it like a (dense) fog. I besieged the city.... Its people, young and old, I did not spare, and I filled the city squares with their corpses. I carried off alive to my land Šūzubu (Mušēzib-Marduk), the king of Babylon, together with his family (and) his [...]s" (Sennacherib 223.43b). At different points

ii.16–20). The language is very vague but could perhaps be taken as referring to eliminationist violence.

23. See Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period, <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/corpus/>. Most royal inscriptions from the Neo-Assyrian period can be found on this site. Translations of the annals of Sennacherib on the site are from Grayson and Novotny, *Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib*. Similar statements about 𐤅𐤴𐤭𐤤𐤌𐤎 can be found on ll. 2, 15; 3.18; 15.ii.1b; 16.i.81; and elsewhere in Sennacherib's inscriptions.

Assurnasirpal II states that he “razed, destroyed, burnt, (and) consumed” particular cities.²⁴ These cases do not necessarily or even usually feature eliminationist violence, but the phrasing is vague and could imply totalizing killing. Notably, however, there is no comparison to the slaughter of animals present.²⁵

If comparing the killing of totalities of humans to the killing of animals such as sheep was rare or absent in ancient West Asian sources, arguably for conceptual reasons, why not, then, compare the killing of the Canaanites to the killing of vermin, as modern genocidal texts from Germany and Rwanda did? One would assume that such a metaphor would fit ancient genocidal thinking as well as it did modern. However, to ascertain whether this was in fact the case, one must examine whether the ancients had a conception of eliminating pests. Naturally, the ability of ancient groups to eradicate pests would be greatly inferior to ours in our world of insecticides and rat poison. In fact, according to two chemists who have written on the topic: “The science of pest control is considered to be of recent origin, dating from the latter part of the nineteenth century.”²⁶ Still, the ancients did have various methods for trying to control popu-

24. The verbs appear in different combinations. See, e.g., Assurnasirpal II.001, i.50, 65, ii.1, iii.50b; and elsewhere (Royal Inscriptions of Assyria online, <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/riao/corpus/>; translations are adapted from Grayson et al., *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC*).

25. One possible exception to the pattern of animalizing comparisons being absent in descriptions of large-scale violence is from the inscriptions of the Middle Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser I: “I slaughtered countless numbers of their extensive army. As for him [Šattuara], I chased him at arrow point until sunset. I butchered their hordes [but] 14,400 of them [who remained] alive I blinded [and] carried off. I conquered nine of his fortified cult centers [as well as] the city from which he ruled and I turned 180 of his cities into ruin hills. I slaughtered like sheep the armies of the Hittites and Aḫlamu, his allies” (01.56; Royal Ascriptions of Assyria online). Translation adapted from Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC)*, RIMA 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). While slaughtering armies is large-scale violence, the text does not claim that the Assyrians have left no survivors or make other clearly eliminationist statements. Thus, though the text could be seen as an exception, I see it as more clearly fitting into the typical war-as-hunt framework found in dozens or even hundreds of cases in ancient West Asian sources.

26. Allan E. Smith and Diane M. Secoy, “Forerunners of Pesticides in Ancient Greece and Rome,” *JAFS* 23 (1975): 1050. Thanks to Adam Booth for the reference to this article.

lations of insects and rodents.²⁷ Likely, the most effective rodent-control mechanisms available were dogs and cats. It has been proposed that this was the very reason cats were domesticated by humans.²⁸ While most of the evidence for mousetraps seems to come from the Renaissance period or later, there is archaeological evidence for mousetraps from Iran and South Asia from the third millennium and from Mesopotamia, Emar in Syria, Cyprus, Crete, and Egypt dating to the second millennium BCE.²⁹ Furthermore, there is a reference to mousetraps in the Greek work *Batrachomyomachia*, or the Battle of Frogs and Mice, which likely dates to the Hellenistic period.³⁰ We also find some evidence for early uses of pesticides.³¹ For example, extracts of bitter lupin and wild cucumber were used against a variety of pests, according to Greek and Roman sources.³² Also, one Mesopotamian text says to “put down field mouse dust,” whatever that consisted of, before buildings walls.³³ These methods stood alongside other practices such as the one mentioned in Pliny where the ashes of cats were scattered over crops to ward off mice or the skull of a female horse was fixed in the middle of a garden in order to ward off caterpillars.³⁴

27. See Smith and Secoy, “Forerunners of Pesticides,” and the works cited below for examples.

28. See Carlos A. Driscoll et al., “The Near Eastern Origin of Cat Domestication,” *Science* 317.5837 (2007): 519–23; Driscoll et al., “The Taming of the Cat,” *SciAm* 300.6 (2009): 68–75; as well as Joshua Schwartz, “Cats in Ancient Jewish Society,” *JJS* 52 (2001): 211–34, which cites many ancient sources describing cats being used to kill vermin.

29. See St. John Simpson, “Mouse Traps in Mesopotamia,” *OE* 1 (1993): 18–20; Vassos Karageorghis, *Coroplastic Art of Ancient Cyprus II: Late Cypriot II–Late Geometric III* (Nicosia: Leventis, 1993), 56–57.

30. Reinhold F. Gleis, “*Batrachomyomachia*,” *BNP*, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-pauly>.

31. Smith and Secoy, “Forerunners of Pesticides.”

32. Smith and Secoy, “Forerunners of Pesticides,” 1053. Other substances used were amurca (olive oil lees), absinthe, cassia, bay leaves, and pomegranate.

33. Ira Spar and Wilfred G. Lambert, eds., *Cuneiform Texts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art II: Literary and Scholastic Texts of the First Millennium B.C.* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 186. Also, sometimes parts of fields were burned to smoke out locusts. See Andrew R. George, “The Dogs of Ninkilim: Magic against Field Pests in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Landwirtschaft im Alten Orient: Ausgewählte Vorträge der XLI. Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Berlin 4–8.7.1994*, ed. Horst Klengel and Johannes Renger, BBVO 18 (Berlin: Reimer, 1999), 291–99, esp. 295–96.

34. Smith and Secoy, “Forerunners of Pesticides,” 1051, 1054.

However, when it came to dealing with rodents or insects, the ancients often, and perhaps usually, turned to the gods. There are, unsurprisingly, Mesopotamian rituals for dealing with mice, locusts, and other small pests.³⁵ For example, there were *namburbi* rituals against field pests petitioning different deities to expel—typically the language of death is not used—pests of different sorts.³⁶ In Greece, storage jars representing the household deity Zeus Ktēsios were used to protect food stores from rodents and insects.³⁷ According to Pausanias, the Eleans sacrificed to Zeus Apomuioi, that is, Zeus “avertter of flies.” Apparently it was by this name that Zeus was invoked to ward off flies during the Olympic games.³⁸ The god Apollo was called Smintheus, understood by the Greeks to mean “exterminator of mice,” as well as Parnopios, “locust-killer,” and Karneios, “louse-killer.”³⁹ Relatedly, Strabo discusses how the epithets of different

35. See, for example, Ivan Hrůša, *Ancient Mesopotamian Religion: A Descriptive Introduction* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2015), 135–36. I thank Thomas Bolin for giving me this reference.

36. See especially George, “Dogs of Ninkilim”; Andrew R. George and Junko Taniguchi, with Marc J. Geller, “The Dogs of Ninkilim, Part Two: Babylonian Rituals to Counter Field Pests,” *Iraq* 72 (2010): 79–148. These rituals involved incantation specialists (exorcists), who petitioned a deity such as Ninurta or Adad to expel pests—or petitioned the four winds to blow pests away—from an infested plot of farmland. One incantation requests that the pests be brought down to the netherworld (George and Taniguchi, “Dogs of Ninkilim, Part Two,” 98). There are also rituals to be performed by the affected farmers themselves.

37. Christopher A. Faraone, “Household Religion in Ancient Greece,” in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, ed. John P. Bodel and Saul M. Olyan (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 216–17.

38. Jon D. Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion*, 2nd ed., BAR (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 109–10; Moses I. Finley and Henri W. Pleket, *The Olympic Games: The First Thousand Years* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2005), 54. Also relevant is the *muia*gros figure in Greek religion—a divine figure or hero who warded off flies; see Robert Parker, *On Greek Religion*, CSCP 60 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 105–6.

39. Some ancient writers saw the name as deriving from the word *sminthos*, “mouse,” and others from the town of Sminthe in Troas of Asia Minor, where Apollo Smintheus was venerated (see Homer, *Il.* 1.39; Ovid, *Fasti* 6.425; *Metam.* 12.585; and the medieval writer Eustathius of Thessalonica, *Comm. Hom. Il.* 1.34). *Parnopios* is from *parnops*, “locust” or “grasshopper,” and *Karneios* from *karnos*, “louse.” See Leonard C. Muellner, *The Anger of Achilles: Mēnis in Greek Epic*, MP (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 99; George S. Phylactopoulos, *History of the Hellenic World: The Archaic Period* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 81; Strabo, *Geog.* 13.1.48, 64.

deities were explained by reference to a god bringing an end to infestations of different pests (*Geog.* 13.1.48, 64). These expectations for dealing with vermin persist in early Christian literature, as well. For example, in the Apocryphal Acts of John, bedbugs depart from an inn at the apostle John's command.⁴⁰

What to make of all of this? Clearly, ancient people had the same desire to be rid of pests as we do, and they appear—unsurprisingly—to have regarded these animals in a different way from that in which they regarded other animals in their environs. Wild prey animals they hunted, and thus they used metaphors of hunting in speaking of human-to-human violence. Wild predators they saw as fearful and threatening, and thus they used metaphors of predation to discuss human-to-human violence, as well. Rodents and insects they sought to eliminate, but at least in ancient West Asia this did not factor into their metaphors of violence to nearly the same degree. This may relate to the lack of efficacy of ancient means of eliminating pests. Even today's mousetraps do not always work, and it is highly unlikely that ancient pesticides were fully effective. This is probably why there were rituals used to attempt to control pest populations and why there is a Zeus Averter-of-Flies and Apollo Exterminator-of-Mice—because divine intervention was needed where human efforts were doomed to failure.

(Tentative) Conclusions

One may return now to the question of why *hêrem* texts do not use animalizing language in the way that other ancient West Asian texts describing violence do and why the War Scroll similarly does not animalize the groups it targets for destruction. I would posit that, from the perspective of a person living in the ancient world, it would make sense to speak in animalizing terms if one wished to torture and kill a single transgressor or a limited set of transgressors, but if one wished to eliminate an entire group

40. "I say to you, you bugs, be considerate; leave your home for this night and go to rest in a place which is far away from the servants of God!" (Acts John 60). Translation from J. Keith Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 328. See also Janet E. Spittler, *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: The Wild Kingdom of Early Christian Literature*, WUNT 2/247 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 96–110. My thanks to Janet Spittler for the reference.

or even multiple groups, animalizing language would make less sense because the ancients, it appears, had no experience with and seemingly no conception of destroying entire species or even eliminating all of the animals from a particular place. One can hypothesize that, because they recognized their lack of efficacy and control in their efforts to eliminate these pests, the experience of dealing with pests was not sufficiently similar to the conception of totalizing killing of humans for metaphors relating killing humans to the killing of pests to be sensible. Unable to eliminate all of the undesirable creatures from a place, they called on the gods for pest control. Getting rid of bedbugs or flies required divine intervention or at the very least ritual activity. This being so, it is perhaps unsurprising that when these same ancients sought to eliminate whole groups of undesirable humans, they passed over metaphors of the hard-to-effect elimination of nonhumans and instead used the same approach that they used when they wished to eliminate a particular type of nonhuman creature—divine intervention. Jericho is destroyed through a miracle, and the Sons of Darkness, too, could not be defeated without divine help. In eschatological texts such as the War Scroll where the scale of violence is so immense, the rhetoric of animalization gives way to that of vilification. Target groups are conceived of as demonic—yes, sometimes they are symbolized as a beast, but as a monstrous one that does not conform to earlier patterns of animalizing language. A broader horizon of violence necessitated a different rhetoric of justification of slaughter and a different mode of othering the enemy, as well as a different conception of divine intervention. The Judeans could not effect the genocidal or anthropocidal killing they imagined without divine aid of a cosmic rather than a localized variety. The master metaphor of war-as-hunt no longer fit the deathscape of Judean texts. Just as one required a god to eradicate all the animals from a place, so, too, did one require a god to eradicate entire groups from a place. Hence, the ancient West Asian framework of enemy as animal was replaced by the eschatological framework of destruction.

One might ask whether this process of revised metaphorization was conscious or unconscious. This question is a difficult one to answer. To use an example of a master metaphor discussed in Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*, if I state that I spent my time reading a book, drawing on the master metaphor TIME IS A SCARCE RESOURCE, I am not consciously using a metaphorical device but rather unconsciously doing so. On the other hand, fiction writers, poets, and even scholars consciously spin new metaphors or revise existing ones. Should we assume that the ancients

were incapable of consciously working with metaphorical language? This would seem very pessimistic on our parts. Still, is it likely that the authors of the ancient texts discussed here thought consciously about metaphors of violence? Did the author(s) of the War Scroll or other Hellenistic-era eschatological literature consciously ponder the fact that older metaphors of war-as-hunt fit poorly with their more totalizing visions of destruction? It is unclear. What is clear is that they generated new images of violence that drew on but heavily revised older imagery and metaphors. Bestial imagery changes form rather drastically from what we see in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions or Judg 1, where the defeated are subjected to patently animalizing violence and conquerors are depicted as predators, to what appears in Dan 7, where enemies are not symbolized as sheep but as beastly predators whose predatory form does not convey a positive attribution of control, magnificence, or hypermasculinity. Both the authors of the War Scroll and those of earlier *hērem* texts clearly found something lacking in the extremely prevalent and well-known metaphor of war-as-hunt that left them seeking—at some level of thought—to create new images of violence featuring genocidal killing and vilified—but not dehumanized—enemies. Whether consciously or unconsciously, long-standing metaphors of power relations gave way to novel symbolism, novel imaginaries of violence. The author(s) of the War Scroll drew on *hērem* texts such as Deuteronomy and Joshua, as well as Gen 49, in order to generate their more sweeping vision of eschatological violence. It seems likely that figuring into their symbolization were their experiences with and knowledge of human-animal interactions acquired in everyday contexts of hunting, animal husbandry, butchery of meat, and attempts to control populations of pests. In light of these quotidian experiences, animalizing metaphors mapped poorly onto the large-scale violence certain authors envisioned and sought to promote, or so one can plausibly infer.

Speculative though these proposals may be, I have attempted here to disentangle some of the frameworks that underlie the presentation of violence in ancient West Asian sources. Rather than idle musings, these suggestions relate to some of the most important features of the conquest narrative in Joshua and the eschatological violence of the War Scroll. If I am correct, it would seem that the conceptualization of relations between humans was tied in surprising ways to relations between humans and different nonhuman species. In other words, what people in ancient West Asia saw and experienced in their interactions with animals affected how they conceptualized and legitimated violence against other humans.

Inside Out: Bodily Inversion in Ancient West Asian Loyalty Oaths and Curses

Nathaniel B. Levtow

Introduction

In his most recent book, Saul Olyan examines the phenomenon of ritual inversion frequently attested in the Hebrew Bible's representations of violent rites.¹ Olyan's discussion of this ritual and rhetorical pattern includes examples of inversion rites that manipulate and transform human bodies, such as punitive exhumation and forced consumption. Olyan describes how these and other strategic acts can "invert norms of behavior," undo "results of previous rites," and upend existing social relationships.²

In the following pages, I draw on Olyan's analysis of inversion rites to further explore how bodily inversion imagery operates in the rituals and rhetoric of ancient West Asian loyalty oaths. I focus on curses that invert natural and social orders that are configured in these loyalty oaths.³ I dis-

1. Saul M. Olyan, *Violent Rituals of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 71–84 and *passim*. See also Olyan, "Ritual Inversion in Biblical Representations of Punitive Rites," in *Worship, Women, and War: Essays in Honor of Susan Niditch*, ed. John J. Collins, T. M. Lemos, and Saul M. Olyan, BJS 357 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2015), 135–43. I am grateful to Saul Olyan for his mentorship and friendship and to the editors for the opportunity to honor him in this *Festschrift*. I thank also Karen B. Stern and Seth F. C. Richardson for offering comments on a draft of this paper.

2. Olyan notes how violent inversion rituals can, for example, mark the transformation of "an agent into a victimized patient" and "a friend, ally, or family member into an agent of punitive violence" (*Violent Rituals*, 9, 15, 21, 38, 54, 72, 83).

3. A version of this paper titled "Making the Foreign Native and the Native Foreign: Ritual Violence in Levantine Imperial and Civil War Contexts" was presented

cuss examples of bodily inversion imagery from the Succession Treaties of Esarhaddon and from a selection of loyalty oath and cursing traditions in the Pentateuch.⁴ These examples depict the inversion of human bodies through ingestion and evisceration, which I discuss in relation to iconic and textual bodies and link to structurally analogous inversions of social bodies through dynastic usurpation, civil war, vassal disloyalty, and exile. I conclude by identifying bodily inversion imagery in ancient West Asian loyalty oaths and curses as a somatic model for broader ethnographic and textual dynamics in biblical traditions including “idolatry” discourse and canon formation.

Bodily Inversion in Neo-Assyrian Loyalty Oaths and Curses

I begin with a visceral representation of bodily inversion inscribed on the Succession Treaties of Esarhaddon. These oath tablets address city lords and officials on the periphery of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, invoking their loyalty to the dynastic successors of Esarhaddon and to his crown prince

to the Religious Competition in Late Antiquity section of the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta in 2015, with Olyan presiding. I focus here on rites and rhetoric that invert bodily orders explicitly configured in these loyalty oaths themselves, in paired depictions of bodily configuration and inversion. I do not include all representations of invasive rites enacted on human bodies such as dismemberment or splitting, on which see Olyan, *Violent Rituals* (as well as his studies cited on ix), and T. M. Lemos, *Violence and Personhood in Ancient Israel and Comparative Contexts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), with which Olyan’s volume is in dialogue. See also Lemos, “Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible,” *JBL* 125 (2006): 225–41.

4. I use the terms *loyalty oath* and *treaty* here interchangeably, following Simo Parpola, “Neo-Assyrian Treaties from the Royal Archives of Nineveh,” *JCS* 39.2 (1987): 180–83 (“Excursus: On the Term *adē*”). On overlapping terminology for, classifications of, and distinctions between oaths and curses, see Anne M. Kitz, *Cursed Are You! The Phenomenology of Cursing in Cuneiform and Hebrew Texts* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 32–133; Malgorzata Sandowicz, *Oaths and Curses: A Study in Neo- and Late Babylonian Legal Formulary*, AOAT 398 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2012). As Kitz notes, oaths are often self-imposed conditional curses but can also be externally imposed. When I refer to loyalty oaths I include the broader delineations of loyal relations that these texts configure and confirm; when I refer to curses I refer to the specific imprecations against violations of their stipulated loyal relations. On treaty terminology see also the following note.

designate Assurbanipal above all.⁵ The tablets address these city lords and officials with the following image of oath reception: “Just as bread and wine enter into the intestines, [so] may they (the gods) make this oath enter into [your] intestines and into those of [your] so[ns] and your [daught]ers” (ll. 560–562).⁶ This image of oath ingestion is inverted in a corresponding evisceration curse against potential oath violators: “Just as young sheep and ewes and male and female spring lambs are slit open and their entrails rolled down over their feet, so may (your entrails and) the entrails of your sons and your daughters roll down over your feet” (ll. 551–554).⁷

These depictions of oath ingestion and cursing evisceration together represent a ritual inversion pattern that operates on the somatic and social

5. Fragments of eight versions of this 672 BCE loyalty oath (*adê*) were found in a throne room in the Nabû temple complex (Ezida) at Nimrud (ancient Kalḫu), with a ninth version recently found in the inner sanctum of a Neo-Assyrian temple at Tell Tayinat (ancient Unqi). The Nimrud tablets address eight named city lords (*bēl āli*) on the eastern periphery of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, whereas the Tayinat tablet addresses provincial administrators on its western periphery (Kullania). Nimrud text and translation: SAA 2:28–59, text 6; Tayinat text and translation: Jacob Lauinger, “Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty at Tell Tayinat: Text and Commentary,” *JCS* 64 (2012): 87–123; SAA 2.15. These tablets can be described as loyalty oaths, vassal treaties (esp. the Nimrud tablets), or succession treaties, and I use this terminology interchangeably, as noted above. On the differing classifications, contexts, and recipients of Esarhaddon’s loyalty oaths, especially with respect to the Tayinat manuscript T, see Frederick M. Fales, “After Ta’yinat: The New Status of Esarhaddon’s *adê* for Assyrian Political History,” *RA* 106 (2012): 133–58; Lauinger, “Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty,” 113.

6. The Akkadian verb *erēbu*, which in these lines signifies physical entry or penetration into the body, is commonly used also to convey entry into a legal status (including political treaties or domestic relations) and entry into the presence of a god or king, as well as territorial or household invasion. See *CAD*, s.v. “*erēbu*,” 4:259, 1–4. The Akkadian term *irru*, here translated as “intestines,” is commonly associated with extispicy and recalls the divinatory dimensions of oath-taking practices and oath violations. I thank Seth F. C. Richardson for these insights into this text’s somatic terminology. On oath-eating rites, see Margo Kitts, *Sanctified Violence in Homeric Society: Oath-Making Rituals and Narratives in the Iliad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 136 n. 50.

7. This curse, which inverts animal and human bodies by externalizing innards and directing them downward, is embedded among a series of concluding conditional curses that share a protasis warning against oath violations through acts of disloyalty. The protasis begins, “If you should sin against this *adê*” (SAA 2.6.513, 555a).

dimensions of relations configured in these oath tablets.⁸ The tablets depict the formation and violation of social relations through its impact on the individual bodies of oath recipients and their descendants. The bodily internalization of treaty relations is further depicted in the tablets' associated imagery of inscribed oaths penetrating the porous boundaries of their recipient's flesh: "Just as oil enters your flesh, so may (the gods) cause this oath to enter into your flesh, the flesh of your brothers, your sons and your daughters" (ll. 622–625). This depiction of epidermal oath absorption is inverted in a corresponding curse against oath violators that reads, "In your hunger eat the flesh of your sons. In want and famine may one man eat the flesh of another; may one man clothe himself in another's skin" (ll. 449–451).

This curse of cannibalism among oath violators plays on both depictions of oath ingestion and absorption cited above. Whereas treaty partners have loyalty oaths "enter into" their flesh and intestines, this curse invokes resultant cannibalism among oath violators who ingest one another and consequently clothe themselves "in another's skin." The practice of flaying enemies, well attested in other ancient West Asian sources, may offer a more explicit inversion of epidermal oath absorption. However, this cursing imagery literally switches the boundaries of oath violators' bodily identities as a consequence of their violation of loyal relations.⁹ In other words, their violation of social bonds results in the violation of their bodies' boundaries. This curse thereby inverts (and confuses) somatic and social relations and identities, specifically those configured (and clarified) in the oath tablets. Just as disloyalty inverts loyalty, treaty curses invert treaty relations, as bodily evisceration inverts oath ingestion and the oath-bearing skins of violators are switched.

8. This bodily inversion pattern also plays on sacrificial imagery; Olyan and Lemos address numerous significant sacrificial analogues to such depictions of violent bodily transformation (see Olyan, *Violent Rituals*; Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*). As Olyan notes, sacrificial victims "not only die but, most clearly in the case of certain animal sacrifices, suffer dismemberment and the separation of bodily components such as blood, skin, bones, internal organs, and meat, thereby losing their bodily integrity in a manner comparable to domestic offenders, political rivals, or foreign enemies subjected to violent ritual acts" (*Violent Rituals*, 110). See also n. 11 below.

9. See SAA 2.6.591–598: "May your flesh and the flesh of your women, your brothers, your sons and your daughters be altogether like the flesh of a chameleon. Just as the honeycomb is pierced with holes, so may they pierce your flesh, the flesh of your women, your brothers, your sons and your daughters with holes while you are alive."

The cannibalism curse cited above invokes family and specifically child cannibalism, additional imagery of which also precedes the depictions of oath ingestion and cursing evisceration cited above: “Just as [thi]s ewe has been cut open and the flesh of [her] young has been placed in her mouth, may they make you eat in your hunger the flesh of your brothers, your sons and your daughters” (ll. 547–550).¹⁰ The curse of family cannibalism addressed to oath violators again recalls, and inverts, their ingestion of treaty oaths. This representation of cannibalism, and specifically child cannibalism, likewise inverts the sacrificial dimensions of oath rituals because, as Tracy Lemos notes, it identifies humans with sacrificial animals.¹¹ In addition, the curse of child cannibalism also inverts the expected direction of dynastic generation and succession invoked throughout these oath tablets.¹² In other words, the cursing rhetoric of child cannibalism evokes the dangers of dynastic usurpation and succession battles against which these Neo-Assyrian treaties repeatedly warn, as child cannibalism somatically inverts the ordered direction of royal births and authorized succession among princely treaty partners.

In these respects, the ritualized imagery of bodily inversion depicted in Esarhaddon’s loyalty oaths and curses radiates beyond the body natural

10. See SAA 2.6.568–569; SAA 2.2.r.iv.10–11. For additional references to cannibalism, see CAD, s.v. “*akālu*,” 1:250, 1b, including a royal inscription of Assurbanipal (Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh’s*, Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 7, 3 vols. [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916], 2:36, iv.45) in which Esarhaddon’s treaty curse of cannibalism is actualized and historicized with respect to the rebellious citizens of Babylon in the following generation (“to [still] their hunger they ate the flesh of their sons and daughters”; Seth F. C. Richardson, personal communication).

11. Lemos discusses human and specifically child sacrifice (*Violence and Personhood*, 131–70) together with human and specifically child cannibalism (155–58, 167–68, with these and other texts cited on 155 n. 45). See as well Olyan with citations (*Violent Rituals*, 27–30). As Olyan notes, “Most biblical texts that speak of human sacrifice focus on children” (27). On cannibalism (including child cannibalism) as a punishment for oath violations, see also Kitts, *Sanctified Violence*, 207.

12. On honor-shame cursing inversions including the shame of cannibalism among royal families, see Lemos, “Shame and Mutilation,” 237 n. 42 with citations. See also Saul M. Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 201–18; Scott B. Noegel, “Corpses, Cannibals, and Commensality: A Literary and Artistic Shaming Convention in the Ancient Near East,” *JRV* 4.3 (2016): 255–303.

to the body politic.¹³ These images of child consumption, transposed flesh, and externalized internal organs correspond to inverted social orders within and between families, cities, kingdoms, and empires.¹⁴ These concentric and overlapping spheres of social formation are aligned in loyalty oaths and misaligned in disloyalty curses, due to reversals in treaty relations perpetrated by oath violators.

The Multiple Dimensions of Esarhaddon's Somatic Inversion Curses

The bodily inversion curses inscribed on Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties operate within and on the linked social-political and iconic-ritual dimensions of these oath tablets. For example, the inversion curses discussed above are inscribed on a Nimrud tablet that stipulates the loyalty of an eastern city lord named Humbareš together with his sons, grandsons, the residents of his city, and "all the men of his hands" to the dynasty of Esarhaddon and the lineage of the crown prince designate Assurbanipal.¹⁵ Humbareš is called on to serve and protect Assurbanipal against all threats foreign and domestic, from the innermost realms of the Assyrian palace and royal family to the periphery of the empire.¹⁶ The tablet's representations of bodily inversion therefore reverberate through every level of dynastic and imperial order. These somatic and social dimensions are correlated throughout the tablet's ritualized content and contexts. Unearthed in the sanctuary of Nabû at Nimrud, the *adê* invokes as witnesses the upper echelons of an Assyrian pantheon as well as unnamed gods of provincial cities. It is said to be "confirmed, made and concluded in the presence of ... (all) the gods dwelling in heaven and earth, the gods of Assyria, the gods of Sumer and [Akka]d" as well as "all the gods of one's land and one's district" (ll. 13–24, 40A–40B).

The rhetoric and rituals of this Nimrud tablet thereby connect a ruler of a peripheral city to an Assyrian king and prince as if they were of the

13. See Herbert Niehr, "Ein weiterer Aspekt zum Totenkult der Könige von Sam'al," *SEL* 18 (2001): 86; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

14. See Olyan's discussion of bodily and social inversions with respect to friends, relatives, and treaty partners in *Violent Rituals*, 71–82.

15. The text specifies loyalty to the king and crown prince as well as to the prince's brothers and sons (SAA 2.6.1–12, 513–517).

16. See SAA 2.6.212–225.

same flesh and blood, by invoking social and somatic transformations in which a distant vassal is absorbed into the geopolitical framework of Assyrian imperialism and as Assyrian imperial ideology is absorbed into his flesh and internal organs.¹⁷ This eastern city lord must swear oaths that can bind him more closely to the Assyrian prince than members of his own potentially seditious bloodline (ll. 68, 108–115).¹⁸ This proximity to the royal and divine heart of Assyria is ritually inscribed into the vassal's body and mind, as he is said to absorb and ingest treaty oaths and is told, "You shall not ... set in your mind an unfavorable thought against Assurbanipal" (ll. 183–184). The vassal's lineage is further aligned with that of the imperial dynasty when he is told that Esarhaddon's other sons "shall stand before (the prince) and be united with you" (ll. 281–282). This unity applies to future generations, as the oaths demand loyalty to Esarhaddon's successors from the sons and grandsons of Humbareš "who will be born in days to come after this treaty" (l. 10). The bodies politic of the Humbareš dynasty effectively merge with those of Esarhaddon's, as they absorb allegiance in mind and body to the point of near identity with the crown prince designate and are told, "You shall love Assurbanipal ... your lord, like yourselves" (ll. 266–268).¹⁹

17. Neo-Assyrian ideologies of kingship conceived of imperial administrators as extensions of the king's body. See Seth F. C. Richardson, "Getting Confident: The Assyrian Development of Elite Recognition Ethics," in *Cosmopolitanism and Empire: Universal Rulers, Local Elites, and Cultural Integration in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. Myles Lavan, Richard E. Payne, and John Weisweiler, OSEE (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 40–41, after Raiji Mattila, *The King's Magnates: A Study of the Highest Officials of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, SAAS 11 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000), 7–8.

18. On the "prioritizing of loyalty to the suzerain over fidelity to family members," see Olyan, *Violent Rituals*, 15–16 n. 16 with citation; see also Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*, 31–32.

19. Whereas Neo-Assyrian and Levantine treaty tablets address the dynastic lineage of oath takers across generations, in ritualized rhetoric that is to penetrate their minds, souls, and flesh, this West Asian tradition is extended in Deuteronomy to all hearers in perpetuity (Deut 6:4–9). See SAA 2.6.183–184, 266–268, 622–625; see also the Sefire inscriptions II.B l. 5: "If you say in your soul and think in your mind, 'I am an ally ...'" See Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, rev. ed., BibOr 19 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995), 122–23. Following Albrecht Alt, Seth L. Sanders describes this as a scribal reframing of Neo-Assyrian legal traditions within historical narrative that "must be repeatedly handed down and accepted in a

Dynastic alliances are thereby made perpetually binding in royal and divine language and presence through oaths and curses inscribed in clay and flesh, and entered into bodies across generations. This social and somatic transformation is mirrored by the concomitant absorption of the gods of peripheral city-states into the hierarchy of the imperial pantheon, just as cult images of defeated enemies were abducted and installed in Assyrian temples. At the same time, Assyrian imperial cult was projected outward through the installation of oath tablets and victory monuments in strategic sites throughout the provinces.²⁰ “In the future and forever,” the oath recipients are told, “Aššur will be your god, and Assurbanipal, the great crown prince designate, will be your lord” (ll. 393–394).

Vassals thus become intimate allies on the borders of empire. They swear to this liminal identity by divine powers near and far, in their own cities and in imperial centers, as imperial power penetrates the borders of their kingdoms and the flesh of their kings. These peripheral rulers were bound to the imperial dynasty through *adê* oaths and alliances, whereas traitors were cut off from their own lands and families through *adê* curses and conquest. According to the reciprocal logic that often structures ancient West Asian curse formulas, those who break their loyalty oaths will in turn lose their own families and become persons with no name who belong to no land. These curses are violent and visceral as they reverse dynastic and geopolitical alignments, cast vassal kingdoms from inside to outside the protected boundaries of empire, and literally turn disloyal treaty partners inside out.

Bodily inversion rhetoric and rituals therefore serve an essential function in these Neo-Assyrian loyalty oath tablets. Just as the evisceration of vassal kings inverts the ingestion of their broken oaths, child cannibalism inverts the order of their dynastic succession. Indeed, dynastic usurpation can effectively eviscerate cities and kingdoms from within and turn them upside down, just as vassal disloyalty can eviscerate empires from

constituting ritual act.” See Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, Trad (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 163–64.

20. On the ritualized spatiality of treaty tablets and victory monuments see Nathaniel B. Levtow, “Monumental Inscriptions and the Ritual Representation of War,” in *Warfare, Ritual, and Symbol in Biblical and Modern Contexts*, ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank R. Ames, and Jacob L. Wright, AIL 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014).

within, reversing their formation and fortunes.²¹ The ritualized rhetoric of these treaties thereby aligns Assyrian imperialism with regional state formation by imprinting imperial hierarchy in the geopolitical world, within the minds and bodies of treaty partners and on enshrined treaty tablets installed in the center and periphery of the empire.

Ritual, rhetoric, body, and society likewise merge in the installation rites of the treaty tablets themselves, and I conclude my discussion of Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties with one additional sequence of inversion imagery inscribed on them, which is akin to bodily inversion because of the way it undoes their physical form and setting. Prior to their concluding curses, these treaties instruct their oath recipients to "guard (this treaty tablet, which) is sealed with the seal of Aššur, king of the gods, and set up in your presence, like your own god" (II. 407–409). In numerous respects, this injunction represents the *adê* tablet as a body that can be inverted. For example, just as these loyalty oaths are said to be absorbed or, as it were, inscribed into the flesh of their living recipients, so too are they inscribed into clay tablets that were to be treated like living gods.²² This correlation between oaths entering into flesh and inscribed on ritually installed godlike tablets further equates the ritual roles of inscribed treaty tablets with engraved cultic statuary.²³ In this respect, the imperial cult or body politic is here represented not in a cult statue of Aššur but in these treaty tablets, which were inscribed with loyalty oaths and curses, engraved with royal and divine images, and installed in sanctuary cellas as ritual agents.²⁴ As such, physical violations against the *adê* tablets could be described as iconoclastic (but not anti-iconic) acts of disloyalty perpetrated against a monolatrous iconic cult and its cult image. Thus, an additional analogue to bodily inversion depicted in these oath tablets would be attested in their imprecations against their own displacement, destruction, or erasure. Significantly, the tablets' warning against precisely this violation appears

21. See the Sefire inscriptions, which delineate a treaty with "all Upper-Aram and Lower-Aram" (I.A l. 6) and bear a concluding curse that warns, "May they make its lower part its upper part" (I.C ll. 23–24; Fitzmeyer, *Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 42, 55).

22. SAA 2.6.622–624 and 409, respectively.

23. The entry of oaths into flesh also recalls the divine inscription of omens on internal organs (Richardson, personal communication). As noted above (n. 6), the Akkadian term *erēbu* in SAA 2.6.560–562 also commonly signifies entry into the presence of a god or king.

24. See SAA 2.6.13–14, 407–409, and 153–156 (on which see n. 27 below).

immediately after the injunction to guard and treat them like gods (l. 409), and immediately before their sequence of concluding standard curses (ll. 414–493).²⁵ This warning is indeed constructed as the protasis of that major curse sequence. The perpetration of such acts (as at Nimrud, where Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties were found smashed in a throne room of the Ezida) would effectively empty the tablets of their vital internal textual and iconographic content. This may identify tablet destruction or erasure as an iconoclastic variation on bodily inversion analogous to dismemberment or evisceration.²⁶ Describing the erasure and destruction of loyalty oath tablets as iconic bodily inversion invites comparison with similarly iconoclastic and other somatic inversion imagery in the Hebrew Bible, to which I now turn.²⁷

25. SAA 2.6.410–412: “If you should remove it, consign it to the fire, throw it into the water, [bury] it in the earth or destroy it by any cunning device, annihilate or deface it” (see ll. 397–400: “Whoever changes, disregards, transgresses, or erases the oaths of this tablet ...”). On icon or tablet burial as ritual reversal see Nathaniel B. Levtow, “Artifact Burial in the Ancient Near East,” in *The One Who Sows Bountifully: Essays in Honor of Stanley K. Stowers*, ed. Carolyn Johnson Hodge et al., BJS 356 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 151. In light of Olyan's discussion of forced exhumation as ritual inversion, icon or tablet burial would represent a curious reverse analogue (*Violent Rituals*, 73–74).

26. On inscription destruction as iconoclasm see Nathaniel B. Levtow, “Text Destruction and Iconoclasm in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East,” in *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*, ed. Natalie N. May, OIS 8 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 311–62. On ritual reversals and reversal imagery in iconism and iconoclasm see Levtow, “Cognitive Perspectives on Iconoclasm,” in *New Perspectives on Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Saul M. Olyan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 99; Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel*, BJS UCSD 11 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 61, 107, 168.

27. One further example of inversion rites inscribed on Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties (although not so clear an example of visceral bodily inversion) is attested in SAA 2.6.377–380, where the oath recipients are warned, “You shall not try to revoke or undo (this) oath ... [...]; you shall neither think of nor perform a ritual to revoke or undo the oath.” Such a revocation ritual (which would “undo the oath”) is perhaps identified in SAA 2.6.153–156, which reads, “You shall not take a mutually binding oath with [any]one who installs gods in order to conclude a treaty before gods, [be it] by setting up a table, by drinking from a cup, by kindling a fire, by water, by oil, or by holding breasts” (Kitts describes these as oath rituals in *Sanctified Violence*, 136 n. 51, 208). In the following lines, oath recipients are instead instructed to report this treasonous act to Assurbanipal, put the perpetrators of this “insurrection” to death,

Bodily Inversion in Biblical Loyalty Oaths and Curses

In the Hebrew Bible, the clearest analogues to the bodily inversion imagery depicted in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties may be found in covenantal and related loyalty oath and cursing traditions of the Pentateuch.²⁸ This includes the ingestion of curses in the ritual ordeal to which a woman accused of sexual infidelity is subjected (Num 5:16–28), the depiction of child cannibalism in the concluding curses of Deuteronomy (28:53–57), and the ingestion of an oath-violating icon in the golden-calf narrative (Exod 32:19–20).²⁹

In the ritual prescription for a woman who is accused by her husband of sexual infidelity, the accused must imbibe written curses blotted into water mixed with dust from the tabernacle floor (Num 5:16–17, 23–24). According to the text's oath formula, if she is guilty of infidelity she "becomes a curse amidst her people" as the cursing waters "enter her" (5:24, 27; see Num 5:21).³⁰ These cursing waters are said to enter her internal organs and cause her belly or womb to "swell" and her "thigh" to "drop" (5:21–22, 27).³¹ The precise effects of curse ingestion depicted in

and "destroy their name and seed from the land" (157–161). Thus, performing *adē* rites with other treaty partners would constitute an explicit treaty reversal ritual. Lines 153–156 offer additional evidence of the link (see l. 409) between inscribed treaty tablets and cult images, and indicate treaty installation rites as an analogue to *mīs pī* rites of cult image induction.

28. Further examples appear in prophetic and historiographic extensions of these traditions, which I do not address here. For such examples with respect to child cannibalism see Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*, 155 n. 45.

29. See also Lev 26:29 and 18:25–28; 20:22 (H), on which see n. 37 below. On Num 5; Exod 32; and ritual inversion see Olyan, *Violent Rituals*, 20–22, 41–45, 76–77, 83–84; on Deut 28 and child cannibalism see Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*, 155–58, 167–68.

30. On this rite and its oath and curse syntax and terminology, see Olyan, *Violent Rituals*, 20–22, with citations.

31. *Mē'eh* ("internal organs" or "intestines"), *beṭen* ("belly" or "womb"), *yārēk* ("thigh"), *bw'* ("enter"), *šbh* ("swell"), *npl* ("drop"). On this and other terminology and referent body parts in Num 5:21–22, 27 see Olyan, *Violent Rituals*, 21 n. 37, 22 n. 42 with citations. Olyan cautiously and with textual support interprets *nāpēlā yārēkā* nonmetaphorically (see 22 n. 42). I here read it metaphorically and recalling of evisceration imagery (including the downward directionality of externalized entrails in SAA 2.6.551–554). See also n. 6 above regarding the semantic range of the Akkadian terms *irrū* and *erēbu* in SAA 2.6.560–562: with respect to *irrū* this includes interiority,

these verses are debated, but as Olyan notes in his discussion of this text with respect to ritual violence and ritual inversion, they indicate that “‘the bitter, curse-bearing waters’ will damage her body in several visible ways, realizing physically the execration with which she has been cursed.”³² This text clearly depicts written loyalty oath curses being ingested and entering into the internal organs of an oath recipient. Together with its corollary image of curse embodiment for oath violators, who experience a swelling and dropping of body parts, this ritual text recalls the oath-ingestion and cursing-evisceration imagery depicted in the treaty tablets of Esarhaddon discussed above.³³

The depiction of child cannibalism embedded in Deuteronomy’s concluding sequence of curses and curse scenarios (Deut 28:53–57) represents bodily inversion imagery of the kind depicted in Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaties as well. As in the Neo-Assyrian loyalty oath tablets, the addressee of this Deuteronomic curse is told, “you will eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your own sons and daughters,” in this case even to the point where mothers begrudge their husbands the afterbirth and flesh of their own children they themselves are eating (Deut 28:53, 56–57). Lemos identifies numerous correlations between these and other biblical and Neo-Assyrian depictions of child cannibalism with respect to treaty curses, child sacrifice, animalization, and other dimensions of this horrific imagery.³⁴ I here note this Deuteronomic curse’s somatic imagery that, as in the Neo-Assyrian treaties, inverts the natural order of birth and child rearing (with dynastic and civic implications) as a consequence of loyalty-oath violations.

Identifying the Deuteronomic curse of cannibalism as a bodily inversion akin to those depicted in Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaties invites further reflection on the ritualized narrative setting of Deuteronomy’s concluding curses. Similar to the ceremonial installation of the Neo-Assyrian

intentionality and extispicy; with respect to *erēbu* this includes entry into a political or domestic legal status as well as bodily or household invasion.

32. Olyan, *Violent Rituals*, 22.

33. I argue here for shared bodily inversion imagery patterns, not direct textual dependence. See also n. 31 above.

34. See Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*, 155–58, 167–68, with biblical and Neo-Assyrian texts cited on 155 n. 45 (for example, Lev 26:27–29). On bodily mutilation in treaty curses including Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaties and Deut 28 see Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*, 47–48 n. 65, 78–79.

oath tablets, Deuteronomy likewise ordains its own monumental installation beside a sacrificial altar at a pan-tribal sanctuary (Deut 11:29–30; 27:1–8).³⁵ There the Israelites are told to “set the blessing on Mount Gerizim” (that is, the blessing attained through covenantal loyalty) “and the curse on Mount Ebal” (that is, the curse incurred through disloyalty; Deut 11:29). This depiction of the installation and invocation of a Deuteronomic monument creates a mirroring echo of blessings and curses between the mountaintops encircling the Shechem Valley, one inverting the other.³⁶ The oath curses from Ebal reciprocally undo the protective oath blessings from Gerizim, just as curses reciprocally invert loyalty protections in the Neo-Assyrian oath tablets and in many other ancient West Asian monumental law codes and treaties. The Deuteronomic hierarchies of social relations established through blessings of conquest and settlement are thereby inverted through curses of defeat and exile, as in Deut 28:41–43: “You will bear sons and daughters but they will not be yours, for they will go into captivity.... Aliens residing in your midst will ascend above you higher and higher, while you will descend lower and lower.”

The curse of exile is also echoed in the Holiness Code, which deploys two bodily inversion metaphors in its exilic warnings against disloyalty and disobedience, one near its beginning and one near its end. This includes the Pentateuch’s other reference to child cannibalism in Lev 26:29, where the Israelites are told, “You will eat the flesh of your sons, and you will eat the flesh of your daughters.” This threat, together with threats of violent invasion and exile (Lev 26:31–33), is delivered as a warning against ignoring Yahweh’s statutes and commandments including specifically the prohibition of cult images and other ritually disloyal iconic violations (Lev 26:1, 30). The other instance of bodily inversion imagery in the Holiness source appears in a metaphor for exilic expulsion in Lev 18:25–28 (see Lev 20:22). There the Israelites are told that they must keep Yahweh’s statutes and ordi-

35. See also Josh 8:30–35; 24:25–27. On the sites associated with this tradition (Shechem, Gilgal, Ebal) see Sandra L. Richter, “The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy,” *VT* 57 (2007): 342–66.

36. These depictions frame the Deuteronomic code (Deut 12–26). The spatial context for the blessings on Gerizim depends on one’s reading of *ntn* in Deut 11:29 (see 27:12), on which see Richter, who notes that with respect to Ebal in Deut 27:4 (see 11:29; 27:13), “the reference to the installation of a monument is explicit” (“Place of the Name,” 348). On the performance of these invocations see Melissa D. Ramos, “Spoken Word and Ritual Performance: The Oath and the Curse in Deuteronomy 27–28” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2015).

nances so that “the land will not vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you” (Lev 18:28; see 18:25). This imagery operates on the metaphor of the land as a body, which in this case has contracted impurity due to violations of somatic, sexual statutes delineated in Lev 18:1–23. These statutes and warnings are said to apply to Israelite citizens as well as to resident aliens, any of whom can be “cut off from amidst their people” (Lev 18:26, 29) for committing such violations.³⁷

The correspondence between biological, social, territorial, and iconic bodies at work in the inversion imagery of Neo-Assyrian loyalty oaths is richly attested elsewhere in the Pentateuch as well. Included among the curses of Deuteronomy is Deut 27:15, “Cursed is anyone who makes a statue or cast image, an abomination to Yahweh, the work of the hands of an artisan.” The archetypical instance of this oath violation in the pentateuchal narrative is the golden-calf account, which represents the construction and destruction of this icon as an inversion of the construction and destruction of the law tablets that prohibit it (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8).³⁸ As Olyan notes, the forced ingestion of the burned, powdered calf (Exod 32:20) also parallels the ritual of curse ingestion in Num 5:24, 27.³⁹ The golden-calf account therefore depicts bodily inversion with respect to the iconic covenant violation that the calf signifies and the ingestion of the cursing calf itself, and hints at the eviscerating results of its consumption.⁴⁰

37. See Brent Strawn, “On Vomiting: Leviticus, Jonah, Ea(a)rth,” *CBQ* 74 (2012): 447–52. Strawn writes, “This vomiting is, of course, nothing less than a metaphor for exile and land-loss” (451). Regarding “the loathsome *qī*” in Lev 18:25, 28 and 20:22, Strawn notes that “the term is visceral, physical, and related to serious illness,” “the land is the personified subject,” and “vomiting is the tool of choice” to reverse its pollution (448–49 with citations [“loathsome *qī*”: 445 n. 2, citing Jack M. Sasson]). The biological representation of land as body in Lev 18:25–28 and 20:22 invites additional somatic inversion metaphors discoverable elsewhere in the HB. On the relationship between H and D see Olyan, *Violent Rituals*, 122 n. 7 with citations.

38. See Olyan, *Violent Rituals*, 41–45, 55, 76–77. Victor A. Hurowitz discusses oppositional mirroring structures and terminology shared between the golden-calf account and adjacent accounts of tablet construction (Exod 34:1, 4) and tabernacle construction (Exod 25–31). See Hurowitz, “What Can Go Wrong with an Idol?,” in May, *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction*, 290–99. “The calf debacle,” Hurowitz writes, “becomes a mirror of the tabernacle project” (98). See also Levtow, “Text Destruction and Iconoclasm,” 330–31.

39. See Olyan’s discussion of this and other parallels in *Violent Rituals*, 41–45; Levtow, “Text Destruction and Iconoclasm,” 334.

40. On the socially eviscerating results of the calf’s construction and ingestion, see

In these respects, the golden-calf account reflects in somatic, iconic imagery the inversion of larger social and political bodies. As discussed above, Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties depict bodily inversions as consequences of loyalty-oath violations, including ingested curses of evisceration and child cannibalism that evoke dynastic usurpation and succession conflicts. In a similar way, a loyalty-oath violation in Exod 32:1–6 (calf construction) leads to a bodily inversion in Exod 32:20 (calf consumption), both of which evoke social and political inversions of the Sinai and Davidic covenants. In other words, the construction of the calf violates and activates covenant-inversion curses (see Deut 27:15; 28:53–57), and the ingestion of the violating calf thus becomes a curse-ingestion act that signifies curse embodiment (see Num 5:16–24) and serves also as a somatic metaphor for dynastic usurpation and civil war in Israel. Jeroboam's "sin" indeed serves as the archetypical act of "idolatrous" apostasy and the framing device for the Deuteronomistic History's narration of the Northern Kingdom's rise and fall (1 Kgs 12:25–33; 17:21–23). In this way the construction, destruction, and ingestion of the golden calf inverts the founding ritual of secessionist Israel, by catastrophically internalizing its covenant violation and the very first curse invoked on Mount Ebal (Deut 11:29; 27:13–15). The consumption of the calf and, thus, of the foundational curse of the Deuteronomic loyalty oath (Deut 27:15) thereby signifies multiple frames of bodily inversion. All told, this oath violation and cursing inversion is depicted historiographically through subsequent accounts of secession, civil war, and exile, and somatically through the ingestion of the oath-violating icon and subsequent fratricidal purge of the disloyal Israelite within (Exod 32:27).⁴¹

the above discussion and the following note. Somatically, as Olyan notes, the results of the people's ingestion of the calf do not appear in the extant text but "they are likely to have been dire.... Perhaps," he writes, "according to the now-missing ending of the episode, all who drink it are to become disabled in some way, not unlike the guilty woman of Num 5, or to die a painful death of some kind." See Olyan, *Violent Rituals*, 43, citing Rainer Albertz, *Ex 19–40*, vol. 2 of *Exodus*, ZBK 2.2 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2015), 277. It seems reasonable to imagine the imbibed calf being expelled from or affecting the bodies of the Israelites in some visceral, eviscerating way parallel to Num 5:21–22, 27 and to Esarhaddon's loyalty oaths (SAA 2.6.551–554).

41. On the consumption of the golden calf as a metaphor for internal enemies and civil war: Mark S. Smith, personal communication. On the ritualized and inverting violence at Sinai after the calf ingestion, see Olyan's discussion in *Violent Rituals*, 41–45. As Olyan notes, after the calf is imbibed Moses orders the sons of

These wider social, political, and iconic ritual frames of bodily inversion, which are narratively and legislatively represented in Exodus and Deuteronomy as internalized loyalty-oath violations, point to yet broader dimensions and significance for this patterned somatic imagery in the Hebrew Bible and its interpretive traditions. For example, the golden-calf account represents the archetypical “idolatry” narrative also for postbiblical interpretive traditions that target “foreign” and “false” rituals and gods. As such, its imagery of bodily inversion serves as a biblical prototype and paradigm for later ethnographic dynamics of social and textual formation, including orthodoxy/heresy dialectics that generate covenantal communities and canons by purging apostate peoples and apocryphal books.

Conclusion

Bodily inversion is an established, socially generative pattern in the ritualized rhetoric of ancient West Asian loyalty oaths and curses.⁴² In Neo-Assyrian treaty tablets and in the Hebrew Bible, visceral somatic inversions radiate beyond the body natural to bodies politic including dynasties, kingdoms, and empires.⁴³ In the broadest of biblical frames, the

Levi (all of whom declare themselves loyal [“for Yahweh”]) to kill “his brother, his friend and his relative” (Exod 32:27). On the consumption of the golden calf as an inversion of divine embodiment see Levtow, “Monumental Inscriptions,” 40 n. 40.

42. Concerning ritual reversals of established social roles (for example, status reversals), Victor Turner notes the conservative dimensions of such strategic performances. Turner writes that “rituals of status reversal make visible in their symbolic and behavioral patterns social categories and forms of grouping that are considered to be axiomatic and unchanging both in essence and in relationships to one another.... By making the low high and the high low, they reaffirm the hierarchical principle.” See Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 176. Similarly, Henk S. Versnel writes that in the ancient world, “social categories are so firmly fixed that in ritual reversal ... the playful alternatives never carry the germs of structural social change,” and adds that “the reversal of roles is supposed to confirm and legitimize its opposite, not itself.” See Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion II: Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual*, 2nd ed., SGR 6.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 118, 127. With respect to bodily inversion imagery in the ancient West Asian traditions I have discussed above, the curses certainly aim at maintaining hierarchies ordered by the loyalty oaths they are meant to enforce. However, these oaths and curses also represent and can generate dynamic transformations in social relations.

43. Bodily inversion imagery is in this respect a further instance of Deuteronomic

bodily inversion tradition serves as a somatic model for the canonical history of Israelite religion and the formation of the canon itself.

With respect to the history of religion, Deuteronomistic historiography purges indigenous iconic polylatry from the physical landscape of Judah by centralizing aniconic monolatrous Yahwism as the true religion of all Israel. When Josiah does so after discovering a “book of the law” deposited within the Jerusalem temple, this effectively activates the written curses of an internalized Yahwistic loyalty oath, which ritually turns the kingdom of Judah upside down and inside out (2 Kgs 22:8–11; 23:4–20).⁴⁴ By telling this story, Deuteronomistic scribes inserted a loyalty oath with an inversion curse into the textual and social bodies they created.⁴⁵ As a result, the

dependence on Neo-Assyrian loyalty oaths and treaties, on which see Olyan, *Violent Rituals*, 121–25 with citations (esp. the studies by Bernard M. Levinson, Eckart Otto, Jeffrey Stackert, and David P. Wright cited on 122 n. 6).

44. Although the historicity of Josiah’s actions is debated with respect to the archaeological record, the seventh century BCE would have offered regional room and resources for a northwest Semitic dynasty to reconfigure its kingdom’s social boundaries from within. As Neo-Assyrian kings contended with revolts from former vassals and from usurpers within their own palaces (precisely what Esarhaddon’s loyalty oaths imprecate against), ambitious courts and scribes of Judah would reasonably have looked, as did Bir-Ga’yah of KTK in the Sefire inscriptions, to Neo-Assyrian loyalty oaths as durable mechanisms of ritualized social transformation, as many scholars have noted. Deuteronomic dynamics of cult centralization may in this respect be likened to loyalty-oath ingestion and associated curses of eviscerating inversion, and would resemble the Neo-Assyrian absorption of peripheral pantheons through the destruction or abduction and installation of their cult images in royal temples of the imperial heartland. According to this view, indigenous peoples of Judah who worshiped traditional gods in traditional ways were cast out or selectively absorbed into a new orthodoxy of iconoclastic, monolatrous Yahwism with an exclusive center of royal, divine, and scribal presence in Jerusalem. This analogy bears a difference, however. In the regional Neo-Assyrian program, imperial ideology was projected throughout the empire also by the installation of loyalty oaths in peripheral sanctuaries (e.g., at Tayinat), whereas the more local Deuteronomistic program calls for the permanent, defiling destruction of peripheral and rival central sanctuaries. On Deuteronomism as an innovation, see Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, SBLMS 34 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 73; Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 23–52.

45. I here identify the account of the high priest Hilkiah’s “discovery” of the *seper hattôrâh* in 2 Kgs 22:8–20 as a scribal, historiographic analogue to the ritual deposition of loyalty oaths in Neo-Assyrian sanctuaries. This analogy also recalls the monumental Ebal traditions discussed above as well as related Decalogue/ark traditions, all

pentateuchal audience is addressed as the covenantal body that receives the blessings of loyalty within, and as they are constituted and constitute themselves as such, the curse of the idol-eater purges the disloyal apostate and foreigner from their midst.⁴⁶ The etic distinction between the reader and writer is thus eclipsed by the text's emic distinction between the loyal and disloyal, or the self and other, in a historiographic mimesis that thematically and somatically structures not only traditional understandings of biblical religion but also postbiblical narratives of social formation from the Venerable Bede to William Bradford.

With respect to the history of the canon, the correlations between inscribed oaths and curses and inverted bodies and societies extend to text formation as well. Just as the Neo-Assyrian loyalty oaths invoke their own iconic ritual installation and warn against their own transformation or destruction, so, too, does Deuteronomic law invoke its own installation and warn against its own alteration.⁴⁷ In each of these cases, oaths and curses organically bind these texts to the peoples they represent in a mutually productive and destructive relationship. In the somatic inversion dynamic according to which these oaths and curses operate, iconic texts are canonically incorporated or apocryphally expurgated and neutralized as an antibody would a foreign antigen. The authoritative foundation of this inversion dynamic was the ancient West Asian cursing loyalty oath, embedded by Israelite scribes within a narrative framework that recounts its monumental installation by past actors and ordains its ritual implementation for future audiences.⁴⁸ The canonization of this visceral inversion strategy has naturalized its conception of the "true" religion of insiders and "false" religion of outsiders to this day.

of which sanctify Israelite scribal activity and prefigure the installation of canonical scrolls in Greco-Roman synagogues.

46. See Lev 18:24–29, where the land itself will viscerally purge Israelites as it did the Canaanites before them. On the constitution of the pentateuchal audience see Sanders, *Invention of Hebrew*. On socially generative ritual and ethnographic oppositions in the HB, including the generation of self and other through the polarity Israelite/alien, see Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 63–102.

47. SAA 2.6.397–413; Deut 27:1–8 (see 2 Kgs 22:8–20); Deut 13:1. On Deut 13:1 see Bernard M. Levinson, "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty as the Source for the Canon Formula in Deuteronomy 13:1," *JAOS* 130 (2010): 337–47.

48. Deut 27:1–8; 31:9–13, on which see Brian Britt, "Deuteronomy 31–32 as a Textual Memorial," *BibInt* 8 (2000): 358–74; see also n. 19 above.

Part 4

Relationships with the Dead

“And Moses Took the Bones of Joseph with Him”: Israelite Interment Ideology from Moses to Moshe Rabbeinu

Jordan D. Rosenblum

Introduction

In a 2005 essay, Saul M. Olyan identifies five distinct postmortem Israelite burial practices, which he then maps out into a hierarchy of biblical burial types.¹ The most desirable burial practice is “honorable burial in the family tomb,” while “the least desirable treatment of the corpse is not to bury it at all.”² Olyan demonstrates how the five burial types embody the relationship between the corpse and its surviving kin. He rightly suggests

I first conceived of the concept for this essay while still a graduate student. Saul had a practice of photocopying (and eventually, as technology changed, electronically sending the PDF) and sharing his published articles with not only his colleagues but also with his graduate students. Shortly after he published the article with which I open this essay, I read Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael Beshalah (discussed below). I realized that both texts could be put into dialogue with one another, but I had neither the time nor the opportunity to pursue this inquiry until now. I hope that this essay therefore serves as a fitting tribute to the enormous impact that Saul has had on my development as a scholar. I thank Karen Stern for helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this essay. If there are any bones to pick with this essay, they should be directed at the author alone.

1. Saul M. Olyan, “Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology,” *JBL* 124 (2005): 601–16. Olyan then dug up the bones of this essay and reburied them in a collection of his essays; see Saul M. Olyan, *Social Inequality in the World of the Text: The Significant of Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible*, JAJSup 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 225–40. Throughout, I cite the page numbers from the original *JBL* article.

2. Olyan, “Some Neglected Aspects,” 603, 607.

“that idioms of proximity to the ancestors are intended to suggest something about familial social relations in the afterlife.”³

But biblical bodies are not just buried. They are also dug up and reburied. In the second part of his essay, Olyan examines this latter practice, concluding that “transportation of remains may be viewed as a salutary, fully legitimate deed, as an innocuous action, or as an act of great hostility, depending on who is moving the remains and for what purpose.”⁴ For example, it is viewed as positive if family, friends, and/or allies move bones in order to benefit the corpse, but negative if an enemy exhumes bones in order to physically locate them in a spatially inferior resting place.

The theme of relationships permeates Israelite interment ideology. The spectrum from most to least desired burial type demonstrates the relationship between the deceased and its kin (both living and dead).⁵ And the ideology of exhumation and reburial (or nonburial) further inscribes the corpse’s relationship to the communal body. Social relationships are indexed in the treatment of the remains.

Building on Olyan’s insights, this essay explores how the ancient rabbis, who claim authority over interpretation of biblical texts, refract Israelite interment ideology through their own ideological lens. After briefly surveying some of the ways that rabbinic texts discuss biblical interment ideology in regard to transportation of physical remains, we turn our attention to Moses’s interactions with ancestral bones. Rabbinic texts describe Moses as practicing piety in regard to his treatment of Judah’s bones and his exhumation of Joseph’s bones at the time of the exodus from Egypt. By demonstrating his fealty to biblical burial ideology, Moses ultimately demonstrates his many rabbinic virtues. Moses’s actions thus transform the biblical Moses into “Moses our rabbi” (Hebrew *Moshe rabbeinu*).

Rabbinic Reburial

While rabbinic texts treat various aspects of death and burial, I offer here a necessarily brief and selective survey of rabbinic conversation about

3. Olyan, “Some Neglected Aspects,” 608.

4. Olyan, “Some Neglected Aspects,” 612.

5. Intentionality clearly matters. The issues discussed above relate to the movement of bones for ideological reasons. I do not consider the moving of bones without concern about to whom or to where they belong.

exhumation and reburial.⁶ As we shall see, these passages reflect assumptions common to Israelite interment ideology.⁷ The transportation of bones indexes movement (up, down, or laterally) along a hierarchy of social relationships between the corpse and both the individual and collective body.

Many rabbinic texts presume that bones can be exhumed, and that such acts can be deemed meritorious. For example: “Rabbi Meir said: A person may gather the bones of his father and mother [on an intermediate festival day], since it is [an occasion of] joy for him. Rabbi Yose says: It is [an occasion of] mourning for him” (m. Mo’ed Qat. 1:5).⁸ There are a variety of prohibitions on festival days, some of which apply to the intermediate days in between the festival days surrounding Sukkoth and Passover. This text records debate whether a person can collect (in order to rebury) their parents’ bones on such a day. Rabbi Meir allows doing so, because this is a joyous act of filial piety. Rabbi Yose counters that this is a sad moment, as one is still mourning the loss of a parent. Either way, the text does not debate the merit of doing so on a normal, nonintermediate festival day. In fact, the passage presumes that exhumation and reburial is a desired action, and merely debates whether it is allowable at this precise moment.

We glimpse at exhumed bones on multiple occasions where their existence is described in a neutral, matter-of-fact manner. For example, when Abba Shaul (“Daddy Saul” in Aramaic) states what his stint as a bone collector taught him about bones, we learn incidentally about bones being

6. For accessible surveys of both the textual and material evidence for rabbinic (and ancient Jewish) burial practices, see Steven Fine, “Death, Burial, and Afterlife,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*, ed. Catherine Hezser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 440–62; Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 145–80. For an excellent discussion of the ancient Jewish evidence from mortuary graffiti in the Roman East, see Karen B. Stern, *Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and the Forgotten Jews on Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 80–140; further, see Stern’s essay in this volume.

7. In fact, it is worthy of note that secondary reburial of bones is attested predominantly in prerabbinic periods. However, rabbinic literature commonly interacts with practices that are prerabbinic (most notably, temple-based rituals) and uses them to translate a prerabbinic world into a rabbinic world. I argue that this same game is afoot in regard to burial: namely, biblical burial ideology is anachronistically discussed in order to justify the rabbinic enterprise.

8. Also see m. Mo’ed Qat. 1:6; b. Mo’ed Qat. 8a; m. Pesah. 8:8. All translations in this essay are mine.

exhumed for reburial.⁹ Numerous texts describe the normative rabbinic law (Hebrew *halakah*) of removal and transportation of exhumed human bones, implying the regular occurrence of such skeletal movements.¹⁰

We encounter instances in which rabbinic authors approve of the mistreatment of ancestral bones with the intention to convey social distancing.¹¹ An extreme example of this phenomenon can be found in the act of ritual violence reportedly performed by King Hezekiah against King Ahaz's bones:¹² "[King Hezekiah] dragged the bones of his father [King Ahaz] on a bed of ropes, and [the Sages] agreed with him" (y. Pesah. 9:1, 36c).¹³

Biblical texts express great disapproval of King Ahaz's reign (see 2 Kgs 16; 2 Chr 28).¹⁴ One important area of contradiction in regard to the biblical depiction of King Ahaz relates to his postmortem treatment. According to 2 Kgs 16:20, King Ahaz "was buried with his fathers in the city of David"; however, according to 2 Chr 28:27, King Ahaz was buried within the city, but "they did not bring him to the tombs of the kings of Israel." Rabbinic tradition picks up on the latter description. They imbue their description with a report of an associated act of ritual violence: instead of respectfully carrying his father's bones on a bier to be interred with the kings of Israel, King Hezekiah drags his father's bones on a rope bed and does not entomb King Ahaz alongside other Israelite kings. After committing this act of ritual violence, King Ahaz's bones will be buried, but they will not be buried in the spatially ideal location.¹⁵ Given their disapproval for King

9. See b. Nid. 24b.

10. E.g., b. Ber. 18a; b. Naz. 64b–65b (commenting on m. Naz. 9:3). While I focus on secondary reburial, rabbinic texts also consider initial burial, such as a soldier who dies in battle or a corpse found on the side of a road (e.g., b. Eruv. 17a–b).

11. The Babylonian rabbis are aware of the Zoroastrian practice of corpse exposure, which by definition is an act of nonburial. See b. Sanh. 46b, a famous text that purports to record a debate between rabbinic and Zoroastrian authorities over burial practices. For discussion, see Jason S. Mokhtarian, *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings, and Priests: The Culture of the Talmud in Ancient Iran* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 79–80.

12. Saul Olyan has made important contributions to the study of ritual violence, as well. See Saul M. Olyan, ed., *Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible: New Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

13. And parallels: y. Ned. 6:13, 40a; b. Pesah. 56a; b. Ber. 10b; b. Sanh. 47a; b. Mak. 24a.

14. For rabbinic discussion, see b. Sanh. 103a–104a.

15. I focus here on rabbinic interaction with biblical interment ideology. I leave aside additional layers that the rabbis add to their own burial ideology. For example,

Ahaz's actions in his own lifetime, the rabbis explicitly approve of both the mistreatment of his bones and the burial of his remains in a location that indicates a lowering of his status.¹⁶ King Hezekiah's treatment of his own father's bones is thus perceived as a meritorious act of disrespect.¹⁷

Moses Reassembles Judah's Biblical Bones into a Rabbinic Body

In both this section and the following one, we turn our attention to instances in which Moses is extolled for his pious treatment of ancestral bones. In his interaction first with Judah's bones and then with those of Joseph (Judah's younger brother), Moses's respect for biblical burial ideology demonstrates his status as the paragon of the rabbinic sage.

We learn of Moses's interaction with Judah's bones amid rabbinic exegesis on the wording of Moses's premortem blessing in Deut 33:

And Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said [in the name of] Rabbi Yonatan: What [is the teaching that can be derived from] that which is written: “May Reuben live and not die, etc.” [Deut 33:6]; “and this is for Judah” [Deut 33:7]?

The entire forty years that Israel was in the desert, Judah's bones were rolling around in [his] coffin, until Moses stood up and beseeched [God] for mercy for him.

[Moses] said before [God]: Master of the Universe, who caused Reuben to confess? [It was] Judah! “And this is for Judah”?! “Listen, God, to the voice of Judah!” [Deut 33:7].

[Judah's] limbs entered their joints.

[But still,] they did not admit [Judah] to the Heavenly Academy.

[So Moses continued beseeching]: “and bring him to his people” [Deut 33:7].

[While the prayer worked, Judah] did not know to engage in legal debate with the rabbis. [So Moses continued beseeching]: “may his hands contend for him” [Deut 33:7].

the principle that “And just as we do not bury a wicked person next to a righteous person, so too we do not bury a severely wicked person next to a moderately wicked person” (b. Sanh. 47a).

16. Interestingly, b. Sanh. 47a cites a tradition that mistreatment of a corpse is actually a good omen, since it constitutes a postmortem act of retribution. In essence, this wipes the slate clean and allows the violence against a corpse to atone for the person who once inhabited that body.

17. I thank Karen Stern for helping me to clarify my argument here.

[While the prayer worked, Judah] did not know how to solve a difficulty. [So Moses continued beseeching]: “and You shall be a help against his adversaries” [Deut 33:7]. (b. Mak. 11b; compare b. Sotah 7b)

Apparently the rabbis found Deut 33:7 odd. Why is Judah (Jacob’s fourth son) mentioned immediately after Reuben (Jacob’s firstborn)? And why is the introductory formula for this blessing different from any of the others in Deut 33? Based on the general rabbinic principle that God inerrantly edited the Hebrew Bible with the intention of authorizing future interpretation, the curious wording of this passage provides an opportunity to derive rabbinic lessons.

The rabbis break each part of the verse up into individual components, which they use to tell a new story.¹⁸ First, Reuben’s verse is read as informing us that his skeletal remains are intact and attached (hence, Reuben may “live and not die”). But Judah’s bones roll around his coffin for the entire postexodus forty years that they are transported throughout the desert. Given that Judah is understood to have inspired piety on the part of Reuben, this situation does not make sense.¹⁹ Judah’s bones deserve better treatment, which is why Moses stands up and implores God to listen “to the voice of Judah.” As a result, God reassembles Judah’s skeleton.

At this point, the problem seems resolved. Judah’s remains are now connected. Yet, a problem remains. The biblical Judah has a body, but he does not embody a rabbinic sage. Thus, he is denied entry into the heavenly academy, where the deceased go to study Torah (both written and oral). The biblical Judah does not know how to be Rabbi Judah. But back in Deuteronomy, Moses already realizes this, which is why he requests that God “bring him to his people”—that is, to his *rabbinic* people. God complies. But entry into the heavenly academy alone does not a rabbi make. Judah does not know how to engage in rabbinic legal debate. Moses is aware of this too, which is why he then requests that God ensure that “his hands contend for him.” Now, Judah has some knowledge of *halakah*, but

18. For the sake of clarity, I reassemble and quote here the full verse of Deut 33:7: “And this is for Judah, and he said: Listen, God, to the voice of Judah, and bring him to his people; may his hands contend for him, and you shall be a help against his enemies.”

19. Judah causing Reuben to confess is a rabbinic tradition, the precise details of which need not deter us here. For our purposes, we only need to know that the rabbis presume Judah to have inspired Reuben’s piety, so they have trouble grasping the unequal treatment of their remains.

not nearly enough, because he cannot “solve a difficulty”—a key aspect of rabbinic legal debate. Once again, Moses anticipates this, which is why the final words of the verse request that God “shall be a help against his adversaries.” God will join Judah’s legal team in the heavenly academy. With God on his side, Judah now stands a chance to prevail in rabbinic debate.²⁰

In parsing this verse to tell this story, Judah’s biblical bones are reassembled into a rabbinic body. And the architect of this rebuilding project is Moses. What begins with an act of pious treatment of Judah’s bones develops into a full-scale remodeling of biblical figures. Moses is the one biblical figure who knows the rabbinic world that is to come (both in this world and in the heavenly academy). Judah is depicted as completely ignorant of this future. Therefore, it is Moses’s task to build the rabbinic future, bone by bone.

Moses Our Rabbi Busies Himself with Joseph’s Biblical Bones

When rabbinic tradition depicts Moses as moving bones, the remains in his hands are usually those of Joseph. And how Moses is described as handling Joseph’s biblical bones indexes his transition from Moses to “Moses our rabbi.”

We first encounter Moses transporting Joseph’s bones in the Mishnah:

Joseph merited burying his father, and none of his brothers was greater than he, as it is said: “And Joseph went up to bury his father.... And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen” [Gen 50:7, 9].

Whom have we greater than Joseph, for none other than Moses busied himself with him.

Moses merited [exhuming] the bones of Joseph, and none in Israel is greater than he, as it is said: “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him” [Exod 13:19].

Whom is greater than Moses, for none other than God²¹ busied himself with him, as is it said: “And [God] buried him in the valley” [Deut 34:6].

20. On God participating in rabbinic legal debate, see the famous Oven of Akhnai story in b. B. Metz. 59a–b.

21. The Hebrew for “God” here is *ha-māqôm*, literally “the Place.” A common rabbinic term for God, *ha-māqôm* is a synecdoche for God’s dwelling in the temple based off the common Deuteronomic phrase referring to the temple as the place (Hebrew *ha-māqôm*) where God chooses to cause God’s name to dwell (e.g., Deut 12:11).

Not concerning Moses alone did they say [thus], but rather concerning all the righteous, as it is said: “and your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall gather you” [Isa 58:8]. (m. Sotah 1:9)

Connecting biblical verses, this passage proves that Joseph’s piety merited his burying his father; and Moses’s piety merited not only his reburial of Joseph’s bones, but also God’s burial of Moses in an undisclosed location.²²

There are two features of this text that are worthy of note. First, the verb *busied* [Hebrew *nit‘asēq*] merits our attention. In rabbinic Hebrew, “to busy oneself” often means to engage in rabbinic Torah study.²³ Joseph’s actions are biblically meritorious, but it is not until Moses is mentioned that this verb appears. Moses, and then God, engages in rabbinic acts of piety. Second, I translated the final verse of this section from Isa 58:8 to reflect the rabbinic reading of this passage, which includes a clever pun about bones. As Chaya Halberstam notes:

The mishnah plays on Isaiah’s poetic image that God will “gather up the rear” (while righteousness walks in front of you). The verb used is “*ya’aspeka*,” and the root *’SP* is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to imply a kind of “gathering in” to one’s ancestors after death (e.g., Gen. 25:8. Judg. 2:10). Thus just as Moses’ virtue was rewarded by God’s burying him after he dies, so also, the mishnah suggests, all the righteous will be gathered in by God at their death. The rabbinic gesture toward divine care at the moment of death hardly depicts a traditional, deuteronomic sense of divine reward and punishment *in this world* contingent on observance of the commandments, and thus this statement signals a particular rabbinic departure from biblical theology.²⁴

By rereading the final verb of this verse, God is understood to gather the bones of the righteous, which, as Halberstam persuasively argues, reflects a distinctly rabbinic osteo-theology.

22. For rabbinic speculation on where Moses might be buried, see e.g., t. Sotah 4:8; b. Sotah 13b–14a.

23. E.g., m. Avot 4:10.

24. Chaya T. Halberstam, *Law and Truth in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 126, original emphasis (on this mishnaic passage in general, see 123–26).

The relatively brief encounter between Moses and Joseph’s bones recounted in the Mishnah is expanded on in its midrashic retelling. For example, we learn:

“And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him” [Exod 13:19].

[This is stated] in order to proclaim the wisdom and piety of Moses. For all Israel busied itself with plunder, but Moses busied himself with the commandment of [exhuming and transporting] Joseph’s bones.

Concerning him Scripture says:²⁵ “The wise of heart will take on commandments, but one foolish of lips will be cast aside” [Prov 10:8].²⁶

Once again, we are told that Moses “busied himself” [Hebrew *’ôsqîn*] with Joseph’s bones. But we also learn a little bit more. First, we discover that God wrote Exod 13:19 in order to testify to Moses’s “wisdom and piety.” Moses displays both knowledge and righteous action. Second, while the rest of Israel is plundering as much as possible, Moses has another treasure in mind: Joseph’s bones.²⁷ Moses’s concern for God’s commandments thus contrasts starkly with the Israelites’ concern for booty.²⁸ Third, Moses’s righteous action personifies the rabbis’ reading of Prov 10:8. Moses is the “wise of heart” who busies himself with commandments. In contrast, the Israelites are the “foolish of lips” who “will be cast aside.”²⁹ In the rabbinic

25. On the function of Scripture (Hebrew *ha-kātûb*) in Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael in general, see Azzan Yadin, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

26. For ease of reference, I include the pages and line numbers for Horowitz’s critical edition. See Hayim S. Horowitz, ed. *Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael* (Jerusalem: Bamberger and Wahrman, 1960), 78, ll. 6–8. Parallels: t. Sotah 4:7; Mekhilta d’Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai at Exod 13:19; b. Sotah 13a–b (and the brief mention on b. Sotah 20b); additional parallels are noted by Horowitz on p. 78.

27. On Israel plundering Egyptian booty, see Exod 3:22; 12:35–36. Compare the narrative on t. Pe’ah 4:18, in which King Munbaz contrasts giving charity as a treasure versus his brothers’ desire to hoard money as a treasure. For discussion, see Gregg E. Gardner, *The Origins of Organized Charity in Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 137.

28. To be fair to the Israelites, later in this corpus they are described as going to great lengths to properly bury Aaron (Moses’s brother). See Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael Beshalah Vayassa 1 (Horowitz, *Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael*, 152–53); and for discussion, Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 44–45.

29. On how the verb “cast aside” functions both in this context and in rabbinic

worldview, this comes to pass. Those who did not heed rabbinic law were cast aside; but those who, like Moses, embraced rabbinic law, are the “wise of heart” who endure.³⁰ Moses’s attention to biblical bones is therefore a rabbinic lesson for all to learn.

Conclusion

Saul Olyan identifies how Israelite interment ideology indexes social relationships based on the status of the location of a corpse’s burial and the reburial of its bones. Building on Olyan’s insights, I argue that rabbinic texts refract these traditions through their own ideological lens. In particular, I focus on instances in which Moses holds biblical bones in his own hands. Whether reassembling Judah’s skeleton or busying himself with Joseph’s physical remains, Moses transforms biblical bones into rabbinic bodies. In this act, Moses embodies the consummate qualities of “Moses our rabbi.” In sum, Moses becomes the rabbinic ligament that connects the biblical bones of the past in order to build the rabbinic body of the present and future.

Hebrew, see Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 18B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 516.

30. The text continues on to explain how Moses located and identified Joseph’s coffin. While this displays once again how Moses puts rabbinic theory into practice, the details are not necessary to prove my overall argument. Further, some of the details are repetitive: e.g., the tradition from m. Sotah 1:9 found in Horowitz, *Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael*, 79:3–7.

Just Who Is Coming to Dinner? Fostering Relationships with the Dead through Ritual Meals

Susan Ackerman

Scholars generally agree that there was some sort of cult of the dead in ancient Israel,¹ although they can differ regarding specifics. Some propose a more maximal list of rituals such a cult might include: for example, protecting and, when necessary, repatriating human remains.² Others are more minimalist, distinguishing one-time funerary rites such as burial from the ongoing mortuary observances they take to define the cult of the dead.³ In addition, some refer to the Israelite cult of the dead as just that—

Because we have enjoyed so many wonderful meals together during the almost forty years I have known him (Burdicks! New Orleans! Pitlochry!), and because of the deep bonds of camaraderie and collegiality these meals have fostered, it is a great pleasure to dedicate these thoughts regarding the allegiances promoted by ritual feasts to my very dear friend Saul Olyan. Congratulations to him on the occasion of this *Festschrift*'s publication!

1. For up-to-date bibliographies, see Christopher B. Hays, "Death and Burial: Biblical Studies," Oxford Bibliographies Online, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195393361/obo-9780195393361-0140.xml>, and Kerry M. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel*, ABS 27 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 2–3 n. 2.

2. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead*, 25, 28–30, 54–55.

3. Dennis Pardee, "Marziḥu, Kispu, and the Ugaritic Funerary Cult: A Minimalist View," in *Ugarit, Religion and Culture: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Ugarit, Religion and Culture, Edinburgh, July 1994; Essays Presented in Honour of Professor John C. L. Gibson*, ed. Nick Wyatt, Wilfred G. E. Watson, and Jeffrey B. Lloyd, UBL 12 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 273–74; Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 4–12. Sonia offers helpful comments about why, in some

the “cult of the dead”—while others prefer to speak of “ancestor cult” or the “cult of dead kin” in order to focus on the familial context that is the cult of the dead’s primary locus.⁴

In what follows, I consider both the ancestor cult, or the cult of dead kin, as a component of Israelite family religion and also the cult of the dead as manifest in royal circles. Although there are key ritual observances that in my estimation are part of both the royal and nonroyal cult of the dead, these rituals are not necessarily enacted in the same ways in royal versus nonroyal settings or by the same agents. More important, in this volume focused on relationships, I argue that the relationships these rituals forge between the living and the dead diverge in some crucial respects.

1. The Ancestral Cult of Israelite Family Religion

Key rites of the Israelite ancestral cult, enacted on the dead’s behalf by their living descendants, include the proper burial of deceased persons in their family tomb, the periodic provisioning of the dead with food and drink offerings, and the commemoration and regular invocation of the deceased (through, for example, the evoking of dead persons’ names).⁵

cases, this distinction seems too firmly drawn (*Caring for the Dead*, 11). I would push further to suggest that since the larger point of the cult of the dead is to ensure the dead’s well-being and thus to guarantee they will offer support to their living affiliates (see below), proper burial—so essential to the dead’s contented existence in the afterlife—must always be understood as a cult-of-the-dead rite. For related discussions, see Saul M. Olyan, “Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology,” *JBL* 124 (2005): 607–10; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers: The Roles of Ancestor Veneration in Biblical Land Claims*, LHBOTS 473 (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 109–10; Matthew J. Suriano, *The Politics of Dead Kings: Dynastic Ancestors in the Book of Kings and Ancient Israel*, FAT 48 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 7–8.

4. Cult of the dead: e.g., Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, HSM 39 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989). Ancestor cult: e.g., Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Deuteronomy and the Politics of Post-mortem Existence,” *VT* 45 (1995): 1–16. Cult of dead kin: e.g., Sonia, *Caring for the Dead*, 7–10. For the cult’s familial focus, see Herbert Chanan Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife—A Biblical Complex,” *HUCA* 54 (1973): 5.

5. On the role of living descendants, see Saul M. Olyan, “The Roles of Kin and Fictive Kin in Biblical Representations of Death Rituals,” in *Family and Household Religion: Towards a Synthesis of Old Testament Studies, Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Cultural Studies*, ed. Rainer Albertz, Beth Alpert Nakhai, Saul M. Olyan, and Rüdiger Schmitt (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 252–57; Olyan, *Friendship in the*

Abraham Malamat, writing in 1968, also suggested that the *zebah mišpāḥâ* be understood as an ancestor cult ritual.⁶ More specifically, the *zebah mišpāḥâ* should be understood as a sacrificial feast, or *zebah*, held periodically (annually? see 1 Sam 20:6), in which a family's dead ancestors participated alongside the living members of their *mišpāḥâ*—a term that refers generally to an extended family, a lineage, or a clan, and more precisely to “a patrilineal association of kin that shares common title to a particular plot of land or region.”⁷

In the biblical account that most explicitly concerns this *zebah mišpāḥâ*, 1 Sam 20:1–21:1 (ET 20:1–42), the *mišpāḥâ* in question is the clan of David, as David, according to the fiction posed in verses 5–7, 29, has been commanded by his brother to return to Bethlehem, his hometown, to participate in his family's *zebah mišpāḥâ*. The familial nature of the *zebah mišpāḥâ*, as well as the geographical ties of the *mišpāḥâ* “to a particular plot of land or region,” is clearly indicated here. That this event included a ritual meal is also indicated definitively by the use of the term *zebah*, as *zebah*, although often just translated as “sacrifice,” refers specifically to a sacrifice in which only select parts of a slaughtered animal were burned as an offering while the rest of the meat was eaten by those participating in the ritual.⁸

Malamat's proposal that those participating in the *zebah mišpāḥâ* included a clan's deceased ancestors has been adopted by many.⁹ Elizabeth

Hebrew Bible, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 21–24, 33–34. On proper burial in the family tomb, see above, n. 3, and also Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife,” 8, 23. On food and drink offerings and on commemoration and invocation, see Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 53, citing Miranda Bayliss, “The Cult of Dead Kin in Assyria and Babylon,” *Iraq* 35 (1973): 116.

6. Abraham Malamat, “King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies,” in *Essays in Memory of E. A. Speiser*, ed. William W. Hallo, AOS 53 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1968), 173 n. 29. As pointed out by Elizabeth M. Bloch-Smith, Malamat's proposal was to some degree anticipated by Julian Morgenstern. See Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, JSOTSup 123 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 122 n. 1; Morgenstern, *Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death and Kindred Occasions among the Semites* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press; Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 263–64 n. 268.

7. David S. Vanderhooft, “The Israelite *mišpāḥâ*, the Priestly Writings, and Changing Valences in Israel's Kinship Terminology,” in *Exploring the Longue Durée: Essays in Honor of Lawrence E. Stager*, ed. J. David Schloen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 489.

8. Jan Bergman, Bernhard Lang, and Helmer Ringgren, “זֶבַח, זֶבַח,” *TDOT* 4:10–11.

9. Blenkinsopp, “Deuteronomy and the Politics,” 7–8; Bloch-Smith, *Judahite*

Bloch-Smith and Karel van der Toorn have also identified other biblical passages that may allude to a clan sacrifice that includes both a family's living and dead members: for instance, according to Bloch-Smith, Gen 31:53–54,¹⁰ and according to van der Toorn, 1 Sam 9:1–10:16.¹¹ More specifically, van der Toorn identifies a constellation of ritual elements in 1 Sam 9:1–10:16 that “intimates ... a period ... of increased ritual activity combining sacrificial meals at local *bāmôt* with pilgrimages to ancestral graves,” aimed at fostering “a ritual communion with the ancestors.”¹²

The ancestors' participation in this ritual communion attests to the Israelites' fundamental conviction that their forebears lived on in some way after death. More important, the larger complex of ancestor cult rituals (proper burial, periodic provisioning with food and drink, commemoration and regular invocation of the deceased, and shared meals during the *zēbaḥ mišpāḥā*) presumes that the ancestors—if properly attended to—were able to aid their descendants from beyond the grave. Still, living family members' interactions with their dead ancestors are not just what Kerry Sonia has described (quoting Stanley Stowers) as “practices of *generalized reciprocity*,” whereby the dead “possess powers to influence the world of the living” and “may offer these powers in exchange for cultic care.”¹³ Rather (and as Sonia recognizes), the various rituals of the ancestor cult “constituted,” in the words of Joseph Blenkinsopp, “an important

Burial Practices, 124; Baruch Halpern, “Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability,” in *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*, ed. Baruch Halpern and Deborah W. Hobson, JSOTSup 124 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 58; Oswald Loretz, “Ugaritisch-biblisch *mrzḥ* ‘Kultmahl, Kultverein’ in Jer 16,5 and Am 6,7,” in *Künder des Wortes: Beiträge zur Theologie der Propheten*, ed. Lothar Ruppert, Peter Weimar, and Erich Zenger (Würzburg: Echter, 1982), 93 n. 28; Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, SHCANE 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 211–18; and, somewhat more tentatively, Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 178; Rüdiger Schmitt, “Care for the Dead in the Context of the Household and Family,” in Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 457.

10. Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 125–26.

11. Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 214–17.

12. Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 216–17.

13. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead*, 13 and 15, there quoting Stanley K. Stowers, “The Religion of Plant and Animal Offerings versus the Religion of Meanings, Essences, and Textual Mysteries,” in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, ed. Jennifer Wright Kunst and Zsuzsa Varhelyi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37.

integrative element of the social, religious, and emotional bond of kinship” that was crucial to Israelites’ family identity and “solidarity between the living and the dead.”¹⁴ Blenkinsopp goes on to say that “the social life of the kinship group ... and its persistence through time were inextricably bound up with ownership of a parcel of land which also served as a burial plot,” thereby forging a connection between “land ownership, burial, and the perpetuation of the sib [or clan].”¹⁵ What results is an interrelated network of elements captured in nuce in the title of Herbert Brichto’s 1973 article “Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife—A Biblical Complex.”¹⁶

2. The Royal Cult of the Dead

According to many, Deuteronomic tradition as promulgated in the seventh century BCE worked to undermine the ancestor cult, or the cult of dead kin, and the clan solidarity and clan-centered allegiances it promoted, in order to build up a centralized cult center in Jerusalem.¹⁷ This in turn built up the power and authority of the Judaeen monarch, who both supported and was supported by Jerusalem’s centralized cult. In the words of Blenkinsopp, “Since ancestor cult was an essential integrative element of a social system based on lineage, it was opposed in the name of a centralized state cult which claimed the exclusive allegiance of those living within the confines of the state.”¹⁸ State opposition to the ancestor cult also, according to Blenkinsopp, stemmed from the localized claims to land ownership that

14. Blenkinsopp, “Deuteronomy and the Politics,” 3, 8.

15. Blenkinsopp, “Deuteronomy and the Politics,” 8–9. *Sib* is a word Blenkinsopp takes from Max Weber, or, more specifically, from Weber’s translators’ rendering of German *Sippe*. See Weber, “Glossary and Index, 1. Subjects,” in *Ancient Judaism* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952), 475, s.v. *sib*. More commonly in English, *Sippe* is rendered as “extended family,” “kinship group,” or “clan.”

16. Above, n. 4.

17. Blenkinsopp, “Deuteronomy and the Politics,” 1–16; Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 132; Halpern, “Jerusalem and the Lineages,” 75–77; Christopher B. Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II and in First Isaiah*, FAT 79 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 175; van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 352–62. Note also the somewhat kindred arguments of Mary Douglas, *Jacob’s Tears: The Priestly Work of Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 176–95; Herbert Niehr, “The Changed Status of the Dead in Yehud,” in *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era*, ed. Rainer Albertz and Bob Becking, STR 5 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003), 136–55.

18. Blenkinsopp, “Deuteronomy and the Politics,” 1.

the ancestor cult sustained, given the “state’s need for land as a source of income and to reward or placate retainers.”¹⁹

This thesis that posits a causal relationship between Deuteronomy’s program of cult (and state) centralization and an effort to erode the kin-based ancestor cult was originally put forward by Max Weber in his early twentieth-century classic *Ancient Judaism*, and it is one with which I generally agree.²⁰ Yet even as the Jerusalem monarchy and affiliated elites benefited from Deuteronomic efforts to constrain the clan-centered ancestor cult, some sort of a cult of the dead was practiced in Judahite and also Israelite royal circles.²¹ Within the royal cult of the dead, however, rituals characteristic of the *mišpāḥâ*’s ancestor cult were often conceptualized differently.

For example, royal affiliates did not necessarily observe the practice of burial in a family tomb. Note, most famously, the eighth-century BCE tomb of Shebna, the steward (*sōkēn*) of King Hezekiah, which Shebna is said to have built for himself in Jerusalem’s Silwan necropolis, where, according to Isa 22:16, none of his family was otherwise buried.²² David Ussishkin reports, moreover, that this is but one of eleven to sixteen “gabled ceiling” and “monolithic above-ground” tombs that “nobles and high-ranking officials” built in the Silwan necropolis for “the burial of a single person or for a couple, and in one or two cases for three individuals at most.”²³

19. Blenkinsopp, “Deuteronomy and the Politics,” 4.

20. Susan Ackerman, “Cult Centralization, the Erosion of Kin-Based Communities, and the Implications for Women’s Religious Practices,” in *Social Theory and the Study of Israelite Religion: Essays in Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Saul M. Olyan, RBS 71 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 19–40. Weber’s essays on ancient Judaism originally appeared in the 1917–1919 issues of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*; for an English translation in book form, see n. 15.

21. William W. Hallo, “Royal Ancestor Worship in the Biblical World,” in “*Sha’arei Talmon*”: *Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shem-aryahu Talmon*, ed. Michael Fishbane and Emmanuel Tov (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 381–401; Klaas Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, AOAT 219 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 250; Nicolas Wyatt, “Royal Religion in Ancient Judah,” in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah*, ed. Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 72–75.

22. Nahman Avigad, “The Epitaph of a Royal Steward from Silwan Village,” *IEJ* 8 (1953): 137–52.

23. David Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan: The Necropolis from the Period of the Judahite Kingdom* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 257, 266, 328.

Kings also modified the tradition of the family tomb. After David established Jerusalem as his royal city, for example, his dynasty's tomb was relocated from his clan's ancestral lands in Bethlehem (2 Sam 2:32) to his new patrimonial fief. Indeed, 1 Kgs 2:10; 11:43; 14:31; 15:8, 24; 22:51 (ET 22:50); 2 Kgs 8:24; 9:28; 12:22 (ET 12:21); 14:20; 15:7, 38; and 16:20 all indicate that David and his descendants through Ahaz were buried "in the city of David," which Norma Franklin and Nadav Na'aman—based on Isa 14:18 and abundant Near Eastern parallels—take to mean these kings were buried under the royal palace.²⁴ Yet over time, the site of Jerusalem's royal tombs changed, as Manasseh and Amon are said to be buried in the "garden of Uzza" (2 Kgs 21:18, 26). What, exactly, is meant here is debated, although Na'aman argues the reference is still to burial within a palace complex, but a different palace located at the city of David's southeast end.²⁵ Palace burial within a royal city, however, while a well-known monarchical tradition in the Near East, deviates significantly from the clan-based rituals of the Israelite ancestor cult, as the typical cave and bench tombs of nonroyal Judean families were located outside of settlements' walls, "in tell slopes or nearby cliffs."²⁶

Franklin has proposed, moreover, that with the founding of the Omride dynasty, the same pattern seen in Judah holds in the North: first, the royal fief established by Omri in Samaria became his burial place and that of his descendants and other successors, through, at least, Joash and

24. Norma Franklin, "The Tombs of the Kings of Israel: Two Recently Identified Ninth-Century Tombs from Omride Samaria," *ZDPV* 119 (2003): 2; Nadav Na'aman, "Death Formulae and the Burial Place of the Kings of the House of David," *Bib* 85 (2004): 247–49.

25. Na'aman, "Death Formulae," 249–51. On the debate, see Hays, *Death in the Iron Age*, 157–59; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, "Exploring the Garden of Uzza: Death, Burial and Ideologies of Kingship," *Bib* 87 (2006): 1–21; Suriano, *Politics of Dead Kings*, 108–18; Jeffrey R. Zorn, "The Burials of the Judean Kings: Sociohistorical Considerations and Suggestions," in *"I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times": Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Aren M. Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 812–16.

26. Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 51. On palace burial within ancient Near Eastern royal cities, see Franklin, "Tombs of the Kings," 3; Hays, *Death in the Iron Age*, 36–37; Na'aman, "Death Formulae," 249; Herbert Niehr, "The Royal Funeral in Ancient Syria: A Comparative View on the Tombs in the Palaces of Qatna, Kumidi, and Ugarit," *JNSL* 32 (2006): 1–24; Suriano, *Politics of Dead Kings*, 55–63.

probably Jeroboam II (1 Kgs 16:28; 22:37; 2 Kgs 10:35; 13:9; 14:16, 29);²⁷ second, the royal tombs in Samaria were located within the royal palace. In fact, Franklin identifies two tombs, excavated by the Harvard Expedition of 1908–1910 and located “beneath rooms of the earliest palace” at Samaria, as royal tombs, possibly the tombs of Omri and Ahab, or possibly of Ahab and Jehu.²⁸ Yet again, though, these palace burials differ from nonroyal tradition, as the North’s nonroyals were buried predominantly in cist tombs that, at least at some sites, were located in cemeteries separated from residential districts, on the side of or relatively proximate to tell mounds.²⁹

The obligation to care properly for the corpse could also be realized differently within the royal cult of the dead, as in elite circles caretaking responsibilities need not be assumed by the deceased’s family. In 2 Kgs 9:34–37, for example, just after King Ahab’s wife, Jezebel, has been thrown to her death, Jehu, who had usurped the Northern throne, orders that her body be “cared for” (*piqdû*). He no doubt means that those to whom he speaks are to fill the role of the *pāqidu* known from Mesopotamian tradition, by enacting appropriate burial rites for Jezebel and (if Mesopotamian parallels are germane) making periodic food and drink offerings on her behalf and periodically invoking her name.³⁰ Yet while Mesopotamian traditions regarding the nonroyal cult of the dead indicate that the *pāqidu* “seems in most cases to have been a relative of the deceased,”³¹ the unspecified “they” commanded by Jehu to assume the *pāqidu* role on Jezebel’s behalf are best understood as either the eunuchs who allied with Jehu in 9:32–33 or soldiers from his entourage.

To be sure, since Jehu has killed—or is set to kill—most of Ahab’s and Jezebel’s descendants (2 Kgs 9:14–26, 27–28; 10:1–11), one could argue that Jehu has no choice but to appoint individuals from outside Jezebel’s family to fill the *pāqidu* role. That said, the Old Babylonian Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty may suggest that 2 Kgs 9:34–37 draws on a

27. Franklin, “Tombs of the Kings,” 2.

28. Franklin, “Tombs of the Kings,” 4, 7–8, but see David Ussishkin, “Megiddo and Samaria: A Rejoinder to Norma Franklin,” *BASOR* 348 (2007): 62–68.

29. Franklin, “Tombs of the Kings,” 1; Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 159 (Tel Zeror), 184–85 (Tel Qedesh).

30. Bayliss, “Cult of Dead Kin,” 116.

31. Bayliss, “Cult of Dead Kin,” 116.

royal tradition of nonkin serving as a deceased aristocrat's *pāqidu*.³² The Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty begins by listing the names of the dynastic ancestors of Ammišaduqa, the great-grandson of Hammurabi and Babylon's reigning king (r. 1646–1626 BCE), who are invoked so that they can receive what is known in Mesopotamia as the *kispu* offering: a “libation and sacrifice for (or cultic feeding of) the dead.”³³ But in its concluding lines, the Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty also indicates that others, including members of “any dynasty not listed on this tablet,” as well as “royal sons and royal daughters”—all “who have no one to care for them [*pa-qi-dam*] or to call them”—are summoned along with Ammišaduqa's forebears to “come,” “eat,” and “drink.”³⁴ Note especially that *royal daughters* are included among those who, because they otherwise have no relative to serve as a *pāqidu*, are summoned to receive offerings. This is precisely the reason Jehu puts forward in 2 Kgs 9:34—that Jezebel “is a king's daughter”—when commanding nonkin to assume the role of *pāqidu* on her behalf.

Saul Olyan has pointed to other instances where nonkin undertake the responsibility for caring for the deceased within Israel's royal cult of the dead. In 1 Sam 31:12–13, for example, the men of Jabesh-Gilead retrieve the corpses of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-Shan and bury their bones “under the tamarisk in Jabesh,” and in 2 Kgs 9:28 and 23:30, the bodies of Ahaziah and Josiah, respectively, are brought by their servants to Jerusalem for burial after these kings have been killed during battle.³⁵ Somewhat similarly, in 1 Kgs 22:37, the body of an unnamed Israelite king killed in battle (usually taken to be Ahab) is brought to Samaria by unspecified but presumably nonkin agents, and in 2 Kgs 14:20, the unspecified but presumably nonkin “they” who have conspired against King Amaziah bring his body back from Lachish, where he was killed, for burial in Jerusalem. Conversely, in Judg 16:31, “Samson's *brothers* and *other male kin* bring his mutilated corpse up from Gaza to the family tomb in Danite territory” (emphasis added).³⁶

32. Jacob J. Finkelstein, “The Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty,” *JCS* 20 (1966): 95–118.

33. Hays, *Death in the Iron Age*, 41.

34. Translation from van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 64.

35. Olyan, “Some Neglected Aspects,” 603; Olyan, “Roles of Kin,” 259.

36. Olyan, “Some Neglected Aspects,” 603–4.

Note also the tradition found in 2 Sam 21:12–14. There, consistent with the rituals of the clan-based ancestral cult, the bones of Saul and Jonathan are brought from their previous resting place in Jabesh-Gilead to their family's tomb in Benjamin. Still, it is a nonkin agent, David, who enacts the ritual repatriation of Saul's and Jonathan's bones on behalf of his royal predecessor, just as nonkin agents act on behalf of dead royals in 1 Sam 31:12–13; 1 Kgs 22:37; and 2 Kgs 9:28, 34–37; 14:20; and 23:30. Again, moreover, we might compare the Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty, where, as we have seen, King Ammišaduqa (or the officiants acting on his behalf) goes beyond providing nourishment for his deceased ancestors to include among those “who have no one to care for them” the members of “any dynasty not listed on this tablet.” Saul and Jonathan are well characterized using this language: they are members of a royal dynasty who have no one from their own dynastic line to care for them, given that all the descendants that remained to Saul save the disabled Mephibosheth had been executed by the Gibeonites just prior to the reinterment of Saul's and Jonathan's bones (2 Sam 21:7–9). As in the Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty, that is, the lack of an able-bodied kinsman who could execute the proper caretaking rituals for Saul and Jonathan within Israel's royal cult of the dead prompts a nonkin monarch, David, to assume that role.

This 2 Sam 21:12–14 episode has surely been included in the David story for political reasons (David's biographers sought to appease Saul's supporters in order to defend David against accusations that he had usurped Saul's throne), and political obligations similarly seem to compel the men of Jabesh-Gilead who originally retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-Shan.³⁷ But the ritual actors in other texts we have surveyed are arguably motivated either by the benefits that might accrue to them in this life because of the cultic care they have extended to the dead or by the benefits they hope to receive after death because of cult-of-the-dead rituals that have been enacted on their behalf. Shebna, for example, presumably arranged to be buried among other elites in the Silwan necropolis because he believed his living counterparts in Jerusalem would deliver the protection of his remains that he so ardently desired (KAI 191B), and presumably Shebna's aristocratic colleagues likewise believed he would reward their safeguarding efforts by offering them support from beyond the grave. Kings, too, seemingly perceived it to be

37. Olyan, “Some Neglected Aspects,” 605; Olyan, “Roles of Kin,” 259–60.

beneficial to extend cultic care to their royal predecessors, even, as the Genealogy of the Hammurabi Dynasty suggests, to monarchs from outside their own patriline. Presumably this is because these kings believed their dead predecessors had the power to bestow benefits on them from beyond the grave. The servants who cared for the bodies of kings such as Ahaziah and Josiah, and those assigned to care for the body of Jezebel, may also have hoped to receive aid from the deceased elites they attended.

Overall, the logic of reciprocity that helps define the ancestor cult of the *mišpāḥâ* arguably helps structure the royal cult of the dead as well. Nevertheless, the reciprocal relationships fostered by the rituals of the royal cult of the dead often depend on politically and aristocratically based alliances, as opposed to the kinship alliances that characterize the ancestor cult of the *mišpāḥâ*. As a result, the royal cult of the dead features a diminished emphasis on burial in the *mišpāḥâ* or family tomb, located on the *mišpāḥâ* or ancestral land, and a diminished imperative for members of the *mišpāḥâ* to see to the corpse's proper burial and to enact the caretaking rituals that ensured the deceased's continued well-being (the making of food and drink offerings and the evoking of the deceased's name).

What, moreover, of the *zebah mišpāḥâ*, the ancestral clan feast? Given the diminished role of the *mišpāḥâ* generally in the royal cult of the dead, and given the particularly important role the *zebah mišpāḥâ* played in promoting ideologies of *clan* solidarity, *clan*-centered allegiances, and *clan* claims to land ownership that, as we have seen, are antithetical to monarchical interests, we can hardly expect the *zebah mišpāḥâ* to be a part of the royal cult of the dead. But could the periodic clan feast of the *mišpāḥâ* appear in a reconceptualized form within royal and royally affiliated circles? Although it has become an unfashionable position among scholars,³⁸ I propose that at least on some occasions, the *marzēaḥ* banquet brought living members of Israel's aristocracy together with their dead counterparts for a ritual communion meal.

Certainly, a significant body of evidence from the West Semitic world indicates that the *marzēaḥ*—an institution known from the Late Bronze Age through the Roman period—was centered on ritually connoted feasting and, especially, drinking. The ritual connotations of the *marzēaḥ* are most clearly indicated by the fact that *marzēaḥ* associations are often identified as having a patron god: for example, at Ugarit, the

38. See below, n. 45.

goddess Anat (*KTU* 4.642), the god Šatrana (RS 15.70), the Hurrian Ištar (RS 18.01), and possibly, based on a reference in a mythological text, the god El (*KTU* 1.114). First-millennium BCE sources that reflect this same tradition include a *phiale* with a Phoenician inscription that identifies it as belonging to the *marzēaḥ* of the god Šamaš,³⁹ and KAI 60, the Piraeus inscription (96 BCE), where a *marzēaḥ* seems to be associated with the Baal of Sidon. In his 2001 monograph on the *marzēaḥ*, John McLaughlin cites eleven different deities associated with *marzēaḥ* institutions at Roman-era Palmyra.⁴⁰

The Ugaritic text that identifies El as the patron of a mythological *marzēaḥ* (*KTU* 1.114) also attests to the *marzēaḥ*'s character as a drinking association, as, according to this text, El drinks so much wine in the *marzēaḥ* that he collapses in his own excrement. Ugaritic administrative texts (*KTU* 4.642; RS 18.01) in addition indicate that *marzēaḥ* associations owned vineyards, no doubt used to produce wine for the *marzēaḥ* drinking feasts, and the *phiale* described above was surely meant for wine consumption. McLaughlin, moreover, calls attention to four large trough-shaped objects from Nabatean Avdat, all inscribed with fragmentary texts referring to a *marzēaḥ* and each used to serve wine, and he notes as well that six of the nine tesserae from Palmyra that mention the *marzēaḥ* depict the *marzēaḥ* leader reclining beneath a grapevine.⁴¹ Israelite evidence that indicates wine drinking was integral to the *marzēaḥ* is found in Jer 16:5–9, where the terms *bêt marzēaḥ*, the “*marzēaḥ* house,” and *bêt mišteh*, the “drinking house,” are to be taken as synonyms, and Amos 6:4–7, where those who participate in a *marzēaḥ* are condemned for drinking wine out of ceremonial bowls (*mizrāqīm*). Still, wine was not the only substance consumed by a *marzēaḥ*'s participants: Amos 6:4–7 mentions eating lamb and calves' meat, and Jeremiah, too, speaks of food accompanying drink within the *bêt marzēaḥ*/*bêt mišteh*.

Like the *marzēaḥ* of Jeremiah's day, *marzēaḥ* associations from Ugarit can be described as owning houses, as well as storehouses and, as noted above, vineyards (*KTU* 3.9; 4.642; RS 18.01).⁴² Ugaritic texts also men-

39. Nahman Avigad and Jonas C. Greenfield, “A Bronze *phiale* with a Phoenician Dedicatory Inscription,” *IEJ* 32 (1982): 118–28.

40. John L. McLaughlin, *The Marzēaḥ in the Prophetic Literature: References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-biblical Evidence*, VTSup 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 69.

41. McLaughlin, *Marzēaḥ in the Prophetic Literature*, 46–49, 69–70.

42. Hays, *Death in the Iron Age*, 116.

tion *marzēaḥ* associations' financial holdings (KTU 3.9; RS 14.16), and the monetary and material assets of *marzēaḥ* associations are similarly attested in various first-millennium BCE and Roman-era sources.⁴³ The *marzēaḥ*, it follows, is an institution of the elite. Amos 6:4–7 also bears witness to this: there, the *marzēaḥ* participants are said to lie on ivory beds (meaning beds or couches decorated with ivory inlays) and to anoint themselves with the finest oils. Most Israelites, moreover, when they (rarely) ate meat, ate, say, mutton, not the meat of lambs and calves (veal) that is the food of the *marzēaḥ* according to Amos 6:4.

The case for the *marzēaḥ* as a death-cult banquet is much less clear. The most emphatic arguments in favor were made in 1981 by Marvin Pope, who concluded, "There is scant reason to doubt that that the West Semitic Marzeah was a feast with and for the departed ancestors."⁴⁴ Those who have advocated for a more minimal position include Kevin McGeough, McLaughlin, Dennis Pardee, and Brian Schmidt.⁴⁵ My own sense is that the truth lies somewhere in between:⁴⁶ that while the institution of the *marzēaḥ* functioned primarily as a drinking association, this drinking could (on occasion) be combined with funerary rituals as well as with the ongoing mortuary feasting that was part of the cult of the dead. In our own culture, after all, not every cocktail party need be a wake; nevertheless, some are.

As is widely recognized, a *marzēaḥ* text from Ugarit, KTU 1.21, "offers us the strongest evidence for the association of the *marzēaḥ* with a death-cult" and even as "a communion with the dead," as it describes the Rephaim—recently defined by Mark Smith as divine ancestral spirits of

43. McLaughlin, *Marzēaḥ in the Prophetic Literature*, 67–68.

44. Marvin H. Pope, "The Cult of the Dead at Ugarit," in *Ugarit in Retrospect: Fifty Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic*, ed. Gordon D. Young (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 176.

45. Kevin M. McGeough, "Locating the Marziḥu Archaeologically," *UF* 35 (2003): 410–11; McLaughlin, *Marzēaḥ in the Prophetic Literature*, 70–79, 214–17; Pardee, "Marzēaḥ, Kispu," 277–79; Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 246–49.

46. See similarly Hays, *Death in the Iron Age*, 117; Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 94; Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Introduction with Text, Translation, and Commentary of KTU 1.1–1.2*, VTSup 55 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 143–44; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 202. But see Lewis's less affirming description of his own position in Lewis, "How Far Can Texts Take Us? Evaluating Textual Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Israelite Beliefs about the Dead," in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. Barry M. Gittlen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 203.

the “heroes of old”⁴⁷—being summoned to a heavenly *marzēah*. According to Smith, the effect of this text is to “mythologize” the earthly *marzēah* associations of Ugarit by suggesting an identification between earthly *marzēah* participants and the Rephaim of yore.⁴⁸ Still, “it is hard to dissociate the *rp’m* [Rephaim] utterly from funerary ritual,”⁴⁹ especially given that in another Ugaritic text (*KTU* 1.161), the Rephaim are again summoned, some by name, to participate in a ritual that marks the death of Ugarit’s King Niqmaddu III and the ascension of King Ammurapi.

At this ritual, moreover, the Rephaim arguably partake of the sacrificial offerings catalogued in lines 27–30, thereby joining earthly elites in death-related feasting that, based on *KTU* 1.21, could be taken as analogous to a *marzēah* feast. Somewhat similarly, in Jer 16:5–9, the *bêt marzēah* seems to be a place where, at least at some points, “ritual feasts on the occasion of funerals could have taken place.”⁵⁰ Note, too, the Nabatean *marzēah* association at Petra that was under the patronage of a dead king, Obodas I.⁵¹ Admittedly, the evidence is sketchy, but overall, Theodore Lewis concludes, “The *marzēah* was an organization known for its drinking festivals ... which in some cases came to be associated with funeral feasts.”⁵²

King Obodas’s patronage of Petra’s *marzēah* reminds us, moreover, that the *marzēah* was an institution of elites, and elites who are not necessarily related. There is no indication, for example, that the “men of the *marzēah*” (*mt mrzḥ*, *bn mrzḥ*) known from Ugaritic sources are kin (*KTU* 3.9; 4.399; see also RS 14.16; 15.70, 88; 18.01). Rather, they seem to be dues-paying members who come together under the leadership of a “head,” or *rb* (*KTU* 3.9).⁵³ To be sure, Ras Shamra 15.70 and 15.88 speak of the house of a *marzēah* being passed on to “descendants.” Yet these descendants do not seem to be “biological progeny” but “subsequent members of the association.”⁵⁴ That Šamūmānu, the “head” of the *marzēah* in *KTU* 3.9,

47. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 87; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 202; Mark S. Smith, *Poetic Heroes: Literary Commemorations of Warriors and Warrior Culture in the Early Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 137.

48. Smith, *Poetic Heroes*, 147–48.

49. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 87.

50. Schmitt, “Care for the Dead,” 458.

51. For references and discussion, see, most recently, McLaughlin, *Marzēah in the Prophetic Literature*, 45.

52. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 94, but see Lewis, “How Far Can Texts,” 203.

53. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 83; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 197–98.

54. McLaughlin, *Marzēah in the Prophetic Literature*, 15.

apparently *leases* his house, or a portion of it, to his *marzēaḥ* colleagues further suggests that at least Šamūmānu and his *marzēaḥ*'s members are not related, for we would expect biological affiliates, given West Semitic patterns of kin-based residence, to own a house in common.

Similarly, the seventy elders of Judah who come together in Ezek 8:7–13 for what I have argued elsewhere is a *marzēaḥ* feast should not be seen as biological kin but associates bound together by their upper-class status.⁵⁵ This also seems indicated in KAI 69, the Marseilles tariff inscription (fourth–third century BCE), where a *marzēaḥ* association is differentiated from “every clan” (*kl šph*), and at Palmyra, where at least eight of the nine members of a *marzēaḥ* listed on an inscribed altar (PAT 0326) apparently come from different lineages (the ninth member, Zab-dibol, could be the same Zabdibol who is identified as the grandfather of a member named Agailu).⁵⁶ Overall, as van der Toorn writes, “membership of the *marzeah* was not based, it seems, on kinship ties.”⁵⁷ Yet as van der Toorn elsewhere reminds us, “to partake of [a] meal is to be part of the community,” echoing the words of William Robertson Smith from some 125 years ago that “the very act of eating and drinking [together] was a symbol and a confirmation of fellowship and mutual social obligation.... Those who sit at meat together are united for all social effects.”⁵⁸ Others who have made the same point include Carol Meyers, who states that taking part in a feast “fosters and maintains a sense of identity” and “provided individuals with a sense of belonging to the commensal group.”⁵⁹

Thus, just as the *zēbaḥ mišpāḥā* “constituted,” to quote again Blenkinsopp, “an important integrative element of the social, religious, and

55. Susan Ackerman, “A *marzēaḥ* in Ezek 8:7–13?,” *HTR* 83 (1989): 267–81.

56. McLaughlin, *Marzēaḥ in the Prophetic Literature*, 53.

57. Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 169.

58. Karel van der Toorn, “Nine Months among the Peasants in the Palestinian Highlands: An Anthropological Perspective on Local Religion in the Early Iron Age,” in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina*, ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 401; Carol Meyers, “The Function of Feasts: An Anthropological Perspective on Israelite Religious Festivals,” in Olyan, *Social Theory and the Study*, 144, quoting William R. Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: Their Fundamental Institutions*, 3rd ed. (London: A&C Black, 1927), 269.

59. Meyers, “Function of Feasts,” 157, 162, initially citing Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 66.

emotional bond of *kinship*” (emphasis mine) that was crucial to Israelites’ *family* identity and “solidarity between the living and the dead,”⁶⁰ the *marzēaḥ*, we might argue, constituted an important integrative element of the social, religious, and emotional bond of *class* that was crucial to Israelite *elites*’ identity and solidarity, including (if we take the *marzēaḥ* as having, at least on occasion, a cult-of-the-dead component) solidarity between living elites and the elite dead. This solidarity can in turn obligate kings and other elites to assume caretaking responsibilities on behalf of their dead counterparts within the royal cult of the dead, as opposed to the caretaking role for which the family takes responsibility elsewhere in Israelite society. Likewise, this solidarity can obligate dead elites to offer support from beyond the grave to their aristocratic colleagues among the living, as opposed to the support dead ancestors offer to their biological descendants within the ancestor cult of the *mišpāḥâ*. In other words, the effect of the *marzēaḥ*—if and when it is a death-cult feast—is to forge relationships between living and dead *aristocrats*, as opposed to the relationships between living and dead *kin* forged by the *zēbaḥ mišpāḥâ*. Once forged, these aristocratic relationships promote a sense of mutual dependence that compels living members of the elite—more specifically, kings and their affiliates—to extend cultic care to their deceased affiliates, just as it compels dead elites to offer succor to their living associates.

60. Above, n. 15.

The Ongoing Relations between the Living and the Dead: A Viewpoint from the Material Evidence

Rüdiger Schmitt

1. Introduction

In his book *Biblical Mourning* from 2004, Saul Olyan presents a comprehensive analysis of mourning rites in the Hebrew Bible and their social implications, in particular that death was not the end of social relations between the deceased and the living members of the family.¹ Rites and rituals maintaining this relation in ancient Israel and Judah not only are represented in the texts of the Hebrew Bible but are also witnessed by material culture, the tomb itself, its contents, the treatment of the interred bodies, tomb inscriptions, and—possibly—sites and venues for the ritual communication between the living and the dead. Scholarship in the last decades has emphasized both the importance of mediality and materi-

1. Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 42–45. See also Klaas Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, AOAT 219 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986); Thomas Podella, *Ŝôm—Fasten: Kollektive Trauer um den verborgenen Gott im Alten Testament*, AOAT 224 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1989); Podella, “Totenrituale und Jenseitsbeschreibungen—Zur anamnetischen Struktur der Religionsgeschichte Israels,” in *Tod, Jenseits und Identität: Perspektiven einer kulturwissenschaftlichen Thanatologie*, ed. Jan Assmann and Rolf Trauzettel, VIHA 79 (Freiburg: Alber, 2002), 530–61; Brian B. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996); Dagmar Kühn, *Totengedenken bei den Nabatäern und im Alten Testament*, AOAT 311 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2005); Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 429–73.

ality, in particular in relation to grave goods, sometimes described as a material turn.² The aim of this essay—which I gladly dedicate to my dear friend Saul—is to present an overview about different aspects of mediality and materiality in Iron Age Israelite and Judean burial practices and how they contribute to maintain a bond between the living and the dead.

Before examining the material evidence, a critical reflection on some terms used in scholarship in the context of the care for the dead and the ritual communication with them is in order. Often used but quite misleading is the frequently used term *cults of the dead*: as I have argued in previous studies,³ the term *care of the dead* instead of terms such as *cults of the dead* and *ancestor cults* is preferable because the latter insinuate a veneration of ancestors similar to that of gods. Concepts of deification of the dead are rooted in the evolutionist paradigm of nineteenth-century scholarship, in particular in the work of William Smith.⁴ Neither the epigraphic evidence nor the traditions in the Hebrew Bible and the LXX contain hints that family or royal ancestors were worshiped in a cult of the dead. Ancestors were to be honored, but not worshiped. The use of the term *'elōhîm* in 1 Sam 28 and Isa 8:19–20 (here used parallel with *mētîm*) is best understood as a designation of the dead as preternatural beings, possessing qualities not shared by the living. Rather, *care for the dead* underlines the ongoing social relations between the living and the deceased members of a family, clan, or other community. The honoring and remembrance of the ancestors was an important feature in building and maintaining familial identity in Iron Age Israel and Judah.

2. Tombs and Tomb Contents

In Iron Age II B–C the dominant Israelite and Judean burial type was the bench or diwan tomb alongside arcosolia tombs and cave tombs, the latter

2. Brian B. Schmidt, *The Materiality of Power: Explorations in the Social History of Early Israelite Magic*, FAT 105 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 10. See also the contributions in Christian Frevel, ed., *Medien im antiken Palästina: Materielle Kommunikation und Medialität als Thema der Palästinaarchäologie*, FAT 2/11 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

3. Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 429–33; Rüdiger Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, AOAT 411 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), 63–65.

4. See William R. Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions* (Edinburgh: A&C Black, 1889).

often reused.⁵ The Iron Age II tombs were often multigenerational tombs, used over several generations. A common feature of these tombs was receptacles used for the placement of bones after decomposition, clearing space for subsequent interments on the benches. It is self-evident that it was the task of the family to provide and maintain the familial tomb. Typical burial gifts were items of household pottery such as bowls, jugs, juglets, cooking pots, storage jars, and lamps, other utilitarian objects such as knives, ritual objects such as female pillar figurines, male horse-and-rider figurines, model furniture, and rattles, which are nearly exclusively found in tombs, amulets (Egyptian-type object amulets), and seal amulets (scarabs, scaraboids, and other related forms), as well as elements of personal adornment, including fibulae, earrings, pendants, rings, and so on. Amulets and objects of jewelry could be in many cases directly associated with a corpse. There was no typical Judean standard assemblage, but there existed strong local traditions in content that mostly follow the earliest burial in a cemetery.⁶ For example, the Beth Shemesh tombs contained large numbers of lamps that offer no functional explanation since they were not used for illumination, while at Tell en-Naşbeh, the tombs yielded more storage jars than have other places. In some cases (such as Lachish Tomb 1002), burials seem to have followed specific familial traditions regarding the types and numbers of grave goods (in this case female pillar figurines, male horse-and-rider figurines, model furniture, and animal figurines, as well as seals and earrings), which accumulated subsequently layer by layer.⁷ Most individual burials seem, however, to have followed a general pattern, through including a more or less standardized repertoire of five to seven vessels of the types described above, and one to three items of jewelry and personal adornment, including amulets and seals.⁸

Of particular interest for the present topic are the function of amulets and seal amulets in tomb contexts. Seal amulets are an item of personal adornment often found associated with the body and most likely had been

5. Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead*, JSOTSup 123 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), table 2–4.

6. Robert Wenning, “‘Medien’ in der Bestattungskultur im eisenzeitlichen Juda,” in Frevel, *Medien im antiken Palästina*, 130–33; see also Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 80.

7. See the summary in Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 439–49.

8. Wenning, “‘Medien’ in der Bestattungskultur,” 128.

worn by the deceased in lifetime. With their double function in tomb contexts, of being an amulet with apotropaic beasts; signs and symbols providing luck, health, and strength; and an identity marker,⁹ seals gave protection for the dead and made them easily recognizable when the tomb was opened for further interments. Even when the body had decayed and the bones collected into a recess, seals and amulets (which were not collected and stored away in the receptacles) could be objects of commemoration of the owner. Besides seal amulets, Egyptian-type object amulets are a frequent grave good. Notably, the majority of those amulets were representations of the god Bes, attested with more than 247 specimens from the Late Bronze II–Hellenistic periods and more than sixty from Iron Age I–III (predominantly from tombs, but also—less frequently—from domestic and ritual spaces); the related Pataikos amulets (a dwarf resembling Bes, sometimes in a Bes/Pataikos mixed form), with 223 specimens; and the Udjat eye, with more than 670 examples from the same time range.¹⁰ Thus, clearly apotropaic objects were used for the interment, Bes warding off any evil with his grim appearance and the Udjat eye protecting (most likely) from the evil eye and any other malevolent witchcraft. Amulets, as well as the presence of female pillar figurines, male horse-and-rider figurines, and rattles are indicators for an enhanced need for protection in the grave, as well as the necessity of perpetual petition represented by the figurative objects.¹¹ Providing the dead with the necessary objects to secure their safety in the tomb shows the strong commitment of the living for the postmortem fate of their deceased family members.

It has been assumed that the relatively small numbers of vessels, in particular those that were used for food and drink provisions, and personal objects that accompanied each inhumation point to the assumption that they served not as supplies either in the grave or in the underworld over longer durations unto eternity, but for a shorter, transitional phase, during which the person may have been believed to have been personally present,

9. On the multifunctional character of seal amulets, see Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit, Einleitung*, OBO.SA 10 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), §§703–28.

10. Christian Herrmann, *Ägyptische Amulette aus Palästina Israel*, OBO.SA 38 (Fribourg: Academic Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 4:451.

11. Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 454–5; Schmidt, *Materi-ality of Power*, 148–49.

or possibly over the time until the body had decomposed,¹² and finally was “collected to the fathers” in a recess in the tomb. The amulets and other ritual objects, however, imply a perpetual protective function and probably reflect a belief in the eternal presence of the deceased in the tomb.

In case of elite tombs, which sometimes bear inscriptions (see below, section 3), it is important to notice that sometimes great efforts were spent on the execution of the burial chambers and on the façade, such as in case of the Silwan tombs in Jerusalem.

There is no archaeological evidence for postburial ritual care or communication with the dead in or at the tomb proper. This may have (occasionally) taken place at subterranean installations, located both outside and in between a necropolis, as will be discussed below.

3. Tomb Inscriptions and Pictorial Incisions

Before examining the inscriptions, it has to be noted that these only occur with elite tombs and that, due to their scarcity in Iron Age II B–C Judah, broad generalizations about familial beliefs should be handled with caution. It is self-evident that it is not possible to reconstruct whole belief systems or theologies on far fewer than a dozen inscriptions.¹³

Elite tomb inscriptions serve several purposes: (1) they mark the owner and contain—in some cases—biographical information, (2) ensure perpetual remembrance, (3) express wishes of postmortem welfare, and (4) ward off dangers by curses and apotropaic devices, whether caused by tomb robbers or supernatural beings. Inscriptions as tomb markers at the outside of the burial chamber(s) proper are witnessed in the cases of so-called monolithic tomb from Silwan, the so-called tomb of the royal steward, and the so-called tomb of Pharaoh’s daughter (where only two letters were readable), as well as the En-Gedi cave inscription, which is most likely a tomb inscription too.¹⁴ All other known tomb inscriptions

12. Wenning, “Medien in der Bestattungskultur,” 129–30.

13. As done (among others) by Martin Leuenberger, *Segen und Segenstheologien im alten Israel: Untersuchungen zu ihren religions- und theologiegeschichtlichen Konstellationen und Transformationen*, AThANT 90 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2008).

14. Cited after the edition by Johannes Renz and Wolfgang Röllig, *Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphik [HAE]*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2016). Monolithic tomb: 1:191–92 (Jer [8]:6); tomb of the royal steward: 1:261–65 (Jer [7]:1–2); tomb of Pharaoh’s daughter: 1:265–66 (Jer [7]:4); En-

were found inside the tombs. The rather short inscription number 3 from Silwan reads:¹⁵

¹[z't] qbrt z[...] ²šr yp[th...]

¹[this is] the tomb [...] ²whoever opens [...]

Silwan tomb inscription number 3 thus contains in line 1 an identity marker to whom the tomb belongs as well as a curse in line 2, were the word 'rr, "cursed," can be complemented, according to Silwan tomb inscription number 1b:2.¹⁶ The latter provides the title of a high official ('šr 'l hbyt, "who is over the house"). The inscription states further that no silver and gold are to be found in the tomb, rather only the bones of the owner and his maidservant, and closes again with a curse on whoever dares to open the tomb. Providing the title of the owner, which can be seen as biographical, covers both the representative and the commemorative aspect of the inscription. The inscription on the outside of the tomb is an important sign of prestige, both for the deceased and the living. In case of the Silwan tombs, a curse is directed at potential tomb robbers at the entrance and gives expression to the commitment of the bereaved to secure the tomb, as well as the need of the deceased for protection. The same seems to be the case with the En-Gedi tomb inscription, which also contains a curse in the first line, but followed by a row of blessings (brk PN).¹⁷ As blessing formulas of this type do occur in other tomb inscriptions, it seems likely that these are directed to the named interred, both to protect and to commemorate them.¹⁸

All the other known tomb inscriptions (from Khirbet el-Qom tombs 1–3 and from the chamber tomb at Khirbet Beit Lei)¹⁹ are to be found inside the tombs and not at the outside, but in the antechamber or the entrances of the chambers, respectively. These inscriptions thus do not address a wider public but are addressed both to the deceased and those who might enter the chamber, most likely the family members, but also

Gedi cave inscription: 1:174 (EGed [8]:2). For discussion on the En-Gedi cave inscription, see *HAE*.

15. *HAE* 1:191–92 (Jer [8]:6).

16. *HAE* 1:264 (Jer [7]:1b).

17. *HAE* 1:175 [EGed [8]:2].

18. *HAE* 1:174.

19. *HAE* 1:199–211 (Kom [8]:1–3); 1:242–51 (BLay [7]:1–7).

to potential robbers in case of the four curse formulas on the walls of the antechamber.²⁰ The famous 'Uriyahu inscription from Khirbet el-Qom (inscription no. 3),²¹ with its biographical details (l. 1: the "rich," or, more likely, "the commander" [šr]; ll. 3–6: who was "saved" [hwsʿ] by a certain 'Oniyahu and the goddess Asherah), seems to commemorate events that are evoked through the text and thus remembered by the family members. Formulas of blessing, praise, and petition, which are attested in the antechamber of the Khirbet Beit Lei tomb,²² are most likely directed to the deceased, ensuring their postmortem welfare, but may also have been used in burial rituals by the family members.

Khirbet el-Qom tomb 2 shows a—up to this date—singular feature: a deeply incised hand between the entrances of chambers 1 and 2, with fingers directed downward.²³ In analogy to contemporary Egyptian type amulets of a hand, or an arm with hand,²⁴ an apotropaic meaning is most likely. Moreover, amulets in the form of a hand, mostly as a pendant, hand of Fatima (for Muslims), hand of god (for Jews), and hand of Mary (for Christians) are still popular in the contemporary Near East and the Levant.²⁵ Also, the placing of an inscription and the hand sign on the inside of the tomb points to an apotropaic function for the deceased in the tomb: not so much for warding off tomb raiders but to protect the dead in their postmortem existence. An uncommon feature and only to be found in the Khirbet Beit Lei tomb are incised depictions of adorants, warriors, and ships.²⁶ The latter may have had a biographical or commemorative purpose or were intended for the protection of the deceased (in the case of the warriors) and to provide transportation to the netherworld (in the

20. HAE 1:249–51 (BLay [7]:4–7).

21. HAE 1:202–11 (Kom [8]:3).

22. HAE 1:245–49 (BLay [7]:1–3).

23. William G. Dever, "Iron Age Epigraphic Material from the Area of Khirbet el-Qôm," *HUCA* 40–41 (1969–1970), pl. VI B (139–204). On the symbolism of the hand see Rüdiger Schmitt, *Magie im Alten Testament*, AOAT 313 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2004), 150–51; Schmidt, *Materiality of Power*, 151–62, with extensive discussion. Schmidt's conclusion that the downward-oriented hand "might signify the human loss of power or even death as cessation" seems a bit far-fetched (153).

24. These types are not very frequent and are not attested from Iron Age IIC Judean sites (see Herrmann, *Ägyptische Amulette*, 451).

25. See Schmitt, *Magie im Alten Testament*, 151.

26. Joseph Naveh, "Old Hebrew Inscriptions in a Burial Cave," *IEJ* 13.2 (1963), figs. 4–7.

case of the ships), as indicated by later parallels.²⁷ The male adorants may symbolize perpetual petitional prayer by or for the deceased.

Thus, it seems that elite families made great efforts in providing their deceased members with apotropaic and other inscriptions as well as with iconographic representations, which only could be afforded by the very few able to pay a skilled artisan or scribe and be read (in the case of the inscriptions) only by a literate elite.

4. Ritual Structures for the Communication with the Dead

Installations used for ritual communication with the dead are possibly represented in Iron Age IIC by the—much discussed—Jerusalem Caves I–III and Cave 6015.²⁸ It already has been proposed that the Jerusalem Caves I–III, excavated by Kathleen Kenyon, along with Jerusalem Cave 6015, as well as Samaria Locus 207, are best understood as subterranean locations for the cult of the dead, or better ritual care for the deceased.²⁹ The caves yielded no traces of burials and were therefore likely never to have been used as tombs, but nevertheless contained great amounts of utilitarian pottery, as well as ritual objects such as stands, terracotta figurines, small altars, and rattles, the latter (found in Jerusalem Cave I, Locus 6015, and Samaria E207) otherwise attested in interments only. It therefore seems plausible to interpret the Jerusalem Caves I–III, Locus 6015 (which was located near a cemetery), and Samaria Locus E207 as having been places of rituals intended for communicating with the dead,

27. Karen B. Stern, “Graffiti as Gift: Mortuary and Devotional Graffiti in the Late Ancient Levant,” in *The Gift in Antiquity*, ed. Michael L. Satlow, AWCH (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 137–57; Stern, *Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and the Forgotten Jews of Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 120–26.

28. For Caves I–III see Itzak Eshel and Kay Prag, eds., *The Iron Age Cave Deposits on the South-East Hill and Isolated Burials Elsewhere*, vol. 4 of *Excavations by K. M. Kenyon in Jerusalem 1961–1967*, BAMA 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). On Locus 6015: Eilat Mazar and Benjamin Mazar, *Excavations in the South of the Temple Mount: The Ophel of Biblical Jerusalem*, Qedem 29 (Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1989), 50–53. For discussion see Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 462–69.

29. Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole*, 6th ed. (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 2010), §201; Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 462–69; see also Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001), 206–9.

especially through commemorative meals wherein the living shared community with the dead. As in domestic ritual assemblages, the presence of a deity was not represented by permanent features but was evoked through ritual acts. One can therefore conclude that these caves served the families of the deceased, who met to commemorate their ancestors with meals that included the giving of portions for relatives abiding in the netherworld. Although Jerusalem Cave I could have accommodated quite a large group, it is nevertheless plausible that the cave served only nuclear or joint families, with the large amount of vessels gradually accumulating as the cave was used over an extended period of time.

Moreover, there seems to be a continuation of this practice well into the Persian period: outside the city of Lachish proper, the so-called 500 Cemetery contained some caves (Locus 515 and 534) that were not used for burials.³⁰ These caves contained about two hundred small limestone altars as well as other ritual objects such as horse-and-rider figurines, among them an incense box with the Yahwistic name of Maḥalyah. Cave 515 contained a horse-and-rider figurine, a scarab, an earring, and thirty small limestone altars; Cave 534 a fibula and over 150 altars. Additional altars have been found in a deposit, Locus 506, with thirteen altars. Olga Tufnell interpreted the caves as depositories, but the Iron Age parallels of the Jerusalem caves may hint to a continuation of a ritual practice associated with the care for the dead. That the altars show no traces of soot may be interpreted as their having been used either as votives for the deceased or as gifts to be used in a symbolic way by the dead.

5. Other Material Memorials for the Dead

Other material memorials for the dead are only known from the textual sources, but there is no archaeological evidence for material memorials outside a cave besides tomb inscriptions to this very day.³¹ Nevertheless, it is worth having a brief look at these texts, because they provide valuable information about the ongoing bonds between the dead and the living.³²

30. Olga Tufnell, *Lachish III: The Iron Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 219–20.

31. See Wenning, “Medien in der Bestattungskultur,” 120.

32. For the textual evidence on material memorials see Rüdiger Schmitt, “‘And Jacob Set Up a Pillar at Her Grave ...’: Material Memorials and Landmarks in the Old Testament,” in *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour*

Material *memoria* for the dead were named *yād* (2 Sam 18:18; Isa 56:5), *šīyyūn* (sepulcher of the man of god in 2 Kgs 23:17), or *mašsebāh* (the tomb of Rachel in Gen 35:20 and the monument of Absalom in 2 Sam 18:18).³³ The erection of a memorial was, according to Gen 35:20 and Isa 56:6, a part of family piety, and it was especially the duty of a son to commemorate his parents after their death. The designation of the *memoria* as *mašsebāh* suggests worked or unworked stelae, which would most likely have functioned as more than just markers of a tomb. This is made explicitly clear in the notice on Absalom's *mašsebāh* in 2 Sam 18:18, which was named after him as a monument (*yād*) of Absalom: "In his lifetime Absalom has taken and set up a *mašsebāh* for himself in the King's Valley, for he said: 'I have no son to keep my name in remembrance.' He named the *mašsebāh* after his own name. It is called Absalom's monument [*yād*] to this day."³⁴ The note about Absalom's *mašsebāh* or *yād* was a late addition to the story about the succession to the throne. It remains uncertain whether this verse reflected preexilic traditions or folkloric associations prevalent during later compilation of the preexilic sources.

Furthermore, in Isa 56:4–5, a material memorial is considered to ensure eternal remembrance:

For thus says Yahweh: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,
 who choose the things that please me
 and hold fast my covenant.
 I will give, in my house and within my walls,
 a monument and a name [*yād wāšem*]
 better than sons and daughters.
 I shall give them an everlasting name,
 that shall not vanish.

As both 2 Sam 18:18 and Isa 56:4–5 show, *memoria* were not placed in the grave or its vicinity, as was the case for Rachel's tomb in Gen 35:20, but it was to be placed in a temple or some other location. As the text indicates, the remembrance of one's name in the presence of Yahweh within his temple was considered an exceptional honor. In the case of

of Ed Noort, ed. Jaques van Ruiten and J. Cornelis de Vos, VTSup 124 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 389–403; Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 460–62.

33. See Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 113–14; Kühn, *Totengedenken bei den Nabatäern*, 311–45.

34. Unless otherwise indicated, biblical translations are mine.

Absaloms's pillar, it can be assumed that a place was chosen where other royal commemorative stelae were also placed. This place could have been the *'mq ydt*, "valley of monuments," as attested twice on an ostrakon from Jerusalem.³⁵

Nevertheless, there is a lack of material evidence from Iron Age Israel and Judah. Steleform memorials were common in contemporary Syria and Phoenicia, especially for kings, but also for the elites. In Iron Age Jordan, steleform memorials with anthropomorphic features (such as noses or, in one case, ears) standing over graves were discovered at the Wadi Fidan 40 Cemetery.³⁶ The stones stood about thirty centimeters high and were surrounded by stone circles that indicated the position of a cist grave beneath. It was supposed by the excavators that these monuments were representations of the deceased.

Absalom's *mašsebāh* and the *yād* in Isa 56:4–5 may be compared with the Wadi Fidan standing stones, constructed monuments like the monumental so-called Absalom's tomb, the tomb of Zechariah crowned by a pyramid and other pyramidal structures aboveground, as with the *nepeš* pillars, in relief, painted, or incised as graffito found in the context of Hellenistic Jewish and Nabatean³⁷ tombs; nevertheless, the latter are not intended to be tomb markers. Absalom's pillar and the *yād wāšem* for the eunuchs may have been understood to have been representations of the names of the dead, ensuring the durability of their commemoration like actual tomb stones, but in a different context of placement. It may be assumed that both types of *memoria* functioned as a kind of representation of the dead, as indicated by the finds from Wadi Fidan, although such representations are not to be confused with any identification with the spirits of the dead nor with their powers in any animistic sense. There is no textual evidence from Jewish or Nabatean sources that stelae were inhabited by spirits of the dead, as attested in the north Syrian Katamuwa

35. HAE 1:310–11 (Jer [7]:5).

36. Thomas E. Levy et al., "Iron Age Burial in the Lowlands of Edom: The 2004 Excavation at Wādī Fidān 40, Jordan," *ADAJ* 49 (2005): 443–87.

37. For the Hellenistic Jewish tombs, see Rachel Hachlili, "Burials: Ancient Jewish," *ABD* 1:789–94; Rachel Hachlili and Ann Killebrew, "Jewish Funerary Customs during the Second Temple Period in the Light of the Excavations at the Jericho Necropolis," *PEQ* 115 (1983): 109–32; Hans-Peter Kuhnen, *Palästina in griechisch-römischer Zeit*, HAV 2/2 (Munich: Beck, 1990), 80; Stern, *Writing on the Wall*, 115; Orit Peleg-Barkat, "The Second Season of Excavation at Horvat Midras," *Strata* 35 (2017): 185. For the Nabatean tombs, see Kühn, *Totengedenken bei den Nabatäern*, 101–282.

inscription from Sam'al (Zincirli),³⁸ which seems to reflect a different religious tradition, or that acts of veneration were performed in front of them. As Dagmar Kühn has observed, the presence of the dead as marked by stelae was not intended to denote any kind of actual presence; rather, it was intended to symbolically represent an ongoing relationship between the dead and the bereaved.³⁹ According to the textual material analyzed by Kühn, it was the task of closest kin, sons, brothers, and fathers, to take care of the erection and maintenance of the *memoriae*. The use of stelae and comparable elements in the context of funerary architecture was also attested by Josephus (A.J. 13.211–212), who mentions the monuments that Simon erected for his father and brothers:

Simon also erected a very large monument for his father and his brothers, of white and polished stone, and raised it to a great height, to be seen from a long distance, and made cloisters about it, and set up monolithic pillars [στύλους μονολίθους], a work that was wonderful to see. Moreover, he built seven pyramids also for his parents and his brothers, one for each of them, which were made very surprising, both for their size and beauty, and which have been preserved to this day.⁴⁰

Therefore, the custom of erecting commemorative monuments by a son or brother may be traced from the Hellenistic period back to preexilic times and was, at least in Hellenistic and Roman times, as supported by the archaeological evidence,⁴¹ not restricted to royal or high-priestly tombs but also occurred in the tombs of affluent families. Because of a lack of archaeological evidence from the Iron Age, and because the textual evidence speaks only of memorial stelae for members of the royal and administrative elite, one cannot conclude that the erection of pillars was a common practice in preexilic times. Moreover, as most of the biblical texts cited above have a likely postexilic or even a late Persian/early Hellenistic date, such as Isa 56 (which cannot be discussed here in detail), we have to assume that the tradition of erecting monuments for members of the elite is at least a postexilic and most likely Hellenistic-period custom.

38. Dennis Pardee, "A New Aramaic Inscription from Zincirli—Ancient Sam'al," *BASOR* 356 (2009): 51–71.

39. Kühn, *Totengedenken bei den Nabatäern*, 280.

40. My translation after Josephus, *Books 12–13*, vol. 5 of *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. Ralph Marcus, LCL 365 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943).

41. See n. 36.

For the Hellenistic Roman period evidence, in particular according to Josephus's account in *A.J.* 13.211–212 and the contemporary Nabatean practice, we can conclude that it was the task of closest kin, sons, brothers, and—in cases of an early death—of the father to take care for the erection of a monument for remembrance.

6. Conclusions

Grave goods, in particular pottery but also other elements of the ritual apparatus such as stands, votive objects such as female pillar figurines, male horse-and-riders, animal figurines, and model furniture, are clearly a subset of domestic utilitarian and ritual ensembles. Thus, the tomb is a prolongation of the household and reflects elements of the familiar religious practice in the household. Very similar subsets of domestic utilitarian and ritual objects, however in varying quantities of the latter, are to be found in the Jerusalem Caves I–III and Jerusalem Locus 6015, as well as at Samaria Locus E207, thus identifying them as places where ritual activities of the carrier group of these objects, the family, took place. Both tombs and the subterranean ritual installations served the care for the dead; the subterranean installations, however, seem to be where the ritual communication with the dead took place, by feasting and ritual meals, indicated by the high amount of food-consumption pottery in the caves. The archaeological evidence thus indicates the ongoing social ties between the living and the dead and the way these ties were maintained: by ritual meals, giving portions, and placing votives to the dead. Food provisions for the dead were still common in Hellenistic times. In *Sir* 7:33, providing food for the dead was a holy duty: “Give graciously to the living and do not withhold kindness from the dead.” In *Tob* 4:17, a gift of bread placed on the tomb of the deceased is mentioned in the teachings of Tobit for his son as one duty of the living for the dead. Thus, within the realm of family religion, care for the dead and ritual communication by sharing food was—even as late as in Hellenistic times—an orthodox practice in the true sense of the word, and not something nonconformist or heterodox.

Another way of maintaining the bonds was to provide the tomb with inscriptions, which was as far as we know only practiced among the well-to-do of the Iron Age II Judean society. Representative inscriptions not only marked the tomb but were status markers for the family itself, underlining their position in society. Moreover, protective inscriptions and symbols show the commitment of the families for protection of the

dead and their postmortem welfare. Both grave goods and inscriptions can be considered as gifts to maintain the bond between the deceased and living members of a family. Constructed memorials, as mentioned in biblical traditions, are not witnessed archaeologically before the Hellenistic period. In the case of the pillars erected by Simon according to Josephus, large monuments were erected by the leading figures of the society both to commemorate the ancestors and to underline the importance of the ruling family. This practice was not restricted to royal or high-priestly tombs but, on a smaller scale, also occurred in the tombs of affluent families in the form of pyramid-shaped monuments and *nepeš* pillars inside the tombs. Either way, material memorials, which were potentially made for eternity, were an expression of the ongoing bond between the living and the dead and the need for the dead to be cared for.

Bonds between the Living and the Dead: Rethinking Dedications in the Synagogue of Syrian Apamea

Karen B. Stern

Saul Olyan's research destabilizes the assumptions scholars often hold dear by replacing seemingly obvious interpretations of biblical texts with novel insights about ancient peoples, their behaviors, and their relationships with one another. In his recent *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, for instance, Olyan uses anthropological theory to interrogate how biblical texts frame obligations that bind individuals linked by kinship as well as friendship, during life and after death.¹ In much of this research, moreover, he simultaneously undermines conventional notions about gender practices and their implications.² Inspired by these perspectives, I focus below on a set of inscribed mosaics originally discovered in the floor of a synagogue from

Saul Olyan has inspired me to explore the world of the ancient Levant for the past two decades. His graduate seminars encouraged me to exploit the richness and subtlety of language to interrogate the cultural experiences of peoples throughout the ancient Levant, Mesopotamia, and beyond, and our ongoing discussions and exchanges consistently recommend careful attention to questions concerning social and family relationships, gender, and cultural transformation. I am forever grateful for his mentorship and friendship, for which I owe him thanks beyond measure.

1. Saul M. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 11–37.

2. These works include but are not limited to Saul M. Olyan, "What Do We Really Know about Women's Rites in the Israelite Family Context?," *JANER* 10 (2010): 55–67; Olyan, "Gender-Specific Pollution in the Hebrew Bible," in *Gender and Social Norms in Ancient Israel, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Michaela Bauks, Katharina Galor, and Judith Hartenstein, JAJSup (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 159–67; and Olyan, "Occasionally beyond Gender: The Rhetoric of Familial Nurture in Discourses of West Asian Kings and Their Agents," in *Social Inequality in the World of the Text*:

late ancient Syria in the city of Apamea, once situated at the crossroads of Hellenistic, Roman, Mesopotamian, and Persian Empires. To this point, the formulaic, repetitive, and limited nature of these Greek dedicatory inscriptions has appeared to curtail improved insights into the lives and priorities of their commissioners. I argue here, however, that renewed attention to overlooked features of these Greek texts, refracted through Olyan's discussions of friendship, kinship, and gender in the Bible, reveals otherwise unnoticed information about one Syrian town and the bonds that local Jews forged with each other, inside their households, within their communities, and between the living and the dead.

Roman Apamea and Its Synagogue

Positioned south of Antioch and along the Orontes, the Syrian city of Apamea was established by Seleucid dynasts and refounded by Rome in the time of Claudius.³ Jews had dwelled in Apamea in earlier times, but the excavated local synagogue dates to later periods of the town's history in the middle of the fourth century CE.⁴ Originally constructed along the southeast of Apamea's so-called Grande Colonnade (Main Street), the synagogue was prominently located in the ancient city near an intersection with the main *decumanus*.⁵ The extant floor mosaics and associated architectural features from the building, however, date to subsequent periods of the synagogue's use, following its renovation sometime around 392 CE.⁶ The entire structure was destroyed soon thereafter: Christian vandals

The Significance of Ritual and Social Distinctions in the Hebrew Bible, JAJSup 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 101–13.

3. Political history in Apamea is considered in Jean Charles Balty, "Apamea in Syria in the Second and Third Centuries A.D.," *JRS* 78 (1988): 91–104.

4. Josephus notes the sizable presence of Jews in Apamea in earlier periods (*B.J.* 2.18.5). Looted mosaics depicting legendary representations of the foundation of Apamea are now missing from Syria and wanted by Interpol. See discussions of these foundation mosaics in Marek T. Olszewski and Houmam Saad, "Pella-Apamée sur l'Oronte et ses héros fondateurs à la lumière d'une source historique inconnue mosaïque d'Apamée," in *Héros fondateurs et identités communautaires dans l'Antiquité entre Mythe, Rite et Politique*, ed. Maria P. Castiglioni et al. (Perugia: Morlacchi Editore, 2018), 365–416.

5. *IJO* 3:84.

6. Most publications ascribe a date of 391 to the reconstruction of the synagogue, which Noy and Bloedhorn correct to 392 (see *IJO* 3:88). Compare discussion in Eliezer

likely burned down its walls during a regional revolt against Jews, then built a church just above the synagogue floor.⁷ Yet these acts of destruction, ostensibly aimed to erase the presence of a synagogue in Apamea, inadvertently achieved the opposite effect. Construction of the church directly upon the synagogue floor sealed its mosaics from exposure to the elements and protected them from incremental damage through time.⁸

Study of the building's mosaics (and of the fate of its constituent parts) nonetheless remains surprisingly challenging, given their excellent state of preservation when first discovered in the 1930s during Belgian excavations of the site. Shortly after workers uncovered the synagogue mosaic, they divided it up and distributed its parts to the Belgian Musée du Cinquantième in Belgium and the Damascus Museum in Syria. But sequential fires in the archives of the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in the 1940s incinerated the excavation records for the building, which included documentation of the complete layout of the mosaic. And although Eliezer Sukenik had directly consulted some of Fernand Mayence's original excavation photographs and reports before the fires destroyed them, scholars continue to dispute the original design of the floor and the position of the inscriptions within it.⁹

Sukenik, "An Ancient Synagogue at Apamea in Syria," *Kedem* 1 (1942): 85–87; Sukenik, "The Mosaic Inscriptions in the Synagogue at Apamea on the Orontes," *HUCA* 28 (1950/1951): 541–51; Jason Moralee, *For Salvation's Sake: Provincial Loyalty, Personal Religion, and Epigraphic Production in the Roman and Late Antique Near East* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1.

7. Evidence of burning (through presence of cinders in the foundations of the church built on the synagogue floor) suggests this (points considered in *IJO* 3:84–85). Discussion of the condition of the floor and postulations about the synagogue's demise are discussed in David Noy and Susan Sorek, "'Peace and Mercy on All of Your Blessed People': Jews and Christians at Apamea in Late Antiquity," *JCH* 6.2 (2003): 21.

8. On questions of Jewish erasure, see Annabel Wharton, "Erasure: Eliminating the Space of Late Ancient Judaism," in *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine and Zeev Weiss (Ann Arbor: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000), 195–214.

9. A Belgian team excavated the synagogue in 1937, but fires in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels in 1944 and 1946 destroyed written records for their work. Belgian publications include Fernand Mayence, "La quatrième campagne de fouilles à Apamée (rapport sommaire)," *AntCl* 4 (1935): 199–204; Mayence, "La sixième campagne de fouilles à Apamée (rapport sommaire)," *AntCl* 8 (1939): 201–11; Sukenik, "Mosaic Inscriptions," 541–51; on the fires see Noy and Sorek, "Peace and Mercy," 12.

Three features of the synagogue mosaic, nevertheless, are known with greater certainty.¹⁰ The first and most basic of these includes the dimensions of the floor. Excavators used the conserved mosaic panels to reconstruct the original measurements of the building, which extended to more than 120 square meters.¹¹ A second indisputable feature of the synagogue floor is its limited decorative scheme, which differs considerably (in execution if not quality) from many local analogues.¹² Indeed, mosaics from Apamea and Antioch were historically noted for their exemplary renderings of human figures, buildings, and objects that employed refined methods of shading and detail; several floors from the Apamean Colonnade follow these paradigms in their depictions of philosophers and hunting scenes.¹³ By contrast, the synagogue mosaics, replete with lozenges and squares containing only inscriptions, abstract vegetal motifs, and polychromatic and geometric patterns, were entirely bereft of the rich figural representations so common in the mosaics discovered nearby. Third and finally, the structure seemingly constituted a synagogue. While no inscriptions explicitly identify the associated building as such, the appearance of one rendering of a menorah in its

10. Several of the inscriptions' original locations remain disputed, as shown in differences between reconstructions of the floor in *IJO* 3 and Leah Roth-Gerson, *The Jews of Syria as Reflected in the Greek Inscriptions* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2001), 54–83. Historian and journalist Adam Blitz has recently used virtual reality technology to develop the Digital Apamea project to recreate the layout of the floor and to facilitate its experiential viewing. See Blitz, "Digital Apamea Lives in Tesserae (Adam Blitz)," Digital Apamea Lives in Tesserae (Adam Blitz), <https://tinyurl.com/SBL2641e>.

11. When Sukenik published his plan of the synagogue in 1942, he used Mayence's original photographs to map out the inscriptions from the floor mosaic (Sukenik, "Mosaic Inscriptions," 543; Sukenik, "Ancient Synagogue," 85–87). See also n. 7 above.

12. Absence of figural imagery cannot singlehandedly identify the space as a synagogue. Many synagogues contemporaneous to that in Apamea bore elaborate figural decoration, as seen in Dura Europos, Sepphoris, and elsewhere, while mosaics from regional buildings without Jewish association were occasionally dominated by nonfigural motifs (Balty, *Mosaïques Antiques*, 10).

13. Apamean mosaics are collected in Janine Balty and Jean Charles Balty, *Mosaïques Antiques de Syrie* (Brussels: Centre belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, 1977); Janine Balty with Cécile Dulière and Michael Theunissen, eds., *Apamée de Syrie: Bilan des recherches archéologiques 1965–1968* (Brussels: Centre belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, 1969).

mosaics, the inclusion of inscriptions containing personal names of biblical association (such those of Saul and Isaac) and of titles of synagogue officials (including *archisynagōgos*, gerusiarch, and *hazzan*), collectively support this identification of the associated structure. Even the targeted destruction of the building and its rapid overbuilding by a church constitute ancillary data for its identification as a synagogue: such practices of violence and architectural supersessionism grew increasingly common in the Roman East during the late fourth and fifth centuries.¹⁴

Mosaic Inscriptions

Roughly twenty inscribed panels from the synagogue mosaic have been published, which correspond with specific architectural features or sections of the floor.¹⁵ These inscriptions, rendered in Greek and nested within either *tabula ansata* frames or rectangular borders amid riotous geometric designs, formed an important part of the floor's decorative scheme.¹⁶ As I discuss additionally below, these inscribed mosaics retain critical information about the activities conducted by the wealthiest of Apamea's Jews in late antiquity, particularly in the absence of supplementary records from the town. Indeed, renewed attention to the contents of

14. The synagogue seems to have been targeted for destruction, because signs of burning did not extend to neighboring buildings. Worth noting is that such activities (Christian efforts to destroy synagogues) recurred throughout Syria and Asia Minor in comparable periods, as considered in Noy and Sorek, "Peace and Mercy," 22–23. See comparative discussions of architectural supersessionism in the Roman East and West in Shira L. Lander, *Ritual Sites and Religious Rivalries in Late Roman North Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 8–10.

15. See most recent edition of Apamea inscriptions in *IJO* 3 nos. 53–73; see Suke-nik, "Mosaic Inscriptions," 541–51; Roth-Gerson, *Jews of Syria*, 54–83.

16. Sean V. Leatherbury discusses the visual impact of inscriptions and their frames in "Reading and Seeing Faith in Byzantium: The Sinai Inscription as Verbal and Visual 'Text,'" *Gesta* 55.2 (2016): 133–56; Leatherbury, "Framing Late Antique Texts as Monuments: The Tabula Ansata between Sculpture and Mosaic," in *The Materiality of Text: Placements, Presences and Perceptions of Inscribed Text in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Andrej Petrovic, Ivana Petrovic, and Edmund V. Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 380–404. Extensive bibliography in apparatus in *IJO* 3:84–116, as well as Noy and Sorek, "Peace and Mercy," 23–24; Michael Satlow, "Giving for a Return: Jewish Votive Offerings in Late Antiquity," in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity*, ed. David Brakke, Michael Satlow, and Steven Weitzman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 105–8.

these inscriptions best illuminates the relationships that these local Jews enacted and sustained within their families and households, between the living and the dead, and, perhaps, with the divine.¹⁷

Dedicatory Inscriptions from the Apamea Synagogue

Most mosaic inscriptions from the synagogue floor are terse and follow basic formulas of dedication. Several name donors, occasionally indicate honorific titles the donor(s) held, and specify the number of feet of mosaic their monetary contributions had funded. One basic example of this type of text, encircled by an elaborate mosaic frame containing a menorah, and bordered by joined *hederae*, reads: “Euthalis the *scholasticus* made 140 feet (of mosaic)” (Syr60).¹⁸

Several other inscriptions ascribe donations to preliminary vows taken by the donor, “having made a vow,” or in “fulfillment of a vow” (*euxamenē/os*; Syr57, 58, 59).¹⁹ Male donors often named their wives and their children in such dedications. One such text announces: “Hierius, with Urania his wife, having made a vow, made 100 feet (of mosaic)” (Syr56).

Other inscriptions similarly mention wives and family members as codedicants. One such inscription lauds the close relationship between donors as it acclaims: “May the years be increased of the brother-loving [*philadelphōn*] Eusebius and Veturius with their wives” (Syr70). This

17. Discoveries of second- and third-century CE coins, minted in Apamea and adorned with images of Noah and an ark, prompted questions about cultural positions of Jews in Apamea. See Paul R. Treblico, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 86–95.

18. This and subsequent transcriptions and translations of the Greek inscriptions from Apamea follow those from *IJO* 3 and are catalogued accordingly. This text is also equivalent to Roth-Gerson, *Jews of Syria*, no. 13. Worth noting here is that the term *scholasticus* (also included in other Jewish inscriptions in Larissa and Sepphoris) need not be one particularly related to the synagogue but could indicate someone well-educated or expert in Roman law. See discussion of the latter point in Margaret H. Williams, *The Jews among The Greeks and the Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook* (London: Duckworth, 2001), no. 1.87; also *IJO* 3:103.

19. This expression for vow making is less conventional in dedicatory inscriptions associated with Jews but appears in inscriptions from the synagogue in Apamea, as well as that from Hammath-Tiberias (see Noy and Sorek, “Peace and Mercy,” 16). On the relationship between vows and gift giving, see discussion in Satlow, “Giving for a Return,” 91–108.

sentiment both praises and advertises the couples' joint dedication and the men's exemplary fraternal relationship.²⁰

At least eight of the dedicatory inscriptions record women as primary donors to the synagogue.²¹ One mosaic from the north of the main hall, currently held in the Damascus Museum, reads: "Alexandra, having made a vow, for the welfare [*sôtērias*] of all her (people), made 100 feet (of mosaic)" (Syr61), while another commemorates the donation of a woman named Eupithis, "for the welfare of herself and her husband and her children and all her household" (Syr71). Still a third dedication, preserved in fragmentary form, anticipates that a woman's "descendants" (as well as herself and her children) might benefit (gain *sôtēria*) from her donation (Syr69). In these cases, family members are not named as codedicants but rather as cobeneficiaries of donors' good works.

To this point, what remains clear is that dedicatory inscriptions from Apamea commemorate their donors' generosity to the synagogue in multiple ways. The tersest dedications omit rationales for contributions to the synagogue mosaic but only name donors and the number of feet of mosaic they had sponsored. Phrases in more extensive inscriptions, however, often vary according to the gender of their donors. As David Noy and Susan Sorek have noted, for instance, male donors more frequently explain their donations as consequences of vows previously taken, while women's records of preliminary vows are often paired with requests for their own welfare or salvation (*sôtēria*), as well as for that of their spouses, children, extended households, and even their yet-unborn descendants.²² Interpretations of the dynamics of such dedications, however, partly rely on one's precise understanding of the word *sôtēria*, variously translated into English as "welfare," "health," or "salvation," a point I discuss additionally below. Yet closer attention to other texts from the synagogue promotes

20. Photo in Roth-Gerson, *Jews of Syria*, 70. As Noy and Sorek note, this inscription could celebrate either the relationship between two brothers or between two men of equal social status ("Peace and Mercy," 19). On perspectives on concord and obligations between siblings, see Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 7, 9, 15, 19. See also Gen 43; Ps 133:1. The term *philadelphos* is locally unusual but attested in Jewish mortuary contexts from elsewhere; see JIGRE, 114, 86, 133; JIWE 2:127, 344, 177, 528.

21. On women donors to synagogues, see the seminal work of Bernadette Brooken, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues*, BJS 36 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

22. See Syr61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 69, 71; Noy and Sorek, "Peace and Mercy," 18.

further insights into these local manifestations of broader regional practices of benefaction, gender, and community building.

Donations to Benefit the Living and the Dead

Indeed, one pair of inscriptions, originally situated to the west of the main hall of the synagogue, retains supplementary data for interpreting the familial and communal dimensions of dedication to the Apamea synagogue, and the different benefits that male and female donors anticipated for themselves and for their families as rewards. The first of these texts, which once tessellated the east side of the interior entrance to the building, records certain basic facts about one donor's benefaction. It reads:

In the time of the most honoured *archisynagōgoi* Eusebius and Nehemiah [Nemias] and Phineas, and of Theodorus the gerusiarch, and of the most honoured elders Isaac [Eisakios] and Saul [Saoulos] and others, Ilasios, *archisynagōgos* of the Antiochenes, made the entrance of the mosaic (for) 150 feet. Year 703, Audynaioi 7. A blessing to all. (Syr53)

The text principally exalts Ilasios, named as the *archisynagōgos* of Antioch, and nominates several of the officials, who presided over the synagogue at the time he offered his gifts. The scale of Ilasios's contribution, foremost, stands out from the others: he sponsored 150 feet of mosaic, which exceeded the second largest donation to the floor by ten meters. The explicit and redundant methods of recording the date of the completion of the mosaic (following the chronology of synagogue officials and including a named date, equivalent to January 392, according to the dating system of the Antiochene calendar) and the generosity of his gift, as well as the prominent position and framing of the mosaic by the synagogue entrance, collectively (and perhaps, appropriately) drew greater attention to Ilasios's name among other donors to the space.²³

Yet a complementary and facing mosaic inscription, which commemorates the work of the same Ilasios, particularly emphasizes the implications of his benefaction (in addition to the parameters of it) by recording additional information about the consequences of his good

23. Discussions of chronology in *IJO* 3:89. Concerning arguments about the *archisynagōgoi*, see discussion in *IJO* 3:88; Tessa Rajak and David Noy, "Archisynagōgoi: Office, Title, and Social Status in the Greco-Jewish Synagogue," *JRS* 83 (1993): 75–93.

works for his family and the surrounding community. Situated on the opposite side of the room, this second mosaic reads:

Ilasios, (son of) Isaac [Eisakios] *archisynagōgos* of the Antiochenes, for the welfare of Photion his wife and (their) children, and for the welfare of Eustathia his mother-in-law, and in memory [*mnias*] of Isaac [Eisakios] and Edesius and Hesychius (his) forefathers, made the mosaic of the entrance. Peace and mercy upon all your blessed people. (Syr54)

While it appears curious that Ilasios, as the *archisynagōgos* of Antioch, made these donations to a synagogue in Apamea (rather than to a synagogue in Antioch), his extensive financial involvement with the Apamean synagogue remains unequivocal.²⁴ This mosaic inscription, in any case, is both elaborately and carefully worded and of a piece with the previous example.

In certain respects, this second commemorative inscription of Ilasios appears fairly conventional for the synagogue, even if it follows a slightly different epigraphic model than the first. Also commemorating Ilasios's sponsorship of "the mosaic of the entrance," this text specifies that Ilasios's donation was for the *sōtēria* of his wife (mentioning her personal name, Photion), children, and even his mother-in-law (here named as Eustathia). Several other dedicatory inscriptions within the synagogue similarly incorporate such information, as noted above.²⁵

Yet additional features of the text appear to be more unusual when compared to other inscriptions from the structure, let alone from the town at large. For instance, its concluding phrase, "peace and mercy upon your blessed people," is attested neither in the synagogue nor elsewhere around Apamea. The sentiment appears to presage (or to reflect) later developments in Judaism and early Christianity, but it is without exact equivalent in explicitly Jewish devotional contexts in Apamea or

24. Some hypothesize that marriage brought Ilasios to Apamea from Antioch (Noy and Sorek, "Peace and Mercy," 18). For discussion of Jews and Antioch see Bernadette Broton, "The Jews of Ancient Antioch," in *Antioch, the Lost Ancient City*, ed. Christine Kondoleon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 28–38.

25. An inscription of Thaumasi[u]s also makes a dedication for the *sōtēria* of his mother-in-law (Syr55); see Noy and Sorek, "Peace and Mercy," 14. See consideration of cultural associations of personal names in this and other inscriptions in Roth-Gerson, *Jews of Syria*, 57–58.

elsewhere.²⁶ Regardless of the precise sense of the benediction, moreover, its function is significant: it broadens the target audience of the inscription by invoking wishes of “peace and mercy upon *all* your blessed people” (my emphasis). As Jason Moralee comments in his study of salvation inscriptions from the Roman East, this closing formula explicitly “puts the entire Jewish community at Apamea into debt for his (Ilasios’s) munificence.”²⁷ Indeed, Ilasios’s second inscription prioritizes the benefits of his donation for his own family, but, with this concluding blessing, expands its potential beneficiaries (and dependents) to include the Jewish community at large.

Also unusual for the synagogue setting, but lesser noted in commentaries on the inscription, is Ilasios’s explicit naming of deceased family members as cobeneficiaries of his acts of dedication. Unlike other texts from the Apamea synagogue, for instance, which appear primarily to confer benefits of a donor’s generosity to the donor and his/her living relatives, this text explicitly pairs names of living beneficiaries with those of Ilasios’s deceased kin, including his father, Isaac, as well as a certain Ede-sius, and Hesychius. Yet to these deceased relatives, whose names are listed separately, Ilasios confers a distinct benefit—that of memory (*mn[ē]ias*)—rather than the conventional allocation of salvation, welfare, or health (*sôtēria[s]*). The syntax of the text indeed suggests that *mneia*, rather than *sôtēria*, constitutes the most appropriate reward for the deceased. At first glance, the differentiation in these benefits appears to be somewhat puzzling. Indeed, one might anticipate that the living might benefit from acts of memorialization just as much as the dead might, while, perhaps, the dead could also use wishes of salvation—a point I discuss additionally below.²⁸ In all cases and when examined more closely, however, this second inscription functions as a more complex form of commemoration than does the first.²⁹ To be sure, it celebrates Ilasios as a wealthy head of

26. Noy and Sorek, “Peace and Mercy,” 58. Compare in Christian writings: Gal 6:16; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 John 3; and among Jews in the nineteenth benediction in the Shema-nah ‘Esreh; *IJO* 3:93.

27. Moralee, *For Salvation’s Sake*, 74.

28. Concerning salvation as a reward for dedication to synagogues, see also Karen B. Stern, *Inscribing Devotion and Death: Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Populations in North Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 242.

29. As Moralee suggests, Ilasios “signals his intention to use the inscription as bridge between the living and the dead” (*For Salvation’s Sake*, 9). See *IJO* 2:49 = *CIJ* 2.754; see also *IGLSyria* 680.

household and synagogue official. But it also demonstrates how Ilasios's acts, as documented, serve to consolidate family bonds between living and dead kin. Moreover, Ilasios's activities of munificence additionally position his success and that of his family as critical to that of the broader synagogue community (including "all your blessed people").

Salvation, Family, and Friendship

Of course, the most appropriate way to evaluate inscriptions, such as those above, is to regard them in kind: as strictly standardized and formulaic salvation inscriptions, relatively conventional for their period, context, and region. Commissioned inscriptions in the Apamea synagogue, indeed, appear to merge two types of behaviors that commonly converged in the eastern Mediterranean in periods of earlier and later antiquity, which were simultaneously social, economic, political, familial, and devotional. These include widespread practices of euergetism, popularized throughout the Hellenistic world after Alexander's conquests (particularly in Asia Minor), whereby people's donations to public projects, events, and buildings earned permanent and (semi-)public advertisements of their good works through commemorative inscriptions.³⁰ Such types of gift giving, both ostentatious and competitive, served as a means for donors to gain social status from advertising in writing their contributions to the public weal. Outdoing one's neighbors (in terms of the size of a gift) would simultaneously elevate the status of the donor and help the surrounding community by funding the construction of accessible temples, theaters, or other types of civic spaces for enjoyment.

Complementary efforts to contribute to public life in the Roman east also drew from what Moralee has described as a salvation ideology, which entailed donations of prayers and sacrifices for the benefit (*hyper sōtērias* in Greek or *pro salute* in Latin) of named individuals, who ranged from elites (including the emperor) to one's family or progeny. These activities would also be flaunted through commemoration in publicly accessible inscriptions. The syntax of texts documenting these activities, however, is both coercive and reliant on an unequal type of transaction. In Hellenistic and Roman contexts, a person would first dedicate a prayer or a sacrifice

30. Discussion of dedicatory inscriptions and euergetism in Susan Sorek, *Remembered for Good: A Jewish System of Benefaction in Ancient Palestine*, SWBA 2/5 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010), 26.

to the divine, to solicit a return of a different kind: the fulfillment of a specific request for the health, safety, or salvation (*sōtēria* in Greek or *salus* in Latin) of the donor or others. In earlier periods of Roman hegemony, during which this salvation ideology publicly expressed loyalty to the empire, people would specifically make sacrifices or prayers for the health and safety of others, including the emperor.³¹ As Moralee notes, benefits of these supplications were not expected to be permanent: appeals to one's superiors (whether emperors or gods) indeed might only offer temporary fortitude or relief from distress for the named beneficiaries.³²

Nonetheless, by later periods (contemporaneous with the existence of the Apamean synagogue) traditions of private supplication (which had preceded and existed alongside the public type) superseded those conducted for the emperor or empire. Multiple examples of private salvation inscriptions are preserved from the Levant (sixty-two, according to Moralee's count), most of which derive from areas of modern Lebanon and Syria.³³ Many of these inscriptions, found inside and around pagan temples and ritual contexts, largely request *sōtēria* in exchange for donors' preliminary sponsorship of the construction of statues, altars, columns, or other associated architectural features.³⁴ Such inscriptions are documented throughout the Hauran, in Emesa, Hierapolis, and Palmyra, and in Lebanon throughout the Bekaa.³⁵

In periods of later antiquity, Christians adapted similar formulas. They also used inscriptions to document donors' gifts to churches and other spaces for the *sōtēria* of their families.³⁶ Chancel screens, columns, and flagstones, whose creation they had sponsored, all advertised donors' names and their expectations of their family members' salvation as a consequence of their preliminary donations to surrounding churches or

31. Indeed, *Sōtēria* (salvation or health) was also personified as a goddess in several contexts (Pausanias, *Descr.* 7.21.2, 24.2).

32. According to this ideology, a supplicant (or supplicants) offered prayers or small sacrifices as barter for the alleviation of "a range of destructive forces, known and unknown, mundane and supernatural" (Moralee, *For Salvation's Sake*, 1).

33. Moralee, *For Salvation's Sake*, 56.

34. Eighteen inscriptions from Dura Europos request *hyper sōtērias* for dedicants and families (Moralee, *For Salvation's Sake*, 56).

35. Multiple altars discovered in Lebanon bear inscriptions of corresponding syntax (discussion in Moralee, *For Salvation's Sake*, 56).

36. See SEG 46:1368; IBulgChr 181.

shrines.³⁷ Women are occasionally listed as donors in these inscriptions, but to lesser degrees.³⁸ In later Christian contexts, moreover, the sense of the term *sōtēria* transforms somewhat. Sometimes, it retains its traditional meanings of “health,” “welfare,” or “relief from suffering,” but in later periods, these senses are supplanted by distinct connotations that evolved in Christian writings, in which *sōtēria* references Christ’s ultimate intercession on behalf of sinners.³⁹

The extant corpus of *sōtēria* inscriptions associated with Jews is significantly smaller than those in Christian contexts and mostly derives from synagogues. Indeed, inscriptions containing phrases petitioning for *sōtēria* on behalf of individuals appear on many of the same types of architectural features as discovered in pagan and Christian contexts, including columns, lintels, decorated stones, and chancel screens.⁴⁰ *Sōtēria* formulas (or their Latin equivalents) also appear in inscriptions on floor mosaics from synagogues from Roman Palestine and North Africa, but the grammatical form used in Apamea remains relatively unusual.⁴¹

The late date of most Jewish inscriptions documenting salvation requests, moreover, complicates their facile translation and interpretation. Moralee, for instance, argues that by late antiquity the word *sōtēria* had attracted more eschatological connotations among Jews and Christians alike, even if historians of Jewish populations exhibit greater reticence to attribute to it such conceptions.⁴² For instance, translating the Greek term

37. Moralee, *For Salvation’s Sake*, 70.

38. *Sōtēria* appears to indicate Christ’s salvation of sinners in Pauline texts (Rom 13:11; 1 Thess 5:9; Acts 4:12). See also Joseph S. Park, *Conceptions of Afterlife in Jewish Inscriptions: With Special Reference to Pauline Literature*, WUNT 121 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 188.

39. Declining numbers of dedications for the emperor in late antiquity may relate to shifted imperial expectations of subjects and the general decline in the epigraphic habit throughout the empire (Moralee, *For Salvation’s Sake*, 50 n. 120).

40. Discussions of chronology in *IJO* 3:88. These include those listed in Baruch Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives: Répertoire des dédicaces grecques relatives à la construction et à la réfection des synagogues*, CahRB 7 (Paris: Gabalda, 1967), 49, no. 62; 56–57, no. 72. Inscription from the chancel screen from Ashkelon published in SEG 8:267; 46:2052; see also Moralee, *For Salvation’s Sake*, 75 n. 136.

41. Satlow, “Giving for a Return,” 93; for consideration of analogous formulas in the synagogue of Hammath Tiberias in Roman Palestine, see Moralee, *For Salvation’s Sake*, 9.

42. Moralee, *For Salvation’s Sake*, 76.

as “welfare,” as does Noy, or “health,” as does Michael Satlow, supports the view that the word connotes bodily advantages enjoyed only during one’s lifetime, while differently translating it as “salvation” (as does Hayim Lapin or Moralee) opens up the possibility that wishes of *sôtēria* might even benefit its recipients posthumously.⁴³ Countering the latter possibility, of course, is the exclusive allocation of *sôtēria* to living relatives in Ilasios’s inscription—a benefit from which the deceased are excluded. Perhaps Jews in Apamea understood *sôtēria* to mean something more like health, or welfare, to be enjoyed only by the living. Yet additional modes of reading could support complementary understandings, as discussed further below.

Worth noting, also, is the rarity of requests for remembrance in the Apamea inscriptions. Indeed, requests for the remembrance of donors (“May [personal name] be remembered!” or “May [personal name] be remembered for good!”) constitute some of the most common ways to acclaim benefactors and their actions throughout regions of Roman Palestine, Syria, and Arabia in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic inscriptions.⁴⁴ Memorial dedication formulas abound in earlier periods in cult centers, such as those on Mount Gerizim, as well as in graffiti and dedicatory inscriptions of buildings of both devotional and nondevotional use in second- and third-century Dura Europos and Palmyra.⁴⁵ Many synagogue mosaics also incorporate such phrases in Beit Alpha, Tiberias, and Sussiya,⁴⁶ while a Greek text found on a reused stone in a house in aḏ-Ḍumair (Admedera) represents this common type in declaring: “One God who helps. May there be remembrance of Tanḥum and Samuel, sons

43. Hayim Lapin, “Palestinian Inscriptions and Jewish Ethnicity in Late Antiquity,” in *Galilee through the Ages: Confluence of Cultures*, ed. Eric M. Meyers (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 239–68.

44. See also more extensive discussion in Sorek, *Remembered for Good*, 72–99; Tessa Rajak, “Jews as Benefactors,” in *Studies on the Jewish Diaspora in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, ed. Benjamin Isaac and Aharon Oppenheimer, Te’uda 12 (Ramat-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 1996), 17–38.

45. Anne K. de Hemmer Gudme theorizes this genre of gift giving in *Before the God in This Place for Good Remembrance: A Comparative Analysis of Aramaic Votive Inscriptions from Mt. Gerizim*, BZAW 441 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013); see also Karen B. Stern, *Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and the Forgotten Jews of Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 22–29.

46. Sorek, *Remembered for Good*, 77–99.

of Ezri. They made the expenditure well" (Syr41).⁴⁷ Yet in the Apamea synagogue, remembrance is not invoked on behalf of the donor but is only sought for the dead; inscriptions in the Apamea synagogue thus apparently follow distinct syntactical and conceptual paradigms.

Assessing Inscriptions and Relationships

Considerations of the inscriptions from the Apamea synagogue floor demonstrate how Apamean Jews of the fourth century CE engaged in a series of devotional behaviors that largely resembled those of their pagan and Christian neighbors. They dedicated funds to a building they used for worship, they anticipated rewards for themselves and their households as results of these donations, and they documented their actions by recording them in writing on a prominent architectural surface inside the structure. Activities these individuals undertook, moreover, qualify as devotional for multiple reasons. Their donations contributed to the construction of a synagogue, a space that increasingly assumed aspects of the holy in late antiquity.⁴⁸ This was a place used for convocation and prayer, in which audiences included both humans and the divine. Other devotional behaviors practiced in the synagogue, including ephemeral acts of prayer or recitations of liturgy, leave no archaeological traces. But acts of donation were devotional behaviors that bore tangible and permanent results: they were documented in writing, they yielded the architectural edification and beautification of the synagogue space, and they offered the added benefit of having associated requests for *sōtēria* (and memory) witnessed by their community (as they likely hoped) in perpetuity.⁴⁹ Advantages of these

47. They are equally common in surrounding areas of Syria. A text from a mosaic in Mutatio Heldua reads: "May they be remembered for good and for the abundance of many blessings, Joses [son of?] Abbomaris and Benjamin his son, that for their welfare [*sōtērias*] they made a benefaction and made the apse and laid mosaics from the apse and the up[per part?]. Year. 686" (Syr23). Similar expressions abound in synagogues elsewhere in Roman Palestine and Syria, rendered in Aramaic as *dkyr lṭb*; see inscriptions in the synagogue of Dura Europos, e.g., *IJO* 3, Syr89–97.

48. On transformed indices of holiness in the synagogue, see Karen B. Stern, "Har-nessing the Sacred: Hidden Writing and 'Private' Spaces in Levantine Synagogues," in *Inscriptions in the Private Sphere in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Peter Keegan and Rebecca Benefiel (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 214–37. See also discussion in Satlow, "Giving for a Return," 93, 102.

49. Stern, *Writing on the Wall*, 25.

activities only compounded through time, as the mere existence of the dedicated floor panels facilitated the conduct of additional and significant devotional acts upon them, including group or individuated prayer, recitation of liturgy, or reading or translation of biblical Scripture.

Moreover, despite the standardization of language inside the inscribed mosaics, their phrases could still belie more individuated concerns about family relationships and obligations between particular spouses and their households (including living and dead kin), as well as their peers. In *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, for instance, Olyan identifies ways to read formulaic language, in similar ways, to investigate more personal and idiosyncratic relationships sustained by friends and family in biblical texts. Olyan interrogates “vocabulary and idioms of friendship” in biblical language that extols friends who are as intimate as family, or family members who demonstrate true devotion for one another, much as friends do.⁵⁰ This approach, while directed toward literary texts of earlier periods, helps to isolate aspects of Apamean inscriptions that perform comparable functions. For instance, while repeated requests for *sôtēria* on behalf of wives, husbands, children, servants, and in-laws in mosaic inscriptions might seem comparably formulaic, closer review suggests that such phrases work to project idealized relationships within families, between spouses, and even between siblings.⁵¹ The nested family obligations and relationships these inscriptions implicate, furthermore, could instantiate more unified relationships between and among individual families and within the community at large. Indeed, inscriptions of Ilasios and others make explicit the importance of family unity and devotion as foundational for the health (*sôtēria*) of the entire synagogue community.

Also worth noting is how these inscriptions illuminate the potential roles of women in the Apamean synagogue, as well as inside their households and communities. Ever since Bernadette Brooten published her groundbreaking work on women officials in the synagogue, scholars have drawn attention to potential ways in which Jewish women participated in ancient ritual life, in ways omitted from discussions in contemporaneous rabbinic texts.⁵² As has become increasingly clear, however, gender practices among ancient Jews were highly variable and shifted according to locality, region, and familial and cultural proclivity. This partly explains

50. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 3.

51. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*, 3, 68, 73.

52. Brooten, *Women Leaders*, 1–10.

the erratic nature of the epigraphic evidence for women's involvement in ancient synagogue life. For instance, while women are commonly mentioned as officers and donors in synagogue inscriptions found in Asia Minor or North Africa, relatively few women are similarly nominated in synagogue inscriptions in Roman Palestine or in other towns in Syria, such as Dura Europos. But one of the ways that records from the Apamea synagogue stand apart from those of devotional buildings in other regional Jewish, pagan, and Christian contexts is in their disproportionate representation of women donors. Women are independently responsible for nearly 50 percent of all recorded donations in the synagogue mosaic, with some apparently making their donations as heads of households and anticipating associated benefits for their families for years to come. This distribution is unusual and merits additional scrutiny.

While public donations by women are more common in Asia Minor more generally, this density of inscriptions documenting women's donations remains noteworthy and characteristic particularly of the synagogue in Apamea, unmatched in other local pagan or Christian contexts or Jewish contexts identified farther to the west. Of equal importance, perhaps, is the way that this type of sponsorship may reflect a reality, lesser documented in rabbinic sources, that Jewish women could serve as legal heads of their households, controlling their families' property (e.g., Dig. 28.1.21.1).⁵³ Peter Saller, for instance, discusses how women in earlier periods in Rome could be legally classified as a *paterfamilias*, if they controlled property and served as heads of household.⁵⁴ This property, moreover, often included slaves. The latter possibility, also echoed in regional mortuary inscriptions, might support the likelihood that the households or people listed as beneficiaries of donations in the Apamea synagogue ultimately included slaves and servants, as well as children, descendants, or

53. Discussions of women and leadership roles in Asia Minor include Rosalinde Kearsley, "Women and Public Life in Imperial Asia Minor: Hellenistic Tradition and Augustan Ideology," *Ancient West and East* 4 (2005): 98–121; and Katherine Bain, *Women's Socioeconomic Status and Leadership in Asia Minor: In the First Two Centuries C.E.* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2014); and in Rome, Richard P. Saller, "Pater Familias, Mater Familias, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household," *CP* 94.2 (1999): 182–97. Note, in this respect, the lack of parallelism between the terms *paterfamilias* and *materfamilias* (Saller, "Pater Familias, Mater Familias," 193). On this point see also Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 44.

54. Saller, "Pater Familias," 187–92.

other family members, who might have been in the *potestas* of women, as well as men.⁵⁵

Different inscriptions from the synagogue, including Ilasios's second dedicatory inscription, may offer additional insights into family relationships among Apamean Jews, particularly between the living and the dead. Deliberate inclusion of the names of Ilasios's deceased kin in his second inscription in this respect performs multiple important functions. First, it reaffirms and reifies the ongoing and honored place of the deceased within the unit of the household. Second, it demonstrates an expectation that the dead also should be allocated a specific reward for acts of dedication. Third, it elucidates that the most suitable reward for the deceased is memory, rather than *sôtēria*, as for the living members of the household. This reward, likewise, appears to be allocated for the deceased because it is the most appropriate and useful to them.

These features of the inscription are significant for multiple reasons, including their constitution of rare data attesting to how some Jews imagined their obligations to or ability to interact with the dead, whether inside synagogues or elsewhere. As David Brodsky has argued, for instance, in Roman Palestine, rabbinic Jews did not necessarily believe that the living could intervene (through prayer or any other means) on behalf of the dead.⁵⁶ Yet Brodsky suggests that Jews who participated in rabbinic culture in Babylonia took a different position: they assimilated understandings of death and filial obligation from their Zoroastrian surroundings whereby living heirs could perform actions that might distinctly and palpably benefit the fate of the already deceased. Poised between these two geographic expanses and without a necessary connection to rabbinic Judaism, Jews who commissioned inscriptions in the Syrian synagogue at Apamea might have engaged in similar debates. While Ilasios does not request *sôtēria* for the dead (which might otherwise imply that his actions could modify their posthumous fate), his request for their remembrance might have represented the most significant type of action that the living could perform

55. Compare also the text of a second-century mortuary inscription from Smyrna, documenting a burial-niche dedicated by Jewish woman and head of synagogue named Rufina for her "freedmen and slaves" (*IJO* 2:43 = *CIJ* 2.741).

56. David Brodsky, "Kaddish, the Prequel: The Sassanian-Period Backstory That Gave Birth to the Medieval Prayer for the Dead," in *The Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*, ed. Geoffrey Herman and Jeffrey Rubenstein (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 335–70.

for the benefit of the dead, in honoring their memory inside a synagogue. Indeed, this act could serve as an ultimate means of *sōtēria* for them and for other donors, in their own rights.

There is much we will never know about the Jews in Apamea and their fates. While local Jews might have survived the destruction of their synagogue in the late fourth century, lack of complete excavation records or attestations of small finds from the space assures that, in many respects, their history remains perpetually enigmatic.⁵⁷ But inscriptions from the synagogue in Apamea offer some limited insights into certain aspects of the lives of members of its Jewish community—into the relationships sustained between husbands and wives, siblings, parents and children, individuals and communities, humans and the divine, and bonds between the living and the deceased—preserved only through a series of tesserae.⁵⁸

57. Noy and Sorek speculate about the fate of the community of Jews in Apamea in “Peace and Mercy,” 22–23.

58. Concerning Jewish women and euergetism, see Brooten, *Women Leaders*, 138–42.

In My House and within My Walls: The Shared Space of Yahweh and the Dead in Israelite Religion

Kerry M. Sonia

Introduction

In their analysis of the tomb inscriptions found at Khirbet Beit Lei, Alice Mandell and Jeremy Smoak examine the inscriptions in terms of ritual space.¹ Challenging previous studies that have disassociated the inscriptions from the dead buried nearby, they reframe the discussion of these texts by emphasizing their material role in the construction of space in the tomb complex. For instance, they note that the inscriptions and accompanying iconography only appear on walls that lead into the rooms containing bench tombs,² which suggests that the inscriptions effectively mark the ritual spaces of the dead. Further, the content of the inscriptions, particularly their invocations of Yahweh on behalf of the dead, attest to the role of the deity in the construction of this space.

It is with great gratitude and joy that I contribute this essay to a volume celebrating the scholarship and mentorship of Saul Olyan, a scholar whose teaching and research initially inspired me to study the Hebrew Bible and Israelite religion. I took his course Introduction to the Hebrew Bible as a sophomore at Brown University, and I have benefited from his guidance and academic rigor ever since. His work has deeply influenced my own, and I am proud to be part of the community of his students. I am also grateful to Karen Stern, who offered insightful comments on an earlier version of this essay.

1. Alice Mandell and Jeremy D. Smoak, "Reconsidering the Function of Tomb Inscriptions in Iron Age Judah: Khirbet Beit Lei as a Test Case," *JANER* 16 (2016): 192–245.

2. Mandell and Smoak, "Reconsidering the Function," 198.

Their analysis of this specific burial site gestures toward a shift in scholarship concerning the role of the dead in Israelite religion, one in which the ritual space of Yahweh and the dead are not as separate as the Priestly writers would have us believe (e.g., Lev 21:11–12; Num 6:9–12, 19:11–22; 31:19). Nevertheless, the supposedly stark separation of Yahweh and the dead is often presumed in other studies of cult spaces in ancient Israel. Since Yahweh is a god of the living, Ziony Zevit argues, death is “the ultimate contaminant of all that was particularly sacred to him.”³ Rituals and spaces associated with the dead, according to this model, are “*not the focus of Yahwism* and beyond its interest.”⁴

This essay focuses on biblical and epigraphic evidence relevant to this discussion of the shared ritual space of deities and the dead. This shared space is not unique to the Hebrew Bible and ancient Israel but finds analogues in other ancient West Asian cultures. Therefore, the aim of this essay is twofold: (1) to situate this conception of shared ritual space in its ancient West Asian context and (2) to reconsider the spatial relationship between Yahweh and the dead. By *ritual space*, I am referring to spaces in which rituals take place that offer care to both deities and the dead.⁵ Both in and outside the Hebrew Bible, we find evidence that commemoration, sacrifice, and other modes of care for the dead sometimes appear near or in spaces where deities receive similar care. An examination of this evidence from ancient Sam’al and Ugarit offers us an enriched sense of the broader cultic, cultural, and ritual contexts from which biblical authors develop their own ideologies about this shared space. Although several texts in the Hebrew Bible refer to corpse pollution and the danger it poses to holiness (e.g., Deut 26:14;

3. Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001), 664.

4. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 664, emphasis original.

5. I borrow the term “ritual space” from Mandell and Smoak in their analysis of the inscriptions from Khirbet Beit Lei. As they note, the term refers not only to spaces where rituals take place but also “spaces that held meaning because of their cognitive associations with other spaces” (see Mandell and Smoak, “Reconsidering the Function,” 198 n. 16). For different modes of ritual care for the dead, see my discussion of such care in Kerry M. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel*, ABS 27 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020). In short, I argue that modes of ritual care for the dead include food and drink offerings, the construction of a commemorative monument, invocation of the name of the dead, and the protection and (when necessary) repatriation of human remains.

Ezek 43:6–9), biblical scholars have, perhaps, applied this particular understanding of death and ritual space too broadly in reconstructions of Israelite religion. Comparative analysis of ritual space in ancient West Asia provides the necessary context for understanding the dynamics of shared ritual space between Yahweh and the dead in the Hebrew Bible and tomb inscriptions from ancient Israel.

The Shared Space of Deities and the Dead at Sam'al and Ugarit

The presence of deities at ritual meals for the dead is a common theme in several Iron Age commemorative inscriptions from the Levant, including that of Katumuwa and Panamuwa I from Sam'al. The eighth-century Katumuwa stela explicitly refers to ongoing offerings made by the sons of Katumuwa after his death.⁶ After stipulating sacrifices for multiple deities, including Hadad, Šamaš, and Kubaba, the speaker—Katumuwa himself—also requests “a ram for my *nabš* that is in this stela.”⁷ His sons make these offerings to both Katumuwa and the gods listed in the inscription. Seth Sanders’s analysis of the inscription notes that the divine epithets (e.g., Hadad the Host, Chief of Provisions) listed in the inscription emphasize

6. Virginia R. Herrmann notes that features of the mortuary chapel may reflect offerings left for the dead Katumuwa in this space, including a “low stone bench” to the right of the stela as well as a stone “pedestal” to the left. See Herrmann, “The Architectural Context of the KTMW Stele from Zincirli and the Mediation of Syro-Hittite Mortuary Cult by the Gods,” in *Contextualising Grave Inventories in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of a Workshop at the London Seventh ICAANE in April 2010 and an International Symposium in Tübingen in November 2010, Both Organised by the Tübingen Post-graduate School “Symbols of the Dead,”* ed. Peter Pfälzer et al., QSS (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 76.

7. For a discussion of *ybl* and its likely interpretation as “ram,” see Dennis Pardee, “A New Aramaic Inscription from Zincirli—Ancient Sam'al,” *BASOR* 356 (2009): 61. The term *nabš* and its Hebrew cognate, *nepeš*, are often translated “soul,” but this translation evokes anachronistic concepts that obscure the term’s use in ancient West Asian texts. For instance, Matthew J. Suriano argues that the *nepeš* is unlike the Platonic concept of soul because the *nepeš* is not necessarily immortal, nor is it released from the body at the time of death. See Suriano, *A History of Death in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5. The term in Aramaic inscriptions, like that of the Katumuwa stela, often refers to a physical object that ritually embodies the dead, such as a stela where offerings to the dead can be made (Suriano, *History of Death*, 150–54, 163–70).

the imagery of this feasting.⁸ The architecture of Katumuwa's so-called mortuary chapel also supports the shared ritual space of the dead and the gods. Virginia Herrmann notes the close proximity between Katumuwa's mortuary chapel, and an adjacent building, which she argues was a "neighborhood temple" dedicated to one or more deities.⁹ This adjacent building (A/III) was accessible from the street and housed two stone pillar bases and what Herrmann characterizes as a "monumental table," much like contemporary offering tables at Carchemish and Tell Halaf.¹⁰ Herrmann suggests that the placement of the Katumuwa stela in such close proximity to the adjacent temple may be another indicator that commemoration of the dead intentionally coincides with the cult offered to deities.¹¹

The eighth-century Hadad inscription (KAI 214) demonstrates a different mode by which deities and the dead may share ritual space. Inscribed on a statue of the storm god himself,¹² the inscription is an invocation of Panamuwa I, king of Yadi, by the son who succeeds him to the throne. Via the inscription, Panamuwa I instructs his descendants to say, "May the *nabš* of Panamuwa eat with Hadad, and may the *nabš* of Panamuwa drink with Hadad" (KAI 214:21–22). This imagery shows clear similarities with the Katumuwa inscription. That a statue of Hadad is the medium for this commemorative inscription for Panamuwa I is significant because it demonstrates another way in which deities may mediate the cult of dead kin and, through their participation, perhaps ensure the longevity of that care. The hieroglyphic Luwian inscription on the tenth- or ninth-century monument of Atrisuhas in Carchemish offers another image of the dead feasting with gods: "He who does not [offer] an annual sacrificial meal of an ox and two sheep for this god Atrisuhas alongside the gods, may Atrisuhas come at him fatally!"¹³

8. Seth L. Sanders, "The Appetites of the Dead: West Semitic Linguistic and Ritual Aspects of the Katumuwa Stele," *BASOR* 369 (2013): 45, 50.

9. Herrmann, "Architectural Context," 77–82.

10. Herrmann, "Architectural Context," 78–83. Furthermore, she argues that Building A/III belongs to a group of southern Levantine temples typified by their relatively irregular plans and indirect access.

11. Herrmann, "Katumuwa Stele," 52–53.

12. For a treatment of the inscription, see Josef Tropper, *Die Inschriften von Zincirli* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1993), 54–97; *COS* 2:156–58.

13. For a translation of this inscription, see John David Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, *UI SK* 8 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 100–101. For an analysis of the inscription in the context of other Iron Age funerary monuments, see Seth L.

A literary example of this shared ritual space appears in the Aqhat Epic from Late Bronze Ugarit. In the “Duties of the Ideal Son” listed in this text, a son places a stela in the sanctuary of a deity on behalf of his father:¹⁴

Let there be a son in his house,
 Offspring within his palace,
 Who sets up the stela [*skn*] of his divine ancestor [*’il ’ib*],
 In the sanctuary [*bqdš*] the sign of his family.

The nature of the *skn* stela largely depends on one’s rendering of *’il ’ib*, interpreted either as “divine ancestor” or “god of the father.”¹⁵ Regardless

Sanders, “Words, Things, and Death: The Rise of Iron Age Literary Monuments,” in *Language and Religion*, ed. Robert Yelle, Courtney Handman, and Christopher Lehigh (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), 334.

14. Theodore Lewis argues that erecting a stela in this context is a “central tenet of family religion” and likely took place in the local sanctuary (*qdš*) of a deity, rather than a temple on the Ugarit acropolis. See Lewis, “Family, Household, and Local Religion at Late Bronze Age Ugarit,” in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, ed. John P. Bodel and Saul M. Olyan (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 69.

15. Previous studies have vocalized the term *sikkānu* on the basis of Akkadian *šiknu*, meaning “appearance, shape, structure” (CAD 12.2:436–39). See, e.g., Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, HSM 39 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 55; William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* 5 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 201 n. 28. References to the *sikkānu* in texts from both Emar and Mari also suggest that this term refers to a stela. For an overview of the literature on this term, see Karel van der Toorn, “Ilib and the ‘God of the Father,’” *UF* 25 (1993): 384 n. 36. See also their more recent treatment in Daniel E. Fleming, *Time at Emar: The Cultic Calendar and the Rituals from the Diviner’s House* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 76–93. This comparative evidence casts doubt on the interpretation of *skn* in the Ugaritic context as a G infinitive meaning “to care for,” as it is interpreted in Mark J. Boda, “Ideal Sonship in Ugarit,” *UF* 25 (1993): 13. For those who translate *’il ’ib* as “divine ancestor/father,” see William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (London: Athlone, 1968), 141–42, 204–5; John Gray, “Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion,” in *Volume du congrès, Genève, 1965* (Leiden: Brill, 1966): 174; Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 56–59; Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life*, SHCANE 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 154–68. For those who interpret it as referring to a major deity, see Jimmy J. M. Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon: A Study of the Semitic Deities Attested in Mesopotamia before Ur III* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 35, 125; Wilfred G. Lambert, “Old Akkadian Iliba = Ugaritic Ilib?,” *UF* 13 (1981): 299–301; Dennis Pardee, “Marzihu, Kispu, and the Ugaritic Funerary Cult: A Minimalist View,” in *Ugarit, Religion, and*

of one's preferred translation of this term, the passage nevertheless refers to an abiding concern with filial piety, and one paradigmatic expression of this piety is for a son to place a stela in the sanctuary of a deity on behalf of his father.¹⁶

The so-called *pgr* stelae at Ugarit (KTU 6.13–14), both of which were found outside the eastern temple of the Ugaritic acropolis, may offer more evidence of commemorating the dead in a temple precinct. The inscriptions on both stelae refer to the *pgr*, which some scholars interpret as a mortuary ritual rather than a dead body.¹⁷ Herbert Niehr argues that the inscriptions do not invoke the royal ancestors as a collective, nor do they signify a completed mortuary ritual. Instead, he argues that they refer to the rituals to be carried out following the deaths of the two figures named in the inscriptions, who presumably commissioned the stelae.¹⁸ According to this view, both figures, Tharyelli and Uzzinu, erected these stelae as offerings during their own lifetimes for the benefit of Dagan and for their own benefit after death, an act of “self-memorialization.”¹⁹ For the purposes of the present discussion, it is worth noting that these commemorative stelae were found in close proximity to a temple precinct and

Culture: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Ugarit, Religion and Culture Edinburgh, July 1994, ed. Nick Wyatt, Wilfred G. E. Watson, and Jeffrey B. Lloyd, UBL 12 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 279–80. Others interpret the term differently. For instance, Brian B. Schmidt proposes an alternative interpretation in which *'il 'ib* is a summarizing heading (“gods of the fathers”) that encompasses the many deities listed after it, a theory that has not found wide acceptance among scholars. See Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 56–59. See also J. David Schloen, *House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 343–45.

16. Van der Toorn posits that this shared space of deities and the dead may be a royal privilege (*Family Religion*, 161).

17. See, e.g., David Neiman, “PGR: A Canaanite Cult Object in the Old Testament,” *JBL* 67 (1948): 55–60; Jürgen H. Ebach, “PGR = (Toten-)opfer? Ein Vorschlag zum Verständnis von Ez. 43,7.9,” *UF* 3 (1971): 365–68. Other interpreters, however, reject that the Ugaritic *pagru* refers to a mortuary rite on the basis of the Mari evidence (e.g., van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 162–63; Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead*, 51–53).

18. Herbert Niehr, “Two Stelae Mentioning Mortuary Offerings from Ugarit (KTU 6.13 and 6.14),” in *(Re-)Constructing Funerary Rituals in the Ancient Near East* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 154.

19. Niehr, “Two Stelae,” 154.

may further demonstrate the shared ritual space of deities and the dead at Ugarit.

Previous studies of this evidence from ancient Sam'al and Ugarit have examined its relevance to biblical depictions of the dead and mortuary ritual. Drawing parallels with biblical evidence (e.g., 2 Sam 18:18), Sanders tracks the development of funerary inscriptions in the Iron Age Levant, noting that inscriptions speaking in the voice of the dead indicate a political shift in this period and the literary means by which new rulers try to establish and protect their power.²⁰ This instability is reflected in the lack of generational depth in these inscriptions compared to ritual texts from previous periods, such as Old Babylonian references to the *kispu*, the common Akkadian term for the cult of dead kin.²¹ Most important, Sanders argues that another innovation in this period is the emphasis on the presence of deities in epigraphic depictions of mortuary meals.²² In the absence of assured generational continuity, perhaps the involvement of gods in the commemoration of the dead could offer greater assurance for ongoing protection and care in this period.

The Shared Space of Yahweh and the Dead in the Hebrew Bible

While some biblical texts view the dead as incompatible with normative Yahwistic cult, others suggest that at least some Israelites seem untroubled by the shared ritual space of Yahweh and the dead, and even some postexilic prophetic texts seem to promote it. In Isa 56:3–5, Yahweh promises an “everlasting name” and “commemorative monument” (*yād wā-šēm*)²³ for the (presumably childless) eunuch:

20. Seth L. Sanders, “Naming the Dead: Funerary Writing and Historical Change in the Iron Age Levant,” *Maarav* 19 (2012): 11–36.

21. Sanders, “Words, Things, and Death,” 344. Elsewhere, Sanders notes that this shift may also derive from changes in our evidence, from royal archives to funerary monuments (Sanders, “Naming the Dead,” 30).

22. Sanders, “Naming the Dead,” 33.

23. Commentators on this text have often noted the different resonances of the term *šēm* (“name”) in this passage: commemoration (see 2 Sam 14:7; 18:18; Isa 14:22; Prov 10:7) and, relatedly, a successor. On the latter see Hayim Tadmor, “Was the Biblical *sārīs* a Eunuch?,” in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, ed. Ziony Zevit, Seymour Gitin, and Michael Sokoloff (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 317–25. It is also possible that the establishment of an everlasting name in the sanctuary has political force.

Do not let the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." For thus said Yahweh, "To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, choose that which pleases me, and hold fast to my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a commemorative monument [*yād wā-šēm*] better than sons and daughters. I will give him an everlasting name that will not be cut off."

Unlike the commemoration offered by living descendants, which may lapse over time and become insufficient, the commemoration provided by Yahweh in the temple itself will endure forever. The reference to a commemorative monument "better than sons and daughters" in Isa 56:5 underscores the nature of Yahweh as the ideal cultic caregiver for the dead. Previous interpreters of this passage have emphasized the placement of a monument in a sanctuary with the intention of better preserving the memory of the dead and to offer continual service to a deity.²⁴ Thus, the placement of the commemorative monument for the eunuch in the architectural space of the Jerusalem temple creates a shared ritual space, ensuring that the eunuch's memory will endure under the ongoing care of Yahweh.

This depiction of Yahweh as the ideal caregiver for the dead also appears in Ezek 37:11–14.²⁵ In this passage, Yahweh shows the prophet a valley of dry bones, which represent the Israelites in exile:

Sandra L. Richter compares the biblical "name theology" with Akkadian imperial rhetoric marking the acquisition of territory. See Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology*, BZAW 318 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001). For a discussion of this interpretation of the phrase *yād wā-šēm*, see Dwight W. Van Winkle, "The Meaning of *yād wāšēm* in Isaiah LVI 5," *VT* 47 (1997): 378–85; Gnana Robinson, "The Meaning of *jd* in Isa 56,5," *ZAW* 88 (1976): 282–84; Sara Japhet, "*Yd wšm* [Isa. 56:5]—A Different Proposal," *Maarav* 8 (1992): 69–80; Izaak J. de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 147–51.

24. E.g., de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis*, 168.

25. For a detailed treatment of the imagery in this passage, see Saul M. Olyan, "We Are Utterly Cut Off: Some Nuances of *nigzarnu lanu* in Ezek 37:11," *CBQ* 65 (2003): 43–51. The depiction of the exiled Israelites as dead in Ezek 37:1–14 likely refers to their covenantal relationship with Yahweh. This metaphor relies on some notion of the dead as cut off from Yahweh, an idea reflected in passages such as Pss 6:5; 28:1; 88:4–6; 115:17; Isa 38:18. In order to challenge the interpretation that the exile has invalidated the covenant and that the Israelites are thus dead to Yahweh, Ezek 37:1–14 uses the imagery of the cult of dead kin to demonstrate that Yahweh is still the divine caregiver of Israel.

He said to me—Human, these bones are all the house of Israel. They say, “Our bones are dry, and our hope is lost. We are utterly cut off.” Therefore, prophesy and say to them, “Thus says my lord Yahweh, ‘I am about to open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. I will bring you to the land of Israel. You will know that I am Yahweh when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people.’”

While previous studies have recognized the “beneficent tomb opening” and repatriation of bones in this passage, I argue further that the protection and repatriation of human remains are constitutive practices of the cult of dead kin.²⁶ Yahweh’s actions in Ezek 37:11–14 depict him acting as divine caregiver for the figuratively dead Israel by repatriating their bones to their ancestral land.²⁷ The text draws on this topos of the protection and repatriation of bones to depict Yahweh’s ongoing relationship with Israel, despite the trauma and cultic upheaval of the exile. The imagery of exhumation in Ezek 37:11–14 assumes that Yahweh himself may interact with the realm of the dead in order to act on their behalf. This text demonstrates no anxiety about Yahweh disinterring the bones in a foreign land, which is sometimes construed as polluted (e.g., Ezek 4:13),²⁸ nor handling the bones themselves. Like Isa 56:3–5, this postexilic prophetic text uses ritual care for the dead to assert its ideology of Yahweh as national deity. Instead of performing this care in the temple, Yahweh intercedes on behalf of the dead in the ritual space of the tomb.

While Ezek 43:6–9 espouses a negative view of this shared space, it also assumes that some Judahite elites find it unproblematic. The context of Ezek 43:6–9 is the return of Yahweh’s glory (*kābôd*) to the temple. Early chapters in Ezekiel refer to different human misdeeds that lead to Yahweh’s abandonment: illicit iconography in the courtyard of the temple (Ezek

26. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead*, passim. This language of “benevolent tomb opening” comes from Saul M. Olyan, “Unnoticed Resonances of Tomb Opening and Transportation of the Remains of the Dead in Ezekiel 37:12–14,” *JBL* 128 (2009): 491–501.

27. Human actors perform this protection and repatriation of bones and corpses in other biblical texts (e.g., Gen 49:29–32; 50:12–14, 25; Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32; Judg 16:31; 2 Sam 2:32; 21:12–14).

28. For a detailed analysis of biblical conceptions of foreign lands with regard to pollution, see Andrea Allgood, “Foreign Lands—Multiple Perspectives: Foreign Land Impurity in the Hebrew Bible, Its Context, and Its Ideological Underpinnings” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2014).

8:3–16) as well as extreme violence (Ezek 8:17; 9:9).²⁹ Ezekiel 43:6–9 is a critical point in the literary restoration of Yahweh's presence in the temple and focuses almost exclusively on the defilement of Yahweh's name by the burial of Judahite kings in close proximity to the temple:

The house of Israel shall no longer pollute my holy name—neither they nor their kings—through their whoring, through the corpses³⁰ of their kings³¹ or through setting their threshold beside my threshold so that their doorpost was next to my doorpost and a wall was between me and them. They polluted my holy name through their abominations that they

29. The enumeration of human misdeeds is a characteristic feature of the divine-abandonment motif in ancient West Asia. Another common feature of this motif, restoration of ideal cult, appears in and is adapted by Ezekiel. See Daniel I. Block, "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of an Ancient Near Eastern Motif," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 15–42.

30. For a review of scholarship on the interpretation of *pgr* in the Hebrew Bible and cognate literature, see Matthew J. Suriano, *The Politics of Dead Kings: Dynastic Ancestors in the Book of Kings and Ancient Israel*, FAT 48 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 102 n. 22. Most notably, while many interpreters understand *pgr* as referring to a human corpse, some biblical texts (e.g., Gen 15:11; Lev 26:30) suggest that this term may also refer to a stela. Other commentators argue that this text refers not to royal tombs but to memorial monuments or offerings to the royal dead. See, e.g., Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers: The Roles of Ancestor Veneration in Biblical Land Claims*, LHBOTS 473 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 118; Johan Lust, "Exegesis and Theology in the Septuagint of Ezekiel: The Longer 'Pluses' and Ezekiel 43:1–9," in *VI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, ed. Claude E. Cox (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 217. I opt here for the interpretation of *ûbpigrê malkêhem* as "through the corpses of their kings." Though Stephen L. Cook prefers the interpretation of this phrase as "rites venerating their kings," he acknowledges that "the two senses of *peger* as 'dead-monument' and 'corpse' are not mutually exclusive." See Cook, *Ezekiel 38–48: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 22B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 190. Regardless of one's preferred translation of this phrase, Ezek 43:6–9 is a relevant text in a discussion of shared ritual space between Yahweh and the dead.

31. The translation of the MT here (*bāmôtām*) is difficult to integrate into the rest of the passage. In his commentary on the text, Walther Zimmerli posits that this word may be the result of scribal error, influenced by the infinitive construct that follows it (*batittām*). See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 409. Following Zimmerli, I prefer either omitting the word altogether or translating it as a plural of *bamâ*, which is less awkward than the redundant phrase "through the corpses of their kings at their death."

committed, and I will consume them in my anger. But now, they shall send their abomination and the corpses of their kings far away from me, and I shall dwell in their midst forever.

As Michael Konkel points out, Ezek 40–48 focuses primarily on the strict regulation of space as a way of safeguarding holiness and preventing divine abandonment in the future.³² The sharp delineation of space with regard to Yahweh and the dead in Ezek 43:6–9 is just one aspect of this concept of holiness in Ezekiel’s second temple vision, and the postexilic setting of Ezek 40–48 may influence the passage’s outlook on royal burial practice. Indeed, Ezekiel’s decoupling of temple and royal burial may reflect the architectural and political realities of postexilic Yehud—the loss of the palace, the Judahite monarchy, and thus the practice of intramural royal burial.³³

The image of corpses defiling the temple occurs elsewhere in Ezekiel (e.g., Ezek 9:7), where Yahweh orders that the temple be filled with corpses in order to signify its defilement.³⁴ Since defilement is one explanation for the departure of a deity from its sanctuary, corpse pollution in Ezekiel offers one explanation why Yahweh would abandon Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege and would allow elite Judeans to go into exile. However, the force of this rhetorical strategy depends on the earlier royal assumption that Yahweh and the dead could occupy the same ritual space³⁵ without any risk of defilement. Even if this depiction of royal intramural burial is

32. Michael Konkel, “The System of Holiness in Ezekiel’s Vision of the New Temple (Ezek 40–48),” in *Dynamics in the History of Religions: Purity and the Forming of Religious Tradition in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism*, ed. Christian Frevel and Christophe Nihan (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 429–75.

33. For a survey of royal intramural burial practice in the Levant, see Suriano, *Politics of Dead Kings*, 55–59.

34. The imagery of defiling supposedly illegitimate cult images with corpses also appears in Ezek 6:3–5 (see Jer 8:1–2). The language of this passage is strikingly similar to the cultic injunction of Lev 26:30. For an analysis of these similarities, see Lauren A. S. Monroe, *Josiah’s Reform and the Dynamics of Defilement: Israelite Rites of Violence and the Making of a Biblical Text* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37–40; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, AB 22 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 140.

35. Concerning Ezek 43:8, Cynthia R. Chapman argues: “The king had made an architectural assertion that he and his god were part of a joint family compound, and Ezekiel understood and challenged this assertion.” See Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 31.

a literary fiction, not a reflection of actual burial practice, it nevertheless relies on the notion that the dead are not totally barred from the Temple Mount due to anxieties about corpse pollution.

The biblical depiction of Josiah's violation of the sanctuary at Bethel in 2 Kgs 23:16–18 similarly assumes that this Israelite temple mount could be a burial ground and yet could also be defiled by human bones in an act of ritual violence: "Josiah turned and saw the graves that were on the mount.³⁶ He sent for and took the bones from the graves and burned them upon the altar, defiling it according to the word of Yahweh that the man of God had proclaimed." The passage suggests that these graves are in close proximity to the sanctuary at Bethel, which may reflect the notion that burial near the sanctuary was permissible and, perhaps, desirable among northern Israelites. Despite Josiah's policy of eradicating what he considers illegitimate forms of cult, he says nothing about this burial practice. In fact, his command in verse 17 that no one disturb the monument (*šīyyûn*) of the man of God from Judah suggests two things: (1) the monument of the man of God is also positioned near the sanctuary of Bethel and (2) Josiah does not condemn its location there. Although the man's burial at Bethel is construed elsewhere as punishment (2 Kgs 13:22), neither Josiah nor the narrator of 2 Kgs 23:16–18 refers to its location as punitive.³⁷

Of course, the lack of biblical polemic against burial on the temple mount at Bethel may stem from the fact that Josiah and Deuteronomistic writers do not consider the Bethel sanctuary legitimate, thus corpse contact might not pose a threat to its supposed holiness. Nevertheless, the passage assumes that some Israelites—even a Yahwistic prophet—are buried in close proximity to the sanctuary. While the practice of burial near the Bethel sanctuary prior to Josiah's arrival does not seem to pose a threat to the sanctuary, bringing human remains into the sanctuary and burning them on the altar are construed as defiling. The point of Josiah's exhumation and burning of human bones on the sanctuary's altar is clearly an act of ritual violence, intended to signify the illegitimacy of

36. The LXX describes the graves as being "in the city" (ἐν τῇ πόλει) instead of "on the mount" (*šām bāhār*).

37. In his examination of the hierarchy of burial types in the Hebrew Bible, Saul Olyan notes that the burial of the man of God outside his own family tomb is less desirable than his burial in the family tomb of another. See Olyan, "Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology," *JBL* 124 (2005): 605–6.

the sanctuary.³⁸ Thus, it is important to remember that violence, including ritual violence, is contextual.³⁹ While the proximity of burials to the Bethel sanctuary may not have posed a ritual threat in the eyes of northern Israelites, it is clear that the burning of human bones on the altar is construed as violent and polluting. The former is characterized by benevolent care for the dead, while the latter is concerned with the malevolent transgression of the boundaries constructing ritual space at Bethel. Like the royal intramural burial in Ezek 43:6–9, it is possible that burial on the temple mount at Bethel signifies the elite status of those buried there. It may also ensure their ongoing care and memory. However, Josiah instrumentalizes these human remains, not only violating the ritual space of the tombs but also the sanctuary.

The Shared Space of Yahweh and the Dead in Funerary Inscriptions

Finally, we may return to the initial focus of this essay, the shared ritual space of Yahweh and the dead in Iron II tomb inscriptions. In his recent book on death in the Hebrew Bible, Matthew Suriano argues that the invocation of Yahweh in these inscriptions demonstrates that “Yahweh was not separated from the dead and that his protection extended to the tomb.”⁴⁰ Some of these inscriptions refer to unspecified threats against the dead (e.g., “enemies” and “evil”) and entreat the deity to fend off such threats. For instance, the seventh-century silver amulets from the tomb complex at Ketef Hinnom famously echo the Priestly blessing of Num 6:24–26:⁴¹

38. Mark Leuchter characterizes the actions of Josiah in 2 Kgs 23, including his treatment of human remains, as a “[reenactment of] the divine warrior’s conquest, demolishing the symbols of foreign threats which challenge Yhwh’s mastery over the land as part of a ritual purge.” See Leuchter, “Between Politics and Mythology: Josiah’s Assault on Bethel in 2 Kings 23:15–20,” in *Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible: New Perspectives*, ed. Saul M. Olyan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 74. See, similarly, Monroe, *Josiah’s Reform*, 109–11.

39. David Riches, “The Phenomenon of Violence,” in *The Anthropology of Violence*, ed. David Riches (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 1–27. Drawing on the work of Riches, Saul M. Olyan emphasizes the contextual nature of ritual violence in the Hebrew Bible. See Olyan, “Introduction: Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible,” in Olyan, *Ritual Violence in the Hebrew Bible*, 1–7.

40. Suriano, *History of Death*, 116; see also Sanders, “Naming the Dead.”

41. The original translation of the amulet inscriptions appears in Gabriel Barkay, “The Priestly Benediction on Silver Plaques from Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem,” *TA* 19

“For redemption is in him. For Yahweh is our restorer [and] rock. May Yahweh bles[s] you and [may he] guard you. [May] Yahweh make [his face] shine.” In his study of the amulet inscriptions, Smoak argues that the imagery of Yahweh’s shining face evokes the experience of a pilgrim going to the Jerusalem temple and receiving the benevolence of Yahweh’s presence.⁴² Recovered from tomb repositories, these amulets worn by the dead continue to invoke the protection of Yahweh and his temple in the grave. Regarding this tomb context, Smoak states: “Contrary to the idea that the realm of Yahweh and the realm of the dead were discontinuous in ancient Israelite thought, the inscriptions on the amulets suggest that during the late preexilic period some believed the power of Yahweh’s blessings to penetrate into the tomb and provide protection in death.”⁴³

Although multiple eighth- to seventh-century inscriptions have been recovered from tombs at Khirbet el-Qom, one of them (Qom 3) is particularly relevant to the present discussion not only because it beseeches Yahweh for blessing on the dead but also because of the iconography that accompanies the inscription. Positioned just below the text is a carved imprint of a hand, its five fingers pointing downward. The inscription reads:⁴⁴

Uriah the prosperous, his epitaph:⁴⁵
 Blessed be Uriah by Yahweh
 And from his enemies, by his asherah,⁴⁶ save him.
 (Written) by Oniah

(1992): 139–92. For a more recent examination of these inscriptions, see Jeremy D. Smoak, *The Priestly Blessing in Inscription and Scripture: The Early History of Numbers 6:24–26* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). This excerpt from the inscription on Amulet 1 from Ketef Hinnom appears in Smoak’s translation and commentary on the text (*Priestly Blessing*, 18–19).

42. Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*, 10, 89–110.

43. Smoak, *Priestly Blessing*, 60.

44. This translation closely follows Suriano, *History of Death*, 114.

45. For other translations of this inscription, see André Lemaire, “Les inscriptions de Khirbet el-Qôm et l’Ashérah de YHWH,” *RB* 84 (1977): 595–608; Baruch Margalit, “Some Observations on the Inscription and Drawing from Khirbet el-Qôm,” *VT* 39 (1989): 371–78; Ziony Zevit, “The Khirbet el-Qôm Inscription Mentioning a Goddess,” *BASOR* 255 (1984): 39–47; William G. Dever, “Iron Age Epigraphic Material from the Area of Khirbet el-Kôm,” *HUCA* 40–41 (1970): 139–204; Siegfried Mitmann, “Die Grabinschrift des Sängers Uriahu,” *ZDPV* 97 (1981): 139–52.

46. Other translations render the term *’šrth* in this text as the cult symbol instead of the goddess. For an overview of the interpretative problems posed by this term, see

Mandell and Smoak argue that the hand, engraved on a pillar near the entrance to the burial cave, may have helped mark the tomb as ritual space.⁴⁷ The hand also evokes biblical imagery concerning the dead, particularly 2 Sam 18:18 and Isa 56:5, in which *hand* is synonymous with a commemorative monument for the dead. It is possible and even likely that such imagery is multivalent in this context. A hand may embody the dead, helping to preserve their memory. It may refer to some apotropaic function, which would reflect a concern for the vulnerability of the dead.⁴⁸ It is also possible that the hand (if it is understood to be the right hand), with its thumb pointing to the left, is a gesture of an open-palm entreaty to the deity.⁴⁹ In fact, when read alongside the accompanying inscription, all of these interpretations seem plausible and likely contributed to the appeal of such imagery in a funerary context.⁵⁰

Another possible, though more speculative, interpretation of this image is that it is an example of what Tryggve Mettinger calls “empty-space aniconism,”⁵¹ a method of indexing the presence of a deity through negative space, much like the monumental footprints leading up to the temple at ‘Ain Dara.⁵² After all, the accompanying text is not an epitaph of praise for Yahweh but an invocation for divine assistance, which might account for the fact that the hand is not upraised in a typical gesture of praise but rather extending down toward the earth. It is possible that this gesture signifies the divine beneficence of Yahweh reaching downward to aid the dead Uriah. This image of Yahweh’s hand extending down into the

Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, SBLMS 34 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 25–34.

47. Mandell and Smoak, “Reconsidering the Function,” 206 n. 36.

48. Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 237.

49. Judith M. Hadley offers a similar interpretation of the hand. See Hadley, “The Khirbet el-Qom Inscription,” *VT* 37 (1987): 61–62.

50. Although it is worth mentioning that the carving may be independent of the inscription and thus should not be interpreted in light of it.

51. Regarding this term, Mettinger explains: “It generates in the onlooker the mental image of the deity ... although there is no material image of the deity in the physical world.” See Tryggve Mettinger, *No Graven Image?: Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995), 20.

52. See John M. Monson, “The ‘Ain Dara Temple and the Jerusalem Temple,” in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. Gary M. Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, *BJS* 346 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 273–99.

depths of the earth appears in biblical texts, both to punish (Amos 9:2) and to protect (Ps 139:8–10) those who dwell there.⁵³ However, this interpretation is admittedly speculative since the hand carved below the inscription at Khirbet el-Qom lacks the monumental size of the feet at ‘Ain Dara, making it unclear whether the hand belongs to the dead or the divine.⁵⁴ These different elements of Qom 3—the name of the dead (Uriah), the blessing of Yahweh, and the hand imagery—are all present in the description of the eunuch’s commemorative monument in Isa 56:3–5. Like the inscription from Khirbet el-Qom, the biblical passage gestures, literally, toward the overlapping spaces of the cult of dead kin and Yahwistic cult, going so far as to locate both in the Jerusalem temple itself.

The eighth- to sixth-century tomb inscriptions from Khirbet Beit Lei further support this understanding of Yahweh and the dead.⁵⁵ These texts are striking in their characterization of Yahweh as not only the national deity of Judah but also caregiver for the dead:⁵⁶ “Yahweh is the God of all the land. (The) mountains of Judah belong to the God of Jerusalem.” Another inscription from the antechamber even uses terminology characteristic of care for the dead in its invocation of Yahweh: “Attend (*pqd*)”⁵⁷

53. Margalit seems to suggest a similar interpretation in his analysis of the “open hand” iconography when he compares it to the imagery of Yahweh in Ps 145:16 (“Some Observations,” 373).

54. In fact, Hadley notes that the inscribed hand is “approximately the size of a small human hand” (“Khirbet el-Qom Inscription,” 62).

55. Scholars disagree on the precise dating of these inscriptions, some arguing for a date in the eighth century contemporaneous with Neo-Assyrian campaigns in the region and others for the late sixth century, coinciding with Neo-Babylonian campaigns. For an overview of this debate, see Mandell and Smoak, “Reconsidering the Function,” 192–245. Although previous studies of these inscriptions interpret them as graffiti written by refugees hiding in nearby caves, I am more convinced by Mandell and Smoak’s argument that the inscriptions are “original to the construction and use of the tomb” (“Reconsidering the Function,” 197).

56. My translations of the inscriptions from Khirbet Beit Lei closely follow those of André Lemaire, “Prières en temps de crise: Les inscriptions de Khirbet Beit Lei,” *RB* 83 (1976): 558–68.

57. Several treatments of the cult of dead kin in ancient West Asia note the prevalence of this terminology in care for the dead. See, e.g., *CAD* 12:137–38; Miranda Bayliss, “The Cult of Dead Kin in Assyria and Babylonia,” *Iraq* 35 (1973): 115–25, esp. 116–17. Biblical attestations of the term *pqd* in a funerary context include Gen 50:24; 2 Kgs 9:34; Sir 49:15–16. For an examination of *pqd* in the context of the Ben Sira passage, see Suriano, *History of Death*, 186–89. Lemaire notes that this terminol-

Yah, O gracious God! Acquit (*nqh*)⁵⁸ Yah, O Yahweh!”⁵⁹ The presence of these invocations in a tomb setting suggests that Yahweh is not excluded from such ritual spaces. We find no reference, for instance, to a separation between Yahweh and the dead, nor an anxiety about corpse pollution. Instead, these inscriptions suggest significant overlap between the cult of dead kin and the cult of Yahweh—and, notably, not merely a local form of Yahwistic cult but one that recognizes his status as a national deity and his close association with Jerusalem. These inscriptions on the walls of the tombs at Khirbet Beit Lei mark the ritual space of the tomb and invoke the national deity at the same time.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The preceding analysis offers a reexamination of the relationship between Yahweh and the dead, in both biblical and epigraphic evidence. While previous studies have interpreted certain biblical texts, such as the condemnation of royal intramural burial in Ezek 43:6–9, as indicative of a fundamental disjunction between Yahweh and the dead in Israelite religion, I argue instead that this and other biblical texts attest to a widespread notion that deities may share ritual space with the dead. Both Ezek 37:11–14 and Isa 56:3–5 draw on this notion of space in their articulations of Yahweh’s relationship with Israel after the exile. In particular, Ezek 37:11–14 demonstrates a notable lack of concern with corpse pollution when Yahweh himself exhumes and repatriates the “dry bones” of the figuratively dead Israelites back to the land of Judah. Isaiah 56:3–5 locates the commemoration of the eunuch in the temple itself. Meanwhile, a text such as 2 Kgs 23:16–18, which strongly condemns supposedly illegitimate forms of cult, seems to assume and tacitly accept the practice of burial in

ogy echoes Ps 80:15, which beseeches Yahweh using the *qal* imperative *pqd* (“God of hosts, return! Look from heaven and see! Care for this vine!”; “Prières en temps de crise,” 566).

58. Lemaire also notes a similar *piel* imperative of *nqh* in Ps 19:13 (“Who can discern their errors? Absolve me [*naqqēni*] of secret things!”; “Prières en temps de crise,” 566).

59. Other transliterations and translations of this inscription from Khirbet Beit Lei are quite different from those offered by Lemaire. For a survey of these different renderings of the inscription, see Suriano, *History of Death*, 199 n. 62.

60. Suriano, *History of Death*, 121; Mandell and Smoak, “Reconsidering the Function,” *passim*.

close proximity to the Bethel sanctuary. Even a Yahwistic prophet from Judah could be buried there. It seems clear that not all Israelites would have considered burial near a sanctuary as ritually polluting. In fact, this shared ritual space of Yahweh and dead in the Hebrew Bible fits well with what we know of ritual space elsewhere in ancient West Asia.

In other words, a condemnation of intramural royal burial, in the case of Ezek 43:6–9, is not the only way that biblical writers acknowledge and respond to this concept of shared ritual space. Instead, postexilic prophetic texts such as Ezek 37:11–14 and Isa 56:3–5 use this imagery to vividly assert their own ideologies about Yahweh, temple, and covenant. It is notable that in the wake of the cultic upheaval of the exile, these biblical writers depend on perhaps more portable, less architecturally dependent forms of religious activity—practices and ideologies of family religion, including the cult of dead kin—in order to affirm the existence and strength of what might be perceived as less stable at that time—the cult of the Jerusalem temple and its national deity. Previous studies of the exile have noted the development of certain practices and ideologies during this time that focus on the family and household, such as circumcision and Sabbath observance.⁶¹ In fact, Rainer Albertz goes so far as to argue, “In the deepest crisis of Israel’s religion, this family piety played a supportive and substitutionary role that contributed substantially to the overcoming of this crisis.”⁶² Cynthia Chapman makes a similar point regarding the development of genealogies during this time, arguing, “For Judeans during and following the period of the Babylonian exile, the discourse of biblical narrative, poetry, and genealogical lists would have created a fixed and stable image of themselves that confronted their constantly shifting reality.”⁶³ The comparative evidence cited in this essay suggests why postexilic biblical writers would have found this concept of shared space between Yahweh and the dead so relevant and comforting.

Thus, it seems that the separation of Yahweh and the dead in reconstructions of Israelite religion requires more nuance. Both Isa 56:3–5 and Ezek 43:6–9 talk about ritual care for the dead in or near the Jerusalem temple. While Ezek 43:6–9 condemns the proximity of royal burials to the

61. See also Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, trans. David Green (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 106–9.

62. Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 136.

63. Chapman, *House of the Mother*, 12.

temple, its rhetoric belies the notion among some people in the royal court that such proximity is permissible. Although the eunuch in Isa 56:3–5 is not buried in the temple precinct, Yahweh does erect a commemorative monument for him in the temple itself. It is also notable that placement of the eunuch's monument in the temple suggests that the shared space of Yahweh and the dead is not merely a royal prerogative. The description of Josiah's violation of Bethel in 2 Kgs 23:16–18 offers us another biblical account in which burial near the temple precinct is permissible, though burning bones on the altar is construed as polluting. Therefore, the proximity of burial to the temple does not signify that all notions of corpse pollution are moot. Benevolent care for the dead, especially when Yahweh offers that care, might render such proximity permissible. While all of these texts may share the notion that corpses within the temple are defiling, they also suggest that the boundaries separating Yahweh and the dead may shift, especially to accommodate those of elite status or particular piety.

Inscriptions from tomb contexts at Ketef Hinnom, Khirbet el-Qom, and Khirbet Beit Lei offer new ways of conceptualizing the shared ritual space of Yahweh and the dead. The invocations of Yahweh in these inscriptions suggest that the deity's presence in a burial context was conceivable and even ideal. Imagery evoking Jerusalem and the temple in these tomb inscriptions further draws these ritual spaces together. Corpse pollution seemingly poses no threat to the deity in these contexts, despite the close proximity of dead bodies. In this way, these funerary inscriptions are similar to the depiction of Yahweh in Ezek 37:11–14. Yahweh is able to intercede on behalf of the dead, blessing them and even benevolently exhuming their bones, without any threat to his holiness. This understanding of the relationship between Yahweh and the dead attests to greater ideological diversity in Israelite religion. The Priestly notion of corpse pollution, while widely attested throughout the Hebrew Bible, does not sufficiently explain all biblical depictions of Yahweh and the dead, nor tomb inscriptions from ancient Israel. Instead, recent developments in the analysis of ritual space in ancient West Asia provide us with the necessary context for recognizing the dynamics of shared ritual space between Yahweh and the dead.

Part 5

Relations with and among Divine Beings

Fighting with Angels: On How to Build Up a Celestial Army

Steven Weitzman

In a monograph titled *A Thousand Thousands Served Him*, Saul Olyan set out to illumine the origin of angelic names—both the names of individual angels and the names of angelic ranks.¹ In the references to angels we have in the Hebrew Bible, they are almost never given names. The one exception to that rule is the book of Daniel, which refers to Michael and Gabriel, but it was composed in the Second Temple period, later than other biblical books, and in the many references to angelic beings found in those earlier works, they are consistently anonymous, barely differentiated beings whose individual identities hold no interest for biblical authors. Angelic names—the names of individual angels (Sariel, Uriel, Lahtiel, etc.) and the names of angelic brigades or ranks (*ḥayyôt*, *ʾôphannîm*, *galgallîm*, etc.)—are a product of postbiblical Jewish imagination, in many cases arising from how exegetes in the Second Temple period and late antiquity understood the biblical text, as Olyan's book shows so convincingly.

As Olyan himself acknowledges, however, his explanation is not complete: some angelic titles and ranks derive not from biblical exegesis but from military culture. Examples cited by Olyan himself include *gastera*, from the Latin *castra*, describing a fortified military camp, and *ligyon*, from the Latin unit of the Roman army (the term *legion* is used in the New Testament for a group of demons but also for angelic troops in Matt 26:53).² This use of foreign military nomenclature is a clue that the development of early Jewish angelology is tied in some way to military culture as it developed in this period, and what follows is an attempt to build on

1. Saul M. Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993).

2. Olyan, *Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 69.

this connection, to explore a kind of interaction between the angelic army and foreign militaries that penetrated far deeper into early Jewish imaginations than a few loanwords might suggest.

We now know thanks to research undertaken since the publication of Olyan's monograph that such names are just one of a number of ways in which angelic society in this period was militarized. The most comprehensive survey is that of Aleksander Michalak, who has traced the idea of angels as warriors in Second Temple period sources that include compositions found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2 and 3 Maccabees, and other sources from the age where angels are wearing armor and wielding weapons, are organized into ranks, and operate under the command of superiors with titles such as *archistrategos*, "arch-angel" or "supreme commander."³

Michaelak maintains that this conception of the angels emerged from indigenous Israelite tradition, but that does not preclude its development under the influence of foreign culture, as the absorption of Greek and Latin terms to describe angelic ranks attests. As one can observe in our own era, militaries often emulate the military practices of other militaries, allies, rivals, or enemy armies recognized as possessing power greater than one's own military's—a process anthropologists refer to as competitive emulation, which involves acting like a competitor, rival, or enemy seen to be superior or more advantaged.⁴ Armies are driven to imitate rivals or foes by the pressure to be able to match their capabilities, and emulation seems even more common when a military has limited resources to develop itself and has to take shortcuts in order to catch up.⁵

It so happens that in the Second Temple period conditions were ripe for this kind of cross-cultural military emulation because of the various rivalries and conflicts among the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Under Alexander the Great, the Macedonians absorbed certain military tactics and weapons from the Persians and the Parthians, including the use of

3. Aleksander Michalak, *Angels as Warriors in Late Second Temple Jewish Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

4. For the study of competitive emulation in modern military cultures, see João Resende-Santos, "Anarchy and the Emulation of Military Systems: Military Organization and Technology in South America, 1870–1930," *SS* 5.3 (1996): 193–260; Colin Elman, *The Logic of Emulation: The Diffusion of Military Practices in the International System* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

5. See Fabrizio Coticchia and Francesco N. Moro, "Learning from Others?: Emulation and Change in the Italian Armed Forces since 2001," *AFS* 42 (2016): 696–718.

elephants in battle, and Alexander's Seleucid successors would likewise emulate the Romans once their military prowess became clear. Antiochus IV, the Seleucid ruler remembered for his role as instigator of the Maccabean Revolt, offers one example—a parade he organized at Daphne in 166 BCE included five thousand soldiers clad in Roman-style armor (Polybius, *Hist.* 30.25.4)—and he was far from the only ruler to emulate the Roman army. So too did Hannibal, the Ptolemaic army, and other armies (though the evidence suggests only a partial adoption of Roman practice).⁶ Over the course of the Hellenistic Roman period, as a result of their conflicts with the Seleucid and Roman empires, the Jews had reason to organize militaries of their own, and there is reason to suspect some degree of competitive emulation taking place. In the case of the army marshaled by the Maccabees, for example, it is not possible to pin down the degree to which it was organized on the model of the foreign armies that it encountered, but there is a hint of such emulation thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially the War Scroll, a work that seems to have developed in the Maccabean era and which, it has been argued, patterned its description of weapons and tactics used by its eschatological Israelite army on a Greek or Roman model.⁷

The angels of early Jewish culture would seem to have been floating above all this, but what drew them in was their role as warriors in the Jews' conflict with foreign powers.⁸ We might dismiss as fantasy the claims of Jewish sources from the Hellenistic Roman period that angels were

6. For examples of the (partial) adoption of Roman weapons and formations by Hellenistic armies, see Nicholas Sekunda, *Hellenistic Military Reform in the 160s* (Gdansk: Foundation for the Development of Gdansk University, 2006); Phillip A. G. Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby, *Greece, the Hellenistic World and the Rise of Rome*, vol. 1 of *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 354–57. It should be noted that the evidence for Romanization of these forces is not crystal clear. For skepticism about the Romanization of the Ptolemaic army, see Christelle Fischer-Bovet, *Army and Society in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 142–48.

7. Russell Gmirkin, "The War Scroll and Roman Weaponry Reconsidered," *DSD* 3 (1996): 89–129. Bezalel Bar Kochva acknowledges the challenge of determining whether the Maccabean army emulated Hellenistic military practice. See Bar Kochva, *Judas Maccabeus: The Jewish Struggle against the Seleucids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 144. As we will see below, however, it is possible to document Jewish emulation of the Roman army.

8. See Michalak, *Angelic Warriors*, 72–81.

involved in the Jews' battles against their enemies, but there is reason to think that Jews in this period did in fact understand the angels as a bona fide military force, allies that were mostly invisible but that could make a real difference in battle, and it was the perception of the angels as a genuine army that drew them into a process of competitive emulation similar to that which reshaped Greek armies on a Roman model. This situation, I propose, not only encouraged the borrowing of military terminology in descriptions of the angels' military organization: it led to a focus on organization itself as a defining attribute of angelic culture.

The Power of Organization

By late antiquity, the angelic world was understood by Jews as an elaborate military hierarchy, segmented into different subunits and layers of command under the supervision of commanding officers. In the Babylonian Talmud, for example (b. Ber. 32b), God is said to have created a celestial organization that includes thirty-nine armies established for each of the twelve constellations, with each of the armies divided into thirty legions (*ligyôn*) that are themselves organized into infantry divisions (*rahātôn*), military camps (*kārātôn*), and forts (*gastarā*)—terms borrowed from the Roman army, as Olyan himself briefly notes.⁹ The idea that the angels are organized along military lines already seems in place by the final centuries of the Second Temple period, reflected in references to an angelic “army” and “legions” in the writing of Philo of Alexandria (e.g., *Conf.* 174), the New Testament (Matt 26:53), and other texts from the era. None of these sources describes the angelic army in much detail, but some offer glimpses of it here and there, as in the Aramaic fragments of 1 Enoch found in Cave 4 at Qumran, where the focus of the narrative is a band of angels known by the designation “Watchers”—perhaps a reference to their role as sentinels—who operate as a force led by twenty chiefs in charge of units of ten members each.¹⁰

9. Olyan, *Thousand Thousands Served Him*, 69 and n. 145.

10. Josef T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 150–51, and commentary on 156. For the possible military connotations of the term *Watchers*, see Michalak, *Angels as Warriors*, 68–69. Beyond the title's suggestion of a sentinel role, some see a connection to Persian officers described as “the eyes of the king.” See Javier Texidor, review of *The Genesis Apocryphon of Cave I: A Commentary* by J. A. Fitzmyer, *JAOS* 87 (1967): 634.

As Olyan notes, the idea that the angels were organized into an army, and the related notion that they were subdivided into different units, goes back to the Hebrew Bible, which refers in various passages to three specific classes of angelic being: cherubim, seraphim, and *hayyot*. But it is not clear that these terms as used in the Hebrew Bible refer to angels of different rank within a military-style organization; although they were eventually read in that way, in their original ancient Israelite context, they might have signified different kinds or species of celestial being without signifying anything about their rank or role in a larger structure. Whatever their original meaning, moreover, nowhere in the Hebrew Bible is there the level of interest in the ordering of the heavenly army evinced in later texts such as 3 Enoch, dated to the fifth or sixth century CE, where the angels are organized into some twenty divisions.

I propose that what prompted this interest in angelic hierarchy was the influence of Greek military culture and more precisely the value it placed on *eutaxia*, “good arrangement” or “good structure.” Though it is often translated as “discipline,” *eutaxia* also encompasses order, solidarity, fighting in close coordination with fellow soldiers, acting as a dependable part of a system—qualities that, by the fifth century BCE, Greek writers had recognized as the key to military success. The quality of *eutaxia* was exemplified by the phalanx, the rectangular formation that involved soldiers moving forward in close, coordinated formation.¹¹ The Greeks did not invent the phalanx, but they perfected it, and the cohesion it displayed was explicitly credited for the Greeks’ military success against much larger armies. A well-organized army could overcome a force with superior numbers and home-field advantage, writers such as Thucydides and Xenophon observed, and in the absence of *eutaxia*—the state of *ataxia*, rendered by translators as “disorder,” “insubordination,” or “indiscipline”—an army made itself vulnerable to defeat even when its soldiers were courageous and highly motivated. The personification of *eutaxia* was the Spartans, a reputation they seem to have attracted already in the fifth century BCE, as in Thucydides’s description of the highly stratified Spartan army, where the king is said to issue his orders to commanders known as *polemarchoi* who transmit it to *lochagoi* (captains) who transmit it to *pentekonteres* (commanders of units of fifty) who transmit it to

11. For recent scholarship on the history of the phalanx, see Adam Schwartz, *Reinstating the Hoplite: Arms, Armour and Phalanx Fighting in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2009).

enomotarchoi (unit commanders) who transmit it to the *enomotia*, the smallest unit (*Hist.* 5.66.3–4). Already by this point, *eutaxia* was reflected in a multilayered chain of command that was meant to make it crystal clear who was accountable for which tasks, and who answered to whom.

After the fifth century BCE, as Greek military culture became more professionalized, *eutaxia* came to be recognized as a technical principle that any good general would know to instill in his troops. In the *Anabasis*, Xenophon's account of his experience working as a mercenary for the Persian king, the former soldier repeatedly stresses the tactical importance of *eutaxia*, using the word or its cognates fourteen times in military contexts, and *eutaxia* also seems to have been a priority for other fourth century generals such as the Athenian Iphikrates, known for how well-drilled and obedient his troops were.¹² Over the Hellenistic age, the concept of *eutaxia* developed philosophical dimensions, signifying an orderly way of life exemplified by teachers, judges, doctors, and artists.¹³ In Athens and other Greek-speaking communities in the fourth century BCE and thereafter, there also emerged a civic competition known as *eutaxia* that involved exhibitions of gymnastic discipline.¹⁴ But despite this broadening of its meaning, *eutaxia* continued to denote military discipline, as in a letter from an official in the time of the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III urging forces stationed at Labraunda to be "well disciplined" (*eutakteite*).¹⁵ The term was used in reference to the Roman army as well, the equivalent of

12. For more on *eutaxia* and *ataxia*, see Jason Crowley, *The Psychology of the Athenian Hoplite: The Culture of Combat in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 49–54 (a discussion of the importance of *eutaxia* in Thucydides); W. Kendrick Pritchett, *The Greek State at War, Part II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 236–45 (discusses testimony of Xenophon and other sources); Luca S. di Campobianco, "The Frame of Mind of Eutaxia," in *Mass and Elite in the Greek and Roman Worlds: From Sparta to Late Antiquity*, ed. Richard Evans (London: Routledge, 2017), 21–33.

13. Giovanni Salmeri, "Empire and Collective Mentality: The Transformation of *eutaxia* from the Fifth Century BCE to the Second Century CE," in *The Province Strikes Back: Imperial Dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Björn Forsen and Giovanni Salmeri (Helsinki: Suomen Ateenan-Institut Säätiö), 137–56.

14. See Nigel B. Crowther, "Euexia, Eutaxia, Philoponia: Three Contests of the Greek Gymnasium," *ZPE* 85 (1991): 301–4.

15. Angelo Chaniatos, *War in the Hellenistic World: A Social and Cultural History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 93, citing Jonas Crampa, *Greek Inscriptions*, vol. 3.2 of *Swedish Excavations and Researches* (Lund: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 1969–1972), 46.

the Latin *disciplina militaris*. One example is Josephus's description of the Romans, which singles out the *eutaxia* of their army as the reason for their success on the battlefield (*B.J.* 1.22; 3.70–109; 5.122).¹⁶ Another is a treatise that Aelian the Tactician addressed to the emperor Hadrian, where the introduction makes it explicit that a complex structure described in the treatise was considered crucial to victory: “the ability to organize an army ... is a matter of no small consequence, for it has often been the case that a mighty but disorderly army has been defeated by a handful of men who were well disciplined and trained.”¹⁷

The *eutaxia* of an army was manifest in various ways. In Josephus's case, it was reflected in the rigorous daily schedule of its soldiers, the carefully planned layout of their camps, and the orderly progression of the marches. In other descriptions, it is reflected in a proliferation of units, ranks, and titles, as we can learn from the undated *The Tactics of Asclepiodotus*, a late work relative to the writing of Xenophon since it was composed in the first century BCE but one of the oldest surviving Greek military treatises to come down to us.¹⁸ Its focus is organization, the text offering a detailed enumeration of the various units that the land army was divided into, along with the various titles assigned to the different divisions and officers within this structure. Even a single unit of the army had many officers, titles, and layers of command moving up the levels of the army's organizational structure. Thus, for example, in the unit in charge of elephants, there was a special title reserved for a leader in charge of a single elephant (*zoarchos*), another title for a commander of two elephants (*therarchos*), another for a commander of four elephants (*epitherarchos*), and so on up to the commander of sixty-four elephants (known as a *phalangarchos*).

16. *Eutaxia* overlaps with the Latin concept of discipline, but the two are not exact equivalents. See Sara Phang, *Roman Military Service: Ideologies of Discipline in the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 51.

17. The translation of this passage, which does not appear in the Loeb edition, is taken from Christopher Matthew, *The Tactics of Aelian, or On the Military Arrangements of the Greeks: A New Translation of the Manual that Influenced Warfare for Fifteen Centuries* (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 2012), 17. This edition is eclectic, drawing from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century versions of the work, and the content of the much earlier original is hard to pin down, the oldest surviving manuscript dating to the tenth century CE.

18. *Aeneas Tacticus; Asclepiodotus, Onasander, with an English Translation by Members of the Illinois Greek Club* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

I am not suggesting by all this that it was the Greeks who introduced the idea of military organization to the Jews. The Hebrew Bible's description of ancient Israelite military practice makes it clear that its armies had divisions and officers, and one must remember as well that the Israelites and their Judean descendants had been exposed to Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian armies before the Greeks and Romans came along.¹⁹ But it was classical and Hellenistic-era Greeks—and later the Romans under Greek influence—who elevated the idea of orderliness as a key to an army's ability to achieve victory, and there is evidence that this ideal had an influence on Judean commanders. Josephus notes on several occasions that the *eutaxia* of the Roman army made a deep impression on Judean onlookers, arousing admiration, astonishment and fear (see *B.J.* 1.42; 3.488; 5.353; 6.22), and even more tellingly, he describes how he himself had consciously sought to replicate the *eutaxia* of the Romans during his time as a military commander in the Jewish revolt:

He (Josephus) understood that the Romans owed their invincible strength above all to discipline and military training; if he despaired of providing similar instruction, to be acquired only by long use, he observed that the discipline was due to the number of their officers, and he therefore divided his army on Roman lines and increased the number of his company commanders. He instituted various ranks of soldiers and set over them decurions and centurions, above whom were tribunes, and over these generals in command of more extensive divisions.... Above all he trained them for war by continually dwelling upon the good order [εὐταξίαν] maintained by the Romans. (*B.J.* 2.577–580 [Thackeray])

The passage offers a rare glimpse of ancient military emulation in action. Josephus infers that it is the organization of the Roman army that accounts for its success and then imitates that quality through a reorganization of his troops (“he therefore divided his army *on Roman lines*”), instituting Roman-style divisions, ranks, and officers, and adding new titles (decu-

19. For an overview of ancient Near Eastern military practice that sets Israelite military culture within a larger context, see Charlie Trimm, *Fighting for the King and the Gods: A Survey of Warfare in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017). We also have some evidence by which to investigate Persian influence on Judean military culture in the fifth century BCE. See Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 29–35.

rions, centurions, tributes, generals) to distinguish among the different levels of responsibility.

What I am proposing is that this emulation of *eutaxia* is reflected in the elaboration of the angelic army in the Second Temple period and late antiquity. The imitation that Josephus engages in—his impulse to proliferate ranks and titles in emulation of the Romans—is precisely mirrored in how Jews reconceived the angelic army in this period, and I suspect the motivation is similar as well, to refashion the angelic army so as to counter a military force that seemed to draw its strength from its organization and discipline. This does not mean that the emulation involved was as self-consciously deliberate as Josephus's was, but as suggested by Jewish use of *legion* and other Roman terms to describe the angels' organization, Jews did emulate armies they saw as successful, and I am suggesting that such emulation ran deeper than the sources' occasional use of foreign terminology might suggest, permeating the very impulse to structure the angelic army. Josephus was probably not the only Jew to discern that one of the traits most responsible for the success of Greek and Roman armies was *eutaxia*, and consciously or not, the angelic army seems to have been reconceived according to this ideal, ascribed the same multilayered structure and hyperspecialization recognized as signifiers of *eutaxia* according to Greeks and Romans from the period.

Expanding on the angelic army in this way was not simply an act of religious fantasy. Even if such an army did not directly intervene in battle, a soldier's perception that he was fighting as part of a large and well-organized army, or that the enemy was doing so, could have its own kind of tactical effect by changing the emotional dynamics of the battle. As argued by Luca di Campobianco, *eutaxia* was closely associated with a certain mindset, a state of emotional balance and self-control.²⁰ To *feel* that one was fighting as part of a well-organized unit increased soldiers' confidence and inured them against emotional shocks. Greek and Roman commanders were aware of the psychological dimensions of *eutaxia* and made a point of *displaying* it precisely in order to boost the enthusiasm of their troops and to intimidate the enemy. An example comes from Josephus himself. At a certain point during his siege of Jerusalem, the general Titus decided to parade his army in front of the Jews holed up in the city in order to show them how well-equipped and how *well-organized* his troops were.

20. Di Campobianco, "Frame of Mind of Eutaxia," 21–33.

The performance was very gratifying to Titus's own men (*B.J.* 5.351) and so terrifying to the Jews that many were all but ready to surrender: "Even the hardest were struck with dismay at the sight of this assemblage of all the forces, the beauty of their armor, and the good order [εὐταξίαν] of the men," Josephus notes, and he adds: "I cannot think but the seditious would have changed their minds at that sight" (5.353–354 [Thackeray]). What is worth noting about this passage is its recognition of the psychological impact of seeing an army's *eutaxia*: it communicated an invincible power that nearly overwhelmed the Jewish rebels and was probably reassuring to the Roman troops within Titus's procession as they watched the enemy watching them and growing more dismayed.

Recognizing the psychological dimension of *eutaxia* gives us a way to understand the elaboration of angelic brigades as a tactically consequential act. Jews at the time could not hope to counter the power of the foreign armies that dominated them by matching their numbers, training, or their terrifying catapults and elephants, but they did attempt to do so supernaturally, by allying themselves with the angelic army even larger and better organized than the enemy. Summoning a heavenly army to one's side did little to deter an enemy who could not see the angels, but for Jews able to discern their presence, the knowledge that they were being accompanied by a large numbers of well-organized angelic troops had a significant psychological impact, as one can see from a passage in *Sefer Ha-Razim*: "If you wish to go on a journey (or) to war ... and you want it to appear that a large and powerful army is with you, so that all who see you will be afraid of you, as of one who has with him a military escort armed with swords and spears and all the implements of battle, (then) before you depart from the city or from the place you dwell, purify yourself."²¹ Such testimony suggests that Jews were themselves aware at some level that the angels' power was manifest in the kinds of feelings their presence could arouse—here the feelings of fear and intimidation, ascribed a deterrent role that operates independently of whether the angels themselves do anything more than make an appearance. We do not have any way to know whether this passage's prescription for how to summon the appearance of an angelic army actually worked to intimidate would-be attackers, but what seems likely to have made it effective is not its impact on the enemy's mindset but its

21. Michael Morgan, *Sefer Ha-Razim* (Chico, CA; Scholars Press, 1983), 78–79, emphasis added.

capacity to instill confidence in the person performing the ritual. Thinking that one knew how to summon the appearance of a large angelic army was heartening in its own right.

Before trying to connect these observations to Olyan's work on angelic names, I cannot resist appending one more idea about how the Hellenistic concept of *eutaxia* may have affected the development of early Jewish angelology. The embrace of *eutaxia* as a quality of the ideal army brought with it a heightened allergy to *ataxia*, disorder that was considered especially dangerous when it came from within. Even an unintended act of dereliction—a soldier falling asleep on duty—could undermine the entire army because each soldier operated as a part of an interdependent whole, which is why commanders would be so harsh in their response to such an act. Thus, for example, Xenophon tells us that he was severe in punishing *ataxia* because he recognized that it led to death for all (*Anab.* 5.18.13); both Alexander the Great and Iphikrates were known for killing men caught sleeping on duty, and Josephus claims that the Romans owed the *eutaxia* of their army to their unforgiving response to small infractions: “They have laws which punish with death not merely desertion of the ranks but even a slight neglect of duty” (*B.J.* 3.103 [Thackeray]). The emphasis on order, on everyone knowing their place in the system, led to much more severe disciplining by commanders seeking to set an example for their troops in order to maintain *eutaxia*.

Of course, disciplinary problems are as old as armies themselves are, but the amateur armies of pre-Hellenistic Greece seem to have been less preoccupied by it: the soldiers of such armies, drawing from independent-minded citizens of the city, could be punished by the commander for disobedience, but they felt empowered to speak up against orders they did not like and held generals accountable by filing lawsuits back home.²² The more professionalized military culture of the Hellenistic period seems much more sensitive to the dangers posed by independent-mindedness, by soldiers pursuing their own interests at the expense of the whole, and this is reflected in the era's attention to stories of defection and insurgency such as the mutinies that Alexander had to overcome.²³

22. On the unruliness of Athenian troops, see Crowley, *Psychology of the Athenian Hoplite*, 107.

23. Sara Phang et al., *Conflict in Ancient Greece and Rome: The Definitive Political, Social and Military Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clío, 2016), 252–53. For examples of insubordination from the Hellenistic period, see Elizabeth Carney,

This concern with *ataxia* has a counterpart in the angelic world as conceived in the Hellenistic Roman period. We have already had occasion to mention 1 Enoch, which describes an angelic insurrection against God in the days before Noah's flood. The inspiration for the story is a brief biblical episode in Gen 6:1–4, which refers to how the sons of God mated with the daughters of men, but there is nothing in the biblical account that dictates how the episode was expanded on in the Hellenistic period, when it became a story of an angelic military unit rebelling against God. How does one account for the story's transformation into an angelic rebellion? Scholars argue that the story has been expanded under the influence of mythology, Mesopotamian and Greek stories of lower gods rebelling against higher gods such as the myth of the Titan Prometheus. I would not contest the claim of mythological influence—Jews in the Hellenistic period were familiar with the Titan myth; indeed, a Greek fragment of 1 Enoch even uses the word *Titans* in place of the word *giants*²⁴—but I would propose another influence on the story, the era's anxieties about *ataxia*.

In this connection, it is worth noting that the motive for the angelic rebellion in 1 Enoch, though derived through a reading of Gen 6, happens to call to mind one of the causes of *ataxia* in Greek and Roman armies—the love of women. Many of the insurrections of the Hellenistic age were motivated by soldiers' dissatisfaction with their treatment or pay, but romantic and family attachments could also undermine a soldier's loyalty, discipline, or sense of obligation. We know from Roman literature of cases where armies suffered defeat because a general or soldier got involved in a love affair that caused him to be derelict in duty, and soldiers' erotic attachments with non-Romans were considered humiliating and dangerous for the army (as illustrated by the story of Antony and Cleopatra).²⁵ There is no way to prove that the story of rebellious angels in 1 Enoch arose under the direct influence of this kind of experience, but it is striking that such a

"Macedonians and Mutiny: Discipline and Indiscipline in the Army of Philip and Alexander," *CP* 91 (1996): 19–44.

24. Jan Bremmer, "Remember the Titans!," in *The Fall of the Angels*, ed. Christoph Auffarth and Loren Stuckenbruck (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 35–61.

25. Angelos Chaniotis, "Foreign Soldiers and Native Girls? Constructing and Crossing Boundaries in Hellenistic Cities with Foreign Garrisons," in *Army and Power in the Ancient World*, ed. Chaniotis and Pierre Ducrey (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 99–113; Sara Phang, *The Marriage of Roman Soldiers (13 BC–AD 235): Law and Family in the Imperial Army* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 362–66.

story emerged at a time when the obedience and discipline of garrisoned troops were being tested by the personal relationships they developed with the local populations among whom they were stationed.

Whether or not one buys a connection between the story of angelic rebellion and Greek anxieties about *ataxia*, the corollary notion of *eutaxia* helps to fill in a missing piece of the puzzle in our understanding of the history of angels in the Second Temple period. How does one get from the angels as described in the Hebrew Bible to the highly structured and precisely organized angelic army of the late Second Temple and rabbinic periods? The various factors identified in earlier scholarship as influences on the development of early Jewish angelology—the experience of exile, Persian influence, early Jews' compulsion to fill in the details of the biblical text—do not fully explain the elaboration of units and ranks, but such a transformation does make sense within the context of Hellenistic Roman culture military culture, where we can explain the change as an emulation of a quality recognized in the era as a key to victory. We know from Josephus's firsthand testimony that such emulation occurred: the point I am adding is that it prompted the heightened organization not only of this-worldly armies such as the one he led but also of the celestial army, the angelic forces that early Jews relied on to match the power of the well-organized Greek and Roman armies they faced in battle.

A Thousand Thousands Served Him Revisited

My goal in this essay is not to just to shed light on the early history of angels but also to pay tribute to Olyan, and with that goal in mind, I return to *A Thousand Thousands Served Him* to see whether what we have learned here sheds any new light on what that work uncovers.

As Olyan suggests, there were probably a number of factors involved in the early Jewish impulse to give names to individual angels. One might speculate that the impulse to name individual angels reflects the increased focus on the individual that hellenization is supposed to have encouraged, related to the impulse that led Greek artists to sign their names to their creations, though such a theory runs afoul of recent scholarship which questions the association of Hellenism with rising individualism.²⁶

26. See Luther H. Martin, "The Anti-individualistic Ideology of Hellenistic Culture," *Numen* 41 (1994): 117–40.

Another explanation builds on the importance of angelic names in magical practice during the Hellenistic Roman period: knowing an angel's name, being able to call it by its name, made it possible to enlist its power, and people therefore sought out such names for us in incantations, spells, and exorcistic rites. An example is the late antique text *Sefer Ha-Razim*, which lists some seven hundred angelic names, where the knowledge of the angels' names is crucial to the performance of the magical practices it prescribes.²⁷ But what we have seen reveals another possible context for the enumeration of names: being able to identify angels by name may reflect another way in which early Jewish angelology mirrors Hellenistic Roman military culture and its focus on *eutaxia*, on organizing an army as tightly as possible.

Part of maintaining a well-coordinated army was knowing who everyone was, information that modern armies translate into serial numbers but which for the Roman army meant keeping track of soldiers by name, filiation, place of origin, the year of enlistment, and/or the name of their centurion. The ideal commander was one who knew such information—the emperor Alexander Severus showed himself an exemplary leader by knowing the names and service records of every one of his soldiers (Hist. Aug. 21.6–8)—and the Roman army seem to have invested a considerable amount of effort in compiling and maintaining such information, conducting regular roll calls or musters, as reflected in written reports that we know about from fragments found at various sites.²⁸ The only genre of report we know by name is the *pridianum*, a yearly report of an army's strength that does not list individual soldiers by name, only the overall numbers of troops categorized according to those who were present, absent, transferred, or promoted, but there is evidence that clerks kept lists of individual names, as in military records from the twentieth Palmyrene cohort stationed at Dura Europos in the early third century CE: two rosters found there, appearing on the two sides of a papyrus roll that may

27. See Rebecca Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 300–310; Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 307, 376–78.

28. G. R. Watson, "Documentation in the Roman Imperial Army," *ANRW* 2.1:493–507; Phang, *Roman Military Service*, 205–8. For more on the kind of documents used to keep track of the strength of military units, see Alan K. Bowman and J. David Thomas, "A Military Strength Report from Vindolanda," *JRS* 81 (1991): 62–73.

have originally been five and a half meters long, list more than thousand individual soldiers on each side.²⁹ It would seem that at least by the Roman period, running a well-organized army meant assembling and collating large amounts of information about the names of individual soldiers.

The surviving military rosters of the Roman army bring to mind works such as *Sefer Ha-Razim*, with its list of seven hundred names. Although its goal is to instruct its readers in how to summon the help of the angels to address personal problems rather than to fight military campaigns, the fact that it describes the angels as a military force, organizing them into camps and armies, justifies a comparison with Roman military literature. While we cannot pursue such a comparison at any length here, I would note that *Sefer Ha-Razim*, which might come from the same period as the Dura Europos rosters, does parallel them to some degree: the long lists of soldiers recorded in the latter includes information about where each soldier was stationed and who their commanding officer was, and likewise, the lengthy listing of angels in *Sefer Ha-Razim* notes where the angels were posted within the different levels of heaven and who their commanding angelic officers were. It is at least conceivable, the parallel suggests, that some early Jews felt it was important to be able to identify the names of specific angels and angelic ranks for the same reason that the Roman army expended so much effort to register individual soldiers' names and ranks—not because they were more individualistic per se but because keeping track of individual angelic names allowed them to better track what their forces were, who was doing what, and who was available to be called up for a given mission.

From the Second Temple period onward, as Olyan has helped us to see, Jewish interpreters scrutinized biblical texts for information about the names of individual angels and angelic units. Why were they looking for such information? What we see here suggests part of the explanation lies in the organizational ethos introduced by Greek and Roman military culture. Running a large and well-organized army required

29. Sara Phang, "Military Documents, Languages and Literacy," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 286–305, esp. 290. For a description of the two military rosters from Dura Europos, P. Dura 100 and 101, see James F. Gilliam, "Dura Rosters and the *Constitutio Antoniniana*," in *Roman Military Papers* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1986), 289–307. The papyri are published in Robert Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), nos. 1 and 2.

knowing in detail how to identify soldiers and where exactly they were assigned within the larger structure, and what is preserved of military documentation from the Roman period shows how much effort was invested in collecting, recording, and updating such data. That Jews in the Hellenistic Roman era felt it important to be able to identify angels and place them within the command structure of the celestial army may not be coincidence. For reasons that may have been tactical as much as they were theological, they too had reason to ascertain as precisely as possible the strength of their forces.

The comparison developed in this essay suggests that there is much more yet to learn about the history of angels by putting its study into new conversations with historical study of how humans think, behave, and organize. But this is a lesson already implicit in Olyan's work, and making it explicit here really comes down to acknowledging how much I have learned from his scholarship, not just about angels but also, even more so, about humans.

What Is the Relation of God to the Ghost That Saul Did Not See?

Stanley Stowers

In light of scholarly tradition in the relevant areas, this question surely seems strange, even off-kilter. But what if thinking about this question by way of the broader norms endemic to the disciplinary matrices of the university aided understanding how to approach the question, What is a god? On that question, one would think that any progress would be welcome. After roughly two centuries of the modern university, it seems to me that almost no progress has been made on this question in biblical studies and cognate areas. In light of the broader norms in the university that lack of progress should seem rather bizarre. Both in biblical studies and even in the field represented by departments of religious studies, the question has until recently hardly even been rigorously thematized. How could that be? How could areas that study the human phenomenon of religiosity not have even theorized a category that has to be central to its research? Think of other fields of study. One does not expect agreement but at least a consensus about the contenders for the definitions and theorizations of major concepts in the area of study. Imagine political science without understandings about such things as democracy, kingship, and political economy. One can go from one field to another and find the central terms clearly delineated and discussed in ways that allow for explanation, but not the concept of a god in biblical studies and cognate areas.

Our situation in this respect tells a great deal about the field. Biblical studies began as areas of normative religious scholarship and teaching in Christian and Jewish institutions or institutions that made a place for such normative work. One did not theorize what a god was or is and then talk about God. God of the holy writings and theology was the unquestionable assumption. There is God, and then there are the

mistaken conceptions of beings called gods to be found in numerous cultures. But the norms that have developed in the modern nonsectarian university do not allow such particularism and isolation from what goes on in the rest of the university. In every field one must study all of the comparable data evenhandedly, classify and theorize across that data, and then assess how local or how general across all comparable data the fitting categories are. A department of botany that studied the real trees of Denmark but the so-called trees everywhere else surely would not find acceptance. Of course, this example is silly, and numerous sophisticated and widely knowledgeable scholars characterize both Hebrew Bible and New Testament scholarship. Nevertheless, on the question "What is a god?" I find us lacking partly as a result of isolation and false notions of privileged autonomy.

By way of contrast, Saul Olyan's scholarship stands as an exemplary model of reaching out to other areas in the university, of taking responsibility for intellectual standards by promoting useful theory and of using and promoting critically selected comparison across cultural areas. I have enjoyed the privilege of being Saul's colleague for many years and of continually learning from his scholarship and model of collegiality.

To address the question in the title of this article one must theorize both god and relation. But one entails the other because the analysis and explanation of a category illuminates what belongs to the class and why. In many years of reading discussions about gods in the various fields about antiquity, I have seen much frustration and confusion. The frustration often stems from a method that only seeks to describe, for instance, how historical sources across the Mediterranean or West Asia use terms and representations, and then asking what is common and different. But the broader norms of the university would tell us that it is impossible to stay at the descriptive and interpretive level, no matter how necessary and important, with temporally and regionally local data and to explain the category "god." The impossibility comes from the fact that unlike Assur, Baal, and YHWH, and ancient generalizing terms for the category, that "god" is not unique to West Asia. That fact must be central to any understanding of the category, even for research about West Asia that meets the norms of the modern university. One must explain why the ancient West Asian concept shares stable and central properties with categories documented, if not universally, then widely across the globe and recorded history. If one treated the trees of Denmark or the category "family" in the sources for ancient West Asia as unique to those areas, one could never

truly understand the phenomena. Knowing what trees and families are partly involves explaining their ubiquity.

Discussions of the category in West Asian evidence display some common tendencies, illustrated by two of the most distinguished scholars in the field, Mark Smith and Karel van der Toorn.¹ By “What is a god?” scholars, including Smith and van der Toorn, usually mean what the category meant in ancient West Asia or parts thereof, even though Christian and Western conceptions of God form a subtext that sometimes becomes explicit. This subtext includes the doctrine that the late Hebrew Bible and Judaism eventually became monotheistic. A narrative about evolution from cruder conceptions of God to (a higher and more spiritual) monotheism frames the discussions either explicitly or implicitly. Both Smith and van der Toorn valiantly and intelligently try to resist and complicate the subtexts, but the texts still haunt their work. I cannot discuss these complex topics, but the discussions are incomprehensible without recognizing these subtexts. Smith and van der Toorn recognize the problem and wrestle with the distorting lens of the narrative.

In an excursus, “What Is a God?,” Smith surveys terminology in the Hebrew Bible and points to similarities in Ugaritic and Akkadian materials.² The category can be quite broad with everything from ghosts to demons. YHWH in many texts clearly belongs to the category. But Smith gives little explanation of the category and does not find a folk theory of gods in the sources. The closest to a theory comes when he writes, “one might suggest that divinity in biblical and ancient Near Eastern terms was thought, metaphysically speaking, to be constituted by power: humans and other non-deities characterized as *’elohim* in some respects participate in the power of, or associated with, the divine power recognized as a god.”³ A god is a power or displays great power. Van der Toorn also finds power to be a chief characteristic but settles on “perfected humans” as a better definition.⁴ Smith frames the definition in terms of ontology. Of what do

1. Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Karel van der Toorn, “Speaking of Gods: Dimensions of the Divine in the Ancient Near East,” in *Open-Mindedness in the Bible and Beyond: A Volume of Studies in Honour of Bob Becking*, ed. Marjo Korpel and Lester Grabbe, LHBOTS 616 (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 273–85.

2. Smith, *God in Translation*, 11–15.

3. Smith, *God in Translation*, 14.

4. Van der Toorn, “Speaking of Gods,” 282, 284.

gods consist? One can understand how the concept of participation helps in relating humans and other beings to the divine/power. But the concept comes from Platonism, and I do not find it in the historical materials, the idea of particular gods and related beings sharing in an underlying state or being of divinity.

I will argue that findings from the cognitive sciences can help with the question. These areas have already begun to revolutionize parts of the humanities and are areas of the biological revolution from the past half-century. Our current intellectual situation, I think, resembles the period after Copernicus and then Galileo. Then only reactionaries could envision going back to a small earth and human-centered cosmos with heavenly perfection just above the clouds. Instead of a qualitatively and profoundly higher perfection, Galileo saw through his telescope rocks, erosion, gravity, and other evidence of earthly principles. Enormous amounts of knowledge awaited future research, and both men were mistaken about a large number of things, but there was no going back. So today, and in some ways more radically than for the aftermath of Galileo's work, we know that we share 95 percent of our DNA with the great apes and that we humans, like other animals, are not crafted from a rationally planned blueprint but consist of numerous good tricks pieced together in the course of evolution so as to address specific opportunities and challenges of environments. We do not know a huge amount about the brain/mind, but with the new understanding we do have, we cannot go back.

In the very few pages allowed here, I will attempt to provide the barest outline of relevant findings. I cannot discuss the body of experimental evidence that supports the findings. Some readers will be quite familiar with what I write, but knowing humanists, many will not. The account can be divided into two broad topics: (1) the way that the brain/mind represents, uses memory, and acquires input; and (2) inherent features of the brain/mind that encourage beliefs about gods and similar beings. Our traditional intuitive and philosophical conceptions of the mind as a blank slate, culture sponge, and general-purpose reasoning faculty have been proven radically mistaken.⁵ These intuitive and traditional conceptions implicitly guide the way that humanists do historical analysis and textual work, their assumptions about cultures and minds. Instead, the mind relies on a fairly

5. See, e.g., Nobel Prize-winner Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking Fast, Thinking Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011).

large (how large is a matter of debate) number of intuitive mental tools that work automatically, fast, unconsciously, and efficiently. When we hear someone talking, we cannot but hear it as speech/language, and we do not have to reason to know that. People with certain types of brain damage cannot recognize faces, even of their husbands or wives. Numerous tools work like facial recognition, including the tendency to attribute agency and mind to the world.⁶ Conscious thought, explicit learning, and reflective thought play a much smaller role than traditionally assumed, have much-researched inherent biases, and depend on intuitive thought. Intuitive cognition comes easily, and its development has been well charted by psychologists from infancy on. Conscious learning comes with great cognitive labor and mixed results. And here is a key point for humanists and social scientists: Some mental representations (e.g., beliefs) are easily acquired, stored in long-term semantic memory, and easily recalled, while representations not grounded in intuitive tools but modified by reflective thought are often difficult to acquire, retain, and recall. This includes kinds of cognition about gods and similar beings. Certain kinds of thinking about gods come rather spontaneously, but others with great difficulty and lack of intuitive relevance. One cannot, for instance, assume that the teachings of Isaiah are “what Judeans believed.” Individuals can even know about nonintuitive representations of gods and similar beings, say, from a writing, and yet such knowledge often plays no active role in their imagined interactions with such beings outside of some intellectualizing context. This is the much-researched idea of conceptual unorthodoxy.⁷

The question as to why belief in gods, ghosts, ancestors, spirits, and so on is ubiquitous in cultures across history and the globe ought to be central to areas that study religion. Cognitive psychology and cognitive science of religion have the first highly plausible theories about the issue that are falsifiable since they are based on experimental evidence. The mind has no inherent tool for beliefs about gods, but side effects of tools evolved to address other needs encourage the formation and use of such beliefs.⁸ No evolved mental tool exists for the appreciation of music,

6. See, e.g., Todd Tremblin, *Minds and Gods: The Cognitive Foundations of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

7. D. Jason Slone, *Theological Incorrectness: Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

8. The uninitiated are easily confused by those who have argued for cultural evolution or for some directly adaptive advantage to religious belief/practice. Cul-

but side effects of tools evolved for other uses make music important for human cultures. Cognitive tools for detecting agency and tools for “reading minds” support a propensity to see things happening in the world with unseen agents causing them for human-like purposes. Mind reading allows us to effortlessly attribute beliefs, desires, aims, and so on to others. “He believes that I believe the story that X told.” “She must have done Y because she believes that I thought Z.” Variation across the human population in mind reading ranges from autism, in which the ability to attribute mind is weak or missing so that social interaction is difficult or impossible, to schizophrenia, in which mind reading is so hyperactive that individuals hear bushes and rocks speaking to them and talk back.⁹ According to the theory, just enough mental bias exists due to misdirected tools that imagining an unseen agent as cause is likely to arise often and spontaneously. Why were the crops so bountiful this year? Why did the wheat wither and die? This is not religion, but when such beliefs begin to play a part in social practices and cultural formations, then one has what we would call religion. The representations become culturally transmitted regularities manifest in practices.

Paul Bloom has gained fame along with other researchers for showing how infants and small children distinguish an inner essence in humans and other agents from the visible body.¹⁰ Researchers have had similar results with adults. Much work has been done on mental tools that provide us with an intuitive physics and ontological categories formed even in small children. The side effects of these tools explain why belief in such things as souls, the dead having an existence outside the body, gods with ethereal bodies, and so on is as widespread as belief in gods more narrowly.¹¹ When dead humans can be thought of in this way, then encouraged by agency detection and mind-reading biases, they can easily join the ranks

tural evolution is *not* neo-Darwinian and *not* accepted by most biologists and cognitive scientists. The adaptionists have not made plausible cases and tend to have culturally/historically naive ideas about religion. For one view, see Radek Kundt, *Contemporary Evolutionary Theories of Culture and the Study of Religion* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

9. Robert N. McCauley, *Why Religion Is Natural and Science Is Not* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 254–68.

10. E.g., Paul Bloom, *Descartes’ Baby: How Child Development Explains What Makes Us Human* (London: Heinemann, 2004).

11. Jesse Bering, *The God Instinct: The Psychology of Souls, Destiny and the Meaning of Life* (London: Brealey, 2011). Core insights regarding ghosts and souls seem to

of unseen agents. The theory does not make religion necessary or universal, but it explains the ubiquity of religion and allows for enormous cultural variation.

Another theory with experimental evidence finds that beliefs about gods and nonevident beings have particular characteristics in relation to the types of memory.¹² From infancy individuals possess and develop fundamental ontological categories such as that something is an agent, a living thing, a nonliving thing, an artifact. With these intuitive ontological categories come sets of intuitive inferences about properties that belong to each category. Agents can initiate action from themselves, but artifacts never do. Living things come into existence at some point and then die at another time. God-concepts have the character of beliefs that moderately violate the inferences belonging to ontological categories, for example, a living thing that never dies, a person with a body of fire, an artifact (spear) that has a mind or that acts. Concepts with these qualities grab attention but have the inferential potential of the violated concept (e.g., inferences about a person) and are easily remembered, stored, and recalled. The minimal oddness seems to be the key.

How then do these findings address the confusions and frustrations of the scholars who have had the courage to discuss god-concepts in West Asia? What about defining gods as powers or as perfect human beings? That gods are powers at first might seem to solve the problem of anthropomorphism. Niagara Falls is a power, and lightening a power, and so on, but they are not human-like in the necessary ways. Could they be gods? Not unless they do things in order to accomplish their purposes. A power that is just there but does not do or know or desire anything would just be the inanimate object that it is. The cognitive theory entails that a concept in the god category minimally possesses characteristics of human mind and agency. Whatever other attributed characteristics, a god must possess such things as aims, desires, purposes, and knowledge. But it is a matter of more or less mind and agency. The imagined being might have a fully human-like mind with moods, emotions, and so on, or only a few

be good in Bering, but the book overreaches. The relevant psychological features are best taken as by-products, not directly conferring fitness.

12. Tremlin, *Minds and Gods*, 86–93. Also see Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). Boyer pioneered the minimally counterintuitive theory, and it has seen a great deal of debate and continuing experimental testing since that introduction.

characteristics. X nonevident being did or could potentially do Y for some purpose. Religious intellectuals have sometimes even gone to cognitively unintuitive extremes: God is just the abstract purpose that lies behind the whole universe.

Great power is not essential to the category, although it might seem to be because the sources that have survived and that have most interested scholars—of cities, empires, temples, and literary sources—typically feature powerful, even cosmic and celestial gods. But the cognitive theory and empirical evidence show otherwise. Dead humans appear as weak creatures in many cultures, even though some can be special and powerful. Around the world many types of spirits and local nonevident beings as, for instance, water sprites, African swamp spirits, jinn, naiads, elves, and Japanese kami often do not display much power, and what they have is quite local in effect.¹³ But one often finds such nonevident beings placed in the larger category of gods, and the theory explains why. The essential and persistent properties of gods/nonevident beings are mental, together with agency and some form of invisibility. Why invisibility? You cannot see desires, purposes, knowledge, and so forth, and they form the core. The tree may be a god, but one cannot see the mental characteristics that make it more than just a tree. The relatively stable cores of the god/nonevident being concepts mean that powers, from cosmic to very limited and local, and many other characteristics can exhibit great cultural and historical variability.

Such variability applies to the intuitive folk ontology that might be applied to gods/nonevident beings. What kind of bodies do they have? Do they consist of a special kind of air/breath/wind? In folk physics, the latter has often been thought to have the powers of self-movement, of life (breath ceases at death), and of intelligence. Or is it some type of self-perpetuating fire? Fire seems mysterious, with powers and agency of its own, if you have not been instructed in its modern science. When can gods/nonevident beings allow humans to see them in some form? After Plato's counterintuitive physics, gods might have no body at all. Gods, on that view, are what moderns would call spiritual. Much is culturally variable, but gods/nonevident beings always have these three powers: some degree of mind, some degree of agency, and some kind of invisibility. The latter often proves to

13. On ghosts and low-level nonevident beings, see Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 73–75, 84.

be the most important power that they have. Gods/nonevident beings can see what humans are doing, but humans cannot see them watching, and therefore gods can know a great deal about humans that is not known to humans.¹⁴ Thus divinatory practices seem to be found in all traditional cultures, and one should not think here primarily of techniques in temples or used by kings or of highly placed diviners, but everyday signs and messages such as in dreams, the flight of birds, the shapes of clouds, sounds in the wind, and on and on. Gods/nonevident beings can provide knowledge to help humans negotiate their everyday lives. Should I plant in that field this year? Is the neighbor plotting against me? Should I undertake the trip? All gods/nonevident beings can potentially provide such information.

The problem of anthropomorphism has in quite particular ways pervasively haunted the areas related to the study of religion in West Asia. The whole volume *What Is a God?* devotes itself to the problem.¹⁵ How could these cultures portray the deity in such human-like, even fallibly human-like ways? How did they deal with such a problematic and often debased representation of the divine? Does this primitive view provide clues about the origins and early history of religion in West Asia? Are there signs of development toward more sophisticated conceptions? Discussions have been complicated by two meanings given to *anthropomorphism*: (1) gods depicted in human bodily form and (2) attributing human-like characteristics to gods in general, including mental characteristics. The first seems odd until one understands the historical background of aniconism in Judaism and Christianity. The latter has been the normal meaning of the term in most areas of the academy.¹⁶

The supposed problem arises from scholars (usually unconsciously) holding to assumptions about the divine that have been normative in Christianity and Western culture. We can blame the Greeks.¹⁷ In the seventh century BCE, pre-Socratic philosophers began to critique traditional religion for its anthropomorphism, claiming that the workings of the

14. Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 150–55.

15. Barbara Nevling Porter, ed., *What Is a God? Anthropomorphic and Non-anthropomorphic Aspects of Deity in Ancient Mesopotamia*, TCBAI 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009).

16. Stewart Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

17. Jennifer Larson, *Understanding Greek Religion* (London: Routledge, 2016), 66–70.

world could be explained by physical forces. Philosophers often retained something that they called God, characterized as the chief principle and sometimes possessing characteristics of mind such as being creative forces (i.e., purpose) or rational ordering principles. God must be “perfect, rational, good, unchanging—and ultimately—nonmaterial.”¹⁸ Some Jewish intellectuals (e.g., Aristeas, Wisdom of Solomon, Philo) adopted these critiques of common intuitive religiosity, and they became central to the intellectual traditions that dominated Christianity.

These Christian understandings of the divine were deeply shaped by Platonism. Plato’s revolutionary idea was ontological. There are not only physical things in the universe but also things consisting of something like thought. Plato, of course, did not know about neurons and the physical workings of the brain. To him and legions afterward, a thought seemed to exist but, unlike physical things, did not occupy three-dimensional space in time and could not be acted on by physical forces. Only after Plato’s idea could people imagine gods without bodies of some sort, the more spiritual view of Christianity that van der Toorn notes.¹⁹ Plato had a theory of an entirely nonphysical mental order of things. Traditionally across the Mediterranean, West Asia, and other places, people assumed that gods had very special bodies with extension in space and time that were subject to physical forces, even if some gods might be more powerful than any forces.

Gods have been imagined in all kinds of forms—mind is essential, form optional—such as of enormous humans or mountains or rivers or animals and so on. In many cultures, religious practice gave *abstract form* (an idea, a pillar, a symbol) to their representations.²⁰ This has been called aniconism. A rock or a tree trunk could work well as a god because the counterintuitiveness that gives otherness, cognitive attention, and memorability is so visible.²¹ Some Greek philosophers and some writers in the Hebrew Bible added an ideology of selective aniconism. The philosophers said that god was of a quality so much higher than anything in the humanly known world that representation with the latter dishonored god. The world consists of a hierarchy of qualitatively greater and lesser substances. Such aniconic ideology was often mixed with the Platonic ontology in Christian

18. Larson, *Understanding Greek Religion*, 69.

19. Van der Toorn, “Speaking of Gods,” 274–76, 85.

20. Milette Gaifman, *Aniconism in Greek Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

21. Larson, *Understanding Greek Religion*, 71.

theology, and a version has been inherited in modernity as one package—God is spiritual. This package of “higher, more spiritual” thought about the divine has deeply shaped the background assumptions for much scholarship about the gods in West Asia and has partly constituted the problem of anthropomorphism.

One of the issues important in *What Is a God?* comes from the discovery of numerous written descriptions of artifacts such as of thrones, temple towers, drums, and many other examples from Mesopotamia clearly designated as or treated as gods/nonevident beings. Barbara Porter impressively catalogues and analyzes what she calls “non-anthropomorphic” objects that over millennia Mesopotamian cultures clearly placed in the category of gods. Many of these were rather consistently given food and other gifts/offerings just as were the so-called anthropomorphic gods.²²

In an important book, Jennifer Singletary shows just how confused the whole approach to West Asian gods has been and how illuminating the cognitive science can be.²³ In light of the cognitive theory, it makes perfect sense to treat an artifact such as a spear or a drum as having some qualities of human mind and probably some degree of agency, more or less. The outward form of a conventional artifact serves as a kind of invisibility. But to give offerings to such artifacts implies that they have desires and take pleasure in things. The action also implies that the artifacts have perceptual abilities. The evidence fails on this point, but it would not be surprising if those who tended the divine artifacts intuited that they could see what people were doing and cause things to happen under certain circumstances. Evidence also fails for understanding how the humans around them conceived of the artifacts’ relation to the great gods, although, as with a spear belonging to a god, they might have been considered assistants. YHWH had his cherubim as assistants, including as pieces of divine furniture (throne, e.g., 1 Sam 4:4) but also as a source of transportation (e.g., Ps 18:10). If the key to intuitions that something is a god is that it possesses mind and can to some degree act, then why not a spear as well as a fantastic composite animal?

What light does the preceding discussion cast on the question about Samuel’s ghost? Two questions confront us. First, does the ghost belong

22. Barbara Porter, “Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum,” in Porter, *What Is a God?*, 153–94.

23. Jennifer Singletary, *Objects of Their Trust: Manufactured Objects, Divine Qualities, and Attributes as Deities in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

to a native category of god? Since one should never assume cultural consistency and uniformity, a better form of the question asks: Would some in the culture on some occasions have deemed a ghost to be in the god category? Second, from the interpretive and explanatory norms typical of contemporary historians, does the ghost belong to such a category? Explanation, unlike interpretation (a form of description), usually finds the native categories to be inadequate for its purposes.²⁴

Contrary to interpreters going back to at least 1 Chr 10:13–14, 1 Sam 28:3–25 does not tell a story about the illegitimacy of necromancy.²⁵ Even the term prejudices the reading in two ways. It has too much (negative) normative baggage, and the concept involves ignoring the social kind to which it belongs and thus undermines accurate sociohistorical description. Consulting the dead for knowledge belongs to the category of divinatory practice (as also prophecy), both on native terms and by critical historical norms of classification.²⁶ By narrative placement, the story serves to contrast YHWH's refusal to listen to Saul and communicate with him, to David's great success on both counts (1 Sam 23:2–4, 9–12; 30:7–8). The refusal signifies that YHWH has abandoned Saul due to his disobedience. As noted, because humans cannot normally see gods/nonevident beings, but they can see and know what humans are doing, divinatory practices have been hugely important in the history of religion. But as heirs to traditions controlled by literate experts in authoritative texts who have discouraged divination by individuals and often attempted to monopolize religious knowledge via their books (e.g., on behalf of temples, kings, elite classes), we must resist following their attempts to minimize the practices. Saul recounts his failures with dreams, Urim (a kind of dice?), and prophets (1 Sam 28:15; see 28:6). Like a prophet, the woman from Endor is a kind of medium for a message from YHWH. Both are divinatory experts.

Consulting the dead for bits of knowledge by way of dreams and other means has occurred regularly in numerous traditional cultures.²⁷ The dead have certain advantages when it comes to information. Quite local in a

24. For a broad discussion of these and related issues, see my "Religion as a Social Kind" (paper presented at the symposium *Religion before Religion*, Bowdoin College, 14–15 October 2016) and other venues.

25. A point well made in Esther J. Hamori, "The Prophet and the Necromancer: Women's Divination for Kings," *JBL* 132 (2013): 827–43.

26. E.g., Hamori, "Prophet and the Necromancer," 827–28.

27. Boyer, *Religion Explained*, 150–60.

way that gods are often not, one might go to their tombs. The dead are also often familiar. As with Saul, one might have known the person while alive and have had a relationship. Compared to gods, weakness often characterizes the dead. In Isa 14:10, the shades in Sheol say to a new arrival, "You also have become weak like us."²⁸ Sometimes the average seeker or an expert can convince or compel a dead one. Samuel suggests such weakness when he complains, "Why have you unsettled me by bringing me up?" (1 Sam 28:15). Samuel's ghost, still an old man in his typical clothing but perhaps with an ethereal body invisible to Saul, can be compelled and suffers for it, hardly a powerful god. But as the cognitive science shows, great power is not essential to gods/nonevident beings. Ghosts were once living human beings. As such, seekers can feel as if the dead have understanding and sympathy for human situations. From Greek hero cults to Christian saints and martyrs across many centuries, we have much evidence for such feelings of special affinity to once-living nonevident beings.

What specifically does the text suggest about Samuel? As for mind or character, though physically transformed as one of the dead, Samuel is the same person. The beginning of the story (1 Sam 28:3) tells the reader that Samuel's body was buried in his city of Ramah, presumably with departed family members. But the Samuel that Saul encounters is a "spirit of the dead." Good translation fails us here, and *spirit* has to stand in for a quite specific Hebrew term for the dead.²⁹ With the woman's divining powers, the dead Samuel comes up out of the earth, probably from Sheol or an indefinite place of the dead under the earth.³⁰ Samuel tells Saul that, dying in battle, he and his sons will join him in the place of the dead (1 Sam 28:19). In intuitive thought about gods/nonevident beings, they are to be found in specific places and travel from place to place, not omnipresent.³¹ Samuel has come from some other place to where Saul is in Endor. Our source is literature, but literature that mixes beliefs from intuitive cognition with literate and political interests and written traditions. Intuitive religious thought often leads to modesty about religious knowledge and lack of concern to rationalize beliefs. Commonly, people hold some cultural idea about a place of the dead (e.g., Sheol, Hades) and yet also believe that the dead are present at their tombs. One example comes in the many

28. Unless otherwise indicated, biblical translations are mine.

29. Theodore J. Lewis, "Dead," *DDD*, 229–30.

30. Hedwige Rouillard, "Rephaim," *DDD*, 692–700.

31. Slone, *Theological Incorrectness*, 63.

centuries that pilgrims and seekers of aid from the great and famous dead went to the supposed burial places of patriarchs and other biblical figures. Some have argued that the Hebrew Bible's interest in such burial places indicates that such practices were of great antiquity.³²

Another way that the dead resemble gods appears in the numerous cultures in which humans have imagined reciprocal exchange relations with them.³³ This has often been called the cult of the dead, but one misses the typical dynamics by reifying the practices with *cult* and missing the ways the activities served occasional everyday practical needs such as for information, healing, and so on. As is well known, some writers and editors of the Hebrew Bible opposed such practices and tried to suppress their representation in the writings. But when Tobit throws out, "Pour your bread and your wine on the tomb of the righteous, and do not give to sinners" (4:17), the writing likely unconsciously expresses the common attitude about taken-for-granted practices. In spite of opposition to interaction with the dead in writings of the Hebrew Bible, some texts reflect actual broader social attitudes by using the expression "knowing ones" for the dead.³⁴ Like gods, they know things. Like gods, the dead can also enjoy honor and attention, gifts of food and drink, and so on. In turn, they give aid to those who honor them.

Like gods, the dead are often present around humans but invisible. When the woman sees Samuel coming up, she describes him to Saul, who, recognizing the physical description as Samuel, bows down and "worships" him. The latter action does not mean that Saul saw him after initially not seeing him. The woman had immediately recognized Samuel and thus realized that the seeker was Saul, but when Saul asks her what she sees, she says, "a god coming out of the earth" (1 Sam 28:14). As this and other texts show, like the Mesopotamians and others, the writers of the Hebrew Bible could and did include ghosts, the dead, in the category of god. That categorization agrees with the ways that the cognitive scientists explain the propensity of humans to have intuitive beliefs about gods/nonevident

32. Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: The History of the Tribal System and the Organization of Biblical Identity*, SHCANE 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 225–35.

33. On ancient Israel, see especially Kerry M. Sonia, *Caring for the Dead in Ancient Israel*, ABS 27 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020).

34. Lewis, "Dead," 229–30. The philological issues are complex, and mine is not the only interpretation.

beings. Again, at the core are intuitions that promote the easy belief in gods, the much-studied cognitive tendencies to understand the world in terms of agents who possess human-like mental abilities that make possible imagined social exchange between humans and gods/nonevident beings. Humans see the gifts that such agents give (e.g., grain, fruit, offspring of animals) but not the gods themselves except in rare occasions of (usually) self-revelation.

Other characteristics, in addition to form, attributed to gods/non-evident beings vary greatly in and across cultures. So, for instance, such beings often have social/political organization and occupy particular locations in the imagined world-cosmic geography. The hierarchy of gods of great cities and empires often looks much like the human political hierarchy. In spite of the promotion of such gods by the elite, the masses relate especially to local, familial, and lesser gods who have little rational relation to the great gods, or people treat the latter as local and intuitive.³⁵ This is exactly what the cognitive science predicts. Gods/nonevident beings arise locally and ubiquitously because cognitive propensities easily allow it and flourish all the more when they become normal in the cultural processes. Culture also gives kinds of personalities to gods/nonevident beings. Some are approachable and desire exchange with humans; others are difficult and moody or even dangerous. The cognitively supported core allows enormous cultural variation.

In spite of celebrated texts in the Hebrew Bible that hold God to be unique—in a class of his own—neither the historical evidence nor explanatory scholarship supports the idea that the claim accurately represents the culture. For biblical writers, God was inconceivably more powerful and in every way greater than Samuel's ghost. Yet both share some core characteristics even in native terms, but predicted by the cognitive theory: invisibility, a special body, knowledge of what humans do, human-like minds and emotions, uncanny otherness, communication with humans, typical places in the divine geography, exchange relations with humans. Both could be in the category "gods," and the theory explains why.

35. See my "Why 'Common Judaism' Does Not Look like Mediterranean Religion," in *Strength to Strength: Essays in Honor of Shaye J. D. Cohen*, ed. Michael L. Satlow, BJS 363 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 235–55.

Incomparable or Prototypical: Yahweh among the Gods in the Hebrew Bible

Jennifer Elizabeth Singletary

Who is like you, Yahweh, among the gods? // Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome with respect to praises, a wonder worker?

—Exodus 15:11¹

Introduction

A number of texts in the Hebrew Bible invite comparison between Yahweh and other supernatural entities. Texts such as Exod 15:11 and Ps 89:7–9 clearly emphasize the specialness and superiority of Israel’s God. But whether these texts also posit Yahweh as unique, incomparable, or even as the sole god in existence is debated, especially in the context of discussions of monotheism in the Hebrew Bible.² Saul Olyan’s important work

This project was made possible through the generous support of the Research Fellowship in Jewish Studies and the Hebrew Bible, which the author received in 2017 courtesy of the Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library and the Center for Jewish Studies at Duke University. Thank you to Serena Bazemore and Rachel Ariel for coordinating this fellowship, and to the members of the Center for Jewish Studies for a productive discussion following my presentation on this topic at Duke in December 2017. This essay was completed while the author was a postdoctoral researcher in the Collaborative Research Center 1136, Education and Religion in Cultures of the Mediterranean and Its Environs from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and Classical Islam, funded by the German Research Foundation at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen.

1. As translated by Saul M. Olyan, in his typically accurate yet elegant style, in “Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?” *JANER* 12 (2012): 196.

2. See, for example, Olyan, “Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?” 190–201, including his review of previous discussions of this issue with regard to Deutero-Isaiah (190–93); Peter Machinist, “How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring,” in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism*,

on the latter topic inspired the present author to reconsider some of these passages, and it is in the spirit of the fruitful dialogue that has always characterized our interactions that this reinterpretation is offered for this volume in his honor. This contribution responds to suggestions regarding the incomparability of Yahweh in two famous texts from the Hebrew Bible and suggests a new framework for understanding them in light of the prototype theory of categories informed by work in cognitive psychology and linguistics. Though this essay calls into question Yahweh's incomparability within the texts, the inimitability of Olyan as an adviser, mentor, colleague, and friend is incontestable.

The prototype theory of categories offers insight into the internal structure of conceptual and linguistic categories in human thought. Since the 1970s, research in cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics has problematized traditional understandings of human thinking about categories and offered convincing alternative explanations concerning the ways that people perceive the internal structure of categories. Numerous scientific experiments have demonstrated the utility of updated theoretical models for understanding the structure of categories. In addition, scholars working on the ancient Near East have increasingly begun to explore their applicability for illuminating conceptual categories and linguistic features in ancient texts.³ Such studies encourage the reconsideration of additional

ed. Beate Pongratz-Leisten (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 189–240; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), among other recent studies.

3. Though biblical studies on the whole has been slow to incorporate newer models from cognitive psychology and linguistics, a number of recent works that incorporate prototype theory and cognitive-linguistic approaches have offered fresh analyses of the lexicography and semantics of Biblical Hebrew. Examples include the numerous articles by C. H. J. van der Merwe and his students, such as Gerrit J. van Steenberg, *Semantics, World View and Bible Translation: An Integrated Analysis of a Selection of Hebrew Lexical Items Referring to Negative Moral Behaviour in the Book of Isaiah* (Stellenbosch: SUN, 2005); van Steenberg, "Componential Analysis of Meaning and Cognitive Linguistics: Some Prospects for Biblical Hebrew Lexicography (Part 1)," *JNSL* 28 (2002): 19–38; van Steenberg, "Componential Analysis of Meaning and Cognitive Linguistics: Some Prospects for Biblical Hebrew Lexicography (Part 2)," *JNSL* 29 (2003): 109–26. Ellen van Wolde also discusses what cognitive science can offer to biblical studies in *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009). Other notable contributions to this discussion include Albert Kamp's *Inner Worlds: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to the Book of Jonah*, trans. David Orton (Leiden: Brill, 2004);

biblical texts with a cognitive perspective. Drawing on research into the internal structure of conceptual categories from cognitive psychology and linguistics, my analysis of some of the biblical texts that explore the relationship between Yahweh and other gods brings prototype theory to bear on their commentary on this category and its members. This essay thus begins with a brief outline of prototype theory and then tests its insights by examining a selection of biblical texts.

Prototype Theory

Prior to the 1970s, the dominant model for understanding categories was the classical or componential theory, based on an Aristotelian model: this theory views categories as clearly bounded, with a definitional structure that can be described in terms of necessary and sufficient attributes.⁴ At the same time, this model posits that all members of a category have equivalent status as category members. In other words, the classical theory holds that something is considered part of a category if, and only if, it has certain required attributes (the definitional properties of the category).

Elizabeth Hayes, *The Pragmatics of Perception and Cognition in MT Jeremiah 1:1–6:30* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); the work of Pierre Van Hecke on polysemy and cognitive approaches to biblical texts; Peter Bekins, *Transitivity and Object Marking in Biblical Hebrew: An Investigation of the Object Preposition* 'et (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), which analyzes transitivity as a prototype category; Lesley C. F. Deyssel, "Animal Names and Categorization in the Hebrew Bible: A Textual and Cognitive Approach" (DLitt thesis, University of Pretoria, 2017); Marilyn E. Burton, *The Semantics of Glory: A Cognitive, Corpus-Based Approach to Hebrew Word Meaning*, SSN 68 (Boston: Brill, 2017). See also the recent edited volumes by Bonnie Howe and Joel B. Green, eds., *Cognitive Linguistic Explorations in Biblical Studies* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014); Ronit Nikolsky et al., eds., *Language, Cognition, and Biblical Exegesis: Interpreting Minds*, SRIE 13 (London: Bloomsbury, 2019). On using cognitive-linguistic approaches to analyze ancient texts, see Percy S. F. van Keulen and Wido T. van Peursen, eds., *Corpus Linguistics and Textual History: A Computer-Assisted Interdisciplinary Approach to the Peshiṭta*, SSN 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Several dissertations using cognitive-linguistic approaches are also currently being written by students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, under the direction of Jeremy Hutton.

4. For concise overviews of the contrast between the classical theory and prototype theory, see Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence, "Concepts," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2019 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL2641f>; Andrew M. Colman, "Prototype Theory," in *A Dictionary of Psychology*, 4th ed., OPR (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

If an item has these required characteristics, it should be considered to share in membership in the category in equal degree with respect to all other items perceived as belonging to that category.⁵ To cite one famous example, Aristotle's definition of MAN as a "two-footed animal" proposes two necessary and sufficient attributes required for an entity to be categorized as such (Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1037).⁶ According to the classical theory, any and all animals that possess the attribute of two-footedness should be considered to share equally in MAN-hood, while any being that does not possess both these qualifications cannot be part of the category of MAN.⁷

Despite the enduring influence of this theory of categories, pioneering work in the last few decades has found that this model does not accurately reflect the way human beings think about the internal structure of conceptual or linguistic categories and their members. Rather, research into human thinking about categories by cognitive psychologists and linguists has demonstrated that human beings tend to perceive category membership as graded, rather than equivalent: various members in a category are experienced within human thought as better or worse exemplars of their categories, depending on how representative of the category they are considered to be. Furthermore, people do not tend to think of categories as

5. See Carolyn B. Mervis and Eleanor Rosch, "Categorization of Natural Objects," *ARP* 32 (1981): 95. They write, "In a classical concept formation experiment, any one stimulus which fits the definition of the concept (possesses the relevant attributes in the correct combination) is as good an example of the concept as any other. More generally, if categories are seen as determinately established by necessary and sufficient criteria for membership (and if, in addition, the role of rationality is to abstract out what is essential to a situation while ignoring what is inessential; see e.g. James 1890a,b), then any member of a category should be cognitively equivalent qua the category to any other member."

6. When used to designate a category or concept, as opposed to a common or proper noun, lexemes are written herein in small caps, in accordance with the conventions of cognitive linguistics.

7. Rosch and Mervis summarize the classical view and its enduring influence as follows: "When describing categories analytically, most traditions of thought have treated category membership as a digital, all-or-none phenomenon. That is, much work in philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and anthropology assumes that categories are logical bounded entities, membership in which is defined by an item's possession of a simple set of criterial features, in which all instances possessing the criterial attributes have a full and equal degree of membership." See Eleanor Rosch and Carolyn B. Mervis, "Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories," *CogPsy* 7 (1975): 573–74.

strictly bounded but instead perceive them as fuzzy with respect to their boundaries.⁸ Prototype theory successfully addresses these and other problems with the classical model.

Developed and tested through a series of experiments by psychologist Eleanor Rosch in the 1970s, prototype theory builds on Ludwig Wittgenstein's recognition that categories are not clearly bounded or defined by one set of necessary and sufficient attributes but instead are flexible and blurry, tending to exhibit a family resemblance structure.⁹ Additionally, prototype theory asserts that conceptual categories are graded, with members perceived as having varying degrees of typicality, while sharing in some, but not all, of the features considered characteristic of the category. In short, according to the theory of prototypical categories, some members are perceived as more prototypical exemplars of a category than others, particularly when they clearly display the greatest quantity of characteristics considered to be important attributes of a category and a minimum number of attributes characteristic of contrasting categories.¹⁰ According

8. See Mervis and Rosch, "Categorization of Natural Objects," 109. They write, "New trends in categorization research have brought into investigation and debate some of the major issues in conception and learning whose solution had been unquestioned in earlier approaches. Empirical findings have established that: (a) categories are internally structured by gradients of representativeness; (b) category boundaries are not necessarily definite; (c) there is a close relation between attribute clusters and the structure and formation of categories. This appears to be a particularly promising approach for future research."

9. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Stuttgart: Macmillan, 1953), paragraph 66; Rosch and Mervis, "Family Resemblances," 574–75. This updated way of thinking about categories has also had an impact in religious studies: many theorists working in this field have argued that RELIGION is a fuzzily bounded second-order category that must be defined polythetically. Ninian Smart already proposed a family resemblance definition for religion in the late 1950s. See Smart, "Numen, Nirvana, and the Definition of Religion," *CQR* 160 (1959): 216–25. A polythetic approach was later popularized by Jonathan Z. Smith in his work, including his polythetic definition for Judaism. See Smith, "Fences and Neighbors: Some Contours of Early Judaism," in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1–18. This model continues to be adopted by many scholars. For example, see Jeppe Sinding Jensen's explicitly polythetic definition in *What Is Religion?* (London: Routledge, 2014), 8–9.

10. As Eleanor Rosch explains, "To increase the distinctiveness and flexibility of categories, categories tend to become defined in terms of prototypes or prototypical instances that contain the attributes most representative of items inside and least representative of items outside the category." See Rosch, "Principles of Categorization," in

to the theory of prototypical categories, conceptual categories are structured in terms of the relative typicality of their members: some members are perceived by people as better, or more prototypical, exemplars of a category than others. Membership in categories is thus not generally defined by a clear, monothetic set of essential and sufficient properties, but rather by polythetic clusters of characteristics. This view recognizes that in human thinking members of a conceptual or linguistic category tend to share some overlapping features, but without a common set of required elements that are both necessary for membership in the category and sufficient to distinguish it from other categories. This way of understanding categories has proven to be a far better fit for the empirical evidence, as cognitive psychologists have shown in experimental studies.¹¹

Prototype theory also addresses the important role of cultural and social contexts in category conceptions. Rosch argues that categories are in no way arbitrary but rather function to provide maximum information with the minimum amount of cognitive effort, a function that can only be achieved when these categories “map the perceived world structure as closely as possible.”¹² She emphasizes, however, that the attributes that are perceived as important for representativeness, as well as the conceptual and linguistic categories themselves, are determined by cultural context and language use, in addition to being influenced by biological capacity and common human mental mechanisms.¹³ In short, the forma-

Cognition and Categorization, ed. Eleanor Rosch and Barbara B. Lloyd (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1978), 30.

11. For example, see the foundational experiments in Eleanor Rosch, “Natural Categories,” *CogPsy* 4 (1973): 328–50; Rosch, “Cognitive Representations of Semantic Categories,” *JEPG* 104.3 (1975): 192–233; Rosch and Mervis, “Family Resemblances”; Eleanor Rosch et al., “Basic Objects in Natural Categories,” *CogPsy* 8 (1976): 382–439. See also later experimental studies such as J. David Smith and John P. Minda, “Distinguishing Prototype-Based and Exemplar-Based Processes in Dot-Pattern Category Learning,” *JEPLMC* 28 (2002): 800–811. More recent experimentation has explored prototypes and category formation in individuals with autism. See Holly Zajac Gastgeb et al., “Category Formation in Autism: Can Individuals with Autism Form Categories and Prototypes of Dot Patterns?,” *JADD* 42 (2012): 1694–1704.

12. Rosch, “Principles of Categorization,” 28.

13. As Rosch explains, “What attributes will be perceived given the ability to perceive them is undoubtedly determined by many factors having to do with the functional needs of the knower interacting with the physical and social environment. One influence on how attributes will be defined by humans is clearly [influenced by] the

tion of categories is the result of basic human cognitive and psychological processes and mechanisms, such as the drive for cognitive economy and the principle that the world is perceived as having structure.¹⁴ Yet, specific conceptual and linguistic categories, their contents, and their members' perceived relative representativeness are determined by their context within a particular culture and encoded by that culture's language at a particular historical point in time. Furthermore, this theory asserts that an item's perceived representativeness within a category is learned and may sometimes even be explicitly taught by cultural leaders and influencers, though they do not invent the categories themselves.¹⁵ For example, the perception of what in today's terms constitutes a real man, or even a real whisky (i.e., the more prototypical members of these categories), is determined by cultural and social contexts, and reinforced by leaders or influencers within each culture.¹⁶

Prototype Theory and Biblical Texts

Prototype theory has become prominent in cognitive linguistics because it remedies many of the problems with the classical theory of categories by proposing that categories are graded, fuzzily bounded, and culturally determined.¹⁷ This essay suggests that this model can also aid in the

category system already existent in the culture at a given time" ("Principles of Categorization," 29–30).

14. Rosch, "Principles of Categorization," 29–30.

15. As Rosch summarizes, "Although prototypes must be learned, they do not constitute any particular theory of category learning. For example, learning of prototypicality in the types of categories examined in Rosch and Mervis (1975) could be represented in terms of counting attribute frequency (as in Neuman, 1974), in terms of storage of a set of exemplars to which one later matched the input ... or in terms of explicit teaching of the prototypes once prototypicality within a category is established in a culture (e.g., 'Now that's a real coat')" ("Principles of Categorization," 41).

16. For example, informal studies by the author suggest that bourbon is considered a more prototypical whisky in Kentucky, where most of it is produced and it is often consumed; in Scotland, however, scotch seems to be more central in the category.

17. Of course, prototype theory is not without its criticisms. See, for example, the issues raised by Dirk Geeraerts, "Prospects and Problems of Prototype Theory," *Diacronia* 3 (2016): 1–16; Russell T. McCutcheon, *Studying Religion: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 59–64. Yet, in experimental settings it has thus far been shown to have more explanatory power than other theories on the internal structure of categories.

understanding of biblical texts, particularly those that address Yahweh's status among the gods, by illuminating the internal structure of the conceptual category that informs the texts.¹⁸ Though prototype theory is itself a relatively new model for comprehending how humans think about categories, its capacity to provide a lens into human thinking and perception of the world in both present and past cultures and languages is extremely promising.¹⁹ A number of studies have shown that this theory can be usefully applied in the analysis of literary texts, including ancient ones.²⁰

18. Like Rosch, my interest is in "explaining the categories found in a culture and coded by the language of that culture at a particular point in time" ("Principles of Categorization," 28). As another cognitive linguist has recently summarized it, categories are "shaped in accordance with the speakers' perspective and their construal of the scene.... They do not so much reflect how reality is carved up objectively, but rather how the mind creates different realities." See Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, "Polysemy, Prototypes, and Radial Categories," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 149.

19. The potential benefits for understanding ancient thinking are substantial and certainly worth investigating. Van Wolde suggests that incorporating cognitive approaches to the study of biblical literature (a methodology she refers to as cognitive literary research) "could reframe the results of the various literary biblical studies in a dynamic network of meaning by examining literary texts and contexts ... as the results of constructive processes in the individual mind in interaction with social, historical, cultural, linguistic, and communicative determinants" (*Reframing Biblical Studies*, 6). She argues that the result of using such a method is nothing less than "a broader view on how the human brain works and on how a culture classifies and how a language expresses the ancient perceptions, experiences, and knowledge of the world."

20. Van Wolde, for example, outlines a methodology for using cognitive linguistics to examine biblical texts in *Reframing Biblical Studies*; the effectiveness of her method is demonstrated by the innovative analyses showcased in her numerous articles using this approach and by the intriguing results of many of her students. See also Burton's overview of recent work in biblical studies that usefully incorporates advances in cognitive linguistics, including prototype theory, in Burton, *Semantics of Glory*, 11–29, as well as the studies discussed in n. 3 above. Such approaches are not limited to biblical studies. Recent work on Egyptian determinatives has demonstrated the utility of prototype theory for illuminating ancient conceptual categories, including Orly Goldwasser, *Prophets, Lovers and Giraffes: Wor(l)d Classification in Ancient Egypt* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002); Racheli Shalomi-Hen, *The Writing of Gods: The Evolution of Divine Classifiers in the Old Kingdom* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006). Gebhard J. Selz, Colette Grinevald, and Orly Goldwasser have also recently argued in favor of the "importance of the application of state-of-the-art methods from ... contemporary typological and cognitive linguistics." See Selz, Grinevald, and

The following discussion serves to further explore the utility of prototype theory for understanding ancient conceptual categories by analyzing descriptions of Yahweh's status vis-à-vis other gods in various biblical texts. Specifically, my focus herein is on two of the passages that situate Yahweh among the gods and which have traditionally been interpreted as indicating the incomparability of Yahweh. A close reading of these passages against the background of prototype theory brings to light the primary features considered not only to be key characteristics of Yahweh but also those considered to be most indicative of representativeness for the category to which he belongs: in other words, the qualities that serve to most clearly represent what members of the category have in common, paired with the minimization of qualities indicative of contrasting categories. It is precisely the possession of a combination of such important qualities *in comparison* with other category members that marks Yahweh as more prototypical and central than other gods within the category at work in these biblical texts. The following discussion shows how a cognitive approach informed by prototype theory can provide greater access to the ancient conceptual categories that inform the texts.²¹

Yahweh among the Gods in the Hebrew Bible

Scholars have frequently interpreted certain texts in the Hebrew Bible as highlighting the incomparability of Yahweh, especially texts such as Exod 15:11; Isa 40:18; Ps 89:7–9; and Job 41:2–3.²² While these texts certainly

Goldwasser, "The Question of Sumerian 'Determinatives': Inventory, Classifier Analysis, and Comparison to Egyptian Classifiers from the Linguistic Perspective of Noun Classification," in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Egyptian-Coptic Linguistics (Crossroads V) Berlin, February 17–20, 2016*, ed. Daniel A. Werning (Hamburg: Widmaier, 2018), 282.

21. As Ellen van Wolde points out, "cognitive linguistics concentrates on language as a result of cognitive processing. Its starting point is the notion of 'concept,' which, generally, can be defined as a 'person's idea of what something in the world is like' (Dirven and Verspoor 1998: 14)." See van Wolde, "Cognitive Linguistics and Its Application to Genesis 28:10–22," in *One Text, A Thousand Methods: Studies in Memory of Sjef van Tilborg*, ed. Patrick C. Counet and Ulrich Berges (Boston: Brill, 2005).

22. To cite only a few examples: Olyan asserts, "Exod 15:11 ... emphasizes Yhwh's incomparability in the context of his victory over Egypt at the Sea of Reeds." He also interprets Isa 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5; and Ps 89:7, 9 as texts that characterize Yahweh as "incomparable" ("Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?," 196–97). Shalom M. Paul

express Yahweh's specialness and superiority, the term *incomparable* should be abandoned in favor of more precise and accurate terminology. The characterization of Yahweh in the texts is best understood not as emphasizing his incomparability but rather his prototypicality. In other words, these texts express Yahweh's specialness as the god par excellence *relative to* other members of the category GOD. To demonstrate this point, the discussion below focuses on the two most famous and oft-cited texts interpreted as expressing Yahweh's incomparability, Exod 15:11 and Ps 89:7–9.

One of the oldest texts commonly considered to indicate Yahweh's incomparability, Exod 15:11 is part of an archaic poem that dates prior to the tenth century BCE.²³ In this verse, the speaker of the poem asks, "Who is like you among the gods, Yahweh? // Who is like you: glorious in holiness/among the holy,²⁴ awe-inspiring with respect to praises, a doer of wonders?"²⁵ There is no doubt that the rhetorical questions here highlight the specialness of Yahweh. Rather than asserting Yahweh's incomparabil-

remarks on "His incomparability" in Isa 40:18, 25 and 46:5 in *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). Debra Scoggins Ballentine suggests that "Yahweh is incomparable" in Ps 89:7–9 and Job 41:2–3. She further argues: "Biblical passages that describe Yahweh's authority over the sea associate this authority with the claim that Yahweh is incomparable among divine beings." See Ballentine, *The Conflict Myth and the Biblical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). Spencer L. Allen contrasts the "singular or incomparable Yahweh" who "needed no geographic markings from a Jerusalemite or Judahite perspective" with the "numerous Ištar goddesses and Baal deities whose geographic last names were indispensable to their identification." See Allen, *The Splintered Divine: A Study of Ištar, Baal, and Yahweh Divine Names and Divine Multiplicity in the Ancient Near East*, SANER 5 (Boston: de Gruyter, 2015). The idea that these texts describe Yahweh as incomparable is hardly new. See, for example, Casper J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1966). Labuschagne identifies a number of additional texts as indicating Yahweh's incomparability, including Deut 32:31; Pss 35:10; 71:19; 77:14; 86:8; 113:5; 1 Sam 2:2; Jer 10:7, 16; Mic 7:18; Job 36:22; 2 Chr 14:10; 20:6.

23. Most scholars, including Olyan and the present author, accept Frank Moore Cross's suggestion that Exod 15 dates to the late premonarchic period. Brian D. Russell dates the song more precisely to approximately 1150 BCE on similar linguistic and comparative grounds. See Russell, *The Song of the Sea: The Date of Composition and Influence of Exodus 1–21*, StBibLit 101 (New York: Lang, 2007), 149–50.

24. Russell suggests translating this phrase "mighty among the holy ones," interpreting the final noun (בְּקִדְשׁ) as a collective (*Song of the Sea*, 11 and n. q).

25. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

ity, however, the poem explicitly identifies the category to which Yahweh belongs, and within which one might look for beings with comparable characteristics: “among the gods” (בְּאֱלֹהִים). Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, rhetorical questions with a similar structure often clearly indicate the conceptual category to which the primary individual belongs, pointing explicitly towards the group with whom the individual in question might reasonably be compared: 1 Sam 22:14 cites Saul’s servants as the group to whom David belongs, 1 Sam 26:15 situates Abner among men in Israel, and Job 34:7 asks what other man is like Job. In each case, the main individuals concerning whom the questions are asked are demarcated as members of specific categories. Obviously, David, Abner, and Job share many features in common with other members of the groups with whom they are associated. In addition, the texts reveal which conceptual categories are most salient for the purposes of each text, indicating not just how each individual is classified in that context but in relation to whom each should be considered remarkable. It is precisely the comparison that proves the individual in question’s specialness: David, Abner, Job, and even Yahweh share qualities with others in their same categories, but in each case they are described as possessing these features in greater degree than the other category members. The key characteristics at play are often spelled out in the next few verses following the question.²⁶

Indeed, what makes Yahweh special in Exod 15:11 is not the possession of unique characteristics that no other beings share at all,²⁷ but

26. This common structure was noted already by Labuschagne, *Incomparability of Yahweh*, 91.

27. Marc Zvi Brettler also comments on the inappropriateness of the term *incomparable* to describe Yahweh as depicted in the HB. See Brettler, *God Is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor*, JSOTSup 76 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 159. As he points out, “If this claim were taken seriously on the level of language in ancient Israel, the vocabulary used of God in the Bible would be unique to him.” Brettler demonstrates that this is not the case in the texts, which often draw on the same vocabulary used to describe human kings to describe Yahweh. Similarly, this essay suggests that the characteristics identified as Yahweh’s “claims to fame” in Exod 15:11 are hardly unique to this deity, or even to gods alone. For example, different verbs from the root אָדָר are used in other biblical texts to describe human beings and natural features, among other things; the same root is used in the previous line of the poem (Exod 15:10) to describe the waters of the sea. Similarly, the root יָרָא is used elsewhere in reference not only to the fearsomeness of Yahweh but also regarding the gods of the Amorites (Judg 6:10), other gods (2 Kgs 17:7, 35, 37), and the deeds of the king (Ps

instead the confluence of several qualities perceived and reinforced as highly representative of this category that Yahweh possesses to outstanding degree. The rest of the gods presumed by the text probably share some of the same attributes as Yahweh, but because they are not perceived as exhibiting them as obviously and outstandingly, they are construed as less prototypical.²⁸ The poetic passage in Exod 15:11 thus reveals not only characteristics of Yahweh that are considered important, but some of the key qualities considered to be highly indicative of membership in the category of GOD, namely, the capacity for holiness, the receipt of praise, and the performance of wondrous deeds. The assertion of Yahweh's greater prototypicality is based on his partial similarity with the category members on the periphery: Yahweh is not utterly incomparable to other gods, which would render Yahweh unrecognizable as a member of the conceptual category, but rather the prime exemplar of this category. Interestingly, the latter two qualities center on Yahweh's interactions with human beings, making them especially relevant to the functional needs of humans seeking to praise or otherwise interact with Yahweh.²⁹ Readily identifying Yahweh as a member of the category GOD is crucial to humans in order to determine appropriate modes for interaction. Yet the first quality, holiness, also serves to distinguish Yahweh from members of contrasting neighboring categories, since it is an attribute rarely predicated of human beings.

Psalms 89:7–9 is a second text that has often been interpreted as showcasing Yahweh's incomparability.³⁰ This passage contains a series of

45:5). Even wonders (פלאים) are not the sole purview of Yahweh; according to Isa 9:5, among other texts, they are also within the capacity of humans.

28. As Rosch and Mervis have shown, "the more prototypical a category member, the more attributes it has in common with other members of the category and the less attributes in common with contrasting categories" ("Family Resemblances," 602).

29. Recall that experimental studies have shown that the "attributes [that] will be perceived given the ability to perceive them is undoubtedly determined by many factors having to do with the *functional* needs of the knower *interacting with the physical and social environment*" (Rosch, "Principles of Categorization," 29–30, emphasis added).

30. Arguments concerning the date of this section of the psalm vary. William M. Schniedewind supports a tenth-century date, following Cross. See Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1–17* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41–43. Others argue for an exilic or early postexilic dating of the entire psalm. For example, see Rebecca S. Watson, *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of "Chaos" in the Hebrew Bible*, BZAW 341 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 169–72.

rhetorical questions that resemble those of Exod 15:11. Psalm 89:7 uses rhetorical questions to imply that Yahweh has no equal among the inhabitants of the sky (בשחק), or those belonging to the class of gods (בבני אלים). No other supernatural being among the clouds can, quite literally, measure up to Yahweh.³¹ Yet, measuring is itself an action that implies comparison. It is crucial to note that several groups are specifically pointed out here as categories into which Yahweh fits and thus possible loci for comparable beings: Yahweh is also a god (emphasized by the use of the polysemic name/term אל in v. 8, immediately juxtaposed with the reference to בבני אלים at the end of the previous verse), and Yahweh also occupies the sky. Many biblical texts, including this psalm, situate Yahweh within the divine council.³² The assertion that none among the gods is equal to Yahweh thus indicates special superiority but not true incomparability. As discussed above, Yahweh's key features in the text are not uniquely associated with Yahweh.³³ This is unsurprising given a clearer understanding of the nature of categories in human thinking: nonequality among members is a typical characteristic of categories according to prototype theory. But having no equal is not the same thing as being utterly incomparable.³⁴ Rather, the other supernatural beings referenced here are not equal because Yahweh more maximally exhibits the characteristics thought to be most important for representativeness of membership in the category of GOD. What follows in the next few verses is thus best interpreted as a list of qualities and deeds that showcase the key characteristics of Yahweh, some, though not necessarily all of which,

31. בי מי בשחק יערך ליהוה. Thanks to Aren Wilson-Wright for suggesting this apt phrasing (personal communication).

32. For other examples, see 1 Kgs 22:19; Ps 82; Job 1–2.

33. As noted above, the root ירָא is used elsewhere in reference to other gods as well as human deeds. Similarly, the root ערַץ is used in other biblical texts to describe nations and human individuals in addition to Yahweh.

34. As Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk explains, “The concept of prototypicality, in short, is itself a prototypically clustered one in which the concepts of nondiscreteness and nonequality (either on the intensional or on the extensional level) play a major distinctive role. Nondiscreteness involves the existence of demarcation problems and the flexible applicability of categories. Nonequality involves the fact that categories have internal structure: not all members or readings that fall within the boundaries of the category need have equal status, but some may be more central than others; categories often consist of a dominant core area surrounded by a less salient periphery” (“Polysemy, Prototypes,” 150–51).

other gods or divine beings are also presumed to possess, albeit to a lesser degree as more peripheral members of the category.³⁵

Conclusion

As Olyan rightly points out, “the terms we use ought to suit the ideological configurations we seek to describe and analyze.”³⁶ In his article on Deutero-Isaiah, Olyan calls into question the use of the term *monotheism* to describe the text. Similarly, despite its long history of use, this essay calls into question the use of the term *incomparability* to describe the conceptual framework revealed by Exod 15:11 and Ps 89:7–9 in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, my suggestion is that these texts do not reveal qualities that Yahweh alone possesses but those that he possesses in greater measure and in greater number compared to other category members—characteristics that other gods and supernatural beings share, but to a lesser extent. Viewing these texts with prototype theory in mind helps to reveal further details about their underlying theology: the statements about Yahweh’s possession of certain characteristics show that Yahweh is considered to be a more prototypical, or central, category member by explicitly demarcating specific qualities that are highly indicative of the category within the cultural, social, and linguistic context of the texts. So understood, the texts reveal not only what makes Yahweh special but also what qualities were viewed as having paramount importance for evaluating representativeness of the category and distinguishing it from other categories within the worldview of the ancient cultures that produced the texts. In addition, these texts not only reflect the way the divine realm is construed but promulgate and reinforce ideas about the arrangement of the relevant categories within their social, cultural, and linguistic matrices. The texts draw on both the nonequality and nondiscreteness of the categories: no other god is equal to Yahweh, yet even this prototypical god shares some characteristics both with other gods and with members of other categories (such as human beings). Examining these and other texts that situate

35. Some of the key accomplishments and features of Yahweh outlined in 89:10–19 are also echoed in the description of David in 89:20–38, emphasizing how close David comes to sharing more characteristics with the gods than with human beings, but also demonstrating that even a human could sometimes share certain qualities with Yahweh.

36. Olyan, “Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?,” 200.

Yahweh in relationship to other supernatural beings with prototype theory in mind thus sheds new light on how the biblical writers construed the relationship among the god whom they promoted as the real god, or god par excellence, and more peripheral category members, further supporting the argument that such texts fail to provide evidence of monotheism.³⁷

37. This analysis thus also provides further support for Olyan's argument that Deutero-Isaiah is "something other than monotheistic" ("Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?," 192).

Beyond Angels and Demons: Reconsidering the Cosmic Powers of Colossians

Emma Wasserman

Uncritical concepts of divinity frustrate the analysis of early Christian texts, perhaps especially of lesser beings termed angels, demons, or cosmic powers of various kinds. Of particular interest here is an influential theory that early Christian texts are concerned with conflict and rebellion in the divine world. Such theories often relate these patterns to conflict myths in biblical and apocalyptic traditions, typically understood as battles between good/evil and order/chaos, and to various kinds of harmful beings often designated as cosmic powers.¹ An especially intense debate has focused on “principalities and powers,” which draws on language about *archē* and *exousia* in 1 Corinthians and in the post-Pauline letters to the Colossians

It is an honor to participate in a volume celebrating Saul Olyan’s academic career and to count him now as a colleague and friend. I first came to the study of religion in Saul’s undergraduate class on death and afterlife and have vivid memories of lectures in which he brought us all to the scholarly frontier and pointed the way to uncharted territory. All of this inspired my sense that there might be work still to be done, but just as important was the interest he took in my juvenile efforts, which gave me the confidence to imagine that I might do some of it. As a small token of my gratitude, this essay builds on Saul’s critique of so-called monotheism to explore the relationships of power in divine world. See Olyan, “Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?” *JANER* 12 (2012): 190–201; also Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

1. The classic study is Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, trans. K. William Whitney Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); more recently, see John Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Debra Scoggins Balentine, *The Conflict Myth and the Biblical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

and Ephesians but is often expanded to include other alleged powers, such as sin, death, and grace.² Among other problems, dualistic schemes that imagine antithetical powers, kingdoms, and realms of good and evil often produce misleading characterizations of the ways that writers portray ranks and relationships in the divine world.³ This essay outlines an alternative that understands language about *stoicheia*, *angeloi*, and *archai* in Colossians as creative attempts to negotiate the relative powers, attributes, roles, and relationships among divine beings of varying kinds. As I argue, the writer/editor labors to portray a divine world in which powers are strategically centralized in the upper tiers of the divine order, so that these upper ranks emerge as the principal source of divine benefits and threat. On this approach, the writer of Colossians integrates and centralizes divine power in God and Christ but preserves the idea of a multitiered hierarchy of ranks, substances, and types of beings.⁴ As in other writings,

2. The literature on principalities and powers is vast and includes the work of Ernst Käsemann, Oscar Cullman, and Johann Christian Beker. For more recent permutations, see J. Louis Martyn, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages," in *Theological Issues and the Letters of Paul* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 89–110; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); Robert Ewusie Moses, *Practices of Power: Revisiting the Practices and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014). Such theories enjoy broad influence, as evident in John G. Riley's overview, which claims that a dualistic view of evil *daimonia* characterizes postexilic Jewish and most Christian literature. See Riley, "Demons," *DDD*, 235–40.

3. Some of these problems are noted by Dominika A. Kurek-Chomycz and Reimund Bieringer, "Guardians of the Old at the Dawn of the New: The Role of Angels according to Paul's Letters," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings, Origins, Development and Reception*, ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schopflin (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 325–55, esp. 325–29.

4. I borrow the idea of a centralizing impulse from Patrick D. Miller; other scholars prefer the language of absorption (Peter Machinist), recategorization (Barbara Nevling Porter), or Mark Smith's "Judean pantheon" that has undergone a "process of collapse and telescoping." See Miller, "Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament: The Divine Council as Cosmic-Political Symbol," *HBT* (1987): 53–78; Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2000), esp. 25–28; Machinist, "How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem in Cosmic Restructuring," in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism*, ed. Beate Pongratz-Leisten (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 189–240; Barbara N. Porter, "A Brief Introduction to a Complex Problem," in *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World*, ed. Porter (Chebeague Island, ME: Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, 2000), 2; Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. 47–53.

such a framework tends to reduce the independence, personality, and significance of lesser beings, but these ranks continue to play a variety of roles in the literature. In particular, these lesser beings function to celebrate the greater gods above them; to illustrate the order, structure, and totality of the cosmos; and to explain the misguided beliefs of those alleged to be outsiders, gentiles, and imagined opponents or rivals.⁵

Centralization and Recategorization Polemics

As a number of scholars have argued, many biblical and nonbiblical texts work to centralize or integrate divine power in a single deity conceived of as supreme or in some way unifying.⁶ Though such schemes are often unhelpfully distinguished as monotheistic or monolatrous, the lower ranks are typically preserved in the form of a host, divine council, minions of heavenly worshipers, or various messengers and viziers.⁷ So Patrick Miller argues that the biblical texts tend to centralize powers more typically allocated to the midlevel gods such as Mot, Poseidon, or Baal:

While in some sense it would seem that the issue was resolved or disappeared with the monotheistic thrust, to assume that is to forget that what took place was a radical centralization of divine power and reality in one deity in whom the complexity and plurality of the universe was not lost but ruled.... The divine assembly of ancient Israel thus holds as one reality a monistic impulse in a pluralistic cosmic structure. That such a dialectic was intentional and at the heart of Old Testament theology and cosmology is nowhere clearer than in the ancient name by which

5. See also Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, esp. 3–14.

6. Similar patterns are also found in Assyrian and Babylonian literature. See Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 157–58; Barbara N. Porter, “The Anxiety of Multiplicity: Concepts of Divinity as One and Many in Ancient Assyria,” in Porter, *One God or Many*, 211–71; Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 131–39. On Simo Parpola’s controversial arguments about Assyrian monotheism, see Jerrold Cooper, “Assyrian Prophecies, the Assyrian Tree, and the Mesopotamian Origin of Jewish Monotheism, Greek Philosophy, Christian Theology, Gnosticism, and Much More,” *JAOS* 120 (2000): 430–44.

7. See Olyan, “Is Isaiah 40–55 Really Monotheistic?,” 190–201; A. Peter Hayman, “Monotheism: A Misused Term in Jewish Studies?,” *JJS* 42 (1991): 1–15; and the contributions to Porter, *One God or Many*.

the God of the Old Testament was known and is still praised, “the Lord of hosts.”⁸

Importantly, this reorganization of powers, roles, and relationships preserves the basic framework of a hierarchy or pantheon familiar from other traditions.⁹ Unlike deities in other narrative traditions, however, the lower ranks tends to be conceived of as relatively anonymous actors, armies, or hosts that lack independence and rarely become objects of extended literary reflection. In spite of this reduction or recategorization, the lower tiers of the divine order nevertheless remain important, and, in the cases treated here, they inform representations of illegitimate gods as having lesser power, as objects of misdirected worship, and as servants or operatives of Israel’s deity.

Treatments of Israelite and Jewish religious polemics have focused on claims that other people worship statuary, reflecting a rich literary tradition that plays on the mundane qualities of cult statues and satirically identifies them with gods.¹⁰ Indeed, the identification of gentile gods with their iconodules or cult statues appears in a good deal of literature preserved in the biblical anthology, and this becomes a centerpiece of reflection in Hellenistic works such as the *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Bel and the Dragon*, and *Joseph and Aseneth*. In a range of literary sources, however, writers also represent outsiders as worshiping beings that belong to the lesser ranks of divine power.¹¹ So in Deut 4:19, Israel is commanded to worship Yahweh alone, but all other peoples are to worship the heavenly bodies and the host. Elsewhere biblical writers insist that Israel fails in this directive and supplicates the host of heaven, the heavenly bodies, statues, a sacred pole, Asherah, and Baal (Deut 17:3; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3–5; 23:4–5; Jer 19:13; Zeph 1:4–5). In some cases, the writers/editors are fairly specific

8. Miller, “Cosmology and World Order,” 72–73.

9. So Porter on the rhetoric of monotheism: “Such assertions do not typically result in any significant depopulation of the divine sphere at all—but simply in the reclassification of its still numerous inhabitants” (“Brief Introduction,” 2).

10. See Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel*, BJSUCSD 11 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008); Wolfgang M. W. Roth, “For Life, He Appeals to Death (Wis 13:18): A Study of Old Testament Idol Parodies,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 21–47; Horst D. Preuss, *Verspottung fremder Religionen im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971).

11. Alternatively, some writings assimilate Israel’s God to the high gods of other traditions, as, e.g., Let. Aris. 15; Aristobulus, *Frag.* 4.6–7.

about the objects of worship, but other cases are more ambiguous. So Deut 32 charges that Israel went astray and worshiped an amorphous class of beings termed “strange gods,” “recent gods,” “gods who their fathers did not fear,” and *šēdīm* (32:15–18). Rather than evoke some widely agreed upon class of beings such as “angels” or “demons,” the vacillating language here suggests a struggle to name these other gods without seeming to legitimize them. As a result, we find considerable ambiguity and tension about their precise identification.

Concerns with sacrifice and obeisance to the gods of others appear elsewhere in biblical and nonbiblical literature, but the texts show little agreement on their precise identification, as they are represented variously as *šēdīm*, spirits, *ʿagānent*, and *daimonia* (e.g., Lev 17:7; 2 Chr 11:15; Ps 106:37–38; 1 En. 19.1–2; Jub. 1.11; Rev 9:20). Importantly, writers also show little interest in elaborating on their precise names, roles, and relationships, save to emphasize that they are lesser. So the writer/editor of Jub. 15 maintains, “For there are many nations and many peoples and all belong to him. He made spirits [*manāfesta*] rule over all in order to lead them astray from following him. But over Israel he made no angel or spirit rule [*mal’aka wa-manfasa*] for he alone is their ruler” (15.35–36).¹² Here angels and spirits appear as lesser divinities that operate at the behest of the high God, but elsewhere the writer/editor represents Israel as going astray and worshiping “demons (*ʿagānent*)” (Jub. 1.7–8, 11), although it is explicitly denied that they have power to extend them benefits in return. In ways that are similar and different, Paul’s statements in 1 Cor 10 impugn the worship of *daimonia*, but on the grounds that this will stoke God’s jealousy and anger, not because they are capable of help or harm.¹³ These patterns suggest, again, a shared interest in allowing that the gods of others exist in some form while also denying them power, independence, and efficacy. Writers such as Philo of Alexandria, Josephus, and the unknown author of the Wisdom of Solomon thread this needle in somewhat novel ways, in part by maintaining that other peoples do not recognize a supreme deity outside of or supreme over the cosmos as a whole. So, in one instance, Pseudo-Solomon vilifies those who deify the heavenly bodies, the elements, or the creation itself but fail to discern “how much superior is the

12. Translated by James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, CSCO 510–11 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989).

13. Claims that outsiders worship or sacrifice to “demons” appear in Ps 106; 1 En. 19; Rev 9; 2 Bar. 4.7; see also Origen, *Cels.* 3.2, 25, 31–32; 4.92; 7.65.

master of these things, for it is the primal author of beauty who created them" (Wis 13:3); Philo reinterprets Deut 4:19 to show that Moses alone recognized that the heavenly bodies are only "magistrates" (ἄρχοντας) that preside over their "subjects" (ὑπηκόους) on earth below, acting as mere "lieutenants of the one father of all" (*Spec.* 1.13–14 [Colson]; see also *Spec.* 14–20; *Opif.* 45–46; *Decal.* 54–55; Plato, *Leg.* 10.903b–c);¹⁴ and Josephus maintains that Moses gazed at the heavens and arrived at a unique understanding that the earth and heaven come about "through the might of their commanding sovereign" (*A.J.* 1.7.1 [Thackeray]; similarly, Philo, *Virt.* 216; *Apoc. Ab.* 7). Some of these examples reflect the adaptation of philosophical arguments from design but, like other traditions of polemic, they also recategorize, demote, and assimilate the gods of others while centralizing power and priority in the upper ranks.

These polemics frequently serve to distinguish the God of Israel from the gods of the gentile nations, as in Deut 32, Jub. 15, and in the Animal Apocalypse of Enoch, where the high God hands over Israel to the gods of the nations, here refigured as lesser divine operatives that serve the will of heaven.¹⁵ In these cases, gentile gods are explicitly conceived of as carrying out the will of the supreme God, which suggests that they play harmful but ultimately just roles in the larger cosmo-political order. In other cases, such polemics serve as rhetorical weapons for deriding those conceived of as more proximate rivals and apostates. So in some Qumran texts, wayward Israel is pictured as in league with a malevolent divine prince, albeit by the design of the supreme God (1QS I–II; 1QM XIII), and in Acts 7:42, it is alleged that God handed over Israel to the rule of *angeloi* or the host after the golden-calf incident.¹⁶ Similar formulations may inform Paul's claim that the law was given by *angeloi* in Galatians (Gal 3:19–20; see Acts 7:53; LXX Deut 33:2), as well as claims about worshiping angels in later literature.¹⁷ These texts show how allegations about the worship (or rule

14. In less combative settings Philo opts to celebrate the heavenly bodies, as in *Opif.* 53–54, 58, 60; *Aet.* 19; see also *Virt.* 73; Alcinous, *Did.* 14.6.

15. See also Hayman on the use of the lesser ranks to accommodate gentile gods ("Monotheism: A Misused Term," 8, 13).

16. See further Hindy Najman, "Angels at Sinai: Exegesis, Theology, and Interpretative Authority," *DSD* 7 (2000): 313–33.

17. As Loren Stuckbruck argues, something approximating angelic worship may be in the background in texts that encourage its refusal (e.g., Tob 12:16–22; *Apoc. Zeph.* 6.11–15; *Ascen. Isa.* 7.21–22, 8.5; Pseudo-Philo, LAB 34; Aelius Aristides, *Apol.* 14) but it proves difficult to distinguish specific practices through the haze of polemi-

by) lesser beings can serve as a form of religious invective, but it should be stressed that the literature tends to misrepresent the beliefs and practices so described.¹⁸ For instance, the charge that other peoples worship lesser divinities requires that they lack conceptions of a supreme deity, even though surviving Greek, Roman, and Near Eastern texts frequently evoke a unified hierarchy or pantheon that is organized by the rule of a single supreme figure.

It is not difficult to appreciate why writers may have reimagined relationships of power in ways conducive to assertions of Yahweh's towering supremacy, especially given Israel's subordinate status within large foreign empires. Perhaps more telling, however, is that writers/editors continue to show an interest in the lesser ranks, even pictured as a nameless host or a heavenly crowd that mainly distinguish the power of the divine monarch set over them.¹⁹ That they do so probably reflects certain taken-for-granted assumptions about the hierarchical structure of the cosmos and their ongoing interests in accommodating the religious beliefs and practices of others in their midst.

Divine Hierarchy and Relations of Power in Colossians

An array of studies labor to reconstruct the beliefs and practices at issue in Col 2, where the writer pillories deception by "philosophy," human traditions and teachings (2:8, 22); things that pertain to *stoicheia* (2:8, 20), *archē*, and *exousia* (2:10, 15); worship of [or by] *angeloi* (2:18); misguided efforts to achieve humility (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*); concern with foods and festival days; and with living as though "you belonged to the world" (2:20).²⁰ Many studies also focus on the issue of whether the *stoicheia*, *archē*, and

cal misrepresentation. See Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 75–139. See also Dale B. Martin, *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippiotics to the Christians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 171–80.

18. On the mischaracterization of the *mis pi* ritual in idolatry polemics, see Levtow, *Images of Others*, 92–100.

19. See also Saul M. Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993).

20. Unless otherwise indicated, biblical translations are mine. Prominent theories posit Hellenistic syncretism, asceticism, mystery religions, philosophical pretension, some kind of mystical ascent, and observance of the Jewish calendar. For overviews, see Jerry L. Sumney, "Servants of Satan," "False Brothers," and Other Opponents of Paul

exousia might be demythologized as mere elements, substances, or human rulers, or whether they should rather be understood as cosmic powers, malevolent beings that threaten the faithful from within and without.²¹ Although the bulk of the evidence suggests that the writer conceives of these as some type of divine being, critical analysis continues to be hampered by mystifying language about gods and types of divinity, as well as by uncritical formulations of good deities versus evil ones. The traditions of polemic explored above help to clarify the nature and scope of these arguments in three basic ways. First and foremost, by treating language about God, Christ, *angeloi*, and *stoicheia* as subtypes of divinity, we can resist the rhetoric of monotheism and make better sense of many of the author's animating interests. In Col 1–2, these interests center on representing divine power as centralized in the upper tiers of the cosmic order, in envisioning an elect with access to the very heights of power, and, on occasion, in using the lesser ranks to illustrate something about relations of power, whether to establish the exalted position of Christ or defame would-be rivals and competitors. Second, rather than attest to some widely agreed-on category of cosmic powers or forces of evil, the language about *angeloi*, *stoicheia*, *archē*, and *exousia* in Colossians fits with the varied, vague, and inconsistent use of language about lesser beings in other texts. Like other writings that envision divine attributes and powers organized in the upper tiers of the divine order, the writer of Colossians retains a place for various ranks of lesser beings and uses them principally as foils for drawing attention to the greater powers above them. Like the hosts, *daimonia*, strange gods, or divine deputies in other literature, the writer here shows no interest in sustained literary reflection about the precise names, roles, attributes, or mythic backstory of any of these, save to note that they are lesser. Third, the traditions of polemic surveyed above provide critical traction on the polemical nature of Col 2, as would-be derelicts can reemerge as useful polemical fictions. Like the satirical claims that other peoples conflate gods with mere statuary, the “worship of [or by] *angeloi*” in Colossians

(Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 188–213; Richard E. Demaris, *The Colossians Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 18–40.

21. For the former view, see Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning, and Development of the Pauline Phrase hai archai kai hai exousiai* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Eduard Schweizer, “Slaves of the Elements and Worshipers of Angels: Gal 4:3, 9 and Col 2:8, 18, 20,” *JBL* 107 (1988): 455–68; Demaris, *Colossians Controversy*.

need no more point to identifiable practices on the ground at Colossae than do portrayals of outsiders and apostates showing fealty to demons or to the heavenly host in other literature.²²

At the opening of Colossians, the writer builds a picture of a newly transformed elect that is “filled with the knowledge of God’s will,” and with “pneumatic knowledge and understanding” (1:9). Here and throughout the letter, Pseudo-Paul tells of new relationships with beings conceived of as at the very top of a divine hierarchy. These relationships bear especially on their ethical dispositions, as they find favor and “lead a life worthy of the lord” (1:10), having been “made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power” (1:11). In one instance, this elect is pictured as honoring the supreme God after having been transferred from darkness to light: “Giving thanks to the father, who has made you [us]²³ sufficient to share in the inheritance of the saints of light [εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί]. He has rescued us from the ruler/domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son [ὃς ἐρρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ], in whom we have redemption” (1:12–14). Most scholars maintain that the language of *exousia*, translated as “power” in the RSV and NRSV, refers to hostile divine beings or cosmic powers, often supporting this theory by drawing connections with Ephesians and certain Qumran texts (as Eph 2:1–2; 6:10–12; 1QS III–IV; see 2 Cor 6:14; 1 Pet 2:9; Eph 5:8; Acts 26:18).²⁴ The context suggests, however, that this alludes to their previous status as gentiles when they lacked proximity and access to the truly powerful deity that reigns over all. Understood in this way, the *basileia* into which they have been moved signals an elevation within a hierarchy of ranks, realms, and types of divinity, as pictured elsewhere in the letter (e.g., 1:20–23). The contrast drawn between the *exousia* of darkness and the *basileia* of God conveys that the elect now have access to the

22. Morna Hooker denies that there are opponents in view. See Hooker, “Were There False Teachers in Colossae?,” in *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen Smalley (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), 315–31.

23. The reading of ὑμᾶς (in place of the ἡμᾶς of NA²⁷) is supported by a number of early witnesses; see Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 620.

24. So Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 36–38; Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 56–58; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to Colossians and Ephesians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 75–79.

very heights of power. The reconciliation of all things “whether on earth or in heaven” in verse 20 could suggest that all is not quite right in the heavenly realm, but the writer shows no interest in discussing waywardness or insurrection in heaven, a pattern also attested in texts such as Isa 24 and Dan 7.²⁵

In the hymnic material in Col 1, the writer uses the figure of Christ to explore relationships of power in the cosmos and the world-historical order. Emphasis will eventually come to rest on a divine plan to reconcile the supreme deity with the whole of the cosmos, but the hymn opens with a series of claims about Christ’s role in creation, thus representing the current divine plan as an outworking of a primordial blueprint. So the writer insists:

He is the image of the invisible God [εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀδράτου], the firstborn of all creation [πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως];²⁶ for in him all things were created [ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα] in heaven and on earth, things visible and invisible [τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα], whether thrones or rulerships or princes or rulers [εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι], all things were created through him and for him [τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκτίσται]. He himself is before all things [πρὸ πάντων], and in him all things hold together [τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν]. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning [ὃς ἐστὶν ἀρχή], the firstborn from the dead [πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν], so that in everything he might be preeminent [ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων]. (1:15–18)²⁷

Here thrones (θρόνοι), rulerships (κυριότητες), princes (ἀρχαί), and rulers (ἐξουσίαι) serve to illustrate something about the exalted position of Christ.²⁸ Although these terms are often made into centerpieces of reflec-

25. See my “Gentile Gods at the Eschaton: A Reconsideration of Paul’s ‘Principalities and Powers’ in 1 Corinthians 15,” *JBL* 136 (2017): 727–46, esp. 733–41.

26. See Lohse, *Colossians*, 48–49, on similarities with wisdom in Prov 8:22 and Sir 1:4; 24:9.

27. Consensus holds that this represents a hymn, as arranged in NA²⁷ and in most translations. Particular arrangements sometimes differ, as, e.g., Gregory Sterling, “Prepositional Metaphysics in Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Early Christian Liturgical Texts,” *SPhiloA* (1997): 234; Lohse, *Colossians*, 44–45; Mary R. D’Angelo, “Colossians,” in *Searching the Scriptures 2: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 317–18.

28. Dunn treats these as malevolent beings but leans heavily on later literature in justifying this position (esp. T. Levi 3.8; 2 En. 20.1; Apoc. El. 1.10–11, 2.3–6; see 1

tion about hostile cosmic powers, the context suggests that they belong to the lesser ranks within a larger, all-encompassing cosmic totality.²⁹ In this sense, they function more like the heavenly hosts and the minions of angelic beings in other literature that serve to fill out and to illustrate the larger system of rule (e.g., Isa 40:25–26; Ps 103:19–22; Dan 7:9–10; 1 En. 15.18–22; see Judg 5:20; Dan 8:10).

In Col 2, the writer/editor uses similar representations of power and priority to vilify the beliefs, practices, and resources commanded by alleged rivals. Here the pyramid of power comes to inform affairs deemed merely human, earthly, and belonging to the lesser ranks of divinity. So the writer avers:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition [ὁ συλαγωγῶν διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων], according to the *stoicheia* of the cosmos,³⁰ and not according to Christ [κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν]. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily [ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς], and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority [ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας]. (2:8–10)

Here human traditions, *stoicheia*, *archē*, and *exousia* are construed as generically lesser, as they pertain negatively to human affairs, the (lower)

En. 61.10; see Dunn, *Colossians*, 92, 97). This theory comes out more clearly in relation to Col 1:20, where he contends that reconciliation was necessary because “there is presupposed an unmentioned event or state, that is, presumably the falling of the cosmos under the domination of the heavenly powers created as part of the *ta panta* (1:16), the state already spoken of in 1:13 (‘the power of darkness’), an ongoing crisis now resolved in the cross (see on 2:15). The defeat of these powers is also the means of reconciling heaven and earth.... The thought is typically Jewish” (Dunn, *Colossians*, 102–3). Similarly, see Walter Wink, “The Hymn of the Cosmic Christ,” in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), esp. 241–43.

29. Sumney prefers “heavenly beings” and allows that some of them might be the gods of other peoples, especially of the Roman Empire (*Colossians*, 67–68).

30. Often misleadingly translated as “elemental spirits” in the RSV and the NRSV, as Lohse, *Colossians*, 128; Dunn, *Colossians*, 149. For a recent theory that *stoicheia* are evil powers, see Clinton Arnold, *The Colossians Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), e.g., 193–94.

cosmic order, the body rather than the head, and, by intimation, lack the full power of divinity invested in Christ. In the verses that follow, this is related to an old and new way of life (vv. 11–14; see Rom 6) and a recent transformation that has somehow canceled the wrongdoings and legal demands associated with this old life, when they were “dead in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh” (Col 2:13), which has been “nailed to the cross” (v. 14). Whereas in 1:16 and 2:10 the writer/editor merely asserts Christ’s priority over the *archai* and *exousiai*, here the crucifixion seems to mark a dramatic shift in their relative powers: “He disarmed³¹ the *archē* and the *exousia* and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him [or it]” (v. 15). The precise nature of this triumph remains difficult, but these lines suggest that the *archē* and *exousia* formerly functioned as obstacles (see 1 Cor 15:23–28), though the explicit sort of hindrance they presented remains unclear.

However the writer understands Christ’s triumph over the *archē* and *exousia* in Col 2:15, treating these as lesser divine beings makes good sense of the larger polemical context, especially the connections drawn with eating practices and festival days, merely human ways of thinking, alleged worship “of [or by] angels” (2:16–19), and the misguided concern with earthly affairs among those who ought to have died to the “elements of the cosmos” (στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου).³² Although these polemics prove diverse, the writer/editor labors to unite them as pertaining at once to their old life and to the lower domains of the cosmos:

If with Christ you died to the elements of the cosmos, why do you live as if you still belonged in the cosmos? Why do you submit to regulations, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch”? All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed worship, humility, and severe treatment of the body [ἐν ἐθελοθησῖα καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνη καὶ ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος], but they are of no value in checking the fullness of the flesh [οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός]. (2:20–23)

31. See Dunn and Lohse on the translation, mood, and subject of the rare ἀπεκδύεσθαι (Dunn, *Colossians*, 167–70; Lohse, *Colossians*, 111–12).

32. For the argument that opponents engage in angelic-like worship of God (the subjective genitive), see Fred O. Francis, “Humility and Angelic Worship in Col 2:18,” *ST* 16 (1962): 109–34.

Like the *angeloi*, *archē*, and *exousia*, the *stoicheia* here make good sense as lesser beings of some unspecified type. In keeping with this picture, the writer goes on to argue that the imagined audience must reorient themselves to the heavenly realm, exhorting them to “seek the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (3:1), much like the image of Christ as “the head” in 2:19.

The constellation of terms used in Col 1–2 probably reflects an interest in organizing the disparate language of Paul’s letters, especially the *stoicheia* of Gal 4 and the *archē* and *exousia* of 1 Corinthians and Romans (1 Cor 2:6; 15:24; Rom 8:38; see also 1 Pet 3:22; 1 En. 61.10; T. Sol. 18.3).³³ The *angeloi* in Col 2:18 may thus draw on the language of Rom 8, where *angeloi* appear alongside heights, depths, *dynameis*, *archē*, and “anything else in the cosmos” that could impede access to Christ (Rom 8:38). Although some interpreters argue that the *stoicheia* refer to the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire), this language is better explained in context as alluding to parts or components of a larger cosmic totality.³⁴ On this interpretation, the *stoicheia* specify parts or subdomains of the cosmos that are generically lesser, so that being enslaved to them conveys fealty to the lower created order (Gal 4:8–11; see Rom 1:19–21; Wis 13:1–5). It is also possible that this language, as with the *archē*, *exousia*, and *kosmokratores* elsewhere, could allude to the heavenly bodies, especially as these may be conceived of as ruling the lower tiers or managing specific weather patterns or meteorological phenomenon, an association that could explain the concern with keeping festival days in Col 2:16–19 and Gal 4:10. Other texts use these or similar terms for the heavenly bodies, as the LXX of Gen 1:16, where the sun and moon are rulers (εἰς ἀρχάς) over day and night, and in Wis 13:1–2, where idolaters allegedly worship the heavenly bodies and the elements.³⁵ Although the linguistic cues remain ambiguous, the author seems to bring this diverse language together because they plausibly involve an orientation to beings, persons, and practices that pertain to the lower ranks of the cosmic order, not Christ high above in the heavens.

33. Demaris attempts to link “humility and devotion” to various philosophical figures and schools (*Colossian Controversy*, 58–61).

34. See my *Apocalypse as Holy War: Divine Politics and Polemics in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 151–55.

35. Plutarch describes the elements as ἀρχοντες and the heavenly bodies as διοικηται and πρυτάνεις (*Mor.* 601A); Cicero refers to the sun as lord, chief, and ruler of the other lights (*Somn.* 6.17; see also Philo, *Spec.* 2.255; *Decal.* 54–55).

Like the examples drawn from Deut 32, Ps 106, and Jub. 1, the writer of Colossians shows virtually no interest in reflecting on the precise nature, powers, domains, or ranks of the *archai*, *exousiai*, *thronoi*, *kosmokratores*, or *stoicheia* that appear in Col 1–2, and they consistently portray the upper ranks of divine power as the principal source of divine benefit and threat. Images of Christ’s surpassing power are paramount, but so too is an intimate relationship of exchange between Christ and the newly transformed elect. So in Col 2, the major threats all involve the upper tiers of power: “the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God” (2:18–19), and the imagined audience is to seek “the things that are above” (3:1).

Conclusion

The approach outlined here seeks to reframe analysis of Col 1–2 as concerned with relations of power in the divine world, a reorientation that helps clarify some difficult issues with language about lesser divine beings. Like the “strange gods,” foreign gods, nongods, *daimonia*, hosts, and heavenly bodies impugned in other literature, the writer of Colossians appeals to *archai*, *exousia*, *angeloi*, and *stoicheia* because they plausibly allude to the lesser ranks of divinity and so serve as foils for centralizing power in God and Christ. On these terms, the discussions in Col 2 are a subtype of religious polemic that vilifies the worship of lesser deities. Understood in this way, ambiguity and inconsistency about precisely what these objects of reverence are coheres with other literary traditions that display tension and vacillation about the precise names, status, attributes, substance, powers, and mythic backstory of these beings. These lesser gods further the portrayal of certain gods and forms of worship as exceptional by serving to illustrate a divine world in which powers, attributes, and intentionality are all centralized in a small subset of deities conceived of as at the very top of a pyramid of power. The lack of clarity about just what kinds of beings these are is thus not incidental but strategic; it allows the writers to adapt standard-fare models of the cosmos as a single, united cosmic hierarchy while telescoping to focus on the head, from which is derived true power, benefits, knowledge, condemnation, and threat.

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