

THE JOSEPH OF GENESIS AS HELLENISTIC SCIENTIST



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THE JOSEPH OF GENESIS
AS HELLENISTIC SCIENTIST

Ljubica Jovanović



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To my mother, who tried to hold on till the end of this project.

*To my grandmother, whose unfulfilled talents removed
all the obstacles to the fulfillment of mine.*

To my father, the accomplished scientist of the family.

To Sladjana, we still have much to do!

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
ANE	ancient Near East
ANRW	Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972–).
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur ZAW
CAD	Ignace I. Gelb <i>et al.</i> (eds.), <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1964–).
CANE	Jack M. Sasson (ed.), <i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> (2 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995).
CAHS	<i>Clarendon Ancient History Series</i>
Colson, LCL	<i>Philo</i> (trans. F.H. Colson <i>et al.</i> ; Loeb Classical Library; 10 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–56).
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium
EJL	Society of Biblical Literature, Early Judaism and its Literature
EM	<i>Encyclopaedia of Midrash: Biblical Interpretation in Formative Judaism</i> (ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2005).
GAP	Guides to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press)
FSBP	Fontes et subsidia ad Bibliam pertinentes
HB	Hebrew Bible
HCS	Hellenistic Culture and Society (Berkeley: University of California Press)
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>

- JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JJS *Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
Jos. Asen. Burch. Christoph Burchard, Carsten Burfeind and Uta Barbara Fink, *Joseph und Aseneth: kritisch herausgegeben* (Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece, 5; Leiden: Brill, 2003).
Jos. Asen. Phil. Marc Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (SPB, 30; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968).
JSJ *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods*
JSOTSup *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series*
JSP *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
LCL Loeb Classical Library
LCLJos *Josephus* (trans. H. StJ. Thackeray *et al.*; Loeb Classical Library; 10 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926–97).
LoJ Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2nd edn, 2003).
LSJ H.G. Liddell, Robert Scott and H. Stuart Jones, *Greek–English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 9th edn, 1968)
NRSV New Revised Standard Version.
OIS Oriental Institute Seminars
OTP *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1985).
PDM *Demotic Magical Papyri*
PGM *Greek Magical Papyri*
PVTG *Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti graece*
RGRW *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World*
RVE *Revelation by visual effects*
Slaw Slavonic translation of *Joseph and Aseneth*
SPB *Studia postbiblica*
STAC *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum*
STT *Sultantepe Texts*
T. Levi (de Jonge) *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (ed. Marinus de Jonge; Leiden: Brill, 1978).
T. Levi (de Jonge, Hollander) Marinus de Jonge and Harm W. Hollander (eds.), *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985).

TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> , Supplements
Whiston	Josephus, <i>The Works of Josephus; Complete and Unabridged: New Updated Edition</i> (trans. William Whiston; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987).
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Abbreviations of the Works of Josephus and Philo

Josephus

<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>Apion</i>	<i>Against Apion</i>
<i>Life</i>	<i>The Life of Flavius Josephus</i>
<i>War</i>	<i>The Jewish War</i>

Philo

<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Aet. mund.</i>	<i>De aeternitate mundi</i>
<i>Anim.</i>	<i>De animalibus</i>
<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De cherubim</i>
<i>Conf. ling.</i>	<i>De confusione linguarum</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De congressu quærendæ eruditionis gratia</i>
<i>Deus imm.</i>	<i>Quod Deus immutabilis sit</i>
<i>Flacc.</i>	<i>In Flaccum</i>
<i>Fug.</i>	<i>De fuga et inventione</i>
<i>Jos.</i>	<i>De Josepho</i>
<i>Leg. all.</i>	<i>Legum allegoriarum</i>
<i>Leg. Gai.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
<i>Migr. Abr.</i>	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
<i>Mut. nom.</i>	<i>De mutatione nominum</i>
<i>Op. mund.</i>	<i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Poster. C.</i>	<i>De posteritate Caini</i>
<i>Prov.</i>	<i>De providentia</i>
<i>Rer. div. her.</i>	<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	<i>De somniis 1, 2</i>
<i>Spec. leg.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus 1–4</i>
<i>Vit. Mos.</i>	<i>De vita Mosis</i>

Abbreviations of Other Ancient Works

Apollonius Sophista

<i>Lex. Hom.</i>	<i>The Homer 'Lexicon'</i>
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Apuleius	
<i>Apol.</i>	Apology
Aristotle	
<i>Cael.</i>	Heavens
<i>De an.</i>	Soul
<i>Div. somn.</i>	Prophesying by Dreams
<i>Mem. rem.</i>	Memory and Reminiscence
<i>Metaph.</i>	Metaphysics
<i>Oec.</i>	Economics
<i>Pol.</i>	Politics
<i>Sens.</i>	Sense and Sensibilia
<i>Somn.</i>	Dreams
Artemidorus	
<i>Oneir.</i>	Oneirocriticon
Chrest. Wilck.	L. Mitteis and U. Wilcken, <i>Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyrskunde</i> , I, <i>Historischer Teil</i> , II <i>Hälfte Chrestomathie</i> (Leipzig-Berlin, 1912), Nos. 1–382.
Cicero	
<i>Div.</i>	<i>De divinatione</i>
Demosthenes	
2 <i>Olynth.</i>	2 <i>Olynthiac</i>
Eudoxus	
<i>Ars</i>	<i>Ars Astronomica qualis in charta aegyptiaca superseset</i>
Euripides	
<i>Cycl.</i>	<i>Cyclops</i>
<i>El.</i>	<i>Electra</i>
Eusebius	
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
<i>Praep. evang.</i>	<i>Praeparatio evangelica</i>
Herodotus	
<i>Hist.</i>	<i>Histories</i>
Hippocrates	
<i>Alim.</i>	<i>De alimento</i>
Hippolytus	
<i>Haer.</i>	<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i>
Homer	
<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
Jerome	
<i>Jov.</i>	<i>Adversus Jovianum</i>
Justin	
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>

Lucian	
<i>Macr.</i>	<i>Macrobian</i>
Origen	
<i>Cels.</i>	<i>Contra Celsus</i>
P.Eleph.	Elephantine papyri
P.Oxy.	Oxyrhynchus papyri
P.Tebt.	Tebtunis papyrus
Pindar	
<i>Ol.</i>	<i>Olympian Odes</i>
<i>Pyth.</i>	<i>Pythian Odes</i>
Plato	
<i>Epin.</i>	<i>Epinomis</i>
<i>Phaedr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Resp.</i>	<i>Respublica</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>
Plotinus	
<i>Enn.</i>	<i>Enneades</i>
Sophocles	
<i>Oed. Col.</i>	<i>Oedipus coloneus</i>
Theophrastus	
<i>Sens.</i>	<i>De sensu</i>

INTRODUCTION

Mark sits to read his newspapers while the bombs blast in the vicinity. The windows are properly covered so that light can't be seen from the outside. At that point, the children come running into the room. Hearing the bombs they turn off the lights, out of fear and habit. Mark, not being able to see what he reads any more, looks up from his newspapers and says in the darkness: 'So, now *I don't know* anything' (*Revelation by Visual Effects in the Twentieth Century*—a real event).

Against the turmoil of postmodernism that science undergoes and in reaching the digital age, society has always expected scientific theories to make accurate predictions and to adequately explain the relevant data.¹ Of the two scholarly activities that involve Joseph of Genesis—divination and dream interpretation—divination has proven to be the most problematic in the history of science. It is commonly categorized with magic but has little to do with science. However, this classification reflects neither the prevailing understanding of divination in ancient societies—that will be treated in detail by this study—nor the current situation in modern science.

With the contribution of Albert Einstein and Werner Heisenberg in the early twentieth century, exact sciences opened up to include many non-orthodox notions. Post-industrial society and the information age are unwilling to accept the term pseudo-science uncritically and do not classify any phenomenon easily as magic. Magicians in modern society have been associated with the circus, in a derogatory sense. Diviners have been equated with palm readers and fortune-tellers in a circus booth. Besides being a side-show attraction, divination in a domestic setting ranges from reading the future from coffee grounds to the series of 'The Complete Idiot's Guides' such as to divining the future, palmistry, tarot, or astrology and the electronic fortune-teller. Is this image the right one with which to imagine Joseph, a highly educated prime minister of Egypt, the greatest empire of the ancient world? Should the image of the president of the United States evoke a circus magician?

1. Richard DeWitt, *Worldviews: An Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 71, 76.

Pious Judeo-Christian readers who have seen divination in this context either ignore the few references in the Genesis story to Joseph as a diviner or interpret the text as an erroneous reading or a misinterpretation, or they ignore the whole story, as may well be the case in most of the Hebrew Bible.² To a great extent, thanks to Freud, dream interpretation fares better in modern society, having earned recognition as a scientific method. It is no longer acceptable to discard dream interpretation as a para-science or para-religion. Interestingly enough, in early ancient Mesopotamia, while divination belonged to the essence of a scientific approach, dream interpretation had a more problematic status.

Unfortunately, the classification of divination under 'magic' is still in our reference texts and even in recent scholarly treatments.³ This study maintains and hopes to convince the reader that divination was one of the main scientific methods in predicting the future in the ancient world, as well as an integral part of the long history of 'Western science'. Magic, on the other hand, belongs to religious phenomena. The confusion of these two terms is present also in the classification and the titles of the primary sources, mixing many forms of divination with magical religious practices, such as in Hans Dieter Betz's edition (1986, 1992) of *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, or Daniel Ogden's *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*.⁴ Moreover, because divination had neither an exotic aura nor pejorative overtones as magic, scholars were not prone to redefine it.⁵

The treatment of divination as magic in a derogatory way by modern scholarship resembles the biblical condemnation of divination as poly-

2. The objection that the Joseph story may not have been composed before Hellenistic times, and thus could not be 'ignored' by the earlier books of the HB, is largely based on the assumption that such a story was unacceptable to the mainline theology of the HB. Thus, either the impossibility of its composition or its neglect by the religious literature of ancient Israel before Hellenism presupposes the same framework of thinking.

3. 'Magic', *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* (2007) <<http://search.eb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/eb/article-9108514>>; Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation*. (JSOTSup, 142; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), p. 42. Also, 'Divination and Magic' is Gideon Bohak's entry in John J. Collins and Dan Harlow (eds.), *Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 543-47.

4. Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn, 1996); Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

5. Sarah Iles Johnston and Peter T. Struck (eds.), *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 155; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), pp. 8-9.

theistic and an idolatrous practice. This attitude is typical of the traditions in the Hebrew Bible (HB) known to biblical critics as deuteronomistic theology, which if familiar with the Joseph story seem to ignore it. Frederick H. Cryer argues that ‘magic’ is a more inclusive term for divination and that divination was assigned to magic in antiquity. Although he attempts to go beyond the HB’s mainline theological bias and present magic in a more favorable light, he does not try to define the term ‘magic’ as it was understood in antiquity or to compare it with magic in modern society. They have different semantics. The matter becomes even more complicated because of the division between black/malevolent/contagious and white/benevolent/sympathetic magic. While white magic did not have a negative connotation in antiquity, black magic was feared and consequently taken very seriously. The feeling of anxiety related to magic distanced divination even farther from reasonable scientific scrutiny, pushing it into the religious sphere of supernatural evil forces. Ann Jeffers, while still putting divination and magic under the same umbrella, placed biblical scholarship on magic in postmodern research, by contextualizing HB magic culturally and cosmologically.⁶ Looking at it through these lenses, magic appears as an integral part of biblical religion. Following Ricks, Jeffers argues, ‘Like in the ancient Near East, magic and religion are in essence undistinguishable: both are controlled by God’s creational activity’.⁷

Although it was clear to ancient Near Eastern scholars that divination was a scientific activity, their reference works and classification at the end of twentieth century continued to follow mainline scholarship on divination and magic. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (1995), whose main subject is the treatment of ancient civilizations, treats magic under ‘religion and science’ and promotes the treatment of divination as a science. Nevertheless, it incorporates for each civilization a separate article on ‘witchcraft, magic and divination’. It may be argued that it is the transitional chapter between science and religion, but it might have worked better to separate these three terms from one another. The proceedings from the 1995 conference on Mesopotamian magic and divination espouse a new direction toward theoretical frameworks for Mesopotamian magic and divination, insisting on their his-

6. A. Jeffers (2007), ‘Magic and Divination in Ancient Israel’, *Religion Compass* 1:628-42 (doi:10.1111/j.1749-8171.2007.00043.x).

7. A. Jeffers, ‘Interpreting Magic and Divination in the Ancient Near East’, *Religion Compass* 1:684-94. (doi:10.1111/j.1749-8171.2007.00047.x); S.D Ricks, ‘The Magician as Outsider in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament’, in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (RGRW, 129; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 131-43.

torical and cultural contextualization.⁸ However, the volume does not question the established equation between magical and divinatory concepts and practices, and the classification of witchcraft, magic and divination under the same umbrella.

There have been some scholarly attempts to redeem our notions of magic and divination in the ancient Near East (ANE), while treating divination under magic.⁹ Magic can be understood as a reasoned system of techniques to influence the supernatural and the divine realm that can be learned and taught. It is a practical and empirical science seeking to alter or maintain earthly circumstances or arrange them anew.¹⁰ In this view, divination is a research science, as it investigates the supernatural realm in order to extrapolate information about the future. Finally, in 2009, the Oriental Institute Seminar was dedicated to an examination of divination as science in the ancient Near East, separating divination from magic and establishing the theoretical principles of divinatory practices and interpretation. The conference papers are published under the title *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*.¹¹

Early modern anthropological scholarship considers magic ‘a pseudo-science’ (R. Taylor) or ‘a spurious system of natural laws as well as fallacious guide of conduct; it is a false science as well as an abortive art’ (J. Frazer). Further, magic is a ‘bastard sister of science’. M. Mauss and H. Hubert stress the ‘irreligiousness of magical rite; it is, and its practitioner wants it to be, anti-religious’.¹² After the 1960s, magic needed to be

8. T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn (eds.), *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretive Perspectives* (Studies in Ancient Magic and Divination, 1; Groningen: Styx, 1998), pp. 3-34.

9. Gabriella Frantz-Szabó, ‘Hittite Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination’, in Jack M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East (CANE)* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), pp. 2007, 2013.

10. Frantz-Szabó, ‘Hittite’, p. 2007.

11. Amar Annus (ed.), *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World* (OIS, 6; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2010), pp. 7-9, is based on the fifth annual University of Chicago Oriental Institute Seminar, ‘Science and Superstition: Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World’. Although a joint enterprise was quite late, the monographs on divination as science by ancient Near Eastern scholars were and are the part of their studies, such as the works of Francesca Rochberg, *The Heavenly Writing: Divination, Horoscopy, and Astronomy in Mesopotamian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), or Stefan M. Maul, ‘Die Wissenschaft von der Zukunft. Überlegungen zur Bedeutung der Divination im Alten Orient’, in E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, M. van Ess and J. Marzahn (eds.), *Babylon: Wissenskultur in Orient und Okzident/Science Culture between Orient and Occident* (Topoi, Berlin Studies of the Ancient World, 1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

12. James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), p. 11; and M. Mauss and H. Hubert, *Esquisse d’une théorie générale de la magie*, as cited in Cryer, *Divination*, pp. 48, 53.

exonerated as the consequence of the Western colonial imposition of values on non-Western societies.¹³ Mircea Eliade rejected historical evolution of religions and thinking in dichotomies, and Jonathan Z. Smith insisted on religious practices. Although they both elevated magic in the realm of religious phenomena and practices, neither of them was interested in defining the term in its ancient Judeo-Christian historical or cultural context.¹⁴

Until very recently, classicists have not done better with ancient Greek magic. After the late-nineteenth-century monumental work of Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, classicists focused only on collecting topical data on the subject.¹⁵ Martin P. Nilsson, in his influential *A History of Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925), devotes very little attention to divination and magic, following the academic trends in the 1940s of pairing divination with magic in antiquity and separating divination and magic from religion.¹⁶ Despite Herodotus's claim that engaging in the inquiry of nature and the belief of divine intervention in it are not mutually exclusive (e.g. *Hist.* 2.68-76, 4.205, 7.129), G.E.R. Lloyd, the doyen of ancient Greek science, sharply separates science from magic. Magic represents what is pre-logical and pre-scientific, representing at its best belief systems that are in opposition to philosophical and scientific thinking, according to rationalistic ancient Greek intellectuals of the sixth and early fifth century BCE.¹⁷

If we go beyond the classifications, we see that the treatments of divination in the ancient world clearly show that it was considered a science as we consider 'science' in contemporary culture. Scholars almost unanimously acknowledge that considerable learning was expected from the diviners of the ancient world, and magic was closely related to wisdom in Mesopotamia, in Egypt and in Anatolia.¹⁸ Cryer even criticizes Assyriologists in general for 'understanding the phenomenon of divination as a species of science'.¹⁹

13. *Mantikê*, p. 8 n. 19.

14. Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 112-15; Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Trading Places', in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (RGRW, 129; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 13-27.

15. Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité* (4 vols.; Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1879).

16. *Mantikê*, p. 6.

17. Geoffrey E.R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience: Studies in the Origin and Development of Greek Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 2, 13, 31.

18. Cryer, *Divination*, p. 135; Rosalie David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Facts on File, rev. edn, 2003), p. 119; Frantz-Szabó, 'Hittite', p. 2009.

19. Cryer, *Divination*, p. 136.

Rosalie David, in translating the ancient Egyptian word *heka* ('to control powers') by 'magic', differentiates the ancient Egyptian understanding of it as 'a sacred science and creative force that had existed prior to the establishment of the universe'.²⁰ Although she keeps the term 'magic', she distinguishes between our definition of 'magic' and that of ancient Egypt.²¹ For her, there is a direct connection between science, magic and religion, as Egyptians equated exact science with temple magic. 'Through the temples cosmic magic is sought by means of the daily rituals to maintain the balance and order of the universe and to prevent the return of chaos'.²² It certainly reminds us of the function of the exact sciences in our society today.

'Scientists' correspond to David's description of 'priest-magicians'.²³ She confirms again, as Simo Parpola does for Mesopotamia, that magicians were regarded as scholars, adding her twist that they were priests as well.²⁴ They were trained for years in the 'House of Life', where the official 'Book of Magic' was stored as a part of the royal archive. Thus, magic was 'an integral element of the state system, and magicians were never regarded as "strange" or abnormal'. Magicians were not only familiar with the secrets of the earliest times, but they were able to recreate the conditions of the time of creation. 'With their unique knowledge the magicians were expected to guide others along the path of wisdom'.²⁵

The counterparts of these ancient magicians are scientists. Both the diviners of the past and the scientists of the present are professionals with a high social standing. Their methodology and their instructions have an important impact on society. 'Scientist' is a relatively new name, introduced by William Whewell in the nineteenth century to replace the term 'natural philosopher'. However, scientist, rather than scholar, as a profession describes more accurately Joseph's activities in the eyes of Hellenists. Joseph's scientific activity and his political and social influence resemble more those of a computer scientist of today, representing the cutting edge of technological progress than those of a scholar. "Scholar" today has the connotation of a remote intellectual who is not yet fully conversant in the application of novel scientific enterprises.

This study will operate with a definition of divination as the different methods of discovering the principles of nature and significance of events, with a focus on future ones. Examination of the nature and analysis of

20. Cryer, *Divination*, p. 119.

21. David, *Handbook*, pp. 119-21.

22. David, *Handbook*, p. 120.

23. David, *Handbook*, p. 121.

24. Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (State Archives of Assyria, 10; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993).

25. Parpola, *Letters*, p. 121.

events aimed to predict the future result of natural and cultural processes in order to plan the actions and change the future is what science today stands for. In this sense, divination and science are universal human activities (Cicero, *Div.* 1.1). As Walter Burkert put it, because humans are social animals, management of the future both individual and communal is a ‘distinctly human problem’.²⁶

The main difference comes from the type of methods used and the understanding of ‘nature’: does it incorporate, in terms of modern science, the world of supernatural phenomena? Another distinguishing feature is the role and relation between rationality and irrationality. The crucial differentiating factor is that modern science considers the divine realm to lie outside its field of inquiry, while divination dedicates most of its energy to disclosure of the hidden knowledge belonging to the divine and in communication with the divine.

I will end this Introduction with another definition of divination that focuses on differentiating it from science. Sarah Iles Johnston stresses that divination functions as a buffer between the world of human everyday experiences and the other imagined worlds that impinge on the experiential world and to which belong the world of the dead, the world of the gods, and the world of the past and the world of the future. The world of the future includes ‘the worlds of alternative, competing choices, whose divergent ramifications cannot be seen until one embarks upon them. Divination is not only . . . a way of *solving* a particular problem in and of itself, but rather a way of *redirecting* the problem out of one of these other worlds, in which it seems to be rooted, and into the everyday world, where one is better able to solve it with human skills.’²⁷

26. Walter Burkert, ‘Signs, Commands, and Knowledge: Ancient Divination between Enigma and Epiphany’, in *Mantikê*, p. 29.

27. Sarah Iles Johnston, ‘Delphi and the Dead’, in *Mantikê*, p. 297.

THE JOSEPH OF GENESIS AS HELLENISTIC SCIENTIST

1. *Introduction*

The Hellenistic period (third century BCE to second century CE) experienced an enormous rise in popularity of the Joseph story—a striking fact, given that it was preceded by a period of nearly complete silence on Joseph’s person. The attractiveness of the figure of Joseph to the Hellenists is a complex phenomenon. One aspect of it, namely, the Hellenistic identification of Joseph with the popular notion of the contemporary scientist, remains almost unexplored.

Apart from the Joseph story (Genesis 37–50), pre-Hellenistic texts of the Hebrew Bible on Joseph’s personality are practically non-existent. This silence is usually explained either as intentional neglect by scholars who hold that the Joseph story predates the majority of the biblical texts (e.g. Vergote, von Rad) or as pure ignorance by those who see the story as a late biblical creation (e.g. Soggin).¹ The former assumes the non-conformity of Joseph’s portrayal with the Hebrew Bible’s mainline theologies, while the latter places the composition of the Joseph story in the Hellenistic period. This study examines those texts that are based on or presuppose the widespread familiarity with the Joseph story as a part of Jewish Scriptures. Thus, the texts examined in this study assume the sanctity of the tale, rendering the discussion of the dating of the Joseph story irrelevant for its argument.

The Hellenistic period witnessed the expansion of ancient science encompassing many diverse schools of thought while maintaining a com-

1. Jozef Vergote, *Joseph en Égypte: Genèse, chap. 37–50, à la lumière des études égyptologiques récentes* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1959); Gerhard von Rad, ‘The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom’, in Gerhard von Rad, *From Genesis to Chronicles: Explorations in Old Testament Theology* (ed. K.C. Hanson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), pp. 75–88; Donald Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37–50)* (VTSup, 20; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970); J.A. Soggin, ‘Notes on the Joseph Story’, in *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson* (JSOTSup, 153; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 336–49.

prehensive, all-embracing approach to its subject. The popularity of the image of a Hellenistic holistic scientist nourished the flourishing Hellenistic literature on Joseph, so that many texts build the image of Joseph based on it. The analysis of these texts shows that Joseph's specialty was the science of vision, or ancient optics. In this light, Joseph's dream interpretations and cup divinations belong to the same scientific field. While maintaining that literary form has social and cultural dimensions, I propose that dream interpretation and lecanomancy (divination by the use of liquids in bowls) nurture the same literary genre: 'revelation by visual effects'. This literary expression articulates the common and longstanding experience of the ancient world that was adopted and adapted within separate cultures, such as ancient Egyptian, ancient Greek or Mesopotamian. It took Hellenistic scientific inquiry to bring its expression to general popularity. Because the practice of the 'revelation by visual effects' phenomena and its institutions were responsible for bringing to birth the corresponding literary form, the accepted scholarly division of dream reports between symbolic and message dreams is artificial. The category of 'symbolic dreams' should be replaced by 'revelation by visual effects'. Moreover, my research indicates that those texts that support Joseph's holistic scientific approach generally, and his practice of a science of vision particularly, also turn out to be cosmopolitan, accepting of multiculturalism, and recognizing ethnic diversity.

The science that characterized the Hellenistic period reflects the coexistence of different schools, based on different worldviews and philosophical systems, such as Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, Epicurean, Pharisaic, apocalyptic. Divinatory thinking that was the theoretical basis for divinatory practices derived its conceptual resources from these Hellenistic schools of thoughts.² Similarly, multiple interpretations of biblical texts flourished, promoting the simultaneous continuation of diverse interpretive traditions. Here is how James Kugel nicely describes this phenomenon:

Community X or Group B, or individual interpreters, certainly would have differed with the reconstruction on particular points: however much individual interpretations circulated and were held in common by different people, there was no single, universally accepted set of interpretations. . . . It was in these three centuries [200 BCE–100 CE] that Israel's ancient library of sacred texts were becoming *the Bible*. From the standpoint of scriptural interpretations, then, there could hardly have been a more crucial time than this one, and the overall interpretive methods, as well as a great many individual interpretations, that were developed in this period did eventually become 'canonized' by Jews and Christians no less than the scriptural texts that they explained. Interpretations of course continued to be developed

2. See also Peter T. Struck, 'Divination and Literary Criticism?', in *Mantikê*, p. 146.

and elaborated in later times; yet it is certainly no exaggeration to say that the main lines of approach, as well as an enormous body of specific motifs, continued to be transmitted by Jews and Christians from this crucial period on through the Renaissance and beyond. In short, the period covered is the formative period of the interpretation of Scriptures.³

Notwithstanding many nuances in differences of Hellenistic traditions, as a result of the research on Joseph, two emerge in sharp contrast to each other. The tradition that glorifies Joseph embraces scientific inquiry and the role of human senses and reason in accessing universal truths and divine knowledge. The tradition that downplays Joseph's significance as a biblical patriarch ignores scientific pursuits and considers the human senses as false venues to accessing the divine. The former tends to appreciate natural, human and societal complexity and acknowledges diversity and multiculturalism, accepting the foreign and the other (e.g. Josephus and *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*). The latter promotes a single ideology, the unification of humanity and intolerance of the foreign and the different. Its ethical message supports political absolutism, religious extremism and ethnic purity (e.g. *Jubilees*).

a. *The Scope: The Texts*

The Hellenistic texts on Joseph number in the hundreds. This study is limited to several longer works from Hellenistic times that considered Joseph an important figure worthy of extensive consideration of his character and deeds. I will examine the writings of the historian Josephus, a theatric play, *Ethiopic Joseph*, and several rabbinic midrashim that belong to the traditions that glorify Joseph as a beneficial character, as well as the philosopher Philo's 'anti-Joseph' presentation. Included are the texts of, what I call, Levitical tradition: *Jubilees*, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Joseph and Aseneth*, where Levi is the chosen brother instead of Joseph, although Joseph is a prominent figure in these texts.

Many other Hellenistic texts mention Joseph. They either make short references to him or are fragments of a longer composition about Joseph. Still, several of them clearly testify that they belong to the Joseph tradition, such as 1 Macc. 2.51-60, where Joseph is mentioned in the line of exemplary forefathers after Abraham and before Phinehas and Joshua. Under Joseph tradition I mean the lore that elects Joseph among Jacob's sons as the carrier or transmitter of Jewish intellectual and religious values. Ben Sira's hymn to the ancestors (Sirach 44-49) starts with Enoch and Noah, continues with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and jumps directly from Jacob to Moses; it mentions Joseph at the very end, separately, along with the most distinguished

3. J. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 45-46.

persons (Sir. 49.14-16) and the first people: Enoch, Shem, Seth, Enosh and Adam.⁴ ‘Nor was anyone ever born like Joseph; even his bones were cared for’ (Sir. 49.15).⁵ In Acts 7.1-50, Stephen places Joseph between Abraham and Moses on the line to David and Solomon.

Some of these texts feature Joseph as a great Hellenistic scientist, glorifying his wisdom (Wis. 10.13-14) and his talent that enabled him to turn into a master of magic (Pompeius Trogus).⁶ According to Artapanus Joseph shaped Egyptian culture, excelling in understanding and wisdom; he was an inventor, that is, a Hellenistic academic par excellence (*Praep. evang.* 9.23.1-4).

b. *Methodology*

This study primarily traces the diversity of traditions about the patriarch Joseph when literary creations about him were in fashion for the first time in history and explains the reasons for Joseph’s popularity. This study will focus on the treatment of a single theme: *Joseph as a scholar*; or to put it more precisely, *Joseph as a Hellenistic scientist*. By tracing the social and historical context of the texts that I examine, I identify the main characteristics of the mindset that nourished them, highlighting the richness of different Judaismisms from the Hellenistic period to Late Antiquity.

The traditions crafted in antiquity may represent the speculation enduring from the biblical epoch, and thus this study may add new insight to the field of biblical criticism of the Joseph story. Finally, my method hopes to offer biblical scholars a more flexible tool that uses ancient post-biblical texts to interpret biblical ones. The new motif, *revelation by visual effects* (RVE), that this work establishes, aims to fulfill these expectations, because it is a literary form attuned to the reality of the ancient Mediterranean world. As the literary expression of the common phenomenon that I label RVE, it illuminates its cultural milieu, which represents also the cultural context of the Bible.

No editions of Genesis without the Joseph story exist. Roughly speaking, Genesis as we know it today was an authoritative text by the third century

4. For the similar link in biblical personalities, see Chapter 5, on Philo.

5. Even in later biblical exegesis, there is an allusion to Joseph tradition, when Reuben’s birthright was transferred to Joseph (1 Chron. 5.2).

6. ‘The youngest of the brothers was Joseph, whom the others, fearing his extraordinary abilities, secretly made prisoner, and sold to some foreign merchants. Being carried by them into Egypt, and having there, by his great powers of mind, made himself master of the arts of magic, he found in a short time great favour with the king; for he was eminently skilled in prodigies, and was the first to establish the science of interpreting dreams; and nothing, indeed, of divine or human law seems to have been unknown to him’ (Justinus, *Epitome of Pompeius Trogus*’ *Philippic Histories*’ 36.6-8, (trans. J.S. Watson; London: Henry G. Bohn, 1835).

BCE.⁷ The Hellenistic Jews loved, discussed, retold and interpreted the Joseph story with much fervor and left us a unique set of ‘reader-response’ texts that are located closer to the authority of the biblical text than we are today. By examining various contemporary interpretive strategies, in the sense that they dictated not only the course for ‘reading’ but also for ‘writing’ texts, I expect not only to identify their interests and mindset but also to determine their line of tradition.⁸ Thus, I include texts that are dated considerably later, in mediaeval times, if they appear to follow the same tradition. Because exegesis started the moment the text was set, the later biblical texts already incorporate interpretations of earlier ones. Consequently, the roots of some of these traditions can be traced back to biblical times. In order to establish different traditions, many texts need to be compared and contrasted, making intertextuality a fundamental methodological tool of this study. Cultural studies are used to place texts in their context. I employ mainly semiotics and studies of genre to connect texts to their cultural milieu. As a result, a cultural niche of a particular collective mindset should be identified, and the existence of other communal standpoints in their cultural milieu acknowledged.⁹

1. *Cultural Studies and Literary Criticism.* I start with Pierre Bourdieu’s proposition that art and literature reveal the social relationships and functions around them.¹⁰ A crucial link between literary study and cultural setting is discovered by tracing conventions through the investigation of metaphors, because metaphors work on the basis of presupposed cultural norms.¹¹ This method connects directly to genre analysis. I employ a genre methodology with a dynamic concept of genre.¹² In an attempt to be inclu-

7. There are strong indications that the the books of the law, the Torah, already existed as a unity by the third century BCE, the strongest being the LXX translation of it at that time. Thus, the problematic issue of dating the Joseph Story is not of direct importance to this study.

8. For this method see Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 14.

9. This cultural niche corresponds roughly to what Yuri Lotman calls *semiosphere* (‘the whole semiotic space of the culture in question’ [Yuri Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (trans. Ann Shukman; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 124-25]), and Michel Foucault calls *épistème*. Foucault defines the term *épistème* as the total set of relations within a particular historical period (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* [London: Tavistock, 1970]).

10. Pierre Bourdieu, *Rules of Art* (trans. Susan Emanuel; Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

11. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Raymond W. Gibbs (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

12. See especially John Frow, *Genre: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2005). For more detailed discussion and bibliography see the concluding chapter.

sive, it tries to integrate the complexities of the historical, social and literary dimensions of a literary category.

The biblical Joseph story is widely acknowledged as an exquisite narrative. Consequently, it lends itself to analysis of the plot development, characterization and focalization. The economic and open-ended biblical storytelling style nurtured the imagination of the readers of the Joseph tale, who left a rich literature of its interpretations. Allegory and midrashim were popular methods of Hellenistic and medieval exegesis and will be addressed frequently throughout this work.

2. Comparative Method. I adopt the comparative method as a basic research tool, recognizing that it compares different texts on the same subject. The constant that I will use is Joseph's prominence. Some excellent sources for the characterization of Hellenistic science and of the widespread popularity of RVE will be left out because they do not fall into this category, that is, they do not focus on Joseph's exceptionality. Bringing these sources into the discussion would constitute a serious methodological mistake, because the constant must remain so that the comparison works.¹³

I apply a historical comparative method to the investigation of texts from the Hellenistic period and Late Antiquity because of their obvious historical connection within the chain of traditions. Malul's analogical comparison is applied to the choice of contemporary terms for ancient phenomena, such as 'holistic' for the Hellenistic scientific approach, and the term 'scientist' for Joseph, instead of scholar.¹⁴ Both the methodology of this Hellenistic office and the social standing of its practitioners correspond more closely to those of today's science than today's philosophy, learning or public intellectualism. I choose, however, to define and use some terms that fit better than those in general use, such as 'science of vision' instead of 'ancient optics', and 'theology' instead of 'religion'.

2. Revelation by Visual Effects (RVE): RVE in Theory

The alchemist knew the legend of Narcissus, a youth who knelt daily beside a lake to contemplate his own beauty. He was so fascinated by himself that, one morning, he fell into the lake and drowned. But this was not how the author of the book ended the story. He said that when Narcissus died the goddesses of the forest appeared and found the lake, which

13. Carl D. Evans, William W. Hallo and John B. White (eds.), *Essays in Comparative Method* (Scriptures in Context, 1; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1980).

14. Meier Malul, *Comparative Method in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Legal Studies* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament, 227; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990).

had been fresh water, transformed into a lake of salty tears. 'Why do you weep?' the goddesses asked. 'I weep for Narcissus', the lake replied. 'Ah, it is no surprise that you weep for Narcissus.' They said, 'for though we always pursued him in the forest, you alone could contemplate his beauty close at hand.' 'But ... was Narcissus beautiful?' the lake asked. 'Who better than you to know that?' the goddesses said in wonder. 'After all, it was by your banks that he knelt each day to contemplate himself!' The lake was silent for some time. Finally, it said: 'I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks, I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty reflected.'¹⁵

The communication between the divine and human spheres in symbolic imagery I call revelation by visual effects (RVE). It usually occurs on shiny surfaces such as a liquid or a mirror, and sometimes in the play of shadows reflected from a screen, or in dreams and daily visions. The source can be divine energy, sun light or the light of a lamp. The basic principles on which the phenomena of RVE operate are deeply rooted in the ancient science of vision.¹⁶ The ancient science of vision is an integral part of Hellenistic science.

a. *Hellenistic Science*

Hellenistic science is the name for ancient sciences of the cultures who participated or were influenced by Hellenism, approximately all of the Mediterranean basin as far as India, covering the Hellenistic period from third century BCE well into Imperial Rome and with a strong legacy up to the Enlightenment. Whatever the differences among ancient sciences, the division between religion and science, between natural and supernatural, was not one of them. The universe of their understanding and inquiry consisted of the worlds of god(s), spirits, humans, nature, heaven and earth.

Four main features of Hellenistic science are important for understanding the ancient science of vision: The first is that Hellenistic science was characterized by a coexistence of many diverse schools of thought. The second is that many longstanding scientific traditions of different cultures came together in Hellenistic academic pursuit. The third is that it features a holistic approach in the sense of inter-disciplinarity as well as a holistic approach to a subject matter in the case of individual sciences. Finally, the principle methodology of Hellenistic science consists of careful observation

15. Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist* (trans. Alan R. Clarke; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), pp. xiii-xiv.

16. This term is adopted from Vasco Ronchi, *Optics: The Science of Vision* (trans. Edward Rosen; New York: Dover Publications, 1991), who introduced it as a more appropriate term for the encompassing scientific approach of antiquity than 'ancient optics'.

of phenomena from which the ideas about the universe and the divine are scientifically deduced (observation and deduction).

1. *Diversity of Schools.* Many philosophical and scientific concepts and movements that existed for centuries in the Mediterranean basin, such as that light is the manifestation of the divine, that water encircles the universe, or that dreams have esoteric provenance, are expressed, defined, and reinterpreted by different schools in Hellenistic times. It is a period of loose systematization, of syncretism accompanied by a quest for identity, and of rapid exchange of ideas and cultural diffusion. It is a time of firmer establishment of diverse ancient intellectual concepts and worldviews.¹⁷ This cultural tendency impressed itself on all levels of intellectual manifestations.¹⁸

17. The parallel existence of different worldviews, such as on the cosmic creation or on the introduction of evil into the world promoted the coexistence of different conclusions about the universe, e.g. of its divine origin or of the human responsibility for sin. Thus, some Greeks explained evil with the Pandora story, while some Jews did so through the Garden of Eden story. According to the standards of modern science, which accepts only a single scientific truth, their apparent incompatibility was due to erroneous theory and faulty methodology. Thomas Kuhn explains the problem from the point of view of modernity: 'What differentiated these various schools was not one or another failure of method—they were "scientific"—but what we shall come to call their incommensurable ways of seeing the world and practicing science in it' (T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996], p. 4).

18. G.E.R. Lloyd stresses the correspondence of the intellectual with the political situation in Greece. This theory is based on the concept that cultural forms and norms become integral parts of the thought-process of society. The dominant political structure plays the key role in forming and informing subtly the other cultural paradigms, in a mutually reinforcing system (Georgia L. Irby-Massie and Paul T. Keyser, *Greek Science of the Hellenistic Era: A Sourcebook* [London: Routledge, 2002], p. 16). Political pluralism promotes intellectual debate and productivity. Accordingly, the Roman Empire with its political monopoly will eventually enforce a hyper-synthesis, creating a uniform view of the universe as an ordered and meaningful whole, with no loose ends that will promote inquiry. Thus, it closed the doors for productive dialogue. In opposing this harsh statement, Latin scholars accuse Greek scholars of degrading the cultural inheritance of Rome; see David Frederick (ed.), *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 3-5. I do not deny Roman innovations and contributions, but it is the overwhelming presence and creativity of Hellenistic science that allowed the literary texts to embrace and embody some of its accomplishments, such as its theory on light or its astronomy of heavenly bodies into its structure. According to Lucio Russo, *Forgotten Revolution*, science as we know it today emerged in the Hellenistic period, i.e. from late fourth century BCE to late second century BCE. This period marks the explosion of contribution to the objective knowledge about the external world that Russo calls the Scientific revolution. Its center was Alexandria. With the Roman conquest it started to decline and by the third century CE it was forgotten. The late Empire and the Middle Ages returned to the prescientific

Out of more or less coherent models of the world that lacked the claim of explanatory totality, around 350–300 BCE there emerged a new move toward the synthesis of these open-ended collections into all-encompassing systems of knowledge with distinct methodologies and scientific rigor, laying the foundations of self-perpetuating schools.¹⁹ The consequence was the parallel function of many schools of thought, each with its own concepts of the universe and its laws.

2. *The Impact of Different Cultures.* The importance of Hellenistic civilization for the highly developed scientific inquiry of its time lies primarily in the interchange of longstanding scientific and technological accomplishments of mainly Greek, Egyptian and ancient Near Eastern cultures. Gradually accumulated and transmitted theoretical and empirical knowledge of each particular civilization came into close contact in the Hellenistic period.²⁰ Each culture developed its own scientific program that allowed the complexities of approaches.²¹ The idiosyncrasies of different intellectual traditions, such as so-called Greek idealism, or Mesopotamian prag-

stage glorifying Classical Greece and the rise of Rome (p. 6). Although a few scientific works were preserved by Byzantium and the Arabs, they made no impact on the Western European culture and none on the seventeenth century birth of modern science (p. 7). Russo, similarly to Latin scholars regarding Rome, complains that Western scholarship treated Hellenism as a deterioration and decline of the classical culture.

19. 'In fact, only in the Hellenistic period did the great majority of philosophers belong to organized and flourishing schools', such as Peripatetic, Platonic, Stoic, Epicurean or Pythagorean (Thomas Bénatouïl, 'Philosophical Schools in Hellenistic and Roman Times', in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy* [ed. Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin; Blackwell Companions to Philosophy; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006], pp. 415-29 [415]).

20. It can be illustrated by Greek immigrants' ability to rework the huge mass of the empirical knowledge inherited by the Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures into their conceptual framework (Lucio Russo, *The Forgotten Revolution: How Science Was Born in 300 BC and Why It Had to Be Reborn* (trans. Silvio Levy; Berlin: Springer, 2004), p. 29.

21. Broad generalizations of older scholarship that the advanced technologies and economies of Egypt and Mesopotamia were brought together with the sophisticated methods of rational analysis developed by Greek cultural tradition are disclaimed today. In the case of ancient Greeks, the pioneering repudiation came with E.R. Dodds's *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Sather Classical Lectures, 25; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951). G.E.R. Lloyd dedicated his lifelong work to show the complexities of Greek intellectual and scientific contributions (*Methods*, pp. 103-104, 282; 284, *Magic, Reason*, p. 5). In the case of Egypt and ANE see for instance articles in *CANE* on religion and science, e.g. Glassner, 'Use of Knowledge', Buccellati, 'Ethics', Robins, 'Mathematics, Astronomy', or David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*, or the recent conference papers in A. Annus (ed.), *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World* (OIS, 6; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2010).

matism, are due to differences in the style of their science, philosophy and technology.²² The precise interaction of these traditional knowledges is not easy to determine. It involves a degree of syncretism, of adaptation to the dominant Greek language and culture of Greek immigrants and vice versa, of dynamic synthesis, as well as the balance of tradition and innovation that needs to be established for each separate case.²³

3. *Holistic Approach of Hellenistic Science.* Ancient science was very different from its modern manifestation. To avoid promoting yet another definition, which is beyond the scope of this study, I will focus instead on the side of Hellenistic science that stresses its encompassing of all knowledge and intellectual traditions. It would come closest to what we call today holistic science and is based on Aristotle's concept that 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts' (*Metaph.* 8.6.1045a).²⁴

This holistic approach manifests itself first in a tendency to promote a universal knowledge or worldview where there is no division among spe-

22. Clichés about Mesopotamian and especially Egyptian science as purely empirical and lacking theoretical basis and about Greek science as purely speculative and anti-empirical is no longer held by recent scholarship (e.g. G.E.R. Lloyd, H. Bowden, G. Buccellati, J.-J. Glassner, J. Bottéro, A. Winitzer). They were based on frequent use of Greece and the ancient Near East as polar opposites: Greece stands for reason and philosophy, while the ancient Near East (including Egypt) stands for irrational, mysticism, faith, and religion. Accordingly Greeks are seen to be the inventors of science and philosophy, while magic, divination and complex technologies came from the ancient Near East and Egypt. In their more extreme offshoots, those who denied the attribute *scientific* to non-experimental inquiry denied to the Greeks any scientific knowledge, labeling all accomplishments of the ancient Mediterranean as pre-scientific.

23. David Frankfurter points to a good example of the new gods that appear in Egypt in the Hellenistic period, such as Serapis and Bes at Abydos, who were the 'creative extensions of Osiris' (David Frankfurter, 'Voices, Books, and Dreams: The Diversification of Divination Media in Late Antique Egypt', in *Mantiké*, p. 238).

24. Based on Aristotle's concept that 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts' (*Metaph.* 8.6.1045a8-10), holism (from Greek ὅλος, 'all, entire, total') was reintroduced in 1926 by Jan Smuts. It contrasted the reductionism in science that maintains that complex systems can be explained by reduction to their fundamental parts. By the late twentieth century holistic science became very popular, but also controversial. Today's holistic science studies the complex systems from whole to its parts, and it holds that it is impossible to predict perfectly the behavior of a system even if all the data are available. Moreover, it rejects the idea that the scientist is a passive observer of an external reality who establishes the objectivity of truth. It holds that the observer participates in the construction of the knowledge in a reciprocal relationship with the examined universe. Holistic science is multi-disciplinary, and it covers numbers of research fields, some within mainstream sciences and some more or less controversial, such as chaos theory, cognitive science, complexity theory, integral theory, quantum physics, ecology, systems biology and study of climate change.

cific sciences, for example, psychology, biology, chemistry and physics all belong to the same science or philosophy. There is also no division between science and religion, and subsequently no separation, for example, between astronomy and astrology. Moreover, what modern scholarship characterizes as magic or popular religion bordering on superstition is an integral part of this scientific inquiry. Thus, any rejection or exclusion of bowl divination or the concept of the evil eye from other pursuits of universal knowledge would have been against general Hellenistic scientific principles.

Other holistic manifestations concern a specific subject matter within what we would classify today as an individual science. A subject matter, such as the human eye, mirror, water, or light, is regarded as a functional part of a whole by the Hellenists and not in isolation, as by modern science. The examination of an eye in the process of seeing an image serves as a nice example: the eye receives the propagated light from the source in the form of an illuminated impression, or it emits light toward such an icon. This part would be classified in today's optics as a part of physics. Upon receiving the light, the eye undertakes bodily changes in order to transmit the message to the brain (reason), which is part of what we call physiology. The reason processes and reworks the data: the subject matter of our psychology. Thus, any perception of light and color must take into account the contribution of all three of these disciplines.²⁵ According to Hellenistic understanding, this process does not follow in just one direction. The roles are interchangeable, and each of the stages can adopt the role of another. Thus, reason can receive divine energy from the outside and transmit it through the eyes to the external world: this is the subject of today's theology/religious science.²⁶

To conclude, an ancient scientist would have examined how the eye sees by collapsing the tools of four modern sciences: physics, biology, psychology and theology. Moreover, the light according to this ancient scientific thought would comprise both its divine and its natural aspect; modern rational knowledge established the division.

4. Hellenistic Scientific Methodology. According to G.E.R. Lloyd, Hellenistic empirical research was based primarily on sustained observation in acquisition of systematic knowledge and the resolution of theoretical issues. Deliberative and organized observation was a self-conscious methodology.²⁷ The stock of knowledge obtained in this manner was the subject of

25. 'In every optical operation there is always a physical, a physiological and a psychological phase' (Ronchi, *Optics*, p. 20).

26. I prefer the term 'theology' to 'religious sciences' in the sense of the literal meaning of the word: theology, as the science about god(s), or divine.

27. The importance of perception as a scientific tool is attested by polemics among ancient Greek philosophical schools on the validity of the senses in epistemological

revisions and modifications. There was an interdependence of theory and observation as in any valid scientific program.²⁸

The prominence of systematic observation as an ancient scientific approach is not based on one of the clichés of ‘ancient science’ that the ancients failed to appreciate the value of the experimental method. Their seeming lack of controlled experimentation is due partially to the perception of modern positive science, which is not only crucially dependent on it, but also proclaims any approach that does not embrace it as dilettante, and partially to the interests of ancient scientists, which were localized in many fields where experiment was not possible.²⁹

b. *Science of Vision*

In order to grasp the principles of the science of vision I will first address some of the relevant basics contained in the worldviews, having in mind the role of many schools and opinions, as well as the difficulty of establishing the details of their cultural and historical context. Two main elements of the science of vision and the practical application of RVE are light and water.

1. *Ancient Cosmologies on Light and Water.* The basic element of the science of vision is light. There is no RVE without light, and its main divinatory technique, hydromancy, involves water as well. With no division between science and religion there was no distinction between natural and supernatural light, nor between the waters of earthly and heavenly origin in ancient cosmologies.

1.1. *Light.* Ancient Mediterranean worldviews consider light as the most general manifestation of the divine presence and its workings in the world. Many ancient Mediterranean religions identified the light sources of the universe as their most important gods. The head of Egyptian pantheon, the

theory. Parmenides, Zeno and sometimes Plato downgraded observation along with other senses as deceiving in contrast to a majority of Plato’s views on observation (Geoffrey E.R. Lloyd, ‘Observation and Research’, in *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge* [trans. Catherine Porter; ed. Jacques Brunschwig and Geoffrey E.R. Lloyd; Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000], pp. 218-42 [221]).

28. Scientific observation existed also in the ancient world before Hellenism.

29. Experimentation was a part of ancient science, especially in Hellenistic times, e.g. there is evidence in Ptolemy’s *Optics* of detailed experimental investigations (Geoffrey E.R. Lloyd, ‘Observation and Research’, in Jacques Brunschwig and Geoffrey E.R. Lloyd (eds.), *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge* [trans. Catherine Porter; Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000], pp. 218-42, here 235-36). However, in contrast to their modern counterparts, ancient scientists did not hold that crucial experiments were something decisive for establishing the truth of a whole theory (Russo, *Forgotten Revolution*, p. 196).

solar god Ra, is the creator of the elements of the universe at the beginning of time, a universal ruler, and the sustainer of life. Moreover, Egypt's single known attempt at the universal worship of one god (monolatry) in the second millennium BCE promoted Aten, the sun disk. Sun gods are frequently patrons of world order and laws. Thus, the Akkadian sun god, Šamaš (Utu of the Sumerians), was the god of justice, judge of heaven and earth, and the sponsor of laws.

Greek Apollo was the god of reason, inspiration, arts, music, prophecy and healing. Oracles were often connected with Apollo, who could reveal the future. While the Greek god of oracles and predictions was the sun-god Apollo, in the Hellenistic period the Greek sun-god Helios, riding in his chariots, gained wide popularity.³⁰ At the head of the Hittite pantheon stood a divine couple: the storm god and the sun goddess of Arinna. One of the main Elamite deities was 'The Divine Good of the Sky', 'Mistress of the Sky' or 'Mother of the Gods'.³¹ The source of light appears not only as the creator and ruler of the world, provider of reason, human creativity and intellectual accomplishments and the knowledge of future, but also it acquires moral characteristics: virtue. Hence, the Persian Ahura Mazda, the pure light, the creator of the sun, the stars and the whole world, is wisdom and knowledge and absolute goodness.

There are passages in Hebrew Bible that indicate that Yhwh was not only worshipped in solar manifestations, solarized Yahwism (Ezek. 8.16; 2 Kgs 23.11; Ps. 84.12), but might have been first an indigenous solar deity of the area around Jerusalem.³² In the late Hellenistic period in the New Testament, the Gospel of John repeatedly uses the metaphor of light for Jesus (John 1.9; 3.19; 8.12; 9.5). And the mosaic floors in late antique syna-

30. Plato already uses the image of Zeus driving his winged chariot as a metaphor for the power of the wings of souls to carry them to the dwelling place of gods (*Phaedr.* 246e). Chariots seemed to be a standard vehicle for traveling up and down from heaven to earth: the eastern pediment of the Parthenon has in one corner the sun-god ascending in his chariots, and the moon-goddess descending in her chariots in the other.

31. Heidemarie Koch, 'Theology and Worship in Elam and Achaemenid Iran', *CANE*, pp. 1960-61.

32. Solarized Yahwism is W. Zimmerli's term for the practice in Ezek. 8.16: 'Sun evoked at least the luminescent dimension of the divine presence' (Mark S. Smith, 'The Near Eastern Background of Solar Language for Yahweh', *JBL* 109 [1990], pp. 29-39, here p. 30). A solar cult in the Jerusalem temple of the late southern monarchy was, according to Smith, 'primarily an indigenous development' (p. 39) both to the ancient Near Eastern heritage, to the first millennium BCE Egyptian influence on Judean royal ideology and the prominence of the solar manifestations of the Assyrian chief god, Assur. In this manner Smith tries to resolve the scholarly dispute about whether the solar cult of Ezek. 8.16 and 2 Kgs 23.11 reflects an indigenous cult of the solar deity or the adoption of foreign worship of the sun god (p. 29).

gogues, such as Beit Alpha with a haloed figure riding on the chariots in the center of the zodiac and invoking the Hellenistic sun god Helios, can be interpreted as the presentation of the sun god, which is the metaphor of light as the divine source.

By the first century CE Platonic cosmology developed into the influential tripartite model of reality comprised of demiurge, ideas and matter. On the highest level is the supreme transcendent principle; in the middle is the world of platonic ideas, and the third is the corporeal world of senses.³³ God is identified with pure light. There are usually eight spheres around the light reaching to the corporeal world, each gradually diminishing in the intensity of light, which progressively also loses its purity in the process. The outer boundary of the visible world is the sphere of fixed stars; below it are seven circles, each belonging to a planet and the last to the moon. On the lowest level is our world, consisting of four elements: fire, air, water and earth.³⁴

Thus, sky, stars and celestial bodies appear as divine but serve an auxiliary function to the sun. They are related to gods and creation, not only in ancient mythologies, but also in Greek philosophy, including in Plato and Aristotle.³⁵ As such they are an indispensable source of the knowledge of

33. Although understanding of the nature and the mutual relations among the three story principles differed from one Platonist to another, a new and heightened interest in theology characterized them all. This tripartite principle combines Platonic views, e.g. its two-story model of reality, with other philosophical teachings such as Aristotelianism, Stoicism and Pythagoreanism (Marco Zambon, 'Middle Platonism', in *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy* [ed. Mary Louise Gill and Pierre Pellegrin; Blackwell Companions to Philosophy; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006], pp. 561-76, here p. 569). An unfortunate term, 'Middle Platonism' is frequently used to characterize the diverse Platonisms that developed between the first century BCE and the end of the second century CE, that is, between the Academy and the so-called Neoplatonism established by Plotinus. However, instead of regarding Plotinus as 'a dividing historic line between two distinct phases in the history of Platonism', the turning point should be the closing down of the Academy and the unification of the intellectual heritage of ancient cultures in Imperial Rome (Zambon, 'Middle Platonism', p. 562). The new unified philosophy as a synthesis of ancient philosophies was featured under the umbrella of Platonisms with the label Neoplatonism. 'A hierarchical and highly structured conception of reality became dominant in the representation of divine reality, the natural world, society and knowledge' (Zambon, 'Middle Platonism', p. 571). It would influence all three monotheistic cultures that would emerge in subsequent centuries: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

34. The souls, angels and demons inhabit the area under the moon. According to dynamic theory on the nature of demons, the disembodied souls are either on their way to 'complete purification (and thus divinization) in the Sun, or to embodiment on the Earth' (John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, rev. edn, 1996], p. 47). Belief in reincarnation was a prominent topic among these Platonists.

35. Plato attributes to celestial bodies godly power (*Tim.* 22c, 39d, 40c-d, 41a; *Epin.* 977-87), while Aristotle (*Cael.* 2.12.292a-b) considers their spheres close to perfect and

the future and of the secrets of the universe. It was believed that variations and conjunctions of the heavenly bodies foretold events on earth. Hence the great interest in astrology and astronomy, of which Babylonians were famous throughout the ancient world, and the lore about them is transmitted to our days.³⁶ This cosmology would become the basis of the Ptolemaic model, a unified astronomical system of Imperial Rome.³⁷

The identification of divinity with light and fire was a cultural norm that became so pervasive in the time of the Roman Empire that it is often addressed as Roman heliolatry. The pervasiveness of this phenomenon should make any investigation of contemporary writings very aware of the possibility of the presence of numerous conventional metaphors.

1.1.1. *Light in the Hebrew Bible.* In Gen. 1.3-5 God creates light before time, before God started to create. Thus, light is prior to and not dependent on other heavenly luminaries: the sun, the moon and the stars, which are created on the fourth day (Gen. 1.14-19). Light features as a major component in the invention of time. Its creation in itself has no function except as an alternative to darkness; the oscillation between them creates time, measured as a unit.³⁸

Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible light stands for God (Mic. 7.8-9; 2 Sam. 22.29; Pss 17.28 [LXX]; 27.1-2; Isa. 9.2; 10.17). God's face shines through light (Num. 6.25; Pss 4.6; 80.7; 90.8), a sign of God's favor. Light is the essence of all divine gifts; it is the source of life (Eccl. 11.7; Job 3.20; 33.30; Pss. 49.19; 56.13-4), order, knowledge, truth and law (Job 12.24-5; 43.3; Prov. 4.18; 6.23; Ps. 43.3). In Ps. 19.1-6, God's law gives regularity

identifies planets with gods (Irby-Massie and Keyser, *Greek Science*, p. 83).

36. Already in its creation story, the *Enuma Elish* gives much attention to the creation of the heavenly bodies. According to Hellenistic Jewish lore Abraham learned monotheism from studying Babylonian astronomy and then taught Egyptians the craft (e.g. Artapanus, in Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 9.18.1). A long tradition of Babylonian astronomers is to be found in many of the cuneiform texts, among which are also the Babylonian star catalogues of 1200 BCE.

37. Claudius Ptolemy, in his work *Almagest*, synthesized all astronomical knowledge of the second century CE starting from the Aristotelian model of the Greek tradition and incorporating accomplishments of the Hellenistic world and the long history of the work of Babylonian astronomers.

38. The chronological measure of events is an innovation of the Hebrew Bible's cosmology and theology. God named light day, and darkness night, and the alternation between day and night is called 'one day', יום אחד, a unit of time (Jack M. Sasson, 'Time . . . to Begin', in Michael Fishbane and Emanuel Tov [eds.], "*Sha'arei Talmon*": *Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East: Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992], pp. 183-94, here 191-92). Sasson also remarks that this theological explanation of time is actually a scientific introduction of human charting of the future (p. 192).

to the revolution of the heavenly luminaries. The moral flavor of light is primarily in its function as a judge (Isa. 10.17; 51.4; Hos. 6.5; Ps. 37.6). In the same manner darkness is juxtaposed to light as death, evil, sin, iniquity and ignorance (Job 17.12; 10.21-22; 29.3; Isa. 5.30; 8.22-9.1; 45.19; Zeph. 1.15; Eccl. 6.4).³⁹ In the reciprocal relationship between light and human beings, the recipients of divine light become light themselves and shine both inwardly and outwardly (Ps. 34.6 [נָהַר]; Eccl. 8.1; Dan. 5.11; Isa. 49.6; Prov. 4.18; 20.27).⁴⁰

Besides its role at creation, light plays figures prominently in passages dealing with ascendance to the divine presence. Chariots, the main transportation vehicle of sun gods, represent metaphorically the divine ascent to heaven, or the divinity itself, or the holiness of the individual who rides them. Thus, in the Hebrew Bible, chariots are used in the ascension to heaven such as Elijah's being taken up in the chariots of fire (2 Kgs 2.11-12). The chariot of God, *merkabah*, is the throne of God in Ezekiel (1.4-26), where the divine glory is described in rich symbolic imagery.⁴¹

1.2. *Water*. Water is one of the four primordial elements.⁴² The existence of primeval waters before the birth of the gods is present in Egyptian, Greek

39. The Hebrew word for light is אֹרֶךְ. The Greek words for the light are derived mostly from φῶς.

40. The unquestionable prominence of this concept in Hellenistic times is easily demonstrated by the iconography of individuals who earn divine favor and are close to divinity. They are depicted with an aura of light around their heads. This imagery probably originated in the optical phenomenon of a halo that appears near or around the sun or moon and also near strong light sources such as burning lamps. This popular depiction of sainthood is taken over as a standard by Late Antiquity. Halos appear already in Homer, around heroes in battle (*Il.* 5.4ff.; 18.203ff.), and in Aristophanes, *Birds* 1290, 2270. The haloed Alexander the Great became the typical representation. Apollo is identified with the sun god, Helios, by his effluent halo. This divine luster around the heads of the deceased was prominent on Egyptian tombs of Roman times.

41. Interestingly enough, the main parts of the Hebrew Bible that feature divine light will become passages on which Rabbinic mysticism will be based: creation and the vision of God's throne in Ezekiel 1 and 12. In Late Antiquity, *merkabah* as the metaphor of God's glory establishes a whole new genre of *merkabah* mysticism, of which the literature of 'ascension to heaven' (*hekalot*) is also a part. See more detailed coverage in Chapter 5, on Philo.

42. Aristotle (*Metaph.* 1.3.983b20-27) ascribed to Thales of Miletos (600–550 BCE) the claim that everything came out of and is made of water. Not only was water the first principle of things for early students of philosophy, but the first students of the gods had a similar idea about nature, for whom Okeanos and Tethys were the parents of creation; additionally, divine oaths were by water (Styx) (*Metaph.* 1.3; 983^b29-33). Moreover, according to Hellenistic Babylonian mythology in Berossus, *Babyloniaca*, Onias, the god creator, came out of the river.

(Homer, *Il.* 14.210, 246) and Mesopotamian cosmologies (*Enuma Elish* 1.1-3). The partition of the primordial waters was a widespread component of cosmogony throughout the ancient Mediterranean world. In the Babylonian creation story, *Enuma Elish*, Marduk divides Tiamat (the Sea) into the upper and the lower part. In Egyptian cosmology the waters surround Geb and Nut, the earth and sky that form the permanent boundary between the world and the primeval waters. According to these geocentric cosmologies water surrounds the material world and serves as the boundary of the divine realm; through these waters communication with the supernatural is likely to occur. The primary channels of available communication are springs and wells.

Hebrew Bible cosmology also follows these principles. Immediately after generating the light, through which to establish time, God proceeded to create space and mass. Thereby, God's first act was to separate the waters into upper and lower registers (Gen. 1.6-7), with the consequent filling of the subterranean springs from the same source as the rain from heaven (Prov. 8.24; Gen. 8.9; Pss. 136.6; 148.4; 33.7). In Hebrew cosmology the waters above and below the earth wet the earth through the shafts. In the same manner as the rain that falls through the channels from above, the shafts from below the earth water the oceans, springs and rivers and fill up the wells.

Thus, in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 1.2) waters existed before the creation of the corporeal world. The concept of water as the source of life and the place where creation started is also a part of modern scientific cosmology: life started as protoplasm in water.⁴³ The natural connection of light and water imagery that was a part of the Mediterranean context is also present in the Hebrew Bible. The narrative of Elijah's ascension in a heavenly chariot connects directly to Elisha's installation by his performing a miracle on water: turning bad water into something pure and beneficial, metaphorically linking the light-water imagery with the divine power (2 Kgs 2.19-22). Psalm 104.3 draws on the same imagery, relating chariots and waters more directly: 'You set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot.'⁴⁴

43. The prominence of the Hellenistic idea of the close connection of light and water to the divine and of their interplay, especially in forming images, may prompted some pro-isolationist Jewish groups in their direct reaction to dominant Hellenistic culture to generalize the commandment 'You shall not make for yourself an idol (sculptured image), whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth' (Exod. 20.4) into an anti-iconic interpretation of the world.

44. If not otherwise stated, all biblical citations in English are from the NRSV.

2. Science of Vision Proper

From now on, my philosophical gentlemen, let us protect ourselves better from the dangerous old conceptual fantasy which posits a ‘pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of cognition’, let’s guard ourselves against the tentacles of such contradictory ideas as ‘pure reason’, ‘absolute spirituality’, ‘knowledge in itself’—those things which demand that we imagine an eye which simply can’t be imagined, an eye without any direction at all, in which the active and interpretative forces are supposed to stop or be absent—the very things through which seeing first becomes seeing something. . . . The only seeing we have is seeing from a perspective; the only knowledge we have is knowledge from a perspective. The more emotional affects we allow to be expressed in words concerning something, the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to train on the same thing, the more complete our ‘idea’ of this thing, our ‘objectivity’, will be.⁴⁵

As a part of Hellenistic holistic science, Vasco Ronchi’s ‘science of vision’ is a suitable term to express the holistic consideration of visual phenomena in their physico-physiologico-psychological complexity.⁴⁶ By adding to it the religious dimension, this study regards science of vision as comprising today’s physics, physiology, psychology and theology.⁴⁷ The phenomena that it examines fall within the range of the visible rays. As all ancient sciences, the science of vision was anthropocentric, meaning that the scientific spotlight was a sentient human being. The center of research was the vision and human eye. It is in contrast to the science of the Enlightenment, a science that is cosmocentric, that is, independent of the observer with the focus on external objects instead of on the eye. The field examining the external source of visible energy, modern science designates as optics and

45. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: Third Essay*, p. 12 (trans. Ian Johnston. Online: <http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/genealogy3.htm> [cited 2 January 2013]).

46. Hermann von Helmholtz already in 1867 undertook to integrate physics and the physiology of vision with psychology in his *Handbook of Physiological Optics* (Nicolas J. Wade, *A Natural History of Vision* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998], p. 3). This approach is continued nowadays by some visual scientists and historians of science, such as David C. Lindberg and Nicholas J. Wade. Hence, Vasco Ronchi favors the term ‘science of vision’ instead of the established scholarly use of ‘optics/ancient optics’.

47. I favor the term ‘theology’ rather than ‘religion’ in the sense of the science of god, or of the divine, parallel to biology or psychology, as the sciences of life and soul, respectively. Although theology is usually related to the articulation of religious beliefs within the framework of a particular tradition, it is used also to denote a general enterprise. Thus, the idea of an “‘intellectual wing” of religion’ (Mark W. Richardson and Wesley J. Wildman (eds.), *Religion and Science: History, Method, Dialogue* [New York: Routledge, 1996], p. xi) conveying its scholarly expression is how it is employed in this context.

is a part of physics.⁴⁸ Vision, however, as an internal and subjective phenomenon is the subject of the philosophy of sight.⁴⁹ The subjective role of an observer is examined by psychology.

Vision as a sensory organ is studied by the 'physiology of senses', a sub-field of biology. It examines both the specifics of the eye's biology, such as limitations in distinguishing the fineness of details, bilateral vision and the dependence of the perceived image on the angle of vision, and the physiology of eyes of an individual, for example, personal difference in the smallest resolvable angle or the state of fatigue.⁵⁰

The premodern world encompassed the natural and the supernatural realm. God/desses, spirits and divine forces were part of the cosmos and fell under systematic research, and the visual perception of them or of their divine aspects was part of scientific inquiry. Today they belong to the field of religious studies or, as I prefer to call it, theology.

48. The extinction of classical optics, included under science of vision by this study, happened as late as 1610 with Kepler's *Dioptrics*. The emphasis on external source and on empiricism as well as the success of Kepler's telemetric triangle lead to the neglect of the physiologico-psychological aspects of vision. It set the basis for the development of a science independent of the observer (Ronchi, *Optics*, p. 50). The eye is no longer the focus of optics but becomes an 'average eye' and is treated statistically. Photometry was introduced in the seventeenth century, and trust in the objectivity of observational instruments was taken for granted in contrast to the position of a skeptic of a previous generation who 'was unwilling to look through them from fear of being deluded by appearances. Now the insatiable investigator pushes a device's potentialities to the limit, seeking to obtain from it information, even fragmentary and deceptive information, about the macrocosmos and microcosmos. This change of attitude opened a boundless horizon to scientific research and progress' (Ronchi, *Optics*, p. 47). Photography is the invention of modern optics, and it would be an impossibility according to the principles of ancient optics. Modern optics was certainly very successful and yielded results that could justify its monopoly for three centuries until the first half of the twentieth century when the research by W. Heisenberg, N. Bohr, E. Schrödinger and A. Einstein shook its foundations.

49. Wade, *History of Vision*, p. 16. Today's *vision science*, introduced by Stephen Palmer (*Vision Science: Photons to Phenomenology* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999]) in order to express a current synthetic approach of science toward a comprehensive study of a scientific topic, covers only this area. And, thus, this *vision science* should not be confused with the *science of vision* of this study. Vision science is an interdisciplinary field concerned with image understanding that emerged in the 1970s. It is a branch of cognitive science and includes only physiology and the psychology of vision (Palmer, *Vision Science*, pp. xvii, 5). Palmer adds to it computer science, which is very appropriate to our information age. (Computer scientist corresponds to the diviner in Mesopotamia, as someone who possesses the most important esoteric knowledge, reveals the most useful secrets for the working of contemporary society and thus holds highly paying positions and enjoys social prestige.)

50. Ronchi, *Optics*, pp. 12, 249.

These ideas about vision were a part of the human cultural scene for two thousand years, until they were radically changed by Johannes Kepler's theory of optics in the seventeenth century and the scholarship of the Enlightenment. At the beginning of modern science, optics was concerned with light, hence, the visible rays. However, as it progressed in theory and in developing more powerful observational instruments, its subject matter expanded outside the range of the visual spectrum to include all forms of energy. The refinement of measurement techniques introduced the double nature of energy as waves and particles, dividing optics into quantum and wave optics or more broadly into particle physics and wave physics. At the same time a field of applied optics developed independently, which is mostly concerned with the technological side of optical phenomena. Thus, the term optics has lost its classical connection with vision.⁵¹ Therefore, this study avoids the term 'ancient optics' and favors 'science of vision' instead.

c. Revelation by Visual Effects as Genre

Ancient intellectual schools differ in their explanations of how humans see things, of the propagation of light and of the nature of visual rays. However, these diverse ancient theories of vision widely support the basic concepts on which the phenomena of RVE are based.

As my research focuses on literary texts, it is not possible to establish with any kind of exactitude how far or even if a philosophical school influenced literature directly or only general public opinion through whose lenses a literary text adopted its views. Nevertheless, it is possible to delineate common agreement in Mediterranean antiquity on the operation of divine communication in figurative symbols by lecanomancy, lychnomancy, catopromancy, well and spring divination, and oneiromancy that justifies the determination of these phenomena under RVE. RVE occurrences influenced their literary use, and this study is an attempt to delineate their literary function in order to gain a better grasp of the ancient world and its legacy to biblical interpretation in subsequent centuries up to the present.

Literary criticism helps us to establish if there is metaphoric meaning to the key terms of RVE such as *water, light, cups, mirrors, lamps* or *wells*. It can determine the meaning that they convey and whether they are used as

51. *Optics Communications* has the scope and aim of rapid publication of contributions in the field of optics and interaction of light with matter. The articles focus on the source and the transmission (e.g. all of them so in vol. 249, nos. 4-6 (2005). *Journal of Optics* is still divided into A and B. *Journal of Optics B* is dedicated to Quantum and Semiclassical Optics, while *Journal of Optics A* is devoted to Pure and Applied Optics.

conventional metaphors.⁵² If they worked as metaphors they must operate on a general agreement. Their metaphorical dimension would be the best proof of accepted conventions. Literary expressions of accepted conventions are by definition a literary category. Thus, the presence of a metaphor would give the clearest proof of the existence of a genre. The metaphorical meaning of *water, light, cups* will be used as the check point for the information gathered from examination of the cultural context of the texts and by comparative analysis.

The details of the mechanics of vision of the different schools are eclectic and consequently superfluous if not also detrimental to an understanding of the relative cultural agreement on the concept of vision. It is to be expected that metaphors are based on the main concepts prevalent across ancient worldviews and shared not only by the majority of the schools but also by the general public. I will show that the semantic range of the motifs of the metaphors of RVE disclosed understanding of theories of vision and light that are inconsistent with post-Enlightenment physics. Because classicists and scholars of religion were educated in the principles of modern optics, RVE phenomena remained overlooked and escaped systematic examination until recently.

d. *History of Scholarship*

The history of the science of vision, popularly known as ancient optics, was very recently developed as a part of the history of science. History of science evaluates ancient sciences according to their contribution to the scientific pool of knowledge.⁵³ Because according to modern rational science there is only one scientific truth, any deviation from this standard was overlooked as a scientific mistake, such as the theory that eyes can emit light. Thus, in the case of ancient optics, the works of its scientists, Euclid and Ptolemy, are deemed false. Also the focus was on ‘verified scientists’, while philosophers and religious thinkers who did not leave systematic theories or treaties on a scientific subject were excluded. Therefore, the contributions

52. Conventional metaphors, in contrasted to a new metaphor with a power to create a new reality, are defined as ‘metaphors that structure the ordinary conceptual system of our culture, which is reflected in our everyday language’ (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], pp. 139, 141).

53. The idea of science as a progressive accumulation of knowledge pushed historians of science into labeling the out-of-date theories as errors, superstition and myths (Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996], p. 2). Even in 1999, Palmer, *Vision Science*, while trying to modernize the field, excluded the contributions of ancient scholarship to ‘the vision science’ altogether, starting his history of the field with Helmholtz in the nineteenth century.

of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Democritus to the theories of vision are disregarded altogether.⁵⁴

In the 1950s as a result of the shift of the scientific paradigm introduced by quantum mechanics, the uncertainty principal of Werner Heisenberg and Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, the base of mechanical physics was shaken.⁵⁵ These developments in physics reintroduced the human factor in the accountability of scientific inquiry, along with the probability and relativity of its results, creating a scientific climate not dissimilar to the anthropocentric scientific context of divination in the ancient world. Particle-wave duality, together with Niels Bohr's attempt to embrace two mutually incompatible theories with his concept of complementarity, shattered the basic principle of a single valid scientific theory behind each phenomenon, thus opening the door into post-modern physics.⁵⁶ These shifts had an immediate impact on the understanding of the nature and the propagation of light and energy, the problem of vision and the role of the observer, and her/his objectivity and subjectivity. Thomas Kuhn, in his influential book *The Scientific Revolution* (1962), reexamined and revolutionized scientific theory. Vasco Ronchi, in *Optics* (1955), reevaluated the basis of the field of optics, reintroduced the ancient contributions and redefined ancient optics as the *science of vision*.⁵⁷

54. Anne Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote* (International Plato Studies, 16; Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2003), p. 1.

55. The term 'paradigm shift' is adopted from Thomas Kuhn, in its meaning of a scientific revolution. Paradigm 'is universally recognized scientific achievement that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners'. The change of these paradigms occurs through revolutions: 'Successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science' (Kuhn, *Scientific Revolution*, pp. x, 12).

56. Russo, *Forgotten Revolution*, 396; J.E. Loder and W.J. Neidhardt, 'Barth, Bohr and Dialectic', in M.W. Richardson and W.J. Wildman (eds.), *Religion and Science: History, Method, Dialogue* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 271 ff.

57. This idea is being taken over slowly by the textbooks. Thus, Leno S. Pedrotti and Frank L. Pedrotti adapted their *Introduction to Optics* in the 1998 edition to *Optics and Vision* (Leno S. Pedrotti and Frank L. Pedrotti, *Optics and Vision* [Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998], xv), making it less specialized and more comprehensive. In *The Science Study Reader*, Timothy Lenoir writes about the philosophy of science using terms from and connecting it to the science of vision: 'Nietzsche's passage (cited at the beginning of this section) highlights several themes central to recent work in science studies. First, it rejects a single, all-empowering gaze, a nonperspectival seeing, in favor of radical, critically positioned seeing—the theme of situated knowledges. Second, the passage enjoins us not to abandon objectivity, but to reclaim embodied vision, perspectival seeing, even technologically mediated vision as a route to the construction of located, and therefore responsible, knowledges' (Timothy Lenoir, 'Was the Last Turn the Right Turn? The Semiotic Turn and A.J. Greimes', in *The Science Study Reader* [ed. Mario Biagioli, New York: Routledge, 1999], pp. 290-301, here p. 290).

Recently a renewed interest in ancient theories of vision has emerged among philosophers, and especially among classicists.⁵⁸ The profundity of the works of the latter, gained by examination of the literary works and material culture, displayed an overwhelming picture of popular ancient ideas about vision. I will turn next to their work.

e. *Hellenistic Science Applied to the Science of Vision*

Seeing has, in our culture, become synonymous with understanding. We 'look' at a problem. We 'see' the point. We adopt a 'viewpoint'. We 'focus' on an issue. We 'see things in perspective'. The world 'as we see it' (rather than 'as we know it' and certainly not 'as we hear it' or 'as we feel it') has become the measure for what is 'real' and 'true'.⁵⁹

1. *Holistic Approach: Interdisciplinarity.* If the Hellenistic science of vision is described by using analogies with present-day science, it appears as a combination of physics, physiology, psychology and theology. I add theology to Ronchi's definition, not only because religion was an integral part of scientific inquiry but also because this position is based on the evidence of Hellenistic scientists themselves. Thus, Galen, heir of Hellenistic medicine, considers vision a divine faculty. He indicates the continuity and interchangeability of the processes among the object, the eye, the optical nerve and the brain, ending with the spirit (πνεῦμα), a direct connection with the sphere of the gods.⁶⁰ He places the divine source on the same line as the sources of physics, physiology and psychology.⁶¹ Galen also compares the role of the environmental air in the propagation of light between the object with the eye and the role of the nerve in the body in transmitting information between the eye and the brain.

2. *Anthropocentric Approach to the Subject Matter.* According to modern theories of optics, there is a linear progression of light as energy: emission, transmission and reception. It starts with a source of energy, continues with

58. Anne Merker in her dissertation in philosophy in 2000 on vision in Plato and Aristotle, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, p. 1, stresses that she does not examine her topic from the point of view of the history of science, basically because it limits both Plato's and Aristotle's theories of vision, distorting them in the process. Thus, she studies them from a more inclusive perspective: philosophy. The references to classicists are cited on the next pages.

59. Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 168.

60. Véronique Boudin, 'La théorie galénique de la vision', in *Couleurs et vision dans l'antiquité classique* (ed. Laurence Villard; Rouen: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 2002), pp. 69-70; Galen, *On the Doctrine of Hippocrates and Plato* 7.5.

61. Isabelle Gassinio, 'Voir et savoir chez Lucien', in *Couleurs et vision*, p. 167.

the process of transmission and ends with reception in the form of the eye or a technological device as an extension of human vision. Thus, the light from the sun, or from any illuminated object, travels to the eye, which passively receives it. The reversal of the trajectory is not plausible, according to physical laws. A mirror or any shiny surface only reflects energy; it does not produce it. It absorbs energy, only less than other more dense objects. Light gets reflected or refracted from objects. The eye is only a receptor of light, which changes light energy into chemical energy, and that is how living beings see.

In the ancient world the physics of light was very different. According to the Hellenistic sciences, both source and receptor can emit or receive light, while the propagation of energy may go in both directions, for example, from the lamp to the eye but also from the eye to the lamp.⁶² Although there were several different explanations of the details of this process, this concept was generally accepted, so much so that it is possible to talk about it as a cultural paradigm in the ancient Mediterranean world. To put it in modern terms of exegesis, instead of linear progression we have a hermeneutical circle.

Let us examine in some detail what the ancients theorized about visual effects, including dreams and miracles and the notorious evil eye.

3. *Sun-Eye*. Sight is compared to the sun. The eye is the most similar to the sun according to Plato (*Resp.* 6.508 b3). It has its form. Plotinus (*Enn.* 1.6.9.1.30-32) stresses that the eye would not be able to see the sun unless it were similar to it. Thus, the sun is at the same time the object of vision and its cause.⁶³ The difference is not in the functions of sight and sun but in their limitations. The sun sees everything while human sight is temporally and spatially limited, a notion that is already Homeric (*Il.* 3.277). The Greek sun god Helios was also called Helios *Panoptes*, the all-seeing god (Homer, *Od.* 8.300ff.). Hence, there is a metaphor of the sun as an all-seeing eye. The image of the sun is of an intelligent omnipresence. Moreover, a communication between sun and people is a recurrent subject of Greek tragedies. According to Sophocles (*Oed. Col.* 869) birth is described as ‘seeing the sun’, while death is the state of no longer seeing the sun.⁶⁴

Šamaš, the Mesopotamian sun god in charge of law and public affairs, executed a very appropriate task for an all-seeing god. The all-seeing sun is

62. Euclid, *Mirrors*, 6; Ptolemy, *Optics*, 5.3-6, Aristotle, *Sens.* 2.437b26-35.

63. Anne-Lise Worms, ‘De la vision dans le premier traité des *Ennéades* de Plotin’, in *Études sur la vision dans l’antiquité classique* (ed. Laurence de Villard ; Rouen: University of Rouen, 2005), pp. 169-70.

64. The same concept reappears in the Gospel of John, where light as the metaphor for God functions as a metaphor for life and its absence as death (Jn 1.1-5).

also all-knowing, thus connecting vision with knowledge and law.⁶⁵ Thus, sun knows the future and all the secrets of human affairs and analogically is connected to the prediction of the future and learning. The truth happens for humans through their sun-like eyesight.

The human eyes are modeled after the eyes of divinities. The Olympian gods are like the stars, and their eyes function as the stars, which are the source of light (e.g. Pindar, *Ol.* 3.19-24; *Paean.* 9.1-20.).⁶⁶ While a human eye lacks the panoramic vision of the gods, it is directly linked to spiritual illumination and/or intellectual perception.⁶⁷

4. *Emission of Light.* The sun sees and knows everything by the rays that depart from it; the sun launches its rays like arrows. The rays penetrate, illuminate the world, uncover hidden secrets, and, thus, in human ethics they can be understood as launched for or against someone or something. The human eye functions in exactly the same manner as the sun, only on a limited scale.⁶⁸ There is a source of light internal to the eye. The eyes radiate light. This metaphor is very popular, especially in love poetry of all times.⁶⁹ The emitting eye can launch rays in some cases against someone, if there is enough energy. This accounts for ‘evil eye’.⁷⁰ Hence, highly charged eyesight is capable by its gaze of moving objects and in its morally positive aspect perform what we call today miracles.

Empedocles, a Greek philosopher and scientist of the fifth century BCE (Theophrastus, *Sens.* 7), compares the vision of the eyes to a lamp burning

65. The roots of the words for seeing and knowing are the same in Greek, εἶδον, οἶδα.

66. Michel Briand, ‘Les (en)jeux du regard et de la vision dans la poésie mélique’, in de Villard, *Études*, p. 59.

67. An early example is Plato, who assimilates light to the good (*Resp.* 6.508c).

68. Jacques Jouanna, “‘Soleil, toi qui vois tout’: variations tragiques d’une formule homérique et nouvelle étymologie de ἀκτίς;”, in de Villard, *Études*, p. 52.

69. In many languages the metaphor of fire is used to distinguish the quality of a glance, such as a ‘burning glance’. Thus, Sophocles identifies ‘the magic charm of love’ to ‘a kind of lightening-flash in the eyes’ that warms but also scorches with the flame (frag. 474). See also the recent monograph by Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), with its detailed treatment of erotic glance in the early Roman Empire.

70. About the ubiquitousness and fear of the evil eye in the ancient Mediterranean world and in the Hebrew Bible see the work of John H. Elliott (‘The Evil Eye in the First Testament: The Ecology and Culture of a Pervasive Belief’, in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. D. Jobling, P.L. Day and G.T. Sheppard; Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1991), pp. 147-59. For the mechanics of it and its role in Roman Empire see the collection of articles in David Fredrick (ed.), *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

in the dark.⁷¹ Both the lamp and the eye emit rays of light that penetrate into things. The idea of an eye emitting rays reaches as far back as Homer (*Od.* 4.150).⁷² And this illumination is closely related both to the inner state of mind and to an expression of the whole person. The eye is also an ideal mirror of the troubles and sufferings of an ill person and, therefore, was the main source of diagnostics in Hippocratic medicine (e.g. Hippocrates, *Alim.* 2.125).⁷³

That these ideas are neither arbitrary nor marginal is attested by their very embodiment in many ancient languages. Lexicographical analysis, mainly the syntactical analysis of the verbs used for vision in Greek (ὁράω), Latin (*spectare, videre*) and several other ancient languages (e.g. *avar, lezghi* and *lak*), distinguishes two types of vision: one that imposes on a receiver and the other that inquires and searches.⁷⁴ Thus, there is a vision of a passive receptor, usually the verb with a direct object (accusative), and a voluntary vision, vision that is active, usually followed by a preposition if the same verb is used for both cases (e.g. ‘throw a glance toward a vast heaven’, Homer, *Il.* 3.364). Expressions of active and voluntary vision have a much more distinguished presence in ancient languages in comparison with modern ones, testifying to a dual understanding of the nature of vision in antiquity: received or emitted from the human agent.⁷⁵

Mirrors and reflective surfaces function in the same manner as the eye as emitters, receptors and reflectors of light.

5. *Reflection.* The idea of reflection from mirrors is not an ancient concept. Even representatives of diverse philosophical movements, such as atomists with Democritus (Aristotle, *Sens.* 2.438a5) and idealists such as Plato (*Tim.* 45a-46c), including also Anaxagoras and Diogenes of Apollonia (Theophrastus, *Sens.* 36), believed that an image is incorporated in the mirror in the same manner as in the eye. This image is a real bodily substance formed in a mirror or an eye. Eyes and mirrors and other reflective surfaces can also

71. ‘And he [Empedocles] attempts to describe what vision is; . . . what is in the eye is fire and water, and what surrounds it is earth and air, through which light being fine enters, as the light in lanterns’ (Theophrastus, *Sens.* 7).

72. Βολαὶ ὀφθαλμῶν (*Od.* 4.150), and, especially, D. Frederick, ‘Introduction: Invisible Rome’, in Fredrick, *Roman Gaze*, p. 3, and J.R. Clarke, ‘Look Who Is Laughing at Sex’, in David Frederick (ed.), *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 156.

73. Laurence Villard, ‘La vision du malade dans la Collection hippocratique’, in Villard (ed.), *Études sur la vision dans l’antiquité classique*, p. 130.

74. Alain Christol, ‘Vision at agentivité: la syntaxe comme revelateur’, *Études*, pp. 9-14.

75. Christol, ‘Vision at agentivité’, pp. 16-17.

emit light. Democritus associates the eye with water. Thus, the same principle of forming the vision and ‘reflecting’ light applies to watery surfaces.⁷⁶

According to Ronchi, the process of ‘*seeing*’ means creating an effigy and placing it in a portion of the space in front of us’.⁷⁷ Effigies are bright, colored figures that the mind of the observer creates either on its own initiative as in a dream or on the basis of information presented to it. The image observed whether real or virtual is entirely distinct from the figure seen. The former is a mathematical entity, while the effigy is a psychological entity, put in terms of our science. The ancients were aware of this distinction, which is another reason why the interpreters of these effigies, such as Egyptian ‘sacred scribes’ Mesopotamian diviners or Greek pythias, had such a prominent and important role. Ronchi argues that the practical success of Kepler’s optics in enforcing the identification of these two entities was ‘a profound philosophical blunder’.⁷⁸

The image that exists, for example, within the mirror opens up the whole world on the other side of it. No wonder that the ancients understood shiny surfaces as very important portals to the divine world. Thus divination by mirrors, lecanomancy or any other kind of hydromancy (any divination with water reflection) was a reality not to be belittled by philosophers or intellectual or religious leaders of the ancient Mediterranean world.

Mirrors also supply knowledge of the hidden world around us. Thus, Heron of Alexandria writes in the first century CE:

It’s moreover possible through mirrors to see people behind us, and ourselves inverted, and having three eyes and two noses . . . Katoptrics [mirror divination] is useful not only for theory but also for ordinary needs. For how would someone not think it right useful to see people in the neighboring house, e.g., and how many people are in the streets and doing what? Or how will someone not think it equally marvelous to see the current time, both night and day, via images? (Heron, *Mirrors*, pp. 16-17).⁷⁹

It is often remarked that the bards of Hellenistic geometry, Euclid and Ptolemy, discovered the basic principles of refraction and reflection and thus introduced the idea of reflection in the history of science.⁸⁰ They, and

76. Aristotle, *On Sense and Sensation* 2.438a5, discussed in Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, pp. 56-58.

77. Ronchi, *Optics*, p. 261.

78. ‘To convince millions of people that the two things are the same is one of most ridiculous aspects of teaching science’ (Ronchi, *Optics*, p. 203).

79. Irby-Massie and Keyser, *Greek Science*, p. 194.

80. Euclid wrote textbooks on optics and catoptrics around 300 BCE. Claudius Ptolemy’s *Optics* of the second century CE, through its medieval Latin translation from Arabic, made an important impact on the beginning of modern optics (Irby-Massie and Keyser, *Greek Science*, p. 197; Ronchi, *Optics*, p. 11).

Aristotle before them, rejected the corporealization of the image behind the mirror and moved it either to its surface or conceptualized it as an illusion. However, it was not the light ray that was reflected but the visual ray, the ray that was emitted by the human eye. According to this understanding of 'seeing', photography that assumes the presence of an external source of light while the eyes or the camera are the passive receptors only would be impossibility for a Hellenist citizen or scientist.⁸¹ Consequently, even if we accept the geometric principles of reflection, the idea that a human eye can emit energy renders the performance of miracles through a look a scientific possibility, while the belief in evil-eye magic was certainly not a prejudice of uneducated and superstitious masses but a real ethical and scientific question. It certainly has scientific justification in the concepts of vision of both Aristotle and Plato, the great minds of ancient Greek philosophy.

Let the visual effects on water serve as an example of the complicated optical impressions that human vision creates. An effigy in the water seems to an onlooker closer to the surface than the material object it depicts is. If the observer tries to grasp it s(he) will realize that it is situated lower than 'the effigy localized by her/him on the basis of the optical data'.⁸² The farther the object is in the water the greater is the displacement. The calculation of a human eye about the object's placement in the water depends on the angle of perception. The depth of a pond looks much shallower than it is when estimated from the shore. Optical illusion is nicely demonstrated by the effigy distortion that occurs when an oar is partially immersed in water with the figure bending at the point of immersion. Our scientific term for this phenomenon is refraction of light. A household example is a misaligned appearance of a spoon handle in a glass of water.

The tendency of ancient cosmologies to place waters between the visible world in which humans live and the godly abode made earthly bodies of water into a natural access to the divine realm. That the real image is located farther down in the water than the human eye anticipates only strengthens the idea of the mysterious otherworld beyond the water depths. Thus, water can carry a divine message and provide a glimpse of a deity's manifestation, hence the popular conviction of the sanctity of water.⁸³ This cosmology causes Aristotle, who, otherwise rejects the divine origin of light, to categorize divination from reflection in watery surfaces and dream interpretations into the same visual phenomena. The images reflected from the water's sur-

81. Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, p. 59.

82. Ronchi, *Optics*, p. 158.

83. The idea of water as sacred or of divine origin is also obvious in its metaphoric meaning, e.g. as life giving, or of supernatural potency as 'living water' (Isa. 44.3; Jer. 2.13; Jn 4.6, 10).

face as blurred from the motions in water resemble dream apparitions, and both are in need of the same type of interpreter.⁸⁴

6. *Prognostics and Universal Knowledge.* Eyes, mirrors and reflective surfaces are portals to the otherworldly realm. Through them it is possible to access the divine and gain knowledge of the future, the secrets of the universe and of human affairs. The eye receives and emits light through its internal corporeal or illusionary source of light. As an access to the supernatural it can serve as a conductor of divine energy. This divine energy manifests itself in visions and dreams and in miracles performed by the sight.

Predictions of the future and the acquisition of esoteric knowledge come through vision, either by intentional inquiry using shiny surfaces, or incubation dreams, or philosophical query, or is revealed only by divine intervention through nightly or daily visions. This attainment of otherworldly knowledge through visualization is based on the analogy of sight of the visible to the invisible world, and of sensory to non-sensory vision. This intellectual perception is an active and durable operation of intellect, in contrast to visions, which are produced by a glance. Plotinus developed this idea of non-sensory vision based on the existence of the source of light internal to the eye. Plotinus (*Enn.* 4.5) makes the distinction between two types of vision: (1) sensory vision, which is involuntary and limited because the object is limited, and (2) intellectual vision, which is voluntary and is unlimited because its object is unlimited: the Good or the One. Intellectual vision is the subject of philosophy, because although everyone has it, not everyone uses it.⁸⁵ This concept of internal light as the ultimate expression of human intellectual achievement or the supreme state of mind will have a prominent influence on theological and philosophical thought of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. We may ask how much today's metaphors, *understanding is seeing, seeing is knowing* (the desire to see is the desire to know), or *seeing is believing* have to thank this cultural appropriation.

Atomistic theory operates also with two types of visions but avoids 'Neoplatonic' dualism while keeping a holistic approach.⁸⁶ According to the atomists such as Philodemus of Gadara (*Sign.* 52), the invisible is the cause of the visible. But in order to grasp the workings of the invisible world we must draw analogies with the visible one such as the following: the human

84. Aristotle, *Somn.* 464b5-16.

85. Anne-Lise Worms, 'De la vision dans le premier traité des Ennéades de Plotin', in *Études*, pp. 172-73.

86. Meaning: visible/invisible, sensory/non-sensory. Instead of standard 'Neoplatonic', the more accurate term would be 'Platonism of the Imperial period'. See the discussion above on Middle Platonism.

experience of the death of another human is sufficient for the conception of death in general.⁸⁷

The same intellectual or spiritual faculty is in charge both of foretelling the future and of deducting universal truths and human secrets. That prognostics and scientific inquiry come from the same source and function on the same principles is nicely demonstrated through the Epicurean term πρόληψις. Cicero translates it in Latin, *anticipatore*. The concept immediately links vision with cognition. The closest English translation would be *preconception*. Πρόληψις in its Epicurean meaning connects the truth with sensation and emotion. This truth comes from the outside. It also has a quality of seizing.⁸⁸ At the same time it is a pre-notion of the readiness for new experiences, a kind of a foundation on which new knowledge can construct itself. Thus, with πρόληψις, future builds on the past, making prediction of the future into a cognitive faculty.

7. Transmission of Light—Propagation of Light. Eyes under certain circumstances can emit more energy than is in their power as a source of light. It happens because a human eye can become a conductor of divine energy and is able to emit enough energy to be capable of producing miracles by glance. The evil eye, though, is an example of a heightened discharge of power within the capability of energy production of a single human being. Although materialists such as Democritus and some empiricists such as Aristotle challenged the divine nature of light, their views were in the minority.

Almost all the schools agree that the source of light is the human eye and that there is a visible object in its way, but in which manner the vision is produced and transmitted is a matter of different opinions. According to Homer (*Od.* 4.150) and Empedocles (Theophrastus, *Sens.* 7) a human agent sees by launching arrows of light that penetrate visual objects. Both Plato and Aristotle hold that a meditating environment between the eye and the seen target exists; Aristotle considers this medium transparent.⁸⁹ According to Plotinus the medium is lacking, and vision occurs as a sympathetic contact between the internal light of an eye and the light of a visible object.⁹⁰ Instead of a linear propagation of light, atomists such as Democritus or

87. René Lefebvre, 'De la poussière dans la lumière à la agotation des atomes (Lucrèce, *De la Nature* 2.121-124)', in *Études*, p. 158.

88. Lefebvre, 'De la poussière dans la lumière', *Études*, p. 154.

89. Plato, *Resp.* 6.507; *Tim.* 45.

90. Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.5; Anne-Lise Worms, 'De la vision dans le premier traité des Ennéades de Plotin', *Études*, pp. 170-71.

Epicurus understood light as the tumult of atoms similar to propagation of dust in macrocosmos (Aristotle, *De an.* 1.2.404a1-4).⁹¹

However, these differences among the schools on the mechanics of light transmission and its nature do not affect the consensus on the main principles behind the RVE that in this case means the interchangeability of emission, transmission and reception of light between the source and the target, and the idea that the human eye emits energy in the process of perception.

8. *Miracles.* Miracles produced by sight are based on the emanating function of an eye according to the science of vision, and its analogy with gods and sun. A source of energy internal to the eye in conjunction with its interchangeable role as emitter, transmitter and receptor of light transforms the eye into a conductor of divine energy. Reason, which can also assume different roles in the same manner as an eye, becomes the receptor of divine light and the transmitter of energy in the direction of the eye. In this manner human beings who have exceptional relations with divinity can perform miracles through a glance.

The evil eye as a much more common phenomenon than a miracle can be explained by the high energy potency of the eye, the basic function of which is to emit rays of light. No wonder that these beams of energy under certain circumstances of emotional stress and involving some moral issues can harm the object of the sight, such as having the power to wither with a glare. The gazing envious eye emanates the particles that invade the body of the envied person.⁹²

A common Greek word for miracle, θαῦμα, is derived from a verb of visual perception, θεῖομαι.⁹³ In the Hellenistic period, θαῦμα referred to an experience of the extraordinary, the semantics of which ranges from astonishment to amazement (e.g. Apollonius Sophista, *Lex. Hom.* 108.8; Cicero, *Div.* 2.64). An older, Homeric meaning of it is primarily a spectacle (e.g. *Il.* 5.725; 10.439; 13.99; 18.83). In all these cases it expresses essentially a contemplative glance at the external world, again connecting sight with understanding or knowledge and not with an act contrary to natural laws. It

91. Lefebvre, 'De la poussière dans la lumière', *Études*, p. 150.

92. Frederick, 'Invisible Rome', p. 3; Clarke, 'Look Who Is Laughing at Sex', p. 156.

93. Miracles feature prominently in the Hellenistic Greek of the New Testament. The words for 'miracle' in New Testament Greek have semantics rooted in 'making signs', σημεῖον (the most frequent in the NT with 77 entries, e.g. Mt. 12.38, 39; 16.1, 2, 4; Jn. 2.11, 18, 23; 3.2; 2 Thess. 3.17), or in power, δύναμις (Mt. 7.22; 11.20, 21; 13.58; Lk. 10.13; 2 Thess. 2.9), or in prodigy, portent, translated usually as 'wonder', τέρας (e.g. Mt. 24.24; Mk 13.22; 2 Thess. 2.9). In 2 Thess. 2.9, there are three different words used for 'miracles' in the sense of using supernatural powers; they refer to satanic power: σημεῖον, δύναμις, τέρας, and none of them is θαῦμα, or related to words for vision.

features in such phrases as, ‘seeing with one’s own eyes’ (ἡ μέγα θαῦμα τόδ’ ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὁρῶμαι, Homer, *Il.* 15.286; 20.344; 21.54).⁹⁴

The semantic range of the word that links theatrical spectacle with miracle worker appears in the word θαυματοποιός, which designates a professional visual performer: illusionist. Prolonged observation accompanied by a fascination in the theater and in acrobatics gave rise to its pejorative metaphors: jongleurs, charlatans (Aristotle, *Oec.* 2.2.1346b21; Demosthenes, *2 Olynth.* 19.5).⁹⁵

9. *The Nature of Vision.* Plato and Aristotle certainly mark two different schools of thought. However, their answers on how we see are in line with the general theories of perception of antiquity. Their main distinctions lie in their understanding of *seeing*. According to Plato, the sight of the light of day constitutes an authentic divine presence, a vision that opens up an anthropological discourse on what is humanity.⁹⁶ While Plato stresses vision’s access to the divine, Aristotle emphasizes its primary importance in epistemology. Observation of phenomena is a primary scientific tool: Aristotle considers vision as predominating over other senses in the domain of epistemology (*De an.* 3.2-3). The roots of the words for seeing and knowing are the same in Greek, εἶδον, οἶδα. Vision opens up the possibility for reason to acquire knowledge of the sensory world.⁹⁷

Their subsequent responses, although different, underline the importance of sight either as a tool of communication with the divine or as a tool to obtain knowledge, and consequently support the basic principles of ancient optics and RVE. Also, Plato’s and Aristotle’s theories reflect popular concepts of vision of the time. There is an almost universal favoring of vision over other senses in ancient intellectual circles.

10. *The Importance of Vision over Other Senses.* The words for non-vision (ἀφανίζω) and non-perception (ἄιστόω) are words of destruction in Greek. Negation of vision means complete obliteration.⁹⁸ In contrast to Aristotle, who might have reduced sight, according to the understanding of many ancients, to an epistemological tool even if the main one, the great majority of philosophers and ancient scholars regarded sight, along with Plato, as a portal to the divine. Even Galen, the famous second-century CE physician,

94. Christine Hunzinger, ‘La perception du merveilleux: θαυμάζω et θηέομαι’, in *Études*, p. 29.

95. Hunzinger, ‘La perception du merveilleux,’ p. 38.

96. Plato, *Tim.* 27 a-b.

97. Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote*, pp. 245-49.

98. Alain Blanc, ‘Non-vision, non-perception et destruction en grec: étude de vocabulaire’, in *Études sur la vision dans l’antiquité classique*, pp. 21-24.

an heir to Aristotle, thought that sight was the most divine of the human senses.⁹⁹ Galen justifies the divine provenance of sight by amazement at its function of the eyes in part and as a whole after a careful anatomical and physiological analysis of the eye.¹⁰⁰

That the main scientific method of Hellenistic scholarship was the careful observation of phenomena fits this intellectual consensus. The eyes and sight were the main portals to universal knowledge, supernatural mysteries and scientific inquiry. Granted the physical, physiological, psychological and theological basis of the science of vision, this observation included the subjectivity of the observer and the physiology of eyesight. Or to put it in terms of today's rhetoric, it was anthropocentric and holistic.

Beside scientific field, vision is given a premium status in other intellectual activities, such as the process of memorization. The concept that it is not possible to think without images constitutes the essence of mnemonic techniques. It is physically based on ancient theories of senses and cognition linking vision directly to knowledge through the eye of the spirit.¹⁰¹ Visualization of the memories of things seen helps the art of memorization. It plays a crucial role in rhetorics, an art par excellence grounded in speech and the sense of hearing. Latin rhetoricians were trained in the art of memorization.¹⁰²

3. *Revelation by Visual Effects in Practice*

The ancients developed methods to communicate with the divine realm through light to acquire information about the future or about the unknown principles and operations of the surrounding world. In practice, contact with divine light was accomplished through visual events and omens: hydromancy (water divination), captromancy (= catoptromancy, mirror divination), lychnomancy (lamp divination), and oneiromancy (dream divination). Their frequent interchangeability and coupling support the premise of this study that they belong to the same form of communication with the divine.

Hydromancy involves the images formed, refracted or reflected from liquid surfaces, preferably natural waters such as springs or wells that are, according to popular ancient Mediterranean cosmologies, inherently chan-

99. Galen, *Use of the Parts* 10.12. Galen served in many ways as the standard for modern medicine.

100. Boudon, 'La théorie galénique de la vision', pp. 67-68.

101. Aristotle, *Mem. rem.* 1.450-451a.

102. Catherine Baroin, 'Le rôle de la vue dans les arts de la mémoire latins', in *Études sur la vision dans l'antiquité classique*, pp. 203-13.

nels to divinity.¹⁰³ With the increasing popularity of divination, oracles, mystery cults and dreams in the Hellenistic age, water in cups became a more accessible form of hydromancy than springs and wells, and lecanomancy gained a prominent place.¹⁰⁴ Concave cups were sometimes replaced with concave mirrors, bringing captromancy under the same phenomenological umbrella. The second-century CE traveler Pausanias and his contemporary, the satirist Lucian, in describing fashionable customs of their time, tell about mirrors that are put down in wells to tell the future or hidden secrets. Each of them fashions these depictions according to the genre in which he writes.¹⁰⁵

Lychnomancy uses the deciphering of shadow images that are formed by a lamp in accessing the unknown. The practice is usually found in the texts that mention also lecanomancy, which involves similar rituals and the same personnel.¹⁰⁶ For example, immediately after satirizing hydromancy Lucian tackles lychnomancy by making fun of humanoid lamps that inhabit their own city situated up in the sky beside zodiac signs.¹⁰⁷ In divination manuals

103. Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité* (4 vols.; Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1879), 1:186-88; W.R. Halliday, *Greek Divination: A Study of its Methods and Principles* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1967 [1913]), pp. 123-24, 145-46.

104. There is an increased effort in the Hellenistic era to establish divine contact and guidance (Luther Martin, *Hellenistic Religions: An Introduction* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1987], pp. 40-53), which is exemplified by the popularity of the Sibylline oracles. Also, while the mechanics of the Delphic ritual remains unknown, the famous depiction on vase paintings from the classical period (Attic red-figure vase, about 440 BCE, Berlin Mus., 2538), showing a seated Pythia at Delphi looking at the vessel while prophesying, may indicate the standard use of lecanomancy in the Sibylline cult.

105. At Patras, there was a holy spring in the sanctuary of Demeter. 'Here there is an infallible mode of divination, not however for all matters, but only in cases of sickness. They tie a mirror to a fine cord and let it down so far that it shall not plunge into the spring but merely graze the surface of the water with its rim. Then, after praying to the goddess and burning incense, they look into mirror, and it shows them the sick person either living or dead. So truthful is the water' (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 7.21.12); 'A great mirror lies over a well of no great depth. If one goes down into the well, one hears all that is being said amongst us here on earth, and if one looks in the mirror, one sees all the cities and nations, just as if one was actually standing over them. On that occasion, for example, I saw my relatives and all my native land; whether they saw me or not I can't say for certain' (Lucian, *Vera historia* 1.26).

106. The employment of virgin boys, who were usually on the regular staff of the professional interpreters of the symbolic images, in *PGM* and *PDM* is attested only in these two divinatory techniques: lychnomancy and lecanomancy (e.g. *PGM* 7.540).

107. 'Lamp-town . . . lies in the air midway between the Pleiades and the Hyades, though much lower than the Zodiac. On landing, we did not find any men at all, but a lot of lamps running about and loitering in the public square and at the harbour. Some of them were small and poor, so to speak: a few, being great and powerful, were very splendid and conspicuous. Each of them has his own house, or sconce, they have names

a dream oracle appears frequently dependent on lamp divination: 'request for a dream oracle, a request which is always used. Formula to be spoken to the day lamp' (*PGM* 7.250-54; cf. *PGM* 12.121-43).

Dreams in images are linked directly with hydromancy. Sacred springs and wells were favorite places for incubation dreams.¹⁰⁸ Thus, oneiromancy, hydromancy, lychnomancy and captromancy emerge as kindred professions. The interchangeabilities of these visual omens show that they used the same skills and method of interpretation and indicate a need for personnel with similar training who can interpret them. The job was very probably executed by the same person, a professional or an expert in RVE phenomena. The popularity of this concept is nicely exemplified by Aristotle, who, although holding a negative attitude regarding divine revelation or communication through dreams, claims that images in sleep resemble or are of the same kind as images reflected from the water's surface.

The most skilful interpreter of dreams is he who has the faculty of observing resemblances. Any one may interpret dreams which are vivid and plain. But, speaking of 'resemblances', I mean that dream presentations are analogous to the forms reflected in water, as indeed we have already stated. In the latter case, if the motion in the water be great, the reflexion has no resemblance to its original, nor do the forms resemble the real objects. Skilful, indeed, would he be in interpreting such reflexions who could rapidly discern, and at a glance comprehend, the scattered and distorted fragments of such forms, so as to perceive that one of them represents a man, or a horse, or anything whatever. Accordingly, in the other case also, in a similar way, some such thing as this [blurred image] is all that a dream amounts to; for the internal movement effaces the clearness of the dream (Aristotle, *On Prophesying by Dreams*, 2.464b5-16 [trans. Beare]).

Beside being an oneiromancer, the Joseph of the biblical story also practices lecanomancy (Gen. 44.5, 15). Because they both fall under the same category of RVE omens, Joseph appears in the light of popular Hellenistic worldview as a scientist of vision, that is, a Hellenistic scientist. Thus, for the purpose of this study I will address in more detail the historical and cultural background of lecanomancy and oneiromancy.

like men, and we heard them talking. . . . They have a public building in the centre of the city, where their magistrate sits all night and calls each of them by name, and whoever does not answer is sentenced to death for deserting. They are executed by being put out. We were at court, saw what went on, and heard the lamps defend themselves and tell why they came late. There I recognised our own lamp: I spoke to him and enquired how things were at home, and he told me all about them' (Lucian, *Vera historia*, 1.29).

108. Incubation is, according to Halliday, 'perhaps the most frequent of the methods of divination practiced at the holy wells of Greece' (Halliday, *Greek Divination*, p. 128).

a. *Lecanomancy*

Peering at liquids in semispherical containers that reproduce the shape of the universe in order to decipher the divine will and to communicate with the gods has its origins in Mesopotamian myth making. To the legendary Sumerian king Enmeduranki, the gods taught oil lecanomancy that he might read the divine will, render true judgments and transmit his knowledge and skills to a generations of diviners (*bārû*), the professional lecanomancers.¹⁰⁹

Akkadian texts contain relatively opulent material on oil lecanomancy, such as oil omen texts from the second millennium BCE.¹¹⁰ By that time, a *bārûm* was in charge of all types of divinatory sciences, but lecanomancy had a lower status as a predictive tool.¹¹¹ The predictive prestige went to liver and astrological omens, which were almost exclusively used for foretelling political affairs. Oil omens were used mostly for personal predictions. However, it seems that they may have played a role in the initiation of the *bārûm*, probably because oil lecanomancy was understood to have an ancient lineage and a divine origin in a legendary antediluvian king. Moreover, lecanomancy played an important role in the distribution of the idea of divinely ordained kingship, as numerous Mesopotamian cylinder seals and votive plaques with depictions of royal presentation scenes with the enthroned king holding the cup testify.¹¹²

109. 'Enmeduranki [was] a prince in Sippar, beloved of Anu, Enlil and Ea. Šamaš in the Bright Temple appointed him. Šamaš and Adad [took him] to the assembly [of the gods]. . . . They showed him how to observe oil on water, a secret of Anu, Enlil and Ea. They gave him the Divine Tablet, the *kibdu* secret of Heaven and Earth. . . . They taught him how to make calculations with numbers' (from a tablet from Nineveh published by W.G. Lambert, 'Enmeduranki and Related Matters', *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 21 [1967], pp. 126-38 [132]). The connection of kingship and divination agrees well with the situation of Joseph. His interchangeable status of a diviner and a king as lecanomancers may support the image of Joseph as both a scholar and a prime minister.

110. Giovanni Pettinato, *Die Ölwahrsagung bei den Babyloniern* (Rome: Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente, 1966).

111. *Bārûm* was like today's scientist taking care that events are scheduled and happened. See the discussion on divination and science that follows.

112. Irene Winter, 'King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals', in *Insight Through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada* (ed. Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati; Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1986), p. 261. The iconography of a presentation scene has a worshiper, frequently led by an interceding divine figure, approaching a deity or a king who is seated on a throne. If the seated figure is a king, he is depicted holding a cup in his extended right hand. Gods, however, never hold cups. This detail distinguishes royal presentation scenes from divine ones. This cup is usually interpreted as a highly charged attribute that most closely echoes the divine, giving a king a sacred aura. Winter reads it as a symbol of divine justice, and the king who holds it as being in charge of its execution on earth. In this manner, she connects this role of the seated king with the antediluvian king Enmeduranki to whom

In the basic oil lecanomancy, water or wine was mixed with oil in a bowl, and the movement of the oil on the water's or wine's surface was observed. The patterns of these movements foretold the future. Greece, Etruria and possibly Egypt seem to have preferred slightly different types of lecanomancy, such as looking for patterns that pebbles make when thrown in a bowl full of water (see e.g. Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 14.3; Ps.-Plutarch, *Rivers* 19, 20, 21.23) or for the reflection of sunlight on the water surface. By the Hellenistic era looking at the images on the liquid surface was the prevailing type of lecanomancy, and its popularity grew deep into the Middle Ages (Apuleius, *Apologia* 2.42; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 4.35).

Prolonged staring at the shapes of the oil spread on water led to visions in some seers, and eventually the visions in the seers became more important than the shapes in the oil. It was realized that visions could be induced just by staring into the water without the oil. However, oil was sometimes still used, presumably because it was a traditional tool or because it increased luminosity.¹¹³

Twentieth-century scholarship discriminated between oil lecanomancy, which was well established among Semitic cultures, such as Old Babylonians, on one side, and the Etruscan-Greco-Egyptian hallucinatory lecanomancy on the other.¹¹⁴ I suggest that it would be more useful, especially for the Hellenistic period onward, to distinguish between RVE lecanomancy, in which the images need an interpretation, and gazing lecanomancy, which involves direct discourse with otherworldly creatures. Gazing at the liquid surface, which was believed to invoke the gods or the spirits of the deceased, who were asked about the future or about the hidden truth, is labeled necromancy.

Preparation: having kept yourself pure, . . . take a bronze drinking cup, and write with myrrh ink the previously inscribed stele which calls upon Aphrodite, and use the untouched olive oil and clean river water. Put the

Šamaš entrusted the secrets of lecanomancy. Winter claims that this scene expresses the function of the king as a practitioner of lecanomancy: 'There is something very compelling in seeing in Enmeduranki an analogue to the seated kings of Ur III cylinder seals. He was a king; in order to pass on the technique, the gods sat him on a throne; to read the signs he held a bowl; and to teach the technique, he had men of Nippur, Sippar, and Babylon brought before him (literally, a presentation)' (p. 261).

113. E.R. Dodds, 'Supernormal Phenomena in Classical Antiquity', in *The Ancient Concept of Progress, and Other Essays on Greek Literature and Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1973), pp. 186-88.

114. The fact that the oil omen manual survives from Mesopotamia (Pettinato, *Die Öhwahrsagung*), and PGM and PDM come from Greco-Roman Egypt combining ancient Egyptian with classical Greek tradition, which is told to reach Egypt via Etruria (Bouché-Leclercq, *Divination*, 1.27) contributes to this division on oil and hallucinatory omens and their connection to certain cultures and geographical regions.

drinking cup on your knees and speak over it in the stele mentioned above and the goddess will appear to you and will reveal concerning the things you wish (*PGM* 4.3247-54).

Necromancy was sometimes classified in scholarship under lecanomancy, because of its frequent use of cup divination to invoke the spirits of the deceased by looking for their reflections in vessels full of oil or water and then asking them questions.¹¹⁵ However, this necromancy seems to have used a different source of water from the other types of lecanomancy.

Inquiry of bowl divination and necromancy: . . . take a bronze vessel, either a bowl or a saucer, whatever kind you wish. Pour water: rain water if you call heavenly gods, seawater if gods of the earth, river water if Osiris or Sarapis, spring water if the dead. Holding the vessel on your knees, pour out green olive oil, bend over the vessel and speak the prescribed spell (*PGM* 4.223-31).

Lecanomancy was used for predictions as well as for learning the truths of the universe and of human relations. Moreover, being under the auspices of sun gods, who were often the gods of judgment, such as the Mesopotamian Šamaš or the Greek Apollo, it served matters of justice.¹¹⁶ This explanation may be the reason for the frequent use of lecanomancy in forensics. The evidence from Late Antiquity indicates the use of well-established lecanomancy in conjuring the scene of a crime or in recovering the identity of the thief.¹¹⁷

115. R.K. Ritner, 'Necromancy in Ancient Egypt', in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (ed. Leda Ciruolo and Jonathan Seidel; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), pp. 89-96 (93), points to the similarity in magical technique between the scene in 1 Samuel 28, when Saul consults the witch of Endor, and Egyptian vessel necromancy. However, Christopher A. Faraone ('Necromancy Goes Underground: The Disguise of Skull- and Corpse-Divination in the Paris Magical Papyri [*PGM* 4.1928-2144]', in *Mantikê*, pp. 255-86) connected the use of cup in *PGM* necromantic manuals with the skull. If the cup stands for the skull, then the whole ritual would not fall into RVE phenomena (*Mantikê*, p. 257).

116. Šamaš entrusted lecanomancy to the king Enmenduranki (Winter, 'King and the Cup', p. 261). Apollo was consulted by the Pythia in Delphi (*Pyth.* 4.4).

117. There is an incantation formula for finding a thief. It was not specified that the water in a bowl was used for it, but we may follow Halliday's argument that the well, mirror and bowl were related to one other (Halliday, *Greek Divination*, pp. 154-55). Nigidius Figulus, a Neopythagorean of the first century BCE, used boys to locate the whereabouts of the missing money, probably by lecanomancy (Apuleius, *Apol.* 2.42). The bishop of Constantia, Sophronius, was accused of working magic at the synod of Ephesus in 449 CE. The petition submitted by clergymen of Constantia tells about Sophronius's recourse to lecanomancy in order to find a thief: 'We are meant to understand that he had got a boy over whom incantations had been uttered to gaze into the bowl. The demon obligingly revealed the identity of the thief to him, his name and the way in which he was clothed' (M.W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* [London: Routledge, 2003], p. 277).

Thus, for an audience familiar with the use of lecanomancy in forensics, it would not be surprising that the divinatory cup and the theft are brought together in the same episode as in the case in the biblical Joseph story. Joseph's entrapment trick (Gen. 44.2-17) only tickled their imagination.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the Hellenistic popularity of hydromancy, which reserved spring and well divination for the official cult and transported them into bowl divination for private affairs, mirrors its use in the Joseph story.

1. *Cup.* The tool in lecanomancy is the cup or bowl. It carries symbolic meaning. It is probably chosen because it is portable, in contrast to springs and wells, but has a shape that duplicates that of the universe. Thus, the famous cup of Jamshid, owned by the rulers of ancient Persia and used in divination, reflects the Neoplatonic universe.¹¹⁹ One could observe all the seven heavens of the universe by looking into it.¹²⁰

The material of which the cup is made also matters. The elaborate cups made of precious metal were considered the finest gifts in the ancient Mediterranean world. Golden and silver cups were a standard item in royal gift exchanges for centuries in the Mediterranean world, with the very strict rule about the hierarchy of state officials being shown by the intrinsic value of the cup they possessed.¹²¹ Thus, the audience of the Joseph story would not be surprised by the insistence of the text that Joseph's cup was made of silver (Gen. 44.2) because it was a metaphor telling them about Joseph's highest position at the Egyptian court.¹²² Cups of precious metal became common gift items among the wider population in Hellenistic times.¹²³ The

118. See especially Chapter 3, on rabbinic interpretation and on the *Ethiopic Joseph* for the details.

119. The fourth and the greatest king of Persian mythology is already attested in the *Avesta*, the Zoroastrian sacred texts (probably from the first millennium BCE). See also the description of Persian kings of the mythical age in Ferdowsi's *The Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings* (trans. D. Davis; London: Penguin Classics, 2007), pp. 144, 323, 325 (around 1000 CE).

120. Although the term 'Neoplatonic' is not the best choice (see the earlier discussion), the idea of a Neoplatonic universe in the intellectualism of the early Middle Ages is still an easily recognizable scholarly concept.

121. Ljubica Jovanović, 'Joseph's Silver Drinking Cup and Royal Gift Exchange in Ancient Mediterranean' (paper presented at the 215th meeting of the AOS, Philadelphia, PA, March 21, 2005).

122. Silver cups were reserved for the highest court officials, so the designation of the material of the cup in Gen. 44.2 was enough to convey the meaning of the highest standing of Joseph in the Egyptian court.

123. As Michael Vickers notes for Hellenistic times, 'gold and silver vessels served as large denomination banknotes, and weighed round figures in terms of prevailing currency standards'. For the use of cups of precious metals in the royal gift exchanges in the earlier periods, see Amarna correspondence: EA 19.80-81; EA 34.16-25; Hittite

content of the cup could matter to a certain degree, based on its use as a drinking vessel in the most important social context of the time: banquets. Participants in drinking the wine from the same cup could bond on a higher intellectual and emotional level.¹²⁴

The words used for Joseph's cup both in Hebrew Bible and in the LXX are unusual. While the other occurrences of cups in Joseph's story, such as Pharaoh's cup in the dream of the cupbearer, used the standard Hebrew word for a cup, *kos*, Genesis 44 uses *gebi'a*. *Gebi'a* is elsewhere in the Bible used only in Exod. 25.31-4 and 37.17-20 for the golden cups on the candlesticks in the Tabernacle. In Jer. 35.5 the term is used for the wine cups placed before Rechabites. Thus, the word seems to be connected with ritual and the sacred sphere. Although of unknown origin, *gebi'a* is very much like the Egyptian word for 'libation vessel', *qbhw*. L. Koehler suggested that the Hebrew *gebi'a* actually derives from the Egyptian *qbhw*.¹²⁵ An examination of the pictorial offering scenes suggests that this Egyptian word is associated both with water and with libation. John Baines suggests that in the New Kingdom *qbhw* was rarely used with a sacred connotation, and only in the Greco-Roman period did it acquire more general and divine associations.¹²⁶ These libation jars are well represented in Egyptian visual art of all periods, from the Fifth Dynasty (2500 BCE) to Greco-Roman times, either in offering gifts or in different libation poses such as resting on a person's shoulders or being held in front. Hands usually grasp them at the thinnest point toward the bottom.¹²⁷

diplomatic texts: 22A.11-14; 28A.22-24, 25-37; 31B.40-51; 28B.8-10 (numbering from G.M. Beckman, H.A. Hoffner, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* [Writings from the Ancient World, 7; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2nd edn, 1999]), from Mari: M. 11424; M. 6958; M 21[A.3102] 7-10; Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.50; 9.80; 4.5; Neoassyrian texts: ADD 758, 927, 965. The issue is discussed in detail in Ljubica Jovanović, 'Joseph's Silver Drinking Cup'.

124. See the discussions of Josephus and Philo in the corresponding chapters in this volume. All these three features of the cup could adopt a metaphoric value, which both the Bible and the folk legends such as that of the lost grail exploited. The Hebrew Bible's 'cup of the divine wrath' (Ps. 11.6; Isa. 51.17; Jer. 25.15) as well as the New Testament's 'the cup of the communion' (Mt. 26.27; Mk 14.23; Lk. 22.20; 1 Cor. 11.25) are the examples.

125. L. Koehler, 'Hebraische Etymologien', *JBL* 59 (1940), p. 36.

126. J. Baines, *Fecundity Figures: Egyptian Personification and the Iconology of a Genre* (Chicago: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1985), p. 196: 'The specific naming of *qbhw* therefore replaces a more general and possibly divine association, which may have been symbolized partly by the same objects, especially if the jars in some way summarize all the other offerings, but may have been present almost mechanically, for lack of more closely fitting formulae'.

127. Baines, *Fecundity*, pp. 306-307.

The LXX word κόνδυν (Gen. 44.2, 5, 16, 17) is an unusual word of uncertain origin; it possibly has some connection to the Sanskrit *kundas*, ‘jug’. Other Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible differ among themselves in their rendering of Joseph’s cup, for example, φιάλην (Sym) or σκύφον (Aq).¹²⁸ This difference is probably an indication that they were unfamiliar with either the Hebrew term or the LXX’s Greek translation.

2. *It Is a Science.* Lecanomancy (λεκανομαντεία) is literally bowl-divination (λέκανος—bowl, cup, and μαντεία—mode of divination, prophesying).¹²⁹ As one of the two scientific activities assigned to Joseph, along with dream interpretation, it is this divination that has proved to be more problematic for modern scholarship. The issue is made even more complicated by the common classification of divination as magic. The phenomena labeled as magic were considered science neither in the ancient world nor by modern science. The most unbiased and scientific classification of the magical practices should be under religious manifestations.¹³⁰

In the ancient world, divination was a deductive and systematic activity that needed serious schooling and granted its practitioners a favorable social status. Like modern science, divination operated on the principle of cause and effect, that is, a desired effect was achieved through an impersonal force.¹³¹ This effect is always set in the future. The experience of the interpretation of the signs enables an intelligent being to predict the results when it sees the familiar signs. Thus, both modern science on the one hand

128. John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies, 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), p. 742.

129. It can be found also under lecanoscopy, λεκανοσκοπία, which means the examination of the cup or bowl (λέκανος, λεκάνη).

130. It is difficult to argue that magic is a science, especially with the support based on the rationality of magical conceptions (Peter Schäfer and Hans Kippenberg, *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium* [Studies in the History of Religion, 75; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997], pp. ix-x, 66). A somewhat more successful approach, and more appropriate to ancient perceptions, is to regard *magic* as a mistranslation of an ancient term, such as Egyptian *heka*, which means rather a creative force and the source of cosmic dynamics, as a first emanation from the creator (‘Coffin Text Spell 261’, cited in R.K. Ritner, ‘The Religious, Social, and Legal Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic’, in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki [eds.], *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995], pp. 43-60 [49]). Magic in scholarly use represents a religious, rather than a scientific, phenomenon, and scholars focus mainly on reestablishing an honorable place for *magic* in world religions; thus, they attempt to redefine it as an expression of ritual power (Richard Gordon, ‘Reporting the Marvelous: Private Divination in the Greek Magical Papyri’, in *Envisioning Magic*, p. 66). For more in-depth elaboration see the preface of this study.

131. J.F. Borghouts, ‘Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Egypt’, in *CANE*, p. 1775.

and divination on the other provide information about the future.¹³² The only difference is their starting theoretical principles, which rest on different worldviews. Modern science, being cosmocentric, considers the supernatural as irrational and places it outside scientific inquiry, because belief in supernatural causes cannot be proven experimentally. Ancient science, as anthropocentric, accepted irrationality and human belief as part of human being as the subject matter of its study and, consequently, developed several schools of thought based on different perceptions of the divine.

The mantic arts examine the intentions of supernatural powers by studying the established system of signs that gods use to communicate to humans important messages about the workings of the cosmos and its future. A correct procedure will disclose a correct interpretation. Likewise, modern science investigates the workings of natural powers by determining the operation of the laws that govern them. The application of a correct law to a given system of signs will enable modern science to expect correct results, and hence, foresee an event. Either an expert diviner or a skillful scientist cracks the code of the whole interpretative system and, then, makes decisions and formulates plans of action that will appear as advice on future actions either to the community or to an individual.

In all periods of ancient Egypt, diviners belonged to the House of Life, which corresponds to our Academy of Arts and Sciences.¹³³ Besides keeping and promoting traditional learning, this House of Life also served as a school for advanced studies. Its personnel fit well in the description of the holistic scientists of the Hellenistic era. They were in charge of both a comprehensive library of theological, philosophical and scientific knowledge and also served as consultants to pharaoh, the royal house and the highest body as a source of communal or individual advice.¹³⁴ Egyptian academics were scholars or sages without a specialization, but who possessed hidden, mostly ritualistic knowledge. This latter fact combined with the fact that the House of Life was often located within the temple precinct inspired modern scholarship to name them priests.¹³⁵

132. Richard DeWitt, *Worldviews: An Introduction to the History and Philosophy of Science* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 71.

133. The first diviner or scholar of the House of Life to be mentioned in the sources was the Sixth-Dynasty (end of the third millennium BCE) official Harkuf. In the demotic story of Setna-Khaemwese (first to second century CE) his son is said to have studied in the House of Life (Herman Te Velde, 'Theology, Priests', in *CANE*, pp. 1745-47).

134. Te Velde, 'Theology, Priests', pp. 1747-48.

135. That the understanding of priests in Hellenistic times was quite different from our modern understanding is attested by the description of Chaeremon of Alexandria (first century CE) of Egyptian priests as philosophers 'who chose the temples as the place to philosophize' (P.W. van der Horst, *Chaeremon, Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher*:

The ancient Greek word for divination, *mantikē*, designates two types of phenomena. Those that can be taught, such as lecanomancy, lychnomancy, oneiromancy or necromancy, depend on acquired skills and the interpretation of signs and are classified under ‘technical’, ‘learned’ or ‘artificial’ divination. They are distinguished from phenomena that are revealed through trances, states of enthusiasm and dreams on the initiative of the divine, which are typically ‘natural’ divination. According to prominent Greek mythology, it was the Titan Prometheus, a Greek cultural hero, who taught people methods of divination (technical): how to recognize and interpret signs.¹³⁶ Different Greek-speaking Hellenistic schools would develop different theoretical and practical understandings of both types of divinations, and most of them are discussed in Cicero’s *Concerning Divination*. This Latin scholar of the first century BCE provides one of the first Roman attempts at a monumental synthesis of previous knowledge on divination.¹³⁷ Diviners, *manteis*, were highly respected in ancient Greece, and frequently appeared as heroes in early myths.¹³⁸ They were of high social standing, into which they were either born or earned by their profession. Frequently they were outstanding individuals, specialists recognized by their insights, and thus, not connected to an institution; they were ‘freelance diviners’, as Sarah Iles Johnston calls them.¹³⁹

Diviners (*bārû*) in Mesopotamia belonged to a very prestigious scholarly discipline.¹⁴⁰ The craft of the Mesopotamian diviners was so valued that even kings boasted if not of competence in this science (Shulgi) then certainly of the sound knowledge of the theoretical basis of applied divination (Assurbanipal).¹⁴¹ It seems that the domain of divination was a secret science that only a few could exercise. It is comparable to our modern

The Fragments [Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’empire romain; Leiden: Brill, 1997], p. 17).

136. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 484–499.

137. See Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Blackwell Ancient Religions, 3; Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2008), pp. 4–17.

138. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, pp. 112–15.

139. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, pp. 109–25.

140. See Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (State Archives of Assyria, 10; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press 1993), p. xv; and Jean-Jacques Glassner, ‘The Use of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia’ (trans. G. Petit), in *CANE*, pp. 1815–23.

141. In the self-laudatory hymn ‘Shulgi, the Ideal King’, the king portrays himself as an ideal ruler. His important function is as a master diviner, whose predictions are always accurate. In a note at the end of extispicy texts (colophon: 325:3, type 1), Assurbanipal remarks that he was taught divination, the secrets of heaven and earth, by Šamaš and Adad (Hermann Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone* [AOAT, 2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968], p. 101).

notion of the special talent and insight that is the privilege of our top particle physicists, molecular biologists or computer scientists. As Ulla Jeyes nicely puts it, 'Whereas it is doubtful whether the king could become a *bārû*, in the case of Aqba-Hammu, it has been suggested that a *bārû* became king.'¹⁴²

Not only is divination recognized as an important Mesopotamian science, but Assyriologists can trace its progress, thanks to abundant documents especially from the Old Babylonian (c. 1900-1595 BCE) and Neo Assyrian periods (c. 744-612 BCE).¹⁴³ The texts apparently indicate that the increase of the study material in time led to refinement of the rules of interpretation. A steady move toward a scientific methodology can be observed with an increased emphasis on exactness and standardization in measuring description, definition and interpretation.¹⁴⁴

Mesopotamian diviners applied inductive scientific method. The diviner first analyzed and systematized the experienced data and then extrapolated patterns and sequences from the past into the future.¹⁴⁵ In Mesopotamia,

142. Ulla Jeyes, 'Divination as a Science in Ancient Mesopotamia', *Ex oriente lux* 32 (1991-1992), pp. 23-41 (41). Aqba-hammu was a ruler of Rimah about the times of Zimri-Lim in Mari and of Hammurapi in Babylon. Two seals bearing his name are found in the Iltani archive. Instead of 'ruler of Karana', they refer to Aqba-hammu as *bārûm* (Stephanie Dalley, C.B.F. Walker and J.D. Hawkins, *The Old Babylonian Tablets from Tell Al Rimah* [London: British School of Archeology in Iraq, 1976], pp. 32-33, 253-54).

143. There are many tablets from the early second millennium (Old Babylonian period) such as reports on inspection of omnia, rituals, and prayers of diviners, and they are collected into anthologies.

144. Jeyes, 'Divination as a Science', p. 41.

145. Glassner develops his argument, 'When writing up his treatise, the diviner devoted himself to the task of isolating, among all the patterns that presented themselves simultaneously to his eyes, one particular omen whose various parts he successively described. He then analyzed each separate item according to its appearance, number, and relative position; eventually secondary elements such as spots, hollows, or growths were examined. For each case thus brought into relief, he would propose a relationship with some specific event in human life.' The most common patterns of thought were the pattern of duality, that is, the coupling of opposed or complementary statements, and the conceptualization of triads of statements consisting of a middle term sandwiched between two extremes. 'We can see that, very early, the thought of the diviners had drawn away from sensate knowledge and asserted itself as a system. Divination as such can no longer be considered as pertaining to experimental culture' (Glassner, 'Use of Knowledge', p. 1817). There is not much difference between this method and inductive scientific method. Glassner brings them even closer by positioning Mesopotamian science within its own worldview and tracing the development of the Mesopotamian mindset diachronically toward the rationalizing of tasks. 'Similarly, in Old Babylonian times, the diviners began to write treatises based on the above mentioned principles. Over the centuries, these treatises became such considerable works that it was essential to synthesize them. In more or less clear terms, the diviners tried to state general rules; commentaries and guides began to appear. But in order to reach these levels of

probably as different from Egypt especially in the Old Babylonian period (c. 1900-1595 BCE), diviners (*bārû*) did not belong to the temple priesthood. They worked directly for the king, either as palace scholars or as advisers to local governments. They often marched with armies and provided them with instant prognostication. Their most prominent divination was extispicy, while lecanomancy and libanomancy (interpreting burning incense smoke) were cheaper and less exact methods for soliciting a divine message.¹⁴⁶ Their training must have been highly structured, involving the use of, and probably a contribution to the compilation of, scientific manuals that on a systematic and rather abstract level supplied answers to every conceivable reading of the liver.

In direct contrast to our contemporary conceptions, in Mesopotamia divination was certainly a science, while dream interpretation tended toward the religious realm, as dreams were believed often to be a form of divine revelation rather than a rational human activity.¹⁴⁷ One also should be careful not to connect divination with the belief in fate and predetermination. Based on cause and effect, predictions would not change as long as the causes remain the same. Divinatory manuals consist mainly of 'if . . . then' sentences.¹⁴⁸ If the cause changes, then the effect will change. Mesopotamians did not have a notion of fatalism.¹⁴⁹

There are three influential attitudes of modern history that pushed divination to the fringes of occultism and charlatanism. First, divination lost its scientific status with the establishment of modern science, which denied scientific quality to any religious manifestation. The second reflects influential theologies of the Hebrew Bible that condemn divination as unlawful religious practices of Israel's polytheistic neighbors (Lev. 19.26; Deut. 18.10; 2 Kgs 17.17; 21.6; Isa. 2.6).¹⁵⁰ However, there are passages in the

expression, the appropriate concepts first had to be worked out. Therefore, new concepts were created. The longer list of occurrences, the strict thematic choices, and the greatest precision in every field of investigation all reveal a higher conceptualization in all fields of intellectual research. Vision has become more focused; it was required to give history its autonomy' (Glassner, 'Use of Knowledge', p. 1822).

146. W. Farber, 'Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Mesopotamia', in *CANE*, p. 1904.

147. Glassner, 'The Use of Knowledge', p. 1816.

148. 'If the oil divides in two; for a campaign, the two camps will advance against each other; for treating a sick man, he will die' (Pettinato, *Ölwaarsagung*, p. 96, cited in O.R. Gurney, 'The Babylonians and Hittites', in M. Loewe and C. Blacker [eds.], *Divination and Oracles* [London: Allen & Unwin, 1981], pp. 142-73 [152]).

149. Jeyes, 'Divination as a Science', p. 27. The ideas of fate and revelation come from pushing divination in the religious realm—the realm of faith. We may, then, make the same conclusions about the science if we treat it as a form of religion.

150. See the preface of this study for more details.

Hebrew Bible with a positive attitude toward divination (Gen. 30.27; Prov. 16.10; Ezek. 12.24; 13.6, 7; Mic. 3.6-7, 11).¹⁵¹ In addition to Joseph, Balaam is a diviner (Num. 22.7; 23.23; and Josh. 13.22) and very likely Deborah as well.¹⁵²

The third attitude is shared by those religious circles that deny to human reason access to God. In this case divination is rejected together and along with the science. According to this belief the ethics and piety of monotheism spring from the belief in the one and only God whose choices are unpredictable and whose volition is revealed, making reason and scientific inquiry the wrong venues to truth and the divine. According to this interpretation, the exclusiveness of revelation takes divination and science as acting against religious ethics and piety. As Giorgio Buccellati puts it, Mesopotamian divination is a rational endeavor to appropriate a portion of a predictable universe. In this context fate is predictable by virtue of the laws it implements, which regulate in an invariable way both the horizontal and the vertical dimensions of reality. By the exercise of divination or science in modern terms, humans can try to identify the inner, rational harmony of the universal order.¹⁵³ According to Buccellati, the above-mentioned ethical monotheism of the Hebrew Bible asks for intuitive acceptance, such as the acceptance of communicated unpredictability against rational discovery of Mesopotamian and Egyptian polytheism.¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, divination became an irrelevant and superstitious practice of magic with a goal

151. 'But Laban said to him, "If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you"' (Gen. 30.27); 'Therefore, it will be night for you without visions; it will grow dark for you without divination, the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame' (Mic. 3.6-7).

152. A proposed translation of Judg. 9.37: Ga'al spoke again and said, 'Look, men are coming down from the center of the land, and one company is coming from the direction of the Diviners' Oak'. Deborah in Judg. 4.4 is mentioned as a diviner: the wife of 'Lappidoth', which actually can as well be translated as a woman who practices divination, namely pyromancy (flame divination) or capnomancy (smoke divination), as *lapidoth* means torches (see the forthcoming commentary on Judges by Jack M. Sasson).

153. Giorgio Buccellati, 'Ethics and Piety in the Ancient Near East', in *CANE*, pp. 1685-96 (1687-88).

154. Buccellati explains the prevailing mindset of the Hebrew Bible toward the Joseph story in a very revealing manner. In the Genesis accounts, a human being is asked, 'rather than rationally appropriating a portion of a predictable universe ... to bare his consciousness and accept one unpredictability after the next. The later patriarchal tradition of Joseph stresses the same trait in what is an even more technical juxtaposition: dreams are to be interpreted not according to established patterns but according to an intuition essentially based on the apprehension of the unpredictable (i.e. of what is not rationally channeled)' (Buccellati, in 'Ethics and Piety', p. 1687).

of achieving a mechanical control over the supernatural.¹⁵⁵ However, its exercise is founded in the belief that

the sum total of reality is intrinsically knowable if sufficient means can be found to control its broad range of manifestations. Human effort leads to an ever-greater appropriation of such means . . . the human ability to capture the world of values is related not only to the human power of perception but also to the human readiness to solicit and welcome the assistance of those who already fully enjoy the very perception.¹⁵⁶

They can be gods for an Egyptian or Mesopotamian diviner or scholar, or a pool of scientific knowledge or tradition for a modern scientist or academic.

b. The Qualifications of Joseph as a Scholar-Diviner in Antiquity

Having established that a diviner was a scientist of antiquity, let us see what is known about the qualifications of a diviner in the ancient world. The purpose is to examine if it is likely that the Hellenistic audience related these credentials to the biblical Joseph. To become a scientist today one needs an inclination, talent, and material and social support, but one thing absolutely necessary is proper education and training. A modern reader of the biblical story could find some hints in it about Joseph as this kind of scientist. Joseph has the inclination and enthusiasm that expresses his love of his future profession, attested to by having significant dreams and an eagerness when he relates them to his family (Gen. 37.5-6, 9). But the proper guidance in his professional development in the biblical story would come directly from God. Although some believing scientists today may make the same claim, they would never be scientists without going through a rigorous educational process. This route may not be very different in the ancient world, but their fiction writers rarely had a great urge to describe in detail the schooling of their imaginary characters and certainly not as a necessary part of each individual's characterization and destiny.

If Joseph of the biblical story received a professional education required for a successful Egyptian diviner, the question becomes at what point of the tale it could happen, given the silence of the Joseph story on the issue. It seems less likely that it happened before Egypt. In Canaan, the pastoral context in which Joseph grew up, he may appear as talented, but he is inexperienced and lacks the basic understanding of the trade.

When Joseph interprets the chief cupbearer's and the cook's dreams, he already appears as a skillful dream interpreter. To Hellenistic readers the

155. Divination's claim of access to the wisdom of the gods made it into an anti-religious practice of Israel's polytheistic neighbors. Biblical scholarship adopted this understanding of divination.

156. Buccellati, 'Ethics and Piety', pp. 1692-93.

most probable place of Joseph's education was Potiphar's house because they would have been familiar with the Greco-Roman custom that slave masters used to educate talented slaves. The analogy of today may be a student who has free housing and a work-study scholarship endowed by a rich patron.

To the mainly Greek, Egyptian and Jewish data about possible professional training of spiritual experts in the ancient Mediterranean world, I will add the evidence of the specific qualifications for a diviner in the ancient Near East and consider if it could apply to postbiblical readings of biblical Joseph. Because the input of Mesopotamian facts was not addressed systematically before and because Mesopotamian divination has a long tradition of scientific development, I will address it briefly here. In the course of this study this data will be compared with the literary constructions of Joseph as a diviner from Hellenistic times.

W.G. Lambert, in 'The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners', laid out these qualifications based primarily on a Neo-Assyrian text (middle of the first millennium BCE) from Nineveh which yielded a fairly large number of scattered sections on this matter.¹⁵⁷ It features Enmeduranki, the legendary antediluvian king of Sippar to whom the sun god Šamaš and storm god Adad revealed the principles of divination in order that he pass them on to the human race. This *bārû* lore could have been transmitted only to those who have certain qualifications. It is not surprising that in Mesopotamia, with its long tradition of scientific development of divination, the qualifications of diviners are already set up in a foundation myth that treats the science of the *bārû*.¹⁵⁸ Lambert uses the word 'priest' for *bārû*, not a very fortunate term in my opinion because of the modern distinction between a priest and a scientist, which usually excludes the other. While a priest serves gods and is not supposed to examine scientifically the divine, the scientist is denied any discussion of the supernatural. When I insist that Joseph was not a priest but a scientist, I argue with the modern understanding of the terms. The Enmeduranki text does not call a *bārû* a priest, but it deals with the *bārû*'s service to the gods and the *bārû*'s approaching the divine realm through *bārû*'s scientific activities. Thus, it also addresses purity issues:

157. W.G. Lambert, 'The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners', in *Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994; tikip santakki mala bašmu* (ed. Stefan M. Maul; Groningen: Styx, 1998), pp. 141-58. For the source reference, see p. 142.

158. The text has three parts. 'The first gives the legend telling how Šamaš and Adad revealed the *bārû*-lore to Enmeduranki, antediluvian king of Sippar, and how he in turn passed it on to citizens (only some, surely not all) of Nippur, Sippar and Babylon. Next follows a section laying down the qualifications required in such a scholar and priest, and a final section explains the significance of various properties used in the rites' (Lambert, 'The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners', p. 141).

bodily perfection and cleanness. Lambert treats these requirements of bodily perfection as part of the qualifications for a diviner.

Qualifications for a Babylonian diviner are the following. First, parentage: the family of a scholar or a priest had to be an academic or a priestly family. The diviner could also marry into such a family. However, adoption was an established practice in ancient Mesopotamia in cases where suitable heirs were lacking. Both cases could be seen as fulfilled by biblical Joseph in the eyes of a Hellenistic audience. Having a lineage from Abraham, who was considered a great scholar in popular Hellenistic lore, Joseph is born in the right family.¹⁵⁹ Later he marries into the household of an Egyptian academic, or a 'priest', inheriting the profession of his father-in-law. And he could be an adopted heir in Potiphar's household trained in the profession of his owner.

Second, the diviner is chosen as 'the son whom the father loves' (*māršu ša irammu*); to him he leaves the secrets of his trade (K 3819). On these passages, Lambert comments that their full implication is 'that an expert of this kind has professional secrets which he will pass on to only one carefully chosen son' (p. 143). That Jacob 'loved Joseph more than any other of his children' (Gen. 37.3) is the biblical description of Joseph's special position among the brothers. Joseph, then, could be easily understood as the chosen transmitter of esoteric knowledge from Abraham through Jacob.

The third qualification for a Babylonian diviner is a healthy, defect-free body. Joseph certainly fulfills this category, as shown in the Bible's otherwise unusual insistence on his handsomeness (Gen. 39.6). The fourth qualification is that the diviner must be trained in appropriate scholarly literature. The diviner needs not only to master his learning, but also to be 'perfect in his limbs' (*BBR* 79).

Two other qualifications that the diviner ought to fulfill are to serve royal clients only and to perform the rites in special places designated for this

159. The Hellenistic tradition of Abraham as astronomer/astrologer who taught science to Egyptians (Artapanus) and Phoenicians (Pseudo-Eupolemus, in Eusebius, *Præp. evan.* 9.17.3-4, 8; 9.18.2), or who by astronomical examination of the sky discovered monotheism, is preserved by numerous ancient texts beside those that will be discussed in this study (several passages in Philo; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.154-57; *Jubilees* 11-12), such as Berossus, Pseudo-Philo (*Bib. Ant.* 4.16), *Apocalypse of Abraham* 1-8, Orphic fragment, or a lost astronomical treatise attributed to Abraham. After examining the relevant texts, George W.E. Nickelsburg concludes that 'there was a developed lore about Abraham the astronomer' in the third and second centuries BCE (Nickelsburg, 'Abraham the Convert: A Jewish Tradition and its Use by the Apostle Paul', in *Biblical Figures outside the Bible* [ed. Michael E. Stone and Theodore A. Bergren; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998], pp. 151-75).

purpose. Joseph certainly became a royal diviner in the biblical story.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the texts imply that diviners were organized into formalized associations ‘consisting of a “master” and the less senior practitioners that he initiated’, which is demonstrated by the following passage: ‘The “master” of oil will let the diviner carry the cedar’ (2.120).¹⁶¹ Joseph could have belonged to such a setting in Potiphar’s household, or in his own family in Canaan.

Given that all the requirements for a traditional diviner could be related to the Joseph story, it is logical to assume that a Hellenistic understanding of the Joseph story familiar with the Babylonian lore about diviners would take Joseph’s schooling for granted. It is interesting to look into how they perceived where Joseph attained his education.

The input of other traditions that made up the Hellenistic world enriches what is known about Greek diviners, *manteis*. Their skills appeared also as dynamics of inheritance and learning and are taught in guilds and also in a familial context, as most of the professions in the ancient world.¹⁶²

We will see that all these elements were abundantly used by Hellenistic interpreters of Joseph.

c. Oneiromancy

Oneiromancy is a system of interpretation that is applied to divinely sent dreams. The dreams that require interpretation are almost by rule figurative dreams. Daily symbolic visions belong to the same category because they use the same interpretative procedure.¹⁶³ Although under the protection of Šamaš, whose children were dream gods, Zaqīqu and goddess Mamu, during the second millennium BCE dream interpretation lacked the scientific prestige of extispicy and the observation of heavens in Mesopotamia¹⁶⁴. Thus, dream predictions needed to be authenticated by higher standing omen. In Mari, a lock of a hair and a hem from the dream mediator are checked by examination of entrails for authenticity of the event.¹⁶⁵ They are used to validate that the gods did indeed send a dream to an individ-

160. For the place of rituals surrounding divination in the Hebrew Bible see the discussion that follows.

161. Lambert, ‘The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners’, p. 146.

162. Johnston, *Greek Divination*, p. 113.

163. Ezekiel’s vision of God’s glory (Ezek. 1.1-26) is a good biblical example for such a vision.

164. James VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, 16; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1984), pp. 23-75, esp. 60.

165. Stephanie Dalley, *Mari and Karana: Two Old Babylonian Cities* (London: Gorgias Press, 2002), pp. 131-33; H.B. Huffmon, ‘Prohecy in the Mari Letters’, *BA* 31 (1968), pp. 109, 121; Waldemar Janzen, ‘Withholding the Word’, in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon Douglas

ual. However, by late Hellenistic times this situation was reversed. It is now through dreams that the most correct information about the future and the truths of the universe are revealed. Divine appearances in daily and nightly visions thrive probably because they provide a direct contact with the divine to every individual, and they are available to everyone.¹⁶⁶ With the rise of individualized religious rituals an incubation dream would be the most direct and accessible inquiry of the divine.¹⁶⁷ Dreams now replace the prominence of the oracle of the earlier Greek world or extispicy in the Mesopotamian world.¹⁶⁸ *Interpretations of Dreams (The Oneirocritica)* by Artemidorus of Daldis of the second century CE is the only type of divination that was collected, systematized, and synthesized in the early Roman Empire testifying to the prominence of oneiromancy in the late Hellenistic period.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, Hellenistic biblical interpreters and story tellers prefer to use dream narratives for divine communications.¹⁷⁰

d. *Defining a New Biblical Genre: Revelation through Images*

The dreams of the Joseph story consist of sequences of images that function as allegories or metaphors and need interpretation. Modern scholarship bases itself on the ancient division of dreams, as proposed by Artemidorus of Daldis, who in *The Oneirocritica* divides revelatory dreams into allegorical dreams, 'which signify one thing by means of another' (*Oneir.* 1.2), and theorematic dreams, the content of which exactly mirrors their meaning. The main differentiation between these two categories is that the for-

Levenson; Festschrift Frank Moore Cross; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982), pp. 104-105.

166. Johnston, *Greek Divination*, p. 89. She mentions a priestess of the second century CE who asked Apollo at the oracle of Didyma why gods manifest themselves more frequently than before through individual humans.

167. Johnston, *Greek Divination*, p. 33

168. Incubation dreams were the revelatory mode of the popular cult of Asclepius in Hellenistic times. See also Pindar, *Ol.* 13.105. Dreams replaced in prominence the oracles of the earlier Greek world or the inspection of entrails of the Mesopotamian world. While in classical Greek literature oracles authenticated dreams, in the first and second centuries CE, dreams authenticated and confirmed oracles and blood omnia.

169. Reflecting the endeavor of Imperial Rome for comprehensive systematization, Artemidorus collected in five volumes 'the sum total of efforts made to classify and interpret dreams in antiquity' (Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World* [trans. Jill M. Munro; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], p. 22).

170. Here are a few examples: Mordecai's dream in Greek Esther (11.2-12); Moses has a prophetic dream at Mount Sinai, according to Ezekiel the Tragedian, *Exagoge* 68-78; Josephus's attribution of a dream experience to Amram, Moses' father, before the birth of the child (*Ant.* 2.212-17); and from the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Genesis Apocryphon* 19.14-9 ascribes to Abraham's dream revelation the suggestion that Sarah pass as his sister in Egypt.

mer requires an interpretation while the latter is obvious and no additional explanation is necessary.

In theorematic or message dreams a divinity or a divine appointee communicates an auditory message to the sleeper. Sometimes a dialogue ensues between them. The content of this communication is immediately intelligible to the dreamer. The visual element, if present at all, is limited to the description of the messenger.

In allegorical or symbolic dreams the divine message is delivered in figurative language of images and events. Visual communication is dominant but its meaning escapes the sleeper. Upon awakening, the dreamer seeks an interpretation by a third party. Put in a simplified form, symbolic dreams are 'seen', while 'message' ones are 'heard'.

Modern biblical dream scholarship adopts this ancient classification with small variations in their delineations. The largest variation is in the names given to these two categories.¹⁷¹ The main difference between the Hellenistic and the modern taxonomy of dreams is in the insistence of the latter on distinguishing between dreams and daytime visions. The ancients thought of them as of the same nature and did not make a sharp separation between the visions in sleep and waking theophanies.¹⁷²

171. M. Lichtenstein classifies Joseph's dreams as symbolic dreams ('Dream Theophany and the "E" Document', *JANESCU* 1-2 (1969), pp. 45-54), while Diana Lipton calls the obvious dreams in Genesis 'patriarchal dreams', stressing that the Joseph story dreams do not belong to this category (*Revisions of the Night: Politics and Promises in the Patriarchal Dreams of Genesis* [JSOTSup, 288; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], p. 8). Y. Kaufman and S. Bar discriminate between prophetic and symbolic dreams (Shaul Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible* [trans. Lenn J. Schramm; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001]). R.K. Gnuse (*The Dream Theophany of Samuel: Its Structure in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Dreams and its Theological Significance* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984]) distinguishes among auditory, symbolic, mantic and psychological dreams, but later only between auditory message dreams and symbolic dreams (*Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Tradition-Historical Analysis* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996]). A.L. Oppenheim ('The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* ns 46 [1956], pp. 179-373), in still influential work on dreams and dream interpretation in the ancient Near East, claims three levels of dream experiences: divine revelation, mantic dreams (prognostic dreams) and personal dreams (reflecting the dreamer's spiritual and bodily health). Frances Flannery-Dailey, in *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 90; Leiden/Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), applies Oppenheim's classification to Greek and Roman dreams and also to Hellenistic Jewish dreams.

172. See Plato, *Tim.* 71e. See also John S. Hanson, 'Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity', *ANRW* 2.23.1409. For the ancient

Biblical scholars tend to categorize symbolic dreams always as dreams, while allowing the possibility that message dreams and daily theophanies might be the same phenomenon and are, consequently, interchangeable.¹⁷³ Thus, they subordinate the revelatory value of symbolic dreams to that of obvious dreams. I argue that symbolic dreams should be, at least, treated equally and that there is no clear distinction between symbolic dreams and other forms of revelation in encoded images, such as hydromancy or lych-nomancy.

Faith-driven biblical scholarship has tended to question the revelatory value of symbolic dreams by labeling them as a polytheistic dream type characteristic of Israel's neighbors.¹⁷⁴ Hebrew Bible historiography tends to present obvious dreams as the principal revelatory oneiric mode (e.g. Gen. 20.3-7; 28.13-15; 31.10-13; 1 Kgs 3.4-15). Symbolic dreams are scarce, found only in Joseph story and in the Aramaic part of Daniel, except for a single dream of a Midianite soldier in Judg 7.13-15. Also, they are related to foreign practices and dreamt by foreigners, such as Egyptian and Babylonian rulers or by a Midianite.¹⁷⁵

The fact that the divinity sends enigmatic images that need deciphering by an interpreter, i.e. a mediator, makes a dreamer less holy than when a deity approaches such a person directly. Finally, in extreme cases of the interpretive traditions, the revelation in images could appear problematic for a religion that forbids the imaging of the deity (Exod. 20.4). Scholars also labeled practices surrounding symbolic dreams as a mode of divination: oneiromancy in a pejorative sense, because divination was forbidden by Mosaic laws (Exod. 22.18; Lev. 19.26, 31; 20.6, 23, 27), and by Deuteronomistic theology (1 Sam. 15.23; 2 Kgs 17.17; 21.6; Jer. 27.9-11; 29.8-9).

Egyptians the most commonly term used for dreams, *rsw.t*, means something seen upon awakening during sleep (see the most recent discussion in Kasia Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes: Dreams and Nightmares in Ancient Egypt* [Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2003], pp. 15ff.). For the biblical material, see Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, pp. 139-54.

173. Thus, prophets are allowed to have oneiric experiences if they are in the form of obvious dreams and especially if they include a dialogue between God and the visionary. The clear distinction between the dreams 'seen' and those 'heard' is difficult to apply to actual examples. The more decisive factor is whether or not they need interpretation (e.g. Gen. 31.10-13).

174. Historical criticism tried to rectify this situation by insisting that symbolic dreams opened up the connection of ancient Israel with the surrounding cultures in the sense that they applied the popular genre of their neighbors, or, to put it more accurately, they all shared the same cultural norm (see, e.g., one of the first monographs on dreams by E.L. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament* [BZAW, 73; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1953]).

175. The only exceptions are Joseph's dreams in Gen. 37.5-10.

Within the developmental theory of Israelite religion, first applied to the Hebrew Bible by Julius Wellhausen, the revelatory role of symbolic dreams is seen as a primitive stage of natural religion, which lost its ground in prophetic theology.¹⁷⁶ An early source, E, may have deliberately composed oneiric messages without images, such as in Gen. 28.13-15 or Gen. 20.3-7 or Num. 12.6-8, in order to distance itself from the arbitrary practices of Canaanite diviners.¹⁷⁷ As Hebrew culture evolved through the prophetic movement, the Deuteronomistic reform and wisdom traditions, the desacralization of visual dreams continued until they were reduced to the level of deceptive illusions. Symbolic dreams, typical of non-Israelite dreams, were related to 'lying dreams' and attributed to false prophets.¹⁷⁸ The dominant evolutionary approach in biblical criticism failed to make the connection between revelation in symbolic dreams to that in symbolic prophetic visions or any other daytime divine revelation in images.¹⁷⁹

Symbolic prophetic visions that have all the features associated with visual dreams but are not characterized as dreams can be found in Ezek. 1.1-28 and 37. Ezekiel is unusual among pre-exilic and exilic prophets because he gives a neutral if not a favorable treatment to divination. If Ezekiel wants to criticize a type of divination, he puts disparaging terms in front of the word divination: 'They have prophesied falsehood and lying divination' (Ezek. 13.6).

Within historical books, the theophany of the burning bush to Moses in Exod. 3.2-3 and Samuel's appearance before the necromancer of Endor in 1 Sam. 28.7-20 belong very likely to the same genre of revelation. We see it in Josephus, who applies the same word *opseis* to both of these occasions as well as to dreams of the Joseph story.¹⁸⁰

176. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), pp. 17-45.

177. W. Richter, 'Traum und Traumdeutung im Alten Testament', *BZ* 7 (1963), pp. 202-20.

178. These dreams are an indication of false prophecy, e.g. in Jer. 23.25, 32; 29.8-9 (Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, p. 95). However, Jeremiah does not specify the type of dreams. His polemic addresses their source: if they are divinely sent. Moreover, because these dreams needed no interpreter, they were introduced with 'says the Lord' (Jer. 23.31) and the dreamer-prophet claimed that God talked to him; they resemble the message dreams rather than symbolic.

179. Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany*, still identifies polytheistic expressions and Hellenism with visual symbolic dreams, and auditory non-visual messages with monotheistic influences on Josephus.

180. Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany*, treats the burning bush and Endor episodes among the Joseph dream narratives, emphasizing at the same time that they are not dream revelations.

The latest biblical scholarship on dreams, reinforced by the results of psychoanalytical studies, shows a fundamental connection between the appearance of divinity in daytime visions and in dreams. The border between visual theophany and dream revelation is always blurred in the biblical accounts. J.M. Husser draws both on linguistic features, such as the Egyptian word for dreams when alluding to the awakening state and the Greek expression for dreaming, ‘seeing a dream’, and the psychological or anthropological acknowledgment of special states of consciousness. Taking a dream to be a specific state of consciousness in the dreamer’s sleep led Husser in his biblical dictionary entry on dreams in its French edition to write the following:

In texts such as these, this form of consciousness in sleep is given literary form by means of imaginary dream dialogues between the dreamer and the divinity appearing in the dream. . . . In other words, could not the vision of divinity, or the experience of his presence in a dream, be a way of indicating that the dreamer has acceded by means of a special form of wakefulness during sleep to a consciousness experienced as divine, because it opens him up to a realm other than a external human world?¹⁸¹

Frances Flannery-Daily introduces her dissertation on dreams with an obvious statement, ‘The ancients placed their dreams in a spectrum of hypnagogic phenomena’.¹⁸² Introducing the physiological and psychological aspect to the divine origin of dreams and their real existence, we find here all four features of the ancient science of vision expressed in terms of modern science: physics for images, physiology for seeing, psychology for hypnagogic phenomena, and theology for the divine origin of the dreams.

The condensation of images in biblical symbolic dream accounts raises the issue about the application of psychoanalytical theories on dreams. The fact that biblical dreams are not individualized, meaning that they are not real dreams but are only literary categories of unknown authors, makes the use of Freudian psychoanalysis difficult. However, readers do recognize them as dreams, which suggests that they show a functional pattern of dream experience based on the universal working of the human psyche.¹⁸³

181. Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, p. 154.

182. Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 90; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), p. 2.

183. P. Gibert, *Le récit biblique de rêve: Essai de confrontation analytique* (Série biblique 3; Lyon: Profac, 1990), suggests that a dream account must be recognized as such by the audience, which is able to identify the principal component parts of its own dreams in the dream narrative.

The audience of biblical symbolic dreams did not seem to show doubt in recognizing their imagery as familiar imagery of nightly visions.¹⁸⁴

Revelation through images is the common factor of both dream interpretation and cup divination (Gen 44.5, 15). I argue that this divination belongs to the same type of visual revelation as symbolic dreams. It is divination by reflection or refraction of light on the surface of water, oil or any liquid that is poured in bowls or wells or pools or springs or by artificially and scientifically made mirrors. Because it involves the play of light, lamp divination belongs to this category as well. The point is that through reflection and refraction of light there is an access to the divine world that reveals itself through changed images, an array of colors, and distorted dimensions, i.e. the same phenomena that we find in symbolic dreams. These phenomena open doors to a daytime divine revelation through visual effects, similar in principle to the visions in dreams.

Freud already noticed this connection among reflections, water and dreams. When discussing Aristotle, he cites B. Buchsenschutz (*Traum und Traumdeutung in Alterthume*),

Aristotle expressed himself in this connection by saying that the best interpreter of dreams is he who can best grasp similarities. For dream-pictures, like pictures in water, are disfigured by the motion (of the water), so that he hits the target best who is able to recognize the true picture in the distorted one (p. 65).¹⁸⁵

I have already shown the interchangeability of different forms of divination by light, water and visions. The close relation of oneiromancy to lychnomancy and lecanomancy is present in several requests for a dream oracle among the Magical Papyri (*PGM* 7.703-26; 7.740-55; 7.664-85). Lychnomancy and oneiromancy are combined in a 'dream producing charm' (*PGM* 4.3172-3208), where a staff member of the divination ritual addresses the lamp with an incantation, 'I conjure you by the sleep releaser because I want you to enter in me and show me . . . ' (*PGM* 4.3205).¹⁸⁶ This connec-

184. An interesting example by Freud, 'In a novel *Gradiva*, by the poet W. Jensen, I chanced to discover several fictitious dreams, which were perfectly correct in their construction, and could be interpreted as though they had not been invented, but had been dreamt by actual persons. The poet declared, upon my inquiry, that he was unacquainted with my theory of dreams. I have made use of this agreement between my investigations and the creations of the poet as a proof of the correctness of my method of dream-analysis' (*Der Wahn und die Träume in W. Jensen's Gradiva*, vol. 1 of the *Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde* [ed. Sigmund Freud; *Gesammelte Schriften*, 9, 1906]; Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* [trans. James Strachey; New York: Basic Books, 1955], p. 2 n. 1).

185. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 2 n. 2.

186. Connection with the dream oracle is nicely illustrated in a 'Request for a dream oracle to the lamp: Purify yourself before your everyday lamp, and speak to the

tion is not rare in the Hebrew Bible. Ezekiel brings visions and divination under the same umbrella; ‘For there shall no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel’ (Ezek. 12.24; cf. Ezek. 13.6; 7.23; Mic. 3.6).

Moreover, all these visions require interpretation of the coded announcement, and also entail a message about the appropriate action to be taken. Skilled and trained personnel are demanded for this job, not only for the interpretative side of it but also for any prearranged procedures and rites involved in it.

e. *Rituals*

In the seer’s bowl [*makalti bārûti*] with cedar-wood appurtenance
You enlighten the dream priests [*šā’ilī*] and interpret dreams.

Šamaš Hymn 53-54.¹⁸⁷

The popularity of RVE divinatory techniques in the late Hellenistic period is sustained by their wide use in the private realm. The collections that are known in our scholarship as ‘magical papyri’ are a good example of individualized divination.¹⁸⁸ This popularity required not only skilled and trained personnel but also prescribed ritual with a set of rules of execution and pre-determined role of staff members. In pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia the skills seemed to have belonged to a socially inferior diviner, *šā’il(t)u*, who specialized in popular practices and acted outside the realm of professional divination, especially in the later periods, such as Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian.¹⁸⁹ A hymn to Šamaš (53-54) describes the function of *šā’il(t)u*, connecting bowl divination and dream interpretation. Necromancy was also under their auspices. We should also keep in mind that these diviners came from both genders but that oneiromancers in Mesopotamia and Egypt were primarily women.¹⁹⁰

lamplight, until it is distinguished’, continuing with the connection of the light and the water (PGM 22.b.27-31).

187. W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 128.

188. The collections are of Egyptian provenance, written mainly in Greek and Egyptian (demotic), and date from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE. For detailed argumentation on the topic, see Gordon, ‘Reporting the Marvelous’, pp. 65-92.

189. Beside Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian letters with references to actual consultation of *šā’il(t)u* (BIN 6.93.20, TCL 4.5.4, KTS 25a.7) in other texts of the time *šā’il(t)u* occurs beside *bārû* in the context of extispicy. It seems that in the later periods the office remained in a popular context, or in the case of extispicy it was absorbed into practices of *bārû* (CAD 17: 109-12).

190. It is Gilgamesh’s mother who interprets his dream (1.216-63). Geštinnana interprets her brother Dumuzi’s dream (Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once . . . Sumerian Poetry in Translation* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987], pp. 30-31),

According to Plato's still-used distinction between inspired and deductive divination most of the visions in the Hebrew Bible, including the dreams in the Joseph story, are inspired omens. They occurred on the initiative of the deity and need only an interpretation. Lecanomancy and incubation dreams belong to deductive divination.¹⁹¹ They are impetrated omens, which means that they involve prescribed practices (ritual) designed to obtain divine favor so that the deity will send an answer through a stipulated signal. It is mostly impetrated omens that are used in the private sphere. This setting involves the interaction between a client and the diviner. The client participates in the negotiation of the divine knowledge and collaborates with the diviner in making decisions and planning actions. Sometimes the diviner would refer a client to his colleague, which suggests a well-established network of practitioners of divinatory techniques. There was competition among them, and the most respected consultants were those who offered not only the most objective advice but also helped their customers enact the interpretation.¹⁹²

In addition to the interpretation of symbolic visions and the acts involved with it, a diviner was engaged in another sphere of professional activity: enacting the ritual that consisted of the ritualistic preparation and execution of impetrated hydromancy, lychnomancy and incubation dreams. The preparation phase is very important because it determines the atmosphere in which to invoke the deity's favor. It usually includes setting the scene, making a sacrifice, chanting a prayer and pronouncing a formula. The execution involves special actions, such as the bending over the cup in lecanomancy or lying down with the eyes closed in lychnomancy. Frequently, a young assistant would be employed for the part of gazing: a virgin boy acts as intermediary with the requirement that either

and Nanshe, goddess oneiromancer, Gudea's dream (Jan E. Wilson, *The Cylinders of Gudea: Transliteration, Translation and Index* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996], A.iv.7–vi.14). Addu-dûri was a female oneiromancer at Zimri-lim's court in Mari (Jack M. Sasson, 'Mari Dreams', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 [1983], pp. 283-93). Besides being a function of the specialists in sacred writing, dream interpretation in ancient Egypt seems to have involved women. Thus, the earliest reference to it in a letter from P. Deir el-Medina 6 (Ramesside period, New Kingdom) implies that a woman consulted the goddess Nefertari about her dream (Szapakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes*, pp. 65-66). Later in a Hellenistic literary text, *Joseph and Aseneth*, Aseneth makes fun that Joseph is like old women who interpret dreams (*Jos. Asen.* 4.15, long version).

191. Plato, *Phaedr.* 224c-245, 249d-e, 265b-c. See Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, p. 19.

192. See the presentation of the topic by William E. Klingshirn, 'Christian Divination in Late Roman Gaul: The *Sortes Sangallenses*', in *Mantikê*, pp. 99-128.

the diviner or the intermediary needs to keep himself pure.¹⁹³ Children were employed for this action because they were considered less likely to be bodily polluted.¹⁹⁴

Charm for direct vision: Take a copper vessel, pour rainwater into it and make an offering of male frankincense. Formula: . . . Dismissal . . . Use after you have kept yourself pure for 3 days (*PGM* 7.319-34).

Since the types of divination based on the principles of the ancient science of vision, involving light, vision, sun gods and eyes, are interchangeable, two or three types of lecanomancy, lychnomancy, catoptromancy, oneiro-mancy often appear in the same ritual. Here is the ritual of lecanomancy connected to lychnomancy in an RVE with a boy as a medium (cf. *PDM* 14.841-50). The instructions address the diviner.

[A vessel divination:] ‘Open my eyes! Open your eyes!’ . . . up to three times . . . so that I may see the great god Anubis, the powerful one, who is before me, the great strength of the sound eye! . . . *Formula*: You bring a copper cup . . . you fill it with the settled water guarded which the sun cannot find; you fill its [the water’s] face with true oil; . . . you put another four bricks under the youth; you make the youth lie down on his stomach; you make him put his chin on the bricks of the vessel; you make him look into the oil, while a cloth is stretched over him, and while the lighted lamp is his right hand and the burning censer in his left hand; you put the lobe of the Anubis plant on the lamp; you put the incense up[on the censer] and you recite . . . to the vessel seven times. . . . When you have finished, you should make the youth open his eyes and you should ask him, ‘Is the god coming in?’ If he says, ‘The god has already come in’, you should recite . . . And you should ask him concerning that which you desire . . . *His dismissal* . . . You should take the lamp from the child, you should take the vessel contain water, you should take the cloth off him. You can do it alone by vessel inquiry (*PDM* 14.395-427).

Sometimes the elements of the visual effects are present even more, ‘[A vessel divination] . . . Put the light and breadth in my vessel . . . Open to me, o primeval waters. . . . the boy whose face is bent over this vessel’ (*PDM* 14.1-92). The god is described as the one who is the sun and the moon . . . ‘they are unwearied eyes shining in the pupils of men’s eyes—of whom heaven is head, ether body, earth feet, and the environment water. . . . You

193. The main sources are *PDM* and *PGM*. Collections of texts that range from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE are a synthesis of Egyptian, Greek and Roman, and probably also ANE’s (oil lecanomancy) traditions (Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn, 1996], p. xli).

194. Iamblichus, *Mysteries* 3.24; Psellus, *Concerning the Golden Chain* 216.24. See also Sarah Iles Johnston, ‘Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination’, *Arethusa* 34.1 (2001), pp. 97-118.

are the ocean, begetter of good things and feeder of the civilized world' (PGM 13.765-75). 'You will observe through bowl divination on whatever day or night you want . . . beholding the god in the water' (PGM 4.154-68).

1. *Virgin Boys*. Beside the need for visual effects, purity was also necessary. Either the master interpreter had to keep clean for a certain number of days, or pure, uncorrupt boys were used as mediums.¹⁹⁵ 'Put the iron lampstand in a clean house . . . on it a lamp not colored red, light it . . . The boy, then, should be uncorrupt, pure' (PGM 7.540-45). Now if the boy-mediums do not see the gods, then, 'You may use these . . . that one will see unavoidably, and for all spells and needs: inquires, prophecies by Helios [the popular sun god of the Hellenistic era], prophecies by visions in mirrors' (PGM 13.749-52), bringing in catoptromancy.

The virgin boys are used also in the description of impetrated dream rituals from Mesopotamia. Because in a domestic incubation rite the patron should be the one to receive the revelation, virgin boys appear as helpers in the preparation phase: 'having a virgin boy grind grain, sweeping and sprinkling the roof with clean water, drawing a circle, offering incense and flour'¹⁹⁶ (STT 4b.2.65-68, 6b.2.88-91, 7b.2.100-102).¹⁹⁷

These 'virgin boys with a woman', the young trainees, were necessary personnel in visual omens. Rituals could be performed by the diviner provided that he fulfilled purity rites, but it may have been easier to apprentice young boys who conferred purity in the transaction, especially if there are personnel in training for future diviners at hand. I propose that virginity may, therefore, be connected with the training phase of a future scientist of

195. Uncorrupt meant that the boys did not yet have sexual relationships with women.

196. There are some indications from Mari about incubation rites that "the figure who lies down at the bedside" is a special kind of oneiromancer, a sort of professional dreamer-sleeper, capable either of dreaming at request, or provoking dream in someone else and of interpreting it afterwards' (Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, p. 47). The statue (figurine) of Aštābi-El, who was one of the 'fading gods', meaning deities who became ancestors, according to Jack Sasson, was reported in A.747 that 'should lie down on his couch and be interrogated so that his 'seer' (*ha-ia-sū*) could speak' (Jack M. Sasson, 'Ancestors Divine?', in *Veenhof Anniversary Volume: Studies Presented to Klaus R. Veenhof on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* [ed. W.H. van Soldt; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2001], pp. 413-28 [417]). The divine ancestors were used frequently in solving crimes, such as the statue of deceased Amenhotep I in Deir el-Medina. And lecanomancy was used, especially in the later Greco-Roman period, in forensics. Joseph's divinatory activities could easily fit into these images (Sasson, 'Ancestors Divine?', pp. 417-19).

197. Erica Reiner, 'Fortune-Telling in Mesopotamia', *JNES* 19.1 (1960), pp. 23-35 (27-28).

visions. As Potiphar's household would feature as the most likely place for Joseph's education as a diviner in the mind of the Hellenistic audience, had Joseph succumbed to the advances of the wife of Potiphar, he might have compromised his professional development. Thus, seen through Hellenistic eyes, it is his purity that could have been more endangered than his moral standing.

2. *Hidden Testimonies in the Hebrew Bible and the LXX.* No incubation rite is discernible in any of the Hebrew Bible dreams. There are attempts to find incubation dreams behind some dream contexts, such as Solomon's dream, given that the most popular types of incubation dreams of the ancient Mediterranean were linked with spending a night in a temple (1 Sam. 3.3-10; 1 Kgs 3.4-15; 2 Chron. 1.3-13; or Ps. 3.5-6).¹⁹⁸

There is no analogy in any other biblical RVE phenomena to Joseph's divination rites with his cup of divination (Gen. 44.5, 15). However, it is possible in some passages of the Hebrew Bible to discern metaphorical meanings of light, water or vision that disclose the familiarity with the theory and practice of RVE. Wells are places where divine revelations are likely to occur. This setting is popular in the Torah/Pentateuch and is exploited by Hellenistic texts. I will mention here two incidents from the Hebrew Bible that may suggest a presupposed ritualistic setting. Once God promised a future for Hagar's son, Ishmael, 'God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water' (Gen. 21.19). Some traces of the belief in the power of the glance can be probably found at the scene at the well between Rebecca and Abraham's servant (Gen. 24.21): 'The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful'.¹⁹⁹

'For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light' (Prov. 6.23). As a parallel to light, the lamp becomes a metaphor for divine commandments, reminding us of the role of lychnomancy in the ancient world. Moreover, it is possible to track some hints of hydromancy. The Hebrew of Prov. 27.19 states, 'As the water face to face, so the heart of human to the human'.²⁰⁰ An

198. Incubation sites were usually connected to a sacred place: a temple or a sacred spring or a well. It was the main activity in the Greek temples dedicated to Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, such as in Epidaurus. The evidence from Egypt testifies to dream interpreters at the incubation shrines (see *Mantikê*, p. 240 n. 24). Gilgamesh seems to perform an incubation rite in tablet 4 (S.A.L. Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions about Dreams and Dream Rituals* [Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1998], pp. 224-27).

199. The similarities of the 'wooing of Rebekah' in Genesis 24 with ancient Near Eastern interdynastic marriage conventions, and especially with a betrothal in Haleb from the Mari archives, are pointed out by Jack M. Sasson, 'The Servant's Tale: How Rebekah Found a Spouse', *JNES* 65.4 (2006), pp. 241-65.

200. Hebrew: כַּמַּיִם הַפְּנִיִּים לַפְּנִיִּים כֹּן לִב־הָאָדָם לָאָדָם (Prov. 27.19).

indication that this verse relates to water divination is the fact that the LXX avoided the literal translation, and so omitted any hint of RVE reflection: ‘As faces are not like each other, so neither are the hearts of people’ (Prov. 27.19 LXX).²⁰¹ It agrees with the probable systematic tendency of the LXX to omit translating the word ‘water’, as Cecile Dogniez detected in a conference article, ‘De la disparition du theme de l’eau dans la LXX: Quelques exemples’.²⁰²

4. Joseph as a Hellenistic Scientist

In light of the popularity of RVE phenomena, their theoretical basis and their practical applications in Hellenistic times, many features in the Joseph story may be seen as presenting Joseph in activities most fully described by the Hellenistic notion of a scientist of vision. First, lecanomancy and oneiromancy belong to the same office of the interpreter of visual omens. Next, the diviner’s cup was a standard tool of this profession. The silver cup could serve as the metaphor of the highest political office, divinely ordained. Its use in forensics to catch thieves remarkably matches the incident with Benjamin. Finally, the young Joseph was gifted with inspired dream oracles, which he cherished without understanding. The fact that he became an extremely successful oneiromancer in Egypt suggests that he must have obtained additional training in the meantime. Joseph’s refusal to have sex with Potiphar’s wife could have been seen as an attempt to remain pure in his training as a young practitioner of RVE because he needed to sustain his position as a mediator in the state of a virgin boy. This study will examine how the major Hellenistic texts about Joseph responded to these issues. But, first, I will briefly address the scholarship on Hellenistic interpretations of Joseph.

Few biblical stories have left as many traces in world literature as the Joseph narrative in Genesis 37–50. Indeed, few other biblical figures have fascinated subsequent interpreters as much as Jacob’s favorite son Joseph. Jewish, Samaritan, Christian, Muslim, and other authors have employed the story of Joseph in varied cultural contexts, interpreting, paraphrasing, or adapting biblical account. This process started with Hellenistic Jew-

201. “Ὡςπερ οὐχ ὅμοια πρόσωπα προσώποις, οὕτως οὐδὲ αἱ καρδίαι τῶν ἀνθρώπων (Prov. 27.19, Rahlfs).

202. Cécile Dogniez, ‘De la disparition du thème de l’eau dans la LXX: Quelques exemples’, in *XIII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Ljubljana, 2007* (ed. Melvin K. H. Peters; SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series, 55; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), pp. 119–32.

ish authors such as Artapanus, Demetrius, Philo, and Josephus, and has continued to modern times with writers like Goethe and Thomas Mann.²⁰³

Theories of vision impressed the Hellenistic and Roman cultures of which Judea/Palestine were integral parts. Jewish culture became an expression of a minority group that tried to establish its identity in Hellenistic cultural globalization. The response varied. Only some extreme Jewish circles that expanded the prohibition of making images (Exod 20:4) to any revelatory imagery fiercely rejected the principles of the science of vision, especially its claim of access to the divine. If they accepted Joseph as one of the Hebrew patriarchs, they denied any identification of him with the Hellenistic scientist.

However in an attempt to keep Jewish culture pristine, extreme trends both in Palestine and in the diaspora rejected everything Hellenistic or non-Jewish. Any mixing with foreigners was branded as dangerous to Jewish identity and any person who undertook to befriend or marry a non-Jew was a traitor. According to this view, Joseph, who not only lived and prospered in Egypt but also married an Egyptian, betrayed his nation and should not be considered a Jew any longer. Moreover, his sin appears even greater because he could be blamed for dislodging all the Jews from their native land and bringing them to Egypt.

Other Jewish circles tried to establish their identity by asserting the Jewish cultural contribution to the world's intellectual pool and by expressing Jewish values in Hellenistic terms. These groups embraced the idea that Joseph, born and raised in a small country, succeeded to the position of the prime minister of the contemporary empire. Moreover, they identified the biblical Joseph with a highest standing of a Hellenistic scientist of vision. These circles were certainly responsible for numerous literary, historical and philosophical texts that celebrate Joseph.

1. *Scholarship on Joseph in Jewish Hellenism.* The comparative study of the various Hellenistic texts that grew out of the biblical Joseph story was begun only relatively recently by a classicist, Martin Braun (1934). He examined the influence of the Hellenistic romance novels in the tradition of the 'Greek Pheadra legend' such as Xenophon, *Ephesiaca*, and Helodorus, *Aethiopica*, on the Jewish rewritings of the Potiphar episode of the Joseph story.²⁰⁴ The reason for this late start is probably due to linguistic limitations

203. Harm W. Hollander, 'The Portrayal of Joseph', in *Biblical Figures outside the Bible* (ed. M.E. Stone and T.A. Bergren; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International 1998), p. 237.

204. M. Braun, 'Biblical Legend in Jewish-Hellenistic Literature with Special Reference to the Treatment of the Potiphar Story in the Testament of Joseph', in *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), pp.

of individual areas of specialization. Accordingly, classicists too often used to omit biblical literature in presenting literary analyses of ancient characters because of their lack of sufficient knowledge of Hebrew, while Hebrew Biblicists sought comparative material from the mainly Semitic ancient Near East rather than from the Greek classical world.

Subsequent comparative literary studies either focused on the Joseph character in a particular group of documents, such as E.R. Goodenough on Philo, or Harm Hollander on the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, or examined the whole corpus of the ancient texts on a particular feature of Joseph's character, for example, Earle Hilgert, Erich Gruen, Harm Hollander and Susan Docherty.²⁰⁵ Another approach is to study a specific episode of the Joseph story in the post-biblical readings, such as the popular episode with Potiphar's wife.²⁰⁶ The latter branched into two main directions. The first used intertextual study of the multiple narratological developments in post-biblical writings to open up the possible readings of the biblical text and is represented by Alice Bach and Daniel Boyarin.²⁰⁷ The second is a diachronic one that focused on the developments and interdependence of the traditions in different post-biblical texts on Joseph, exemplified by James Kugel.²⁰⁸ Scholars such as Avigdor Aptowitzer, Louis

44-104 (46). The Phaedra motif of the love of an older married woman for a young man in her household is named after the Greek mythological story of Phaedra's love for her husband's son Hippolytus.

205. E.R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory. Together with a General Bibliography of Philo by H.L. Goodhart and E.R. Goodenough* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938); Harm W. Hollander, 'The Portrayal of Joseph in Hellenistic Jewish and Early Christian Literature', in *Biblical Figures outside the Bible* (ed. M.E. Stone and T.A. Bergren; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International 1998), pp. 237-63; E. Hilgert, 'Dual Image of Joseph in Hebrew and Early Jewish Literature', *Papers of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research*, 30 (Chicago: Chicago Society of Biblical Research, 1985); E. Gruen, 'Hellenistic Images of Joseph', in *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 73-109; S. Docherty, 'Joseph the Patriarch: Representations of Joseph in Early Post-Biblical Literature', in *Borders, Boundaries and the Bible* (ed. Martin O'Kane; JSOTSup, 313; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 194-216.

206. J. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990); A. Bach, *I Shall Stir Up thy Mistress against Thee: Getting at the Woman's Story in Genesis 39* (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1991).

207. Alice Bach, 'I Shall Stir Up thy Mistress against Thee', in *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 82-127; Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

208. J. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990).

Ginzberg, Geza Vermes and James Kugel, while tracing the origins and the development of different traditions, were in fact favoring the history of rabbinic interpretations, and, thus focused mostly on tracking *midrashic* types of exegesis.²⁰⁹ In an attempt to identify what was specifically Jewish in Jewish biblical readings they usually contrasted them with Christian or Hellenistic viewpoints. This division on Jewish and Christian readings contributed to a problematic and overwhelming presence of dichotomies in biblical criticism.²¹⁰

Thus far, comprehensive comparative examination of the Joseph story has excluded research on the diversity of Judaism in Hellenistic times. Maren Niehoff's detailed study, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature*, of the major early Jewish exegetical works (Philo, Josephus, *Genesis Rabbah* and Targums) is the first comprehensive investigation of the figure of Joseph in ancient Jewish sources in relation to the biblical Joseph story that surpassed the dichotomies and touched upon the complexities of the traditions' social settings.²¹¹ However, she manages only to provide a detailed literary analysis of the texts without radically reaching into the comparison of the texts. Diachronic and comparative research remain the domain of studies that focus on the post-biblical elaborations of a single episode from the Joseph story. The focus on a single theme facilitates the intertextual comparison revealing the complexity of ideas. The pitfall of this approach is in the fact that texts that belong to the same traditional chain favored certain motifs more than others, for example, *Targumim* and different *midrashim* promoted the passages Gen. 37.3 and Genesis 39 (Potiphar episode), thus channeling the scholarly examinations in the directions of their particular mindsets on account of the wider scope. Scholars have so far

209. Avigdor Aptowitzer, 'Asenath, the Wife of Joseph: A Haggadic Literary-Historical Study', *HUCA* 1 (1924), pp. 239-306; Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2nd edn, 2003); Kugel, *Potiphar's Wife*; Geza Vermes, 'Genesis 1-3 in Post-Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic Literature before the Mishnah', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 43.2 (1992), pp. 221-25.

210. 'Biblical scholars for the most part have been accustomed to coherent readings, readings that progress in a linear fashion to a payoff, a bottom line, a result. Traditional commentaries on biblical texts emphasize a unity of reading, a single viewpoint, a pronouncement of truth. In analyzing the roles and assumptions of biblical criticism, a reading which is suspicious of dichotomies that set off a preferred disciplinary code against some ill-defined other will shatter the stereotypes that have held most interpreters within the confines of patriarchy' (Bach, 'I Shall Stir Up', pp. 7-8).

211. Maren Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, 26; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992).

investigated in detail only one of these subjects, the Potiphar's wife episode (Braun, Kugel, Bach).

Several recent articles search for images of Joseph in all early Jewish literature.²¹² However, the broad scope of their quest, coupled with the shortcomings of the article format, limited their inquiry to grouping the texts according to whether they disclose positive or negative sides of Joseph's character and on how far they idealize him. Their dichotomous analysis along either linguistic or geographical grounds follows faithfully in the steps of Hilgert (1985), who argues for a dual depiction of Joseph (good and bad) in biblical and early Jewish literature. The deficiency of this approach shows in the contradictions of its results. They all seek to postulate the extent of the idealization of the Joseph figure in the ancient sources, because these sources either idealized the Joseph image or exposed the ambiguity of his character. Gruen's analysis leads to the grouping of the texts along language lines: Hellenistic Greek texts expose the complex character of Joseph while Hebrew texts idealize it into a one-dimensional personality. Likewise, Docherty's focus of geographical areas has concluded that diaspora Jews expose the complex character of Joseph, while Judeans idealize him. Hollander, however, states the exact opposite: Hellenistic texts idealize Joseph's image, while Judean reveal his character's ambiguity. Hollander, moreover, traces the ideological basis of this dichotomy to the Hebrew Bible itself, to the contrast between the ideologies of the North, represented by Joseph, and the South, by Judah. He chooses to follow their destiny further, arguing for the Christian idealization of Joseph and rabbinic dissatisfaction with the same.

Concerning the reason for the astonishing appeal of Joseph to the Hellenistic audience, all three works agree that the Jewish Hellenistic diaspora, especially in Egypt, took pride in their famous ancestor Joseph, exploiting the theme of his gaining authority in a foreign land in order to instigate their own national pride.²¹³ They did not examine the differences of the ideas among different groups, leaving an impression of a united and monolithic Jewish Hellenistic diaspora. The fact that Philo contradicts their postulate of diaspora Jewish pride in Joseph testifies to this diversity of expressions.

All three works follow the mainline interest of scholarship on Joseph, emphasizing Joseph as an ethical character. Research is dedicated primarily to the reception of Joseph's moral qualities. In Christian scholarship it is Joseph's function as a type, thus in typology and allegory, that captured the

212. Gruen, 'Hellenistic Images of Joseph'; Hollander, 'Portrayal of Joseph'; Docherty, 'Joseph the Patriarch'.

213. Docherty, 'Joseph the Patriarch', p. 197.

academic interest.²¹⁴ This work will launch into an almost-unexplored field of exegesis: Joseph as a scientist. Moreover, I will show that the texts that embrace Joseph as the conduit of Hebrew religious and intellectual property belong to what I label the Joseph tradition (e.g. the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* and the works of Josephus).

214. However, the scholarship on Joseph in early Christian literature has focused almost exclusively either on his ethical role or his type as Christ (W.A. Argyle's short classic, 'Joseph the Patriarch in Patristic Teaching' [*ExpTim* 67 (1967), pp. 199-201] is still cited as the major source).

2

JOSEPHUS: JOSEPH TRADITION

After the pertinent preparation—having a virgin boy grind grain, sweeping and sprinkling the roof with clean water, drawing a circle, offering incense and flour—‘you recite the incantation three times, and, without speaking to anybody (afterwards), you go to sleep and will see a dream’ (*STT* 4b.2.65–68).¹

Josephus is a very important source of what I call Joseph tradition. His treatment of the phenomena of RVE is as would be expected from a historian: a description of practices rather than theoretical discussions. As a first-century CE intellectual he participated in the early Roman Empire’s project of assembling all past and present knowledge.² Thus Josephus’s writings are an attempt at a synthesis of Jewish history.

1. *Introduction: Josephus and his Historiography*

Exile is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and the true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. . . . The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.³

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian born into an aristocratic family in Jerusalem 37–38 CE; he died in Rome in about 101 CE as the protégé of Flavian emperors. He wrote his opus in the Atticistic Greek used by Greek revivalists of the contemporary literary Roman elite such as Plutarch and

1. Erica Reiner, ‘Fortune Telling in Mesopotamia’, p. 27.

2. What Artemidorus was doing with dream theories of the ancient world, Josephus was doing with Jewish history.

3. E. Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 172.

Lucian.⁴ Josephus spent his last thirty years in Rome writing in his second language (*Ant.* 20.263), apparently isolated from the bustling literary activity of the imperial capital. While Josephus's work has been passed down to us almost in its entirety, through the effort of interested Christian authors, it seems to have been unknown to any serious historian or literary figure of his time and a hundred years later, making the mapping of the cultural context of Josephus's writing difficult to discern. And Josephus, who liked to write about himself, is silent about his literary and intellectual activity in Rome.⁵

His major work, *Jewish Antiquities* (*Ant.*), covers the history of the Jews from its beginnings to the last year of the Roman Emperor Flavius Domitian (96 CE). Josephus addresses political events of his time in *The Jewish War* (*War*), including detailed descriptions of his own participation in them. He also wrote an apologetic work, *Against Apion* (*Apion*), and an autobiography, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* (*Life*). Thus, in the light of the lack of a surviving Greek or Latin source about Josephus, Josephus himself is our main source for his life and work.

Born into a priestly and a royal family, Josephus was a member of the ruling class of Jewish Palestine. Not only was he educated as a future priest and a potential leader of the nation, but he was also a child prodigy. His proficiency in memory and learning made both the religious and political leaders consult the fourteen-year-old Josephus on matters of law (*Life* 8–9). He was 26 or 27 when he went to Rome as part of a Jewish delegation pleading for the release of several Jewish priests (*Life* 13). Rome's power and sense of invincibility impressed Josephus. On his return home he tried both to convince his countrymen not to revolt against Rome and to pacify the war party. His urging was in vain, and eventually he reluctantly took part in the revolt and led a war unit against the Romans. However, being befriended by the emperor Vespasian, he ended up living and writing in Rome under royal patronage. He romanized his name, changing it from Joseph ben Matthias to Titus Flavius Josephus.⁶

Josephus wrote in the last three decades of the first century CE in Rome.⁷ Imperial Roman programmatic synthesis of diverse philosophical and scientific concepts inherited from many Hellenistic schools and intellectual

4. About Josephus's rhetoric and his use of different Greek literary styles to suit his audience, see Steve Mason, 'Of Audience and Meaning: Reading Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum* in the Context of a Flavian Audience', in *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond* (ed. Joseph Sievers and Gaia Lembi; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), pp. 71–100.

5. About Josephus in Rome, see Jonathan J. Price, 'The Provincial Historian in Rome', in *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome*, pp. 101–18.

6. Flavius stood for the Flavian dynasty and the first name of Vespasian, Titus for his son, who were Josephus's Roman imperial patrons.

7. Josephus died in the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan, probably in 101 CE.

movements into a single comprehensive system reflects itself in Josephus's activity as a Jewish historian. He attempts to restructure all knowledge about the Jews into an integrated chronological formation. Thereby, he brings under the same umbrella the diverse intellectual perspectives of Judaism. In the process he synthesizes two worlds, the Semitic and the Greco-Roman, to both of which he felt himself an heir.

Josephus's historiography is based on an assumption that events happen in a certain way and that historiography's goal is to describe them accurately (*Apion* 1.8-9). Multiple versions of an event exist because of the lack of primary sources along with the lack of inclination in historians to discover the truth of the matter (*Apion* 1.4-5). In an apologetic genre (*Against Apion*) Josephus defines his historiographical method in contrast to negative examples of Greek historians. Their different and numerous interpretations of affairs are the result of negligence because they do not consult records or eyewitnesses, but instead they care only to impress their readers with their skilled writing techniques. He asserts that the main difference between him and the majority of contemporary historians is in the use of sources. For Josephus the determining characteristic of a good and trustworthy historian is the use of primary sources, by this he means that eyewitnesses and participants in events should write about them, not historians who write on hearsay and who never visited the places they described, as was the case with Greek historians (*Apion* 1.4; 1.8-9).

Josephus wrote at a time and place of great energy in Roman historiography. Tacitus, Pliny and imperial court historians not only produced historiographies in Latin but also were part of lively literary circles of the intellectual Roman elite. These circles also included the provincial writers, who wrote in Greek, such as the geographer Strabo from Pontus or Timagenes of Alexandria. It is to be expected that Josephus was among them. Greek language and Greek influential thinkers were equally appreciated by the Latin intellectuals in Rome. If Josephus hardly spoke Latin, the language barrier would have little consequence for his acceptance into the Roman literary intelligentsia.⁸ However, these literary elites who discussed and read one another's works knew nothing about Josephus's writings, and there is not even an allusion in Josephus's opus of their existence and activities. Josephus himself mentions only Greek historiographers, most of whom are unknown today.⁹

Dionysius of Halicarnassus was one of the foreign historians who made extensive contacts with the Roman literary elite. The similarities of his

8. Price, 'Provincial Historian', p. 103.

9. It is not unusual that most of the sources of ancient writings are unknown, i.e. are not passed down (Doron Mendels, 'The Formation of an Historical Canon of the Greco-Roman Period: From the Beginnings to Josephus', in *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome*, p. 5).

Roman Antiquities in its patriotic and apologetic guise to the *Jewish Antiquities* led to the scholarly notion that Halicarnassus's historiography is its precursor and model.¹⁰ Scholars today are inclined to acknowledge that both works shared the cultural trends fashionable in Rome at that time without directly influencing each other. Thus, Gregory E. Sterling classifies them both in the same genre, *apologetic historiography*, which aimed to 'establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world'.¹¹

Among Jewish writers in Greek, Josephus shares many similarities with Philo, not the least being that they both wrote about the content and meaning of their sacred texts.¹² Two important differences are that Philo is interested in the philosophical undertones and in the meaning of the words of Torah, while Josephus is interested in the content of the messages, searching to establish a foundation for the sacred history. He is not invested in linguistic analysis. He subordinates the language to the precision of description of the events and protagonists. Josephus is not a literalist. In this light, the meticulous linguistic analysis of Josephus's opus is not a correct approach to it, and I will try to avoid it.

The main source on Joseph is Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*. The Joseph story of Genesis is retold by using midrashic elements in a non-literalist sense as enlargement or contraction of the biblical material, along with elements of a Hellenistic novel, such as dramatic, rhetorical and emotional features.¹³

10. Both Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Josephus came from the East, made Rome their home, and were grateful for the welcome they found there (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.4-6). They were admirers of Roman accomplishments and aware of Rome's power. 'Above all, both sought to reconcile their fellow-nationals—Greeks in the case of Dionysius, Jews in that of Josephus—to Roman sovereignty' (David Daube, 'Typology in Josephus', *JJS* 31.1 [1980], pp. 18-36 [35]. The theory that Josephus was consciously modifying *Roman Antiquities* came from Henry StJohn Thackeray, whose translation of Josephus for the Loeb Classical Library at the beginning of the twentieth century is still the most influential and most used text and translation of Josephus.

11. This genre developed as a response of an indigenous society to Greek ethnography. Manetho's work on Egypt and Berossus's *Babyloniaca* belong to this genre; see Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), p. 17.

12. Hans Sprödkowsky, *Die Hellenisierung der Geschichte von Joseph in Aegypten bei Flavius Josephus* (Greifswald: Verlag Hans Dallmeyer, 1937), maintains that Josephus, who lived and wrote several decades after Philo, used Philo's work. Today's scholarship tends to avoid the hypothesis of direct influence and to treat each in his own right (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, pp. 12, 92). According to this concept, similarities are more likely to come from the resemblance in the cultural trends shared by their respective intellectual environments.

13. The Hellenistic novel as a genre is in full bloom in the first century CE. Josephus's Joseph story can be compared to the Ninus romance (Louis H. Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Joseph', *Revue biblique* 99.2-3 [1992], p. 380).

1. *Septuagint (LXX) Tradition.* While *The Jewish War* and *Against Apion* are written in fashionable elitist Greek style, *Jewish Antiquities* is less polished and ‘more natural’.¹⁴ Following the biblical accounts, Josephus appears to use extensively Septuagint texts and traditions.

Josephus credits his desire to communicate Jewish history to the Greeks because of their curiosity about Jewish history (*Ant.* 1.5). According to Josephus, the high priest Eleazar’s Greek translation of the LXX was the response to the interest shown by Ptolemy II Philadelphus (*Ant.* 1.9-12). However, as Josephus leads us to believe, Eleazar manages to make available in translation only Law, probably the Pentateuch. Thus, it is left to the author himself to continue in Eleazar’s footsteps and include the whole Bible in his *Jewish Antiquities*, which he anticipates as a continuation of real cultural dialogue targeting the enlightened circles of both cultures.

Accordingly, I thought that it became me also both to imitate the high priest’s magnanimity and to assume that there are still today many lovers of the learning like the king. For even he failed to obtain all our records: it was only the portion containing the Law which was delivered to him by those who were sent to Alexandria to interpret it. The things narrated in the Scriptures are, however, innumerable . . . the precise details of our Scripture records will, then, be set forth, each in its place, as my narrative proceeds, that being the procedure that promised to follow throughout this work, neither adding nor omitting anything (*Ant.* 1.12-17).¹⁵

Josephus’s sequence of biblical books follows approximately the Septuagint division.¹⁶ The twenty books of *Jewish Antiquities* cover the period from the beginning of creation up to Jewish revolt in 66 CE. The first eleven books deal with the twenty-two books of Jewish Scripture.¹⁷ Of the first four books, dedicated to the Pentateuch, one and a half deal with Genesis. Therein, Josephus dwells on and expands particularly the history of Joseph.¹⁸

14. Mason, ‘Of Audience and Meaning’, p. 76.

15. If not noted differently, all the translations are by H. StJ. Thackeray taken from the LCL edition (*Josephus* [trans. H. StJ. Thackeray et al.; Loeb Classical Library, 10 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926-1997]).

16. Thomas W. Franksman, *Genesis and the ‘Jewish Antiquities’ of Flavius Josephus* (Biblica et orientalia, 35; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), pp. 6-8.

17. Because of the lack of the exact succession of the prophets after the reign of Artaxerxes, sacred Jewish history covers only the period up to that time (*Apion* 1.38-41).

18. Even the early life of Moses is treated less extensively by Josephus (Franksman, *Genesis and the ‘Jewish Antiquities’*, p. 215).

2. *Joseph Tradition*a. *Josephus's Joseph*

Josephus identified with Joseph in many ways. Just as Joseph, Josephus was born into a noble Jewish family and died famous abroad. As Joseph's namesake, Josephus too felt himself a talented dream interpreter and an able foreseer or diviner (*War* 3.351-53), having predicted Vespasian's accession as emperor (*War* 3.339-408). He too was from a small nation trying to live and succeed in a foreign empire. He too had to leave because there was no place for him among his own people, who either betrayed him or proclaimed him as a traitor. Like Joseph by pharaoh's order Josephus was taken out of captivity by Vespasian because of his ability to interpret dreams and predict the future.¹⁹

Josephus tried hard to help his own people survive in the best possible way in a dominant imperial culture. Josephus was sensitive to issues of identity. He stood up for the preservation of a small nation within an all-powerful empire and battled against parochialism. At the same time Josephus shows sensitivity for the fate of foreigners, who must live outside their country for various reasons.²⁰ His sympathy with the life of prisoners is detailed in his description of Joseph in prison (*Ant.* 2.60-63). For Josephus, slavery is much better than imprisonment. Joseph wears chains in prison and is co-chained to another prisoner and undernourished, while his slave-master, because he favors him, gave him an education (*Ant.* 2.39).²¹

In my opinion, Josephus's sensitivity to the fate of foreigners, the mistreated and the enslaved helps to flesh out these elements of Joseph's character and situation in a most positive light. Because these sentiments put interests of humanity over ethnic solidarity they are often used by the promoters of ethnic purity or a single ideology as a pointer to a traitor of his own race and a collaborator with a foreign power.

19. Even the testimony of the Roman historian Suetonius addresses this episode. 'In Judaea, Vespasian consulted the oracle of the God of Carmel and was given a promise that he would never be disappointed in what he planned or desired, however lofty his ambitions. Also, a distinguished Jewish prisoner of Vespasian's, Josephus by name, insisted that he would soon be released by the very man who had now put him in fetters, and who would then be Emperor. Reports of further omens came from Rome' (*The Twelve Caesars*, *Vespasian* 5.6).

20. Jacob's life in a foreign country is described with sensitivity for its hardship, of the fact that indigenous people take advantage of a foreigner without scruples (*Ant.* 3.20-21).

21. In the Roman period masters educated talented slaves (*Ant.* 20.263-66; lost treatise of Hermippus of Berytus on the education of the slaves written in the time of Hadrian [76-138 CE], P.Oxy. 724). Thus, Josephus's contemporary audience would not be surprised by this fact (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, p. 103).

For Josephus, Joseph is a hero. He is the brother chosen to transmit divine favor and Jewish intellectual property. The succession of the Divine Word (*Ant.* 3.86-87) according to Josephus goes from Jacob through Joseph to Moses, and its main manifestation is the prediction of the future, starting with Adam and reaching perfection in Joseph: Adam → Noah → Abraham → Isaac → Jacob → Joseph → Moses.

b. *Succession*

According to Josephus, the greatest, wisest and the most talented figures, such as Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, share the same fate of exile caused by their families because they stood up for justice, truth or virtue.²² Moreover, Noah, Abraham, Joseph and Moses are founding scholars of the highest human accomplishments in wisdom, science and religion.²³ Besides being intelligent and skillful, they were also virtuous people. The highest spiritual endeavors are accomplished by human reason. Josephus also expresses his high esteem for these figures by attaching a summary encomium to Joseph, as he does previously to Abraham (*Ant.* 1.256), Isaac (*Ant.* 1.346) and Jacob (*Ant.* 2.196).²⁴

According to Josephus, Noah is the founder of physical, life and social studies. In his time and under his patronage, the principles of the natural world are set, such as the taxonomy of animals and the laws of the physical world. This idea is based on biblical references to Noah's preservation of animals and God's bestowal of the rainbow (*Gen.* 7.8-9; 9.8-15). This rainbow is created by the interaction of water and light. Noah received the knowledge of the rules and roles of humans in physical reality within the principles of cosmology (*Ant.* 1.96-106).

Abraham is not only the founder of monotheism but also a great astronomer and mathematician, who transmitted Mesopotamian astronomy and geometry to the Egyptians (*Ant.* 1.154-60, 168). Joseph is the founder of any science that predicts the future and of any human endeavor to discover what is ahead and to organize one's life accordingly. Thus, Joseph practices the very essence of science. Different periods of history have different

22. Josephus could identify with all of them. Thus, he portrayed Noah as forced to go in exile because he feared for his life as he stood for justice and virtue (*Ant.* 1.74)

23. Feldman ('Josephus' Portrait', pp. 391-92) argues that Josephus made these founding fathers into philosophers and scientists for an apologetic reason, directing it to a certain audience: Greeks who accused Jews of not having prominent individuals who contributed to the world's intellectual property. Still, his image of them as scientists had to agree with the widely accepted notion of them in his times. Therefore, Josephus gives us an image of what an ideal scientist in late Hellenistic times should be.

24. Isaac was also persecuted by his neighbors, mainly Abimelech. The exceptional trait of his character was his good nature, that he did not seek vengeance for his mistreatment, but favored a peaceful solution.

names for this essential science that people turn to with trust to set their courses of actions. The favored science has varied from meteorology to futurology, positive legislation to divination, biomedical research to biblical exegesis. To ascertain what would happen tomorrow or in a distant future, humanity in the Greco-Roman period would turn to divination, as today we would turn to meteorology or prediction or virtual market. Josephus's Joseph is a founder of scientific endeavors in divination.

Josephus also emphasizes the importance of Joseph in patriarchal succession by elaborating on his being numbered as two tribes. Because the tribe of Levi was not allotted a territory, two of Joseph's sons took over Levi's and Joseph's portion. Thus, for military purposes the twelve tribes should be enumerated as if Jacob adopted the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh in the place of Levi and Ephraim for Joseph (*Ant.* 2.193; 3.288). This leaves open the possibility that Joseph may take over some of Levi's responsibilities, such as his communication with the supernatural. Thus, Joseph may appear as the transmitter of divine favor from Jacob to Moses, while Levi remains the priest. Moreover, Josephus omits altogether Jacob's testament to the twelve sons (Genesis 49), while Jacob's blessings of the two sons of Joseph are kept (Gen. 48.8-22). Joseph's mother, Rachel, is more prominent than Leah in Josephus's composition of the genealogies of the Joseph story.²⁵ Josephus serves as a model of the Joseph tradition, where Joseph is elected among the twelve brothers to carry on the intellectual property and divine favor from Jacob to Moses.²⁶

According to Josephus, forecasting the future in scientific, scholarly and oneirocritical traditions continues to be transmitted from Moses to Solomon

25. Genesis lists Jacob's descendants in two styles: that of Leah and of Rachel. Although Genesis appears to favor Leah's type, Josephus prefers the style of Rachel and applies it often even to Leah's type of genealogy. In genealogies of Jacob's descendants the brothers are listed in four groups according to their mothers. Leah's style groups the descendants with the respective son of Jacob from whom they derive. Rachel's style first mentions the sons together followed by the offspring of each (Franxman, *Genesis and 'Jewish Antiquities'*, pp. 273-76).

26. Another prominent tradition is Levitical tradition in which Levi is chosen for this role such as in *Jubilees*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, or *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. *Sepher Ha-Razim* (The Book of Mysteries) is an excellent example of Levitical tradition using the same model of succession from Noah to Solomon. The book of mysteries is the object of succession: it is given to Noah, who at the time of his death handed it over to Abraham, Abraham to Isaac, then, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram. Amram gave it to Moses, Moses to Joshua, then to the elders, the prophets to the sages, until it got to Solomon. *Sepher Ha-Razim* represents a Jewish expression of the popular religion of the Greco-Roman world and its magical practices (Michael A. Morgan [trans.], *Sepher Ha-Razim, The Book of Mysteries* [Texts and Translations, 25; Pseudepigrapha Series, 11; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983], p. 11).

and continues through the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel. It is taken on by the Essenes and found again in Josephus himself, who carries on the tradition through his ability to interpret dreams and to predict the future and through his skill as a historian (*Ant.* 17.346-47).²⁷

This tradition displays a holistic approach to science and religion, the approach that the whole cannot be reduced to the summary of its parts, as will be shown next. Science is deeply intertwined in the transmission of the divine word, and the prediction of the future is its main goal. Josephus holds that both are accessible by human reason (λογισμός). Moreover, the same tradition seems to promote cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, diversity, tolerance and equality of all human beings: natives and foreigners, rulers and slaves. On this foundation Josephus builds his Joseph tradition in which the succession of intellectual property goes through Joseph, as it passes from Jacob to Moses.

3. *Hellenistic Science*

a. *Josephus and Science*

There are two issues to keep in mind while examining Josephus's view of Hellenistic science. First, Josephus as a historian is interested in the cognitive side of Hellenistic science, its practices, rituals and the role of individual human beings in its historical development. Historical scientific

27. The transmitted tradition acknowledges dreams as a mode of divine revelation, especially symbolic dreams and other modes of divine RVE, but not all transmitters were scientists. Although Josephus identifies with Jeremiah and Daniel in a similar fashion as with Joseph, they are both prophets for Josephus (*Ant.* 10.246, 249). Josephus's insistence on succession made some scholars identify a unifying thread in Josephus's historiography. Thus, Gnuse (*Dreams and Dream Reports*, pp. 21-33, 136-42, 253-54, 269-70) and Daube ('Typology in Josephus', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 31.1 [1980]), pp 18-36 [33]) like to see Josephus writing his history as a succession of prophets, while some such as the most recent (Oliver Gussmann, 'Die Bedeutung der hohepriesterlichen Genealogie und Sukzession nach Josephus, A 20:224-251', in *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Dortmund 2002: Arbeiten aus dem Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum* [ed. J.U. Kalms and F. Siegert; Munsteraner judaistische Studien, 14; Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003], pp. 119-31 [130]) as a succession of priests, making Josephus into a prophet-historian or a priest-historian, respectively. Pierre Vidal-Naquet ('Flavius Josephé et les prophètes', in *Histoire et conscience historique dans les civilisations du Proche-Orient ancien: Actes du Colloque de Cartigny 1986, Centre d'Etude du Proche-Orient (CEPOA) Université de Genève* [Leuven: Peeters, 1989], pp. 11-31) shows that according to Josephus, prophetic office is no different from the historian. As Jeremiah is a prophet of defeat and capitulation, as Josephus sees himself in *Jewish Wars* 5.391-93, he has a prominent place in Josephus's line of succession, while Isaiah is neglected (p. 14). Moreover, Vidal-Naquet demonstrates that the dream-interpreter of Josephus's times took the place of a prophet of the past (p. 15).

theories, the philosophy of visual effects, the metaphors of light and color are outside the focus of his writings. The second is that Josephus is not a literalist. He does not invest in the special meaning of the words that he uses for phenomena, which makes any lexicographical analysis applied to Josephus an approximation.

Hellenistic science in Josephus could be identified with the human discovery of the secrets of the universe (τὰ ὅλα) (*Ant.* 1.24; 10.278) Τὰ ὅλα for this historian encompass past, present and future and diachronic aspects of events, conditions, situations (*Ant.* 1.247, 3.94). And of course Josephus's universe is the ancient universe, encompassing what we call today the natural and supernatural world and forces.²⁸ The grasp of τὰ ὅλα Josephus calls wisdom (σοφία, *sophia*) and the ability for discernment (σύνεσις). They are divine gifts for Josephus (*Ant.* 11.129), separated from human reasoning and given in the fullest to the wisest human beings, such as King Solomon (*Ant.* 8.24).²⁹ *Sophia* (wisdom) was the prerogative of Jewish lawgivers and Daniel.³⁰

Josephus's universe is accessible to humanity through the senses and reason. This is the standard cognitive theory of Hellenistic inquiry preserved and elaborated in the works of Aristotle.³¹ Through scientific observation and inquiry Abraham discovered that God is one. Thus, through the logic of Greek philosophy Abraham established his revolutionary monotheistic doctrine.³²

28. The earthly world is full of supernatural powers and beings such as angels and demons. There is a rich literature on the concept of the supernatural in Josephus. Morton Smith, 'The Occult in Josephus' (*Josephus, Judaism and Christianity* [ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata; Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1987], pp. 236-56), is a good example, although the choice of the word 'occult' for these phenomena is unfortunate, but not surprising with regard to the scholarship of the 1980s.

29. Solomon possesses wisdom and discernment (*Ant.* 8.34, 42, 43, 49, 165, 166, 168, 171, 173, 182).

30. Moses (*Ant.* 2.286, 288) and Ezra (*Ant.* 11.129) are the receivers of divine law and of σοφία τῶν νόμων (*Ant.* 19.172). Daniel needed to supply the content of the dream in addition to its interpretation (Dan. 2.5). He could not accomplish this task only by reasoning and without direct divine revelation (Dan. 2.19). In contrast to Daniel, Joseph's wisdom is mentioned together with his scientific skill (*Ant.* 2.87).

31. Josephus's science is, thus, equal to Karl-Heinz Pridik's 'reflektierte Offenbarung', which he draws from *Ant.* 1.19: 'um Gottes Wesen zu erfassen . . . (1.19), d.h. mit dem νοῦς ein Betrachter (θεατής) der Werke (ἔργα) von jenem zu warden und dann das Beste von allem als Vorbild nachzuahmen (παράδειγμα τὸ πάντων ἀριστον μιμεῖσθαι), soweit es geht, und (ihm) zu folgen zu versuchen' (Karl-Heinz Pridik, 'Josephus' Reden von Offenbarung', in *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Dortmund 2002, Arbeiten aus dem Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum* [ed. J.U. Kalms and F. Siegert; Munsteraner judaistische Studien 14; Munster: LIT Verlag, 2003], pp. 151-68 [156]).

32. Franxman, following mainline scholarship, implies that Abraham is a natural philosopher (Franxman, *Genesis and 'Jewish Antiquities'*, p. 119). Philo's representation of Abraham is very similar to Josephus' (see Chapter 5).

This he inferred from the changes to which land and sea are subject, from the course of sun and moon, and from all the celestial phenomena; for, he argued, were these bodies endowed with power, they would have provided for their own regularity, but, since they lacked this last, it was manifest that even those services in which they cooperate for our greater benefit they render not in virtue of their own authority, but through the might of their commanding sovereign (*Ant.* 1.156).

Science for Josephus is practical wisdom (φρόνησις) based on close observation of how things work in the universe. This includes practical application of the results of the contemplation of the observed.³³ Josephus, the historian, is especially interested in the use of the outcome of this scientific contemplation in regulating future actions. Josephus's Joseph adds a practical solution to his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, that is, he needs to provide the solution for the next fourteen years of severe changes in meteorological circumstances that he predicted (*Ant.* 2.88).

Josephus uses φρόνησις for the first time in the creation story to describe the knowledge that Eve acquired in the Garden of Eden (*Ant.* 1.37, 40).³⁴ Next, Joseph in the line of descendants of Seth and Noah is the founding scholar of a new scientific field and possesses φρόνησις. That Josephus is careful in using φρόνησις for Joseph is demonstrated by his change of the LXX text. Pharaoh is amazed with Joseph's τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν (*Ant.* 2, 87) instead of with him having the divine spirit, as in Gen. 41.38 (LXX), ὃς ἔχει πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ. These two terms illustrate Josephus's understanding of revelation: if φρόνησις stands for reason, πνεῦμα θεοῦ stands for revelation. John R. Levison demonstrated this in his analysis of Josephus telling the story of Balaam and the ass (Numbers 22–24).³⁵ When the divine spirit takes hold of a living being (human or ass), it can involve the loss of rationality. What Balaam and the ass experience is not the result of their intelligent contemplation but an invading possession of a divine spirit or angelic being that happens contrary to their intentions and causes madness and unconsciousness (*Ant.* 4.108, 118, 119).³⁶ Although both Joseph and Balaam are called diviners by the biblical text, Josephus is

33. Φρόνησις, according to LSJ, means thought, judgment, sense, but also purpose and intention. In Herodotus (1.46) the verb is used 'to test the knowledge of the oracles', similar to 'know full well', or to 'feel by experience'. I think that Niehoff's translation of φρόνησις as 'practical wisdom' is very appropriate for Josephus's understanding of this term, which he, almost exclusively, employs for only two human protagonists, Joseph (*Ant.* 2.9, 87) and Solomon (*Ant.* 8.23, 34, 42, 165, 171) (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, p. 88).

34. Τὸ φυτὸν τῆς φρονήσεως (*Ant.* 1.37) is the name given to the 'tree of knowledge'.

35. John R. Levison, 'The Debut of the Divine Spirit in Josephus's *Antiquities*', *Harvard Theological Review* 87.2 (1994), pp. 123–38.

36. Levison, 'The Debut', p. 128.

very careful to distinguish Joseph's activities as a Hellenistic scientist from Balaam's depiction as paid fraudulent magician.

Besides manifesting wisdom, learning and a deeper understanding of the secrets of the world and life, Joseph develops the tools to predict the future and to supply advice on appropriate actions if applicable (*Ant.* 2.88-89). Josephus's concept of scientific application should not be confused with what we call applied science or technology, because Josephus excludes crafts, engineering, trade, technology, architecture, urban planning, making of musical instruments and weapons from science. These were founded by Cain's progeny, an amoral, violent and murderous people who used them to increase luxury and pleasure exclusively (*Ant.* 1.61-64).³⁷

Besides Joseph, the only other biblical character of Josephus to possess *φρόνησις* is Solomon, whose sagacity and intelligence exceeded even the Egyptians and who is famous for being 'beyond all men in *φρόνησις*' (*Ant.* 8.42).³⁸ What this wisdom represents can be seen in Solomon's petition to God: 'Give me, O Lord, a sound mind, and a good understanding (*φρόνησις*), whereby I may speak and judge the people according to truth and righteousness' (*Ant.* 8.23).

This scientific inquiry requires an open mind, genuine scientific curiosity, tolerance of new knowledge and insights, and a readiness to change one's hypothesis if another proves superior to it. The measure of value and truthfulness of ideas is their excellence only. In this spirit Abraham is willing to conform to the doctrines of the Egyptians if they prove to be more excellent than his own.³⁹ Thus, Josephus makes a point that Abraham is not a fanatical founder of an intolerant religion, warning Jews against exclusiveness, and presenting Judaism as more palatable to the Romans.

37. Josephus's argument is not very characteristic of him, as it does not recur in his writings. Josephus may have attributed wicked arts to Cain and his descendants, against the simplicity of 'the guileless and generous existence which they had enjoyed in ignorance of these things' (*Ant.* 1.61). The allusion is to the perception that the Romans developed technology and craft and enjoyed exaggerated luxury while Greeks and Jews had more intellectual achievements. Yet Romans ruled them all.

38. H. StJ. Thackeray translates *φρόνησις* with 'understanding', 'beyond all men in understanding' (*Ant.* 8.42).

39. 'Abraham, hearing about the prosperity of Egyptians, was of a mind to visit them, both to profit by their abundance and to hear what their priests said about their gods; intending, if he found their doctrine more excellent than his own, to confirm to it, or else to convert them to a better mind should his own beliefs prove superior (1.161). . . Abraham conferred with each party and, exposing the arguments which they adduced in favor of their particular views, demonstrated that they were idle and contained nothing true' (1.166). Instead, he ended up introducing arithmetic to the Egyptians and 'transmitted to them the laws of astronomy' (1.167) from the Chaldeans.

b. Hellenistic Scientists

Because the interest of Josephus, the historian, lies in the impact of humans on historical progression, rather than on description of phenomena, I will first attend to his ideas about scientists before addressing his views on science and divination.

1. *The Hierogrammateus is a Hellenistic Scientist.* Josephus calls a Hellenistic scientist a *hierogrammateus* (ἱερογραμματεὺς), a sacred scribe, whose job it was to predict the future, give advice and determine the action to meet the prediction.⁴⁰ Josephus's definition of a sacred scribe is 'a person with considerable skill in accurately predicting the future' (*Ant.* 2.205), who gives advice to Pharaoh on how to act appropriately in order to meet the predicted event and/or avert misfortune. Moreover, sacred scribes are able to recognize the patterns in nature or in human behavior which indicate the realization of their predictions that are hidden from the rest of the participants.⁴¹

The foreseeing was accomplished by divinatory measures such as oneiromancy, lecanomancy or necromancy. Interpretation of dreams is certainly a major part of the job. Joseph's interpretations of Pharaoh's dreams, followed by his advice on the economic measures that Egypt should employ to meet the meteorological crisis, are typical examples of this profession.

Josephus seems to be our chief literary source for the term *hierogrammateus* (*Ant.* 2.205, 209, 234, 243, 255; *Apion* 1.289, 290; and *War* 6.291). Josephus extends this office beyond Egyptians to include Hebrew *hierogrammateis*. Thus, in *Ant.* 2.243, Josephus tells us that Moses 'gladly accepted the task, to the delight of the sacred scribes (*hierogrammateis*) of both nations', meaning Egyptians and Hebrews. The only ones who correctly interpreted

40. This Greek term is used for an Egyptian priestly, prophetic or scientific office of the 'House of Life'. The Greek sources employ it only in reference to an ancient Egyptian avocation (Lucian, *Macr.* 4; Eudoxus, *Ars* 3.21). Their job includes the forecast of the future, either by divination or in what we usually call scientific mode, such as in the example in the Greek *Hibeh* papyrus 27: *hierogrammateis* together with astronomers use a certain method to fix the raising and the setting of the stars in order to control the correct dating of the festivals (see also *PGM* 12.401-444). *Hierogrammateus* is preserved in many documents in Greek from Egypt of the Ptolemaic and Roman era, including the *Rosetta Decree* 6-7, *P.Tebt.* 2.291, *P.Eleph.* 7, *P.Oxy.* 3567, *Chrest.* Wilck. 76).

41. 'At that spectacle the sacred scribe who had foretold that this child's birth would lead to the abasement of the Egyptian empire rushed forward to kill him with a fearful shout: "This," he cried, "O king, this is that child whom God declared that we must kill to allay our terrors; he bears out the prediction by that act of insulting thy dominion and trampling the diadem under foot. Kill him then and at one stroke relieve the Egyptians of their fear of him and deprive the Hebrews of the courageous hopes that he inspires"' (*Ant.* 2.234).

the signs in *War* 6.291 were Jewish *hierogrammateis*. Josephus's understanding of *hierogrammateus* in its application to Jews corresponds to the broader cultural trend that contributed to the application of the concept of the Hellenistic scientist to the image of patriarch Joseph. This side of the matter still remains to be researched, although Louis Feldman touched upon this theme by observing that Josephus uses the term *mantis* (μάντις) for heathen fortune-tellers, while *hierogrammateus* is employed for true soothsayers.⁴²

Josephus designates Joseph as a *hierogrammateus* in *Against Apion* (1.290), citing the Egyptian Stoic philosopher Chaeremon.⁴³ Earlier in the paragraph, a sacred scribe, Phritobautes, appears as a dream interpreter and as a counselor on a future appropriate action for the interpretation.⁴⁴ In Egyptian tradition, dream interpretation was the business of specialists in sacred writing, 'scribes of the divine book', 'sacred scribes', 'scribes of the House of Life', the members of the Egyptian academy of arts and sciences,

42. Feldman, 'Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus', *JTS* 41 (1990), pp. 386-422; also Josephus, *Judean Antiquities 1-4* (trans. Louis H. Feldman), in *Flavius Josephus, Translation and Commentary*, III (ed. Steve Mason; 4 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), 3.188 n. 576. Moreover, it would be interesting to establish how much Josephus was influenced by Hellenistic conventions on Egyptian priests in bestowing a positive meaning to the term *hierogrammateus*. We could ask in the light of Jacco Dieleman's recent research, *Priests, Tongues and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100-300 CE)* (RGRW, 153; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), on the imagery of Egyptian priests in Hellenistic Rome: To what extent did Josephus draw on their images preserved in the Egyptian literature of his time? Egyptian priest was a favored literary type of the Hellenistic and Roman periods in Egyptian, Greek and Roman literature. The Egyptian priest as a ritual expert within the Hellenistic fascination with all things Egyptian as esoteric and strange was a generic convention. The stereotypes ranged from the priest depicted as a philosopher to as a charlatan, according to the preferences of the authors or the audience (Dieleman, *Priests*, p. 239). The Egyptian stereotype of ritual experts is, first, they are respected members of society and not exotic gurus or miracle workers; second, they are set in the royal court; third, they are projected to Egypt's remote past; and finally, they act, focalize and speak, in contrast to the Hellenistic stereotype of rather passive characters. Josephus's image of Solomon as an exorcist can serve as a reference for comparison.

43. Chaeremon was an Egyptian priest of the first century CE who wrote in Greek (Jerome, *Jov.* 2.13; Origen, *Cels.* 1.59; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.19). His description of the lives of the Egyptian priests seems to have been quite famous since even Porphyry in the third century CE quoted him as an authority (Porphyry, *Abst.* 4.6-8). Chaeremon represents Egyptian priestly culture as seen through Stoic philosophy and thus expressed in Hellenistic terms (Dieleman, *Priests*, pp. 250-51).

44. Josephus cites Chaeremon, 'the sacred scribe Phritobautes [interpreting Pharaoh's dream] told him that, if he purged Egypt of its contaminated population, he might ceased to be alarmed. . . . Their leaders were scribes, Moses and another sacred scribe—Joseph!' (*Apion* 1.289-90).

the House of Life.⁴⁵ The hieroglyphic term *rh-hh.t* ('knower of things'), is rendered by Ptolemaic decrees in Demotic as 'scribe of the House of Life' and in Greek as *hierogrammateus*, 'sacred scribe'.⁴⁶

For Josephus, Joseph was primarily an Egyptian *hierogrammateus*. No wonder that, according to Josephus, the Egyptian name Pharaoh gave Joseph signifies 'Discoverer of secrets' (κρυπτῶν εὐρετήν). Thus, this scientist predicts the future, reveals truths about the universe and leads society to meet accurately the predicted occurrences. The passage also indicates that predictions were not final and could in some cases be averted by an action the diviner suggests, such as the advice to kill little Moses, who was just foretold a glorious future. To murder the baby would stop the fulfill-

45. Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, p. 65; Robert Kriech Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice* (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, 54; Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 222 n. 1031. Ritner follows established scholarship in designating all the members of the 'House of Life' as priests. According to him a practitioner of magic was called 'the scribe of the House of Life', 'sacred scribe', the latter being a translation of 'scribe of the divine book', or 'chief lector priests'. Thus he remarks, 'In literature from the Old Kingdom through the Greco-Roman periods, the priestly qualifications of the magician protagonist are almost invariably specified, being indicated as either "chief lector priest" or "scribe of the House of Life"' (pp. 221-22), following with a notice of 'the late equivalence of the lector priest and sacred scribe' (p. 222 n. 1031). However, his first example from the Old Kingdom has one out of three magicians being a commoner, and he also adds that in the late demotic tales, *Setna I*, royal children are 'trained to read writings of the House of Life' (p. 222 n. 1031). My point is that there is no need to make all these generalizations because the reality is much more complex and diverse. Even if the sacred scribe was called a lector priest, then a definition of a lector priest could reveal an occupation very different from the one we, Josephus, or the Bible would call the 'priesthood'. Moreover, while Ritner identifies 'sacred scribe' with magician, his definition of the magical practices that he calls *heka* corresponds to what I define as science, in which the science of vision is particularly emphasized: 'If the force of [*heka*] is to be understood primarily as the power of effective duplication or "empowered images", then the techniques discussed within the study constitute "magical mechanics" in both the Western and Egyptian sense—though for very different reasons. The use of [*heka*] could hardly be construed in Egyptian terms as "activity outside the law of natural causality" since [*heka*] is itself the ultimate source of causality, the generative force of nature. It is the notion of [*heka*] which unites the tenants of Egyptian religion to the techniques of Egyptian religion' (p. 249). Jacco Dieleman notes an important distinction in the Egyptian understanding of priest or magician as a scientific profession, because it presupposes the wisdom and scribal skills of its practitioners on one side, and the Hellenistic perception of admirable Egyptian priests who are 'knowledgeable in the workings of nature and in ways to manipulate the course of events' (*Priests*, p. 286), on account of their otherness.

46. Ritner, *The Mechanics*, p. 230. The title, *rh-h.t* means 'he who knows things' or a 'scholar', or 'intellectual', referring to the official who was in charge of the religious and scholarly literature of the 'House of Life' (Dieleman, *Priests*, p. 207).

ment of the prediction. 'Kill him then and at one stroke relieve the Egyptians of their fear of him and deprive the Hebrews of the courageous hopes that he inspires' (*Ant.* 2:234).⁴⁷

To show that Josephus understands *hierogrammateus* ('sacred scribe') as a Hellenistic scientist and not as a prophet let us briefly address Josephus's view about prophets. Prophetic inspiration is neither the ecstasy of the invading divine spirit nor teaching about appropriate behavior or moral actions that could change the future. Josephus understands prophecy as primarily predictive, revealing distant future events on a larger scale, in contrast to science, which being based on cause-effect system usually relates to upcoming happenings. Prophetic predictions are determined and are not likely to be changed by human actions (*Ant.* 8.418-20; 10.35). They are the immediate expression of divine providence (θεία πρόνοια), which directs human affairs (*Ant.* 2.8, 24, 174, 189) and watches over God's prophets and cannot be altered.⁴⁸ Divine providence, which in Josephus is frequently charged with the sense of divine care, moves the action, determines the fate of individuals and groups, supervises human affairs (*Ant.* 10.277-80) and is in charge of miraculous deliverances (*Ant.* 10.214-15).

Daniel, another biblical interpreter of royal dreams at a foreign court, is made into a similar literary character and like Joseph is also a role model for Josephus (*Ant.* 10.185-281). However, an important distinction between the

47. Bad dreams can be changed into good ones. This is certainly clear with individualized modern dream interpretations, where dreams serve as the pointers to changes that the dreamer should make on the path of healing. Classical Jewish dream interpretations stress that many interpretations are possible for the same dream. Each interpretation would come true. In addition, if a dream stays uninterpreted, it will not be realized at all. Also, the interpretation must not come from a dreamer, but from another person. It is better for dreamers to use a book of dream interpretation than to try to interpret the dream by themselves. In this case, the dream interpreter's version will have priority in its realization. R. Shelomo Almoli writes about this matter: 'The third interpretation of the rabbinic statement that "all dreams follow the mouth" proceeds from the third axiom, "Do not be wise in your own eyes, do not rely on your own understanding" to interpret your own dreams according to whatever occurs to you. Know that dream can bring awareness only after it has been interpreted; otherwise the dream is meaningless and as though it had not been dreamed. As our sages said: "Every dream which is not interpreted [is like a letter which is not read]" and "All dreams follow their interpretation". When someone is informed of something through a dream, it is with the understanding that it will be interpreted in a specific fashion' (R. Shelomo Almoli, *Dream Interpretation from Classical Jewish Sources* [trans. Yaakov Elman; Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1998], pp. 51-52).

48. For the concept of prophecy in Josephus and the bibliography on it, see Steve Mason, 'Josephus, Daniel and the Flavian House', in V. Parente and J. Sievers (eds.), *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), pp. 161-91 (171).

two is that Josephus's Daniel is a prophet, one of the greatest (*Ant.* 10.266), while Joseph is not. Although Daniel interprets royal dreams, his interpretation is not reached by reasoning but by divine intervention, because he is also asked to provide the content of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel insists that he did not acquire his information about Nebuchadnezzar's dream by his own skills, but God revealed it to him in answer to his prayer. The task itself lies outside human accomplishments and only God could do it. (*Ant.* 10.199-200). Daniel's predictions are on a large scale, including the distant future (*Ant.* 10.276). They lay out the entire course of future events and present a key to understand them and not a plan to confront and/or change them (*Ant.* 10.267).

2. *Joseph's Profession as Hierogrammateus*

2.1. *Joseph Typifies the Office of a Hellenistic Scientist.* Josephus regards Joseph as a professional sacred scribe (*Apion* 1.32). Pharaoh's personal advisor held this office, and his job was to interpret the king's dreams, offer him advice on how to meet the predictions and realize it into action (*Apion* 1.289). Besides having skills for accurate prognosticating (*Ant.* 2.205) and for giving correct advice on the appropriate action, Joseph was expected to execute this action.

The office of dream interpreter would include other modes of divination such as lecanomancy, which suggests the importance of Joseph's cup. The Egyptian evidence for a common connection of *hierogrammateus* and a diviner with a cup at the beginning of the Common Era is overwhelming. Two examples will suffice. First, the Coptic word for 'diviner' literally means 'a man who inspects vessels'.⁴⁹ Second, in a second-century CE Greek tale a Greek physician, Thessalos, travels to Egypt seeking to learn secret botanical cures. He encounters an Egyptian priest who is willing to conduct for him an audience with the gods and the dead using Egyptian 'magical power'. The techniques of the procedure are a combination of lecanomancy and incubation dream, familiar from the descriptions of the rite in *PDM* 14 or *PGM* 7. They involve the use of a cup, fasting and seclusion in order to produce a vision (*Thess* 13-14). Thessalos confronts in a vision Aesclepius/Imhotep who answers his questions.

Hence, for the audience of Josephus's time Joseph could have been a diviner/foreseer and an economic advisor. His position was second in command to Pharaoh, a suitable standing for a sacred scribe serving an Egyptian king. The significance and almost royal standing of this office color Josephus's description of Joseph's installation:

Marveling at the discernment and wisdom (τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν) of Joseph, the king asked him how he should make provision beforehand

49. Ritner, *The Mechanics* p. 233.

. . . in order to render more tolerable the period of bareness. In reply Joseph suggested and counseled him. . . . Pharaohes [Pharaoh], now doubly admiring Joseph alike for the interpretation of the dream and for his counsel, entrusted the administration of this office to him, with power to act as he thought meet both for the people of Egypt and for their sovereign, deeming that he who discovered the course to pursue would also prove its best director. Empowered by the king with this authority and withal to use his seal and to be robed in purple, Joseph now drove a chariot throughout all the land, gathering in the corn from the farmers, meeting out to each such as would suffice for sowing and sustenance. (*Ant.* 2.87-9)

Joseph, ‘Discoverer of Secrets’ (*Ant.* 2.91), executed an office of a top scientist/scholar in Egypt. Thus, Joseph served Pharaoh as a scientist, scholar, and in the political arena as secretary of the treasury. Through his marriage he entered into the highest Egyptian society; Aseneth’s father, as a priest of Heliopolis, the Egyptian university center par excellence, held a highly regarded scientific and academic position in the House of Life.

2.2. *Marriage of a Hellenistic Scientist.* Marriage generally played a crucial role in professional development in Hellenistic and Greco-Roman times. According to Josephus, Joseph marries into a most distinguished scientific and scholarly Egyptian family. Josephus follows the LXX and depicts Aseneth’s father as a priest of Heliopolis (*Ant.* 2.91-92). In the Greek-speaking world this designation meant that he was one of the most learned of the Egyptians because Heliopolis was the center of Egyptian learning.⁵⁰ Thus, by marriage Joseph inherits and carries on the academic intellectual tradition of the highest Egyptian science and learning.

It seems almost an established rule that a son-in-law would pursue the same profession and enjoy the same standing in it of his father-in-law. We have testimonies from the probably contemporaneous Gospel of John about this practice, where ‘John’ describes Annas the high priest as ‘the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest of that year’ (John 18.13).⁵¹

50. Herodotus, in searching for the most reliable historical records, goes to Heliopolis, because it is there that ‘the most learned of the Egyptians are to be found’ (Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.3). Strabo (17.1.29.806) states that Heliopolis was the traditional university of the Egyptians, the principal center of their learning, where also Solon, the Athenian wise man and lawgiver, and the philosophers, Pythagoras and Plato and the celebrated astronomer, Eudoxus, allegedly studied.

51. And that the highest scientific, priestly or secular ranking offices were inherited and executed by the members of the same family, again an example from the NT illustrates it nicely, ‘The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family’ (Acts 4.5).

c. Requirements of a Hellenistic Scientist

The ethos of science calls primarily for the acquired skills of its practitioners. Talent and learning, and not family business, lineage, social status, or ethnic identity, are the crucial requirements for successful scientific research. Josephus puts some of these requirements in an accomplished scientist such as Joseph by making him an activist for the equality of all people ‘in virtue of their kinship’ (*Ant.* 2.94).⁵²

Scientific knowledge is accessible by close observation and insight only if a seeker is a virtuous individual.⁵³ Thus, for Josephus, besides skill, moral integrity is a requirement for an accomplished scientist, which involves some kind of persecution and suffering on the road to success. Initial suffering, a virtuous life and final public recognition are the measures of a great scholar and visionary. This suffering is usually caused by violence from those in the sacred scribe’s immediate surroundings when they refuse to accept his deeper insights about the universe. This very fact of a misunderstood and prosecuted scientist who predicts the future and calls people to certain actions resembling the image of biblical prophets may have contributed to their unfortunate identification as prophets by modern scholarship on Josephus.⁵⁴ Thus, according to Josephus, the absolute necessity for a good scientist or a good visionary is virtue (*ἀρετή*), especially in the context of professional integrity.

The virtuous are also clever (*δεινοὶ συνιέναι*).⁵⁵ Abraham by his intelligence alone ‘began to have more lofty conceptions of virtue than the rest of mankind, and [he was] determined to reform and change the ideas universally current concerning God’ (*Ant.* 1.154). The immorality of Cain’s progeny is the reason why their contributions are not counted as science. On the

52. ‘Nor did he [Joseph] open the market to the natives only: strangers also were permitted to buy, for Joseph held that all men, in virtue of their kinship, should receive succour from those in prosperity’ (*Ant.* 2.94).

53. That virtue and scientific knowledge go together is also a norm nowadays. We tend to demand that our scientists be virtuous, just as we demand ethical integrity from religious leaders.

54. The fact that Josephus does not describe the function of prophecy or the nature of prophecy and his inconsistency in using the term complicates an already problematic definition of prophecy. This definition should incorporate classical biblical prophets and Jewish Hellenistic and Greco-Roman concepts (for further discussion, see Feldman, ‘Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus’, p. 394). Unfortunately, Rebecca Gray in her in-depth examination of prophecy in Josephus collapses Joseph and Daniel into the same category of prophets without really addressing the function of Joseph as such (R. Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], pp. 77-78). She suggests, however, that Josephus presents Joseph’s interpretation of dreams not as divine revelation but as Joseph’s skill in esoteric knowledge (p. 68).

55. Jacob’s prosperity is explained by his having virtuous children, not only good workers but also ‘quick to understanding’ (*Ant.* 2.7).

other hand, the virtue of the necromancer from Endor is particularly praised. Risking her life in a religious practice that King Saul himself forbade she did not refuse him her expertise. As this was not enough, she offered him also for food the only animal she owned: ‘She still did not remember to his advantage that he had condemned her sort of learning (τῆς ἐπιστήμης, *Ant.* 6.340), and did not refuse him as a stranger’ (*Ant.* 6.341-43).⁵⁶

This capable scientist, making Samuel’s spirit communicate with Saul, fed him and restored him to life. She knew that God condemned him to die in the battle the next day and thus, she could not hope for any favor in return from the king. With no expectation of gain for helping him, her actions were expressions of pure generosity. Josephus once again shows us how skill and learning go hand in hand with the highest moral virtues. That prosecution might have fortified her virtue even more could have been a very familiar thought of a reader of Josephus’s time. Although official Roman worship employed various divinatory methods, such as extispicy, augury and astrology, it found necromantic practices distasteful and outlawed them very early. Personal and private necromancy, remaining popular, went ‘underground’.⁵⁷

1. *Joseph, the Entirely Virtuous.* In conclusion Josephus relates the office of *hierogrammateus* to the high moral integrity of its practitioners. Thus, Joseph, in order to be a successful sacred scribe and a statesman, had to be fair and just. And Joseph proves himself to be both just to the Egyptians and equally so to foreigners.⁵⁸ The hiding of his cup in Benjamin’s sack Josephus describes as Joseph’s forensic and pedagogical measure to find out if his brothers had changed. This gesture was neither a cruel trick nor a revenge (*Ant.* 2.125, 135, 137).

It was imperative that Josephus show that Joseph, who has φρόνησις, was a highly virtuous person in all stages of his life. Joseph is not boastful when he reveals his dreams to his brothers; he is naïve, trusting and without guile, revealing his dreams and seeking their interpretation, which he himself failed to grasp. Hence, it is important for Josephus to show that Joseph’s problematic ‘law of the fifth’ (Gen. 47.21-26) is a beneficial economic reform for the Egyptian people and not the mode of their enslavement (*Ant.* 2.191-92). By establishing the law that a fifth of each property

56. Josephus uses ἐπιστήμη in the sense of knowledge that has skill and proficiency, professional competence (K.H. Rengstorff [ed.], *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus* [4 vols.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973-1983], p. 177).

57. For detailed discussion and further references, see Faraone, ‘When Necromancy Goes Underground: Skull- and Corpse-Divination in the Paris Magical Papyri (PGM IV 1928–2144)’, in *Mantikê*, p. 256.

58. Niehoff terms it ‘humanitarian universalism’ (*The Figure of Joseph*, p. 108).

should belong to Pharaoh, Joseph does not enslave the Egyptians but offers them freedom from total dependency on Pharaoh (*Ant.* 2.189-92).⁵⁹

The episode with Potiphar's wife testifies how Joseph kept his virtue in servitude and preferred prison to violating his professional moral integrity. A talented slave in Potiphar's household was getting educated to become a future scientist through training in cup divination and dream interpretation.⁶⁰ According to contemporary cultural norms, Josephus could have seen young Joseph at this stage of his professional schooling performing the role of a boy medium between the interpreter and the divine. We saw that the absolute necessity for this function is the boy's virginity. And Joseph's handsomeness adds to the requirement of purity in the diviner.⁶¹ Thus, more than violating his personal moral integrity, Potiphar's wife appears to threaten his professional ethics.⁶² According to Josephus's worldview, chastity for a profession is the primary virtue of a scientist. Succumbing to his mistress's passion and committing adultery would be only a secondary moral breach: Joseph would have acted against his master, benefactor and mentor (*Ant.* 2.42).

d. Joseph's Scientific Education

Apart from intelligent inclination and moral integrity, a highly regarded job such as *hierogrammateus* required an extended education. According to Josephus, Joseph's education happens entirely in Egypt. It started dur-

59. 'But when the evil abated . . . Joseph repaired to each city and, convening the inhabitants, bestowed upon them in perpetuity the land which they have ceded to the king and which he might have held and reserved for his sole benefit; this he exhorted them to regard as their own property and to cultivate assiduously, while paying the fifth of the produce to the king in return for the ground which he had given them, being really his. And they, thus unexpectedly become proprietors of the soil, were delighted and undertook to comply with these injunctions' (*Ant.* 2.189-92).

60. Josephus attributes to Potiphar the care for Joseph's education at the time when he places his household in his charge, reminding us of a filial custody, in this case of an adopted son (*Ant.* 2.39). Although slaves were educated, they were not entrusted with the property of their masters.

61. See the characteristics of a diviner in the ancient world in the Introduction of this study.

62. This interpretation agrees better with Josephus's idiosyncrasy to identify himself with Joseph. Daube, ('Typology', p. 27), in his treatment of typology as a special recurrence of the past, stresses how Josephus uses it abundantly in dealing with figures that serve as his own role models. Joseph, as one the most important typological identities of Josephus, posses many typologies. Josephus transposes the specifics of his own career to his precursor's career (Daube, 'Typology', p. 27). Typologically Joseph's endangerment in the episode with Potiphar's wife is analogous to Josephus's prosecution 'through slanderous charges by enemies envying his privileged position' (*Life* 76.424-25).

ing his slavery in Potiphar's house; Josephus calls the master by his Greek name in the LXX: Petephres (Πετεφρής). For Josephus, Potiphar had such a high opinion of Joseph that 'he educated him as if he were a free citizen' (παιδείαν τε τὴν ἐλευθέριον ἐπαίδευε, *Ant.* 2.39). Josephus does not give details of this education, but it definitely included literacy as a preparation to become a sacred scribe.⁶³ In ancient Israel and in many small independent countries of the ancient Near East, such as Syria and Ugarit, advanced court scribes were trained to specialize in diplomacy and the sciences, such as divination, languages and medicine.⁶⁴ Joseph ends up assuming both functions in Josephus. During the first millennium BCE, and especially in Hellenistic times, an individual scribe of ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia combined the array of scribal specializations of the old empires. This combination of political and scientific offices may reflect for Josephus an amalgam of the state of affairs from Israel's past and Mesopotamian present combined with the Hellenistic holistic approach to science.

This comprehensive education echoing a holistic approach to Hellenistic science would consist of both theoretical, that is, παιδεία τε τὴν ἐλευθέριον, and practical training. As a future sacred scribe, Joseph would have been trained in different divinatory modes of communicating with the divine, including lecanomancy and oneiromancy. The schooling of a gifted but ignorant young dreamer in Egypt into a dream interpreter, as a ἱερογραμματεὺς, included the apprenticeship of a virgin boy, whose job it was to help in the preparatory phases of impetrated omens or to serve as a medium in lychnomancy and lecanomancy.

63. Niehoff prefers to translate this phrase with 'the education that befits a free man', instead of Thackeray's 'liberal education', which she finds 'slightly misleading'. What she means is that the latter is related to a Platonic type of curriculum, while Josephus wants only to express the common praxis of his time with which his public was familiar: that a talented slave could be educated by his master (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, p. 103).

64. Aaron Demsky and Meir Bar-Ilan, 'Writing in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism', in *Mikra, Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Martin Jan Mulder; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 1-38 (13); W.H. van Soldt, 'Ugarit: A Second-Millennium Kingdom on the Mediterranean Coast', in *CANE*, 2:1255-66 (1263). An assortment of scribal specialization existed in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. However, in Mesopotamia, 'particularly in the first millennium, scribes in their capacity as scholars achieved the greatest proximity to and influence over the matters at court' (Laurie E. Pearce, 'The Scribes and Scholars of Ancient Mesopotamia', in *CANE*, p. 2273). It is worth noting that 'Only in the Hellenistic period, when the use of cuneiform was limited to a few traditionalists in the major cities of Mesopotamia, did an individual (scribe) hold multiple titles once reserved for separate offices' (Pearce, 'The Scribes', p. 2275).

Not only cultural studies but also literary analysis supports Josephus's understanding of Joseph's profession of oneiromancer and lecanomancer, that is, ἱερογραμματεὺς. According to semiotics, the brothers throw an ignorant Joseph, empty of any knowledge and without any education, in a dry and empty pit, symbolically without water. Joseph's triumph over his brothers is reflected in the liquid of a full cup in which the truths of the universe and human relations are deciphered by a deeply understanding Egyptian scientist.

Joseph can thank his heritage and family upbringing for his intelligence. His disposition and moral character are products of clever and unconventional parents and a great-grandfather, Abraham, one of the great founders of ancient sciences.⁶⁵ Josephus may well be conforming with popular Hellenistic cultural knowledge when he emphasizes Joseph's lineage in the praises that the royal butler offers to Pharaoh about the talented, young prisoner he had met: 'The man had been imprisoned . . . as a slave, but, according to his own account, he ranked, alike by birth and by his father's fame, among the foremost of the Hebrews' (*Ant.* 2.78).

Although Joseph's career status was guaranteed by his marriage, which assured him the profession of his in-laws, for Josephus, merit, rather than lineage, mattered. We should keep in mind that Jacob and Joseph's brothers knew enough to be able to interpret Joseph's dreams, but he had to sharpen these skills in a foreign land and to perfect his abilities among foreign people.

4. *Scientific Divination*

Science for Josephus is also a gradual accumulation of insights into the way the natural and the supernatural worlds operate. The cumulative accomplishments of generations are achieved by the contributions of exceptional individuals. The main goal of discovering scientific truths by careful observation and reasoning is the ability to plan the near and distant future in every aspect of human activity.

The accuracy of scientific results was checked by their capacity to fulfill a predicted future. Thus, scientific divination plays a major role in Josephus: astrology, which Josephus calls astronomy, arithmetic, geometry and dream interpretation (ἀστρονομία, ἀριθμητική, γεωμετρία, ὄνειροκρισία, *Ant.* 1.106). Both geometry and dream interpretation are part of the ancient science of vision, or ancient optics.

65. See below for a discussion about unconventionality as a positive trait in Rachel and Jacob.

According to Josephus's worldview, divination as scientific research begins to accumulate insight with the first human being. The ability to predict future events starts with Adam and continues with Seth's progeny, who

discovered the science of the heavenly bodies and their orderly array. Moreover, to prevent their discoveries from being lost to the mankind and perishing before they became known . . . they erected two pillars, one of the brick and the other of stone, and inscribed their discoveries on both (*Ant.* 1.70).

An important reason for the longevity of the generations before Noah is 'to promote the utility of their discoveries in astronomy and geometry . . . for they could have predicted nothing with certainty had they not lived for 600 years' (*Ant.* 1.106). Both Noah and Abraham have a role in scientific prognostics. As the founder of science(s) per se, Noah does not predict the future but partakes in shaping it. Abraham, besides being a person 'of ready intelligence on all matters, persuasive with his hearers', was also 'not mistaken in his inferences' (*Ant.* 1.154). But the perfection in prognostics is reached with Joseph. By marshalling all the techniques in the art of foreseeing, he saved the whole world from hunger (*Ant.* 2.94).

Josephus is interested primarily in human relations. His goal in writing *Jewish Antiquities* is to establish better political relations and communications between Jews and the ruling Romans (*Ant.* 10-12). Thus, scientific tools for predicting the future such as cups, wells and springs are mainly employed to decipher and foresee human relationships in all their complexity.

Hydromancy, empyromancy and oneiromancy were not only part of Roman divination but also the beloved pursuit in everyday practices of the citizens of Imperial Rome. This was the case of divination throughout the ancient Mediterranean, which was officially institutionalized as the mode of searching for divine plans. Two separate bodies of the Roman senate were in charge of divination but were concerned only with the well-being of the state; individual citizens could not turn to them for their needs.⁶⁶ Because the Romans did not have the equivalent of Greek oracular sites, such as Delphi, Dydima or Dodona, where both the state and an individual could ask for a consultation, private inquiries had to be regulated outside state management by a full range of 'freelance' divinatory practitioners.⁶⁷ Their divinatory tools, that is, their scientific equipment, had to be simplified and adapted for portable use. Thus, cups would replace springs, making lecanomancy the most popular type of hydromancy. Lamps were used instead of

66. David Wardle (trans.), *Cicero on Divination, Book 1* (CAHS; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), pp.2-3.

67. Wardle, *Cicero*, pp. 3-4.

sacrificial flames at temple precincts, replacing empyromancy with lych-nomancy.⁶⁸ Profanity accompanies popularity, and people were using cups, wells and lamps in unsanctioned, magical ways, or for trickery and manipulation. The resentment of the intellectual and political elite toward this misuse of divination is abundantly present in contemporary literary works such as Apuleius, *The Apology*, and were satirized by Cicero and Lucian.⁶⁹

In order to avoid any risk of connection of Jewish religious practices with magic, absurdness or strangeness, it is only logical that Josephus did not mention Joseph's cup of divination. Instead he intellectualized or spiritualized the use of the cup for promoting human relations: 'Carrying off that loving-cup in which *he had pledged their healths*'. Thus, by focusing on the outcome of the sanctioned divination, Josephus cleverly circumvented any analogy with the popular misuse of it.

Thomas Franxman, in a rare scholarly treatment of this particular passage in Josephus, reflects the twentieth-century scholarly truism that divination was an activity on the fringes of religious experiences at best, if not a manipulative fraud.⁷⁰ According to Franxman, Josephus avoids any allusion to divinatory practices because they were regarded as popular superstition, unworthy of an official, higher religion in late Antiquity and were also against the official monotheistic Jewish religion. However, the earlier part of this statement cannot be accepted any more in its simplification. A much more nuanced reality was the one that Josephus assumed. That Josephus regarded divination as contrary to monotheistic religion goes against the above-mentioned statement of his main goal in writing *Jewish Antiquities*: to facilitate communication and cultural exchange among Jews, Greeks and Romans. That divination was not sacrilege can be seen in other passages where Josephus explicitly regards divinatory practices as laudatory and on the same line with prophecy, such as the necromancy of Endor's diviner (*Ant.* 6.330 on 1 Sam. 28.8).⁷¹

In the same style Pharaoh summons 'the sagest of Egypt' (Αἰγυπτίων τοῦς λογιωτάτους) to interpret his dreams, using the terms 'interpreters'

68. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, pp. 158-59.

69. Apuleius, *Apology* 2.42-3; Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De senectute; De amicitia; De divinatione* (trans. William Armistead Falconer; LCL, 154; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972). Cicero paved the way for the intellectual expression of Imperial Rome, with his insistence on the use of Latin instead of Greek. *De Divinatione* was written in the year of the death of Gaius Julius Caesar. Lucian's parody of religious practices of the second century CE testifies to the popularity of astrology, hydromancy, and lychnomancy (Lucian, 'True Story', in *Collected Greek Novels* [ed. B.P. Reardon; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989], pp. 619-49 [623-34]).

70. Franxman, *Genesis and 'Jewish Antiquities'*, pp. 241, 260.

71. LXX: γυναῖκα ἐγγαστριμύθον; and Saul asked her to divine, μάντευσαι δὴ μοι ἐν τῷ ἐγγαστριμύθῳ agrees with the Hebrew text קְסוּמֵי־נָא לִי בְאֻב (1 Sam. 28.8).

(ἐξηγητὰς Αἰγύπτου) and ‘its wise men’ (τοὺς σοφοὺς αὐτῆς) of the Septuagint rather than the ‘magicians’ (*ḥartumim* חֲרַטְיִמִּים) of the Hebrew text (*Ant.* 2.75-6).⁷² And Solomon’s wisdom is praised also through traditional survival of his incantations that were still effectively used in exorcism in Josephus’s times (*Ant.* 8.45-49).

To conclude, according to Josephus, Abraham, an astronomer and mathematician (*Ant.* 1.156), and the necromancer of Endor (*Ant.* 6.341-43) were unambiguously scientists. Moreover, Josephus makes the descendants of Seth, Noah and Joseph into the founding scholars of scientific prognostics.

5. Revelation by Visual Effects

Hydromancy and especially oneiromancy are the forms of RVE that we find in Josephus. However, as a historian, he is not concerned with the philosophical foundations that sustain these phenomena, the mechanics of the science of vision, light, water and images. He ignores the play of light, reflection, refraction and amazing colors and the question of human vision of the divine realm. Josephus shows very limited interest in the details of the phenomena of visual effects and therefore made little effort to describe them. His interest in lecanomancy and oneiromancy is mainly in their capacity to decipher human relations, reveal the future and chart correct or ready solutions. He is also concerned with their cultic settings, that is, incubation in the case of oneiromancy.

a. Lecanomancy

Josephus’s understanding of lecanomancy and the role it plays in his telling of biblical stories and Jewish history appears in his treatment of the biblical passages that have allusions on hydromantic tools: cups, wells and springs. Given that cup divination by reflection was becoming the predominant hydromantic method for forecasting detecting human affairs in everyday life of first-century CE Rome, it is almost certain that Josephus connected Joseph’s cup with these lecanomantic practices. Josephus emphasizes Joseph’s use of the cup in the declaration of friendship, hospitality and love, pointing to its important function in establishing human relationships: ‘Carrying off that loving-cup in which he had pledged their healths, and setting more store on unrighteous gain than on the affection which they owed to Joseph and

72. This Hebrew word is used only for this Egyptian profession in Genesis and Exodus and also for Babylonian magicians in Daniel. It is, thus, a question if we should just translate it with ‘magicians’. It is related etymologically to stylus, a tool for writing on a tablet (*ḥrt*), thus having the meaning of engraver, or writer, and, thus, could be related to the scribal profession. The Hebrew word probably derives from Egyptian and the title *ḥartōm* means, ‘chief lector priest’. The Akkadian *ḥartibi*, the Demotic *ḥr-tb*, and later Greek φερτροβ probably all derive from the same Egyptian term (Vergote, *Joseph en Égypte*, pp. 66-73; Redford, *Biblical Story of Joseph*, pp. 203-204).

their own risk if detected'. This concept agrees with Josephus's compassion for the suffering of an abandoned human being, for strangers and foreigners.⁷³ Human relations on a broader scheme appear as political relations. This political dimension reflects Josephus's utmost interest in presenting Jews in a new, favorable light to the ruling Romans, using their cultural norms, with the aim to change their mutual social and political dynamics.⁷⁴

1. *Joseph's Cup in Ant. 2.124-34*. Σκύφος (*skyphos*) is an unusual word for a vessel in Josephus's opus, because he employs it only for Joseph's cup (*Ant.* 2.124, 126, 128, 132, 134).⁷⁵ Aristotle uses the same word once to describe a Scythian festal cup, 'from which a man that had not killed an enemy was not allowed to drink' (*Pol.* 7.2.1324b15-18). In the poetic texts, however, such as Euripides *El.* 493, *Cycl.* 256, 388, 411, 556, or Homer *Od.* 14.109, *skyphos* is more often employed to denote an ordinary drinking cup, usually for wine.⁷⁶ Among non-literary texts, *skyphos* is usually mentioned in long lists, sometimes as a golden or silver cup. *Tebtunis Papyrus* 414 mentions it just before a lamp, alluding to its probable use in divination by visual effects. In this context, cups and lamps are mentioned next to each other as the tools for lecanomancy and lychnomancy respectively.⁷⁷ In the context of literary fantasy, the sequence of the lecanomancy/hydromancy followed by lychnomancy is also kept in Lucian's *True Story*.⁷⁸ Interest-

73. In order to grasp this idea better, a comparison of Josephus's view of Egyptians with the one of Philo can serve as a good example (*Ant.* 2.189-93). Josephus felt urged to justify Joseph's treatment of Egyptians as a compassionate and benevolent act in contrast to Philo, who considers Egyptians as despicable.

74. The similarity of Josephus's description of the use of the cup in Genesis 44 (*Ant.* 2.128) to the symbolic use of the cups at banquets of Imperial Rome testifies to the satire of the practice by Petronius, 'Deeply grateful for so signal a favor, we now returned to the banquet-hall, where we were met by the same slave for whom we had interceded, who to our astonishment overwhelmed us with a perfect storm of kisses, thanking us again and again for our humanity. "Indeed", he cried, "you shall presently know who it is you have obliged; the master's wine is the cup-bearer's thank-offering"' (Petronius, *Satyricon* 5.31).

75. LSJ translates *skyphos* as 'a cup, especially used by peasants', and thus, not appropriate for Joseph's valuable silver drinking cup.

76. Its rather unusual employment was mentioned by Theocritus, *The Idylls*, 1.143, where Daphnis was promised a goat and a cup from which to pour milk as an offering to Muses. It may suggest that this cup was related to the preservation of the virginity of a medium boy in lecanomancy, as Daphnis's ordeal was similar to Joseph's tribulation with Potiphar's wife.

77. *Tebtunis Papyri* document 414; cf. with *PGM* or *PDM*, where lecanomancy is frequently mentioned in the same text with lychnomancy. These lists come mostly from Egypt, just as *PGM* and *PDM*.

78. Lucian, *Vera historia* 1.26-9.

ingly enough, Greek magical papyri's term for the vessel of lecanomancy is *skyphos* (PGM 4.1928-2005, 2006-2114, 2125-39).

Josephus designates Joseph's silver cup as his favorite drinking cup: σκύφος ἀργυροῦν, ᾧ πίνων ἔχαιρε, (Ant. 2.124). Omitting the biblical reference to the silver cup in connection to divination (Gen. 44.5, 15), he explains its importance at the dinner party thrown for his brothers by making Joseph use the cup to establish friendly relations with his brothers.

κακίστους ἀπεκάλουν, οἳ μὴδ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο τὴν ξενίαν καὶ τὴν φιλοφροσύνην τὴν Ἰωσήπου διὰ μνήμης λαβόντες οὐκ ὤκνησαν εἰς αὐτὸν ἄδικοι γενέσθαι, σκύφον δὲ, ᾧ φιλοτησίας αὐτοῖς προὔπιεν, ἀράμενοι φέροισιν κέρδους ἀδίκου τὴν τε πρὸς Ἰωσήπον φιλίαν τὸν τε ἑαυτῶν εἰ φωραθεῖεν κίνδυνον ἐν δευτέρῳ θέμενοι (Ant. 2.128).

scoundrels, who, unmindful of that very hospitality and benevolence of Joseph, had not scrupled to treat him ill. Carrying off that loving-cup in which *he had pledged their healths*, and setting more store on unrighteous gain than on the affection which they owed to Joseph and their own risk if detected (Ant. 2.128).

The phrase that describes what exactly happened with the cup is unique: σκύφον δέ, ᾧ φιλοτησίας αὐτοῖς προὔπιεν (Ant. 2.128) The adjective φιλοτήσιος is a *hapax legomenon* in Josephus, and although usually used in connection with a cup (κύλιξ) with the meaning of 'the cup *sacred to friendship, the loving-cup*' (LSJ) it is never introduced with προὔπιεν but rather with προπίνειν (see φιλοτήσιος in LSJ). The corresponding Philonic text (Jos. 213) displays similar wording and alludes to a similar meaning that seems to make sense. English translations of Josephus's passage either translate from Philo, 'that loving cup in which he had pledged their healths' (LCL) (Τὸ κάλλιστον καὶ τιμιώτατον ἔκπωμα τοῦ δεσπότου, ἐν ᾧ προπόσεις προὔπινεν ὑμῖν), or try to derive the meaning from Gen. 44.5.⁷⁹

2. *Josephus on Cup Divination.* That Josephus uses the same word for Joseph's cup as *PGM*, the main source about private divination in the Greco-Roman world, is strong evidence that Josephus took for granted the popular practice of using cups in telling the near future, especially concerning human relationships. The sacredness of wells and springs was ubiquitous in the Hellenistic period at the main oracular sites, such as Delphi, Dodona and Didymi.⁸⁰ Pausanias and Lucian, contemporaries of Josephus, left colorful

79. Thus, L. Feldman in the most recent translation derives the meaning from the comparison with Gen. 44.5, τὸ κόνδν τὸ ἀργυροῦν; οὐ τοῦτο ἐστίν, ἐν ᾧ πίνει ὁ κύριός μου; αὐτὸς δὲ οἰωνισμῷ οἰωνίζεται ἐν αὐτῷ. 'the cup with which he had drunk to their health' (Ant. 2.128). Neither of these attempts helps in understanding Josephus's wording.

80. For details and references see Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, pp. 65-66.

descriptions of the reflections of wells and springs, often assisted by the addition of mirrors. These reflected images gave access to the divine plans and secrets of the world and humans.⁸¹ Hydromancy, astrology and lych-nomancy did not escape Lucian's satirical pen on contemporary religious practices. To uncover the secret lives of the household members, Lucian advised looking at the well in the courtyard.⁸² Lucian's attitude probably illustrated nicely the attitudes of Roman intellectuals toward the religiosity of ignorant citizens. In the private realm RVE of wells and springs is transferred to portable cups. Josephus, who certainly wanted to avoid any possible connection of Jewish religion with despised and ridiculed practices of Roman religiosity, would not highlight the RVE's aspect of Joseph's cup in *Ant.* 2.128. He also omits mentioning that Joseph divines (Gen. 44.5, 15) but instead describes the immediate result of correct and genuine divination: promotion of friendly bonding among participants in the ritual. This manner of presentation of lecanomancy agrees very well with the main principles of Josephus's historiography: every event or phenomenon has only a single truth, and the existence of many interpretations is evidence of insufficient research and incorrect representations. Josephus is very skilled in finding a successful way to present that one genuine aspect of a phenomenon. His description of Joseph's lecanomantic practice is an excellent example of how it should be done.

Josephus elevates Joseph's scientific practice to a higher interpersonal realm, to God. Josephus uses Joseph's cup as a step to intellectually comprehend the workings of the world, both secular and divine (*Ant.* 2.128). That kind of intellectualizing and philosophizing of religious practices of the masses should not come as a surprise from the non-literalist historian Josephus. Cup divination is given a spiritual meaning in an interpersonal sense, in which the interest of a historian should lie.

The establishment of divine legitimacy for Joseph's cup divination is found in Josephus's rendering of Gen. 44.15. Joseph is presented as a diviner (*Ant.* 2.136) who promotes bonding and generosity in accord with divine providence (πρόνοια τοῦ θεοῦ).⁸³

81. As mentioned in the Introduction, Euclid and Ptolemy advanced the ancient science of vision by developing a sophisticated optical technology that especially experimented with concave mirrors. Regarding the reflective surface of the ancient mirrors, we should keep in mind that their images were far from the perfect reflections that we now automatically associate with a mirror. Made of burnished metals and often with a curvature, they would blur and distort images, leaving the impression that they come from the world behind the mirror; moreover they needed an interpreter to decode them. It is another reason why mirror divination displays a typical form of RVE.

82. Lucian, *Vera historia* 1.26.

83. See above for the discussion of πρόνοια τοῦ θεοῦ in Josephus.

Franxman's argument, based on 1970s ideas about divination and magic, is that Josephus omitted mentioning divination because he wanted to present Jewish religion pure of prejudices. By introducing the providence of God (πρόνοια τοῦ θεοῦ) instead of divination (*Ant.* 2.136), he cites the retelling of Gen. 44.15 as a typical example of introducing the providence of God instead of divination.⁸⁴ However, before making such a conclusion, he first needs to show that Josephus considered divination in its ontological form a prejudice, which is not the case. That for Josephus the interpretation of the reflections on water surfaces was the result of scientific application rather than a prejudice of popular religion is shown by his treatment of similar practices at a number of other places. Several passages from Josephus's retelling of the story of Jacob's family maintain that divination is an important religious ritual in communication with the divine.

Wells were frequently places of divine revelation. Before Jacob falls asleep on his journey to Egypt he offers sacrifice to God at the sacred 'Well of the Oath' (Ὀρκιον φρέαρ, *Ant.* 2.170). This was a common practice of incubation dreams in Josephus's time.⁸⁵ As a result, God appears to Jacob in a dream. Josephus may play with the contrast between a well full of pure water as a place of divine revelation and a dry-and-empty pit in which Joseph was thrown by his brothers, which represents devastation, death and utter humiliation (*Ant.* 2.31 on Gen. 37.24).

Second, in another biblical mention of divination in Genesis (30.25-27) Laban's divining follows immediately the report of Joseph's birth.⁸⁶ This divination is oneiromancy, a highly regarded mode of communication with the divine by Josephus's contemporaries. Appropriately, Josephus did not neglect to elaborate (*Ant.* 1.313) on Laban's dream revelation (Gen. 31.24) extensively. He is only reluctant to name the kind of divination that was ridiculed by Roman intelligentsia at his time, such as lecanomancy.

Third, Pharaoh summons the people who do 'the best reasoning' (τοὺς λογιωτάτους) of Egypt (*Ant.* 2.75) to interpret his dreams. Josephus follows the LXX here (τοὺς ἐξηγητάς Αἰγύπτου καὶ πάντα τοὺς σοφοὺς αὐτῆς, Gen. 41.8). Logiōtatoi (λογιώτατοι) are those who use reasoning to interpret dreams, that is, scientists, and not 'the magicians' of the Hebrew text (ḥartumim).

84. Franxman, *Genesis and the 'Jewish Antiquities'*, p. 160. Πρόνοια τοῦ θεοῦ (foresight, foreknowledge, (LSJ); Thackeray translates with 'watchfulness' (*Ant.* 2.136 [LCL]).

85. Josephus follows the translation of the LXX of Beersheba (Gen. 46.1).

86. The Hebrew word for divination in Gen. 30.27 is the same as in Gen. 44.5, 15 שִׁנְיָהּ; שִׁנְיָהּ, 'But Laban said to him, "If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you"' (Gen. 30.27), οἰωνισάμην ἀνευλόγησεν γὰρ με ὁ θεὸς τῇ σῇ εἰσόδῳ (LXX).

While Josephus clothes lecanomancy in the most socially acceptable form, he rejects magic, and his heroes are not practitioners of it. According to Josephus, Rachel asks Reuben for mandrakes because she wanted to eat them (*Ant.* 1.307).⁸⁷ Josephus plays down any connection of mandrakes with magic. This connection was well exploited by interpretations of this biblical passage, one of the most popular being that a magical use of mandrakes caused Joseph's birth.

Most interesting is Josephus's take on Rachel's theft of her father's *teraphim*. Her act is not driven by religious motivation. She steals *teraphim* as a result of intelligent reasoning in projecting the future and preparing to manage any possible difficulty in an appropriate and successful manner. *Teraphim* are meant to be used as a bargaining tool.

Rachel, who carried the images of the gods, had indeed been taught by Jacob to despise such worship, but her motive was that, in case they were pursued and overtaken by her father, she might have recourse to them to obtain pardon. (*Ant.* 1.311)⁸⁸

In retelling the story of Balaam, Josephus's views on divination and magic are combined. As John R. Levison has shown, Josephus interprets Balaam's sacrifice (*Num.* 24.1-4) as a divinatory practice: empyromancy. Balaam deciphers the divine plan 'in the color, smoke, disfigurations or flames of the sacrificial victims', and does not receive a direct revelation.⁸⁹ In the burning of the sacrifice, Balaam saw the divine sign (εἶδε σημαιομένην). While revealing the details of this divination (*Ant.* 4.111-14), Josephus does not try to rescue Balaam's reputation. As a non-Hebrew religious worker, Balaam is represented as a magician and not as a scientist.

What Josephus does is to rationalize divinatory practices, explaining them in the terms of his time, neither undermining them nor rejecting them. He merely translates them into the contemporary language of his culture. The matching language for these practices is scientific, in the sense that Josephus presupposes the cultural paradigm of Greco-Roman culture where both what was called divination and dreams belong to science.

87. The Bible is again silent about Rachel's motive (*Gen.* 30.14). Later interpretations related the magical use of the plant in causing fertility with Rachel's conception of Joseph (*Gen. R.* 72.2).

88. Although the Bible is silent about Rachel's motive for the theft (*Gen.* 31.19), most of the ancient interpreters, such as *Gen. R.* 74.5; *Pirqe R. El.* 36; *Tanh.* 12; and *Pal. Tg.*, followed by major commentators such as Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and Nahmanides on *Gen.* 31.19 and modern scholars (e.g. Frazer, Skinner, Greenberg), sought for religious reasons, such as her contempt for her father's idolatry (Feldman in Josephus, *Judean Antiquities* 1-4, p. 117 n. 905).

89. Levison, 'Debut of the Divine Spirit', p. 127.

It can be concluded that Josephus, in retelling Gen. 44.15, ‘Do you not know that one such as I can practice divination?’, clarifying Joseph’s ability to divine by the combination of his philanthropia (his love for humanity) and God’s pronoia (providential care). This approach to lecanomancy by a Jewish historian should not come as a surprise. A historian who undertook to record Jewish history should not be expected to show any special interest in the universal methods to access the divine, which is what RVE is about. These methods are ahistorical and international and culturally non-specific. Phenomena of RVE in the Jewish tradition are the result of acculturation and not of an indigenous movement, while Josephus endeavors to focus on the original threads of Jewishness. They are, then, more likely to appear casually in connection with a foreign diviner such as Balaam than with Jewish heroes.

Josephus’s take on the use of the cup for predicting human relations (*Ant.* 2.128) fits into this concept. Joseph is able to predict the future and discern the secrets of the world because of his moral character, designated by its highest expression, philanthropia (love of humanity). This scene (*Ant.* 2.128) according to the rules of narrative criticism also works as the plot culmination of the cup episode. Joseph’s forensic ability is contrasted with his brothers’s absolute astonishment at the strange workings of fate. Their belief that they will certainly bring Benjamin unharmed back to their father in Canaan because they are innocent of theft (*Ant.* 2.135) is shaken. Their predictions is proved totally wrong, and their reasoning in terms of cause and effect erroneous, while Joseph had complete knowledge of the treachery in human relationships.

Therefore, Franxman’s claim that Josephus substituted Joseph’s gift of divining with *pronoia tou theou* (God’s watchfulness) in order ‘to expunge divination from his account’, transmuting ‘Joseph’s abilities in the art of divining’ into *pronoia tou theou*, cannot stand.⁹⁰ In fact Josephus does not transmute; he only translates it into the language of his time, matching his own argument.

3. *Legitimacy of Scientific Divination and of Popular Religion.* Additional proofs that Josephus did not regard divination as sacrilegious but as a scientific activity come from other parts of Jewish Antiquities. Some of these passages deal directly with particular cases of divination such as necromancy and exorcism, and Josephus did not avoid using the term ‘divination’ in them. Necromancy of the fortune teller from Endor is called ἐπιστήμη, which means proficient, professional competence (*Ant.* 6.340). Thus, Josephus clearly acknowledges that necromancy was a legitimate way of seek-

90. Franxman, *Genesis and ‘Jewish Antiquities’*, pp. 260, 262.

ing divine revelation and that it is only made unlawful by Saul himself who 'had cast out of the country the fortune tellers, and the necromancers, and all such as exercised the like arts, excepting the prophets' (*Ant.* 6.327). Josephus faithfully follows the biblical account that deals with the legal prohibition of otherwise effectual contacts with the dead (1 Sam. 28.9-19). This situation resembles the attitude of Roman legal traditions toward divination, with some of them established as official governmental religious practice while others such as necromancy were ostracized.⁹¹ However, after Saul consulted all lawful ways of learning the divine will and failed, he asked for a necromancer to raise the soul of Samuel and ask him about the outcome of his military enterprise (*Ant.* 6.341-43).

According to Josephus, the idea that wisdom and sagacity form the basis of scientific discovery and are portals to divine powers is nicely exemplified in his representation of Solomon as an exorcist.⁹² Solomon's unsurpassed wisdom made him both a philosopher and a healer of souls, as in the case of exorcism. He composed incantations that permanently expelled demons. His incantations had such power that they produced effective cures in Josephus's times.

God also enabled him to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative to men. He composed such incantations also by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which they drive away demons, so that they never return; and this method of cure is of great force unto this day; for I have seen a certain man of my own country, whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this: He put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he abjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the

91. See for detailed discussion and further references in Faraone, 'When Necromancy Goes Underground', p. 256.

92. It is the point where Josephus brings together religion and science. Pridik uses the term 'reflektierte Offenbarung' (defined in an earlier footnote), 'reflective revelation', for Abraham's discovery of monotheism as a typical example of it ('Josephus' Reden', p. 156). In my discussion, scientific revelation would be a more appropriate term. In this revelation the vision is the major factor in all meanings and expressions that Josephus uses for the phenomena. Also, the goal is a deeper understanding of the *sēmeia* and *terata*, and the method consists of observation and interpretation ('Josephus' Reden', p. 168).

spectators know that he had left the man; and when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown very manifestly: for which reason it is, that all men may know the vastness of Solomon's abilities, and how he was beloved of God, and that the extraordinary virtues of every kind with which this king was endowed may not be unknown to any people under the sun for this reason (*Ant.* 8.45-49, Whiston).

This passage clearly shows that Josephus was neither skeptical about accepted religion nor abhorred RVE phenomena. Exorcism, as a method of transmitting and emitting divine energy, belongs to its fringes. Rather Josephus's use of prevalent divinatory practices depended on their importance for promoting Jewish culture and religion, which they do in the case of Solomon.

Josephus's understanding of biblical divination is an intellectual discovery of the secrets of the world for which the combination of liberal education, practical wisdom, natural talent and piety is necessary. Josephus describes the practitioners among whom are not only Joseph but also Rachel and Jacob as anti-conformists.

b. *Oneiromancy*

Dreams are the principal mode of divine revelation for Josephus. He even turns some ambiguous forms of divine communication from the Bible, such as Jacob's wrestling vision (Gen. 32.24-32), into dream experiences. He occasionally adds divine communication through dreams to his biblical retellings, such as the proclamation dream of Moses's birth to his father in the Exodus narrative (*Ant.* 2.212-17).

Oneiromancy fared much better than other types of divination in the Greco-Roman world, leaving considerably less room for its misidentification as a magical manipulation or as a fascination of the ignorant populace.⁹³ Josephus authenticates the notion that during the late Hellenistic period appearances of the divine in visions and dreams became the most reliable source of divine communication. An individual could get a direct communication by dream incubation without the need of an intermediary, in contrast to oracles or extispicy. The democratization of religion, that is, the increasing availability of religious practices to a wide audience, would promote oneiromancy over other forms of divination.⁹⁴

Josephus certainly acts within his cultural context by claiming that he had dream revelations at crucial moments of his life. Like Joseph, one of these dream revelations earned him not only release from prison, but also, just like Joseph, a position at the imperial court as advisor to the Roman

93. According to Plutarch, dream interpretation is the 'oldest oracle' (Plutarch, *Mor.* 159a).

94. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, pp. 33, 89-90.

emperor.⁹⁵ Josephus states that humans dream in order to be forewarned of impending difficulties. They can use their acquired wisdom to lessen these misfortunes. Thus, Josephus's Joseph comments on the reason why dreams were sent to Pharaoh: 'It is not to distress men that God foreshows to them that which is to come, but that forewarned they may use their sagacity to alleviate the trials announced when they befall' (*Ant.* 2.86).

In 2003 Jan Willem van Henten emphasized the importance of dreams for Josephus by showing how Josephus constructs his historiography around dream narratives through whose predictions Josephus controls the future.⁹⁶ In both of these cases the interpretation directly precedes the action that will change the course of the immediate future or start influencing the line of events in a more removed future, but still not a distant one.

Detailed analysis of non-literalist Josephus's use of lexicography would be misleading. However, his choice of Greek terms generally reflects the semiotics of Greco-Roman culture of his times. Josephus uses *oneiros*, *onar* (ὄνειρος, ὄναρ) consistently for Joseph's dreams, instead of *enypnion* (ἐνύπνιον) of the LXX (Gen. 37.5, 9; 40.5; 41.5). In other parts of his writings Josephus tends to use the LXX term only in the pejorative sense for uninspired dreams (e.g. *Apion* 207, 211, 294, 298, 312), showing his sensitivity to Artemidorus's division of dreams into significant, inspired dreams (ὄνειρος, ὄναρ) and insignificant dreams (ἐνύπνιον).⁹⁷

1. *Symbolic Dreams*. Josephus maintains that a symbolic message in a highly illustrated dream must be interpreted by someone other than the dreamers themselves. We see this when he makes first Joseph's brothers (*Ant.* 2.12) and then Jacob the interpreters of Joseph's youthful dreams (*Ant.* 2.15), while Joseph, the dreamer, is ignorant of their meanings. For Josephus, Joseph tells his dreams to his brothers and asks them for an interpretation, because he himself did not understand them. Similarly, Josephus makes the king's imprisoned cup-bearer cautiously seek for an appropriate dream interpreter (*Ant.* 2.63), in contrast to the account in Genesis, where Joseph initiates the action by asking the cup-bearer about his dream. By assuming

95. The oracle that he delivers to Vespasian about his becoming a Roman emperor was probably also a dream revelation (*War* 3.400-402).

96. Jan Willem van Henten, 'The Two Dreams at the End of Book 17 of Josephus' *Antiquities*', in *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Dortmund 2002: Arbeiten aus dem Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum* (ed. J.U. Kalms and F. Siegert; Munsteraner judaistische Studien, 14; Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003), p. 84. He argues that Josephus uses dreams in a similar manner to Ezra, who uses the official documents 'which look authentic at the first glance, but turn out to be a clever construction by Ezra's redactor in order to strengthen and articulate the message of the main narrative' (p. 78).

97. Van Henten, 'The Two Dreams', p. 170.

a search for the right oneiromancer, Josephus reveals the popularity and the importance of this office.

Josephus connects dream revelations and well divination (*Ant.* 2.170-71). Thus, he turns Jacob's encounter with God on his way to Egypt into an incubation dream revelation at the sacred well. Here and elsewhere, there is no clear distinction between theophanies and dream revelations. Josephus uses the term *opseis* (ὄψις) not only for all dream revelations in the Joseph story but also for theophany to Moses of the burning bush and for the necromancy by the woman of Endor. *Opseis* is Josephus's most common term for dream episodes.⁹⁸ It is also the standard word for describing the visual part of a divine revelation.⁹⁹ Most of his other words related to dreams are also words of seeing: *theōreō*, *horaō*, *blepō*.¹⁰⁰ These facts lead to the logic of classification of all these visions under the same category: revelation by visual effects.

Josephus uses *opseis* in necromancy, oneiromancy and well divination, presenting them as legitimate sources of divine revelation as well as being popular among the common Roman populace. Josephus does not reject or belittle popular expressions of belief. In Josephus the main connection between a dream interpreter, a scientist-specialist for visual interpretations, and a necromancer is their moral integrity.

2. *Dream Interpreter*. There are four dream interpreters in Josephus's writings: Joseph, Daniel, the Essenes, and Josephus himself, and all are highly praised.¹⁰¹ Josephus requires that a good dream interpreter be a virtuous person, and that for achieving professional skill wisdom is needed. Thus, the imprisoned royal cup-bearer thoroughly inspects Joseph's character prior to asking him for an interpretation.

98. Gnuse's instances of *opseis* in Josephus refer to otherworldly phenomena, of which twenty-nine describe dreams (Robert Karl Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Tradition-Historical Analysis* [AGAJU, 36; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996], pp. 19, 36). The remaining eight include the burning bush (*Ant.* 2.267), 'general references to an appearance of God' (*Ant.* 2.275, 338), Manoch's vision (*Ant.* 5.284), the apparition of Samuel [*sic*, Endor episode] (*Ant.* 6.332), the appearance of the heavenly host to protect Elijah (*Ant.* 9.55), Belshazzar's writing on the wall (*Ant.* 10.234), and Daniel's vision (*Ant.* 10.272). All of these would belong to the same literary form that I designate RVE.

99. Pridik, 'Mit opseis wird also, dem Wortstamm entsprechend, nur das Sichtbare der Erscheinung bezeichnet, der hörbare Teil durch *fqnh* ergänzt' (Pridik, 'Josephus' Reden', p. 152).

100. According to Pridik ('Josephus' Reden'), the words used for revelation in *Antiquities* are mostly related to vision. He orders them according to their frequency: *opseis*, *epiphaneia*, *phantasma*, *parousia*, *thea* (pp. 152-53).

101. Mason, 'Josephus, Daniel', p. 177.

The king's cupbearer ... wearing the same fetters as Joseph, became the more intimately acquainted with him, and, forming a high opinion of his sagacity, recounted to him a dream which he had seen and asked him to explain whatever meaning it had (*Ant.* 2.63).

Joseph's skills as a dream interpreter brought him career success. Josephus makes it clear that this professional achievement is due entirely to Joseph's own skill. Thereby he omits biblical references to direct divine involvement in Joseph's job performance. First, Gen. 40.8 ('Do not interpretations belong to God?') is not mentioned in Joseph's conversation with the king's cup-bearer (*Ant.* 2.63-4), and second, Joseph's answer to Pharaoh in Gen. 41.16 ('It is not I; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer') is omitted. These omissions could hardly have been accidental because Josephus follows closely the biblical narrative in these passages, as E.L. Ehrlich and Rebecca Gray have shown.¹⁰² At the same time, Joseph's fate and activities are under close divine care (*Ant.* 2.60, 136), but Josephus makes Joseph's skills the result of esoteric knowledge attained by reason. Thus, Joseph's dream interpretations are examples of divine inspiration by reason, or, as I call it, of fine achievements of scientific inquiry.

After two years the chief butler recommended Joseph's expertise to Pharaoh. Pharaoh, in turn, praises Joseph's 'excellence and extreme sagacity' (ἄριστος καὶ σύνεσιν ἱκανώτατος, *Ant.* 2.80), and after Joseph's performance Pharaoh admires his τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν (*Ant.* 2.87). The only other individual in Josephus who is worthy of the same descriptions is Solomon (*Ant.* 8.34, 42, 43, 49, 165, 166, 168, 171, 173. 182). Moreover, J.R. Levinson has shown that Josephus carefully chose his words in v. 87 in order to transmit the meaning of Gen. 41.38 but to avoid the wording of the LXX: divine spirit (θεία πρόνοια), which for him means divine seizure with the loss of human rationality.¹⁰³ Instead Josephus selects words that express the highest intellectual qualities and the finest reasoning to characterize Joseph's oneiromantic performance: φρόνησις καὶ σοφία.

Josephus's understanding of divine inspiration reflects the Greco-Roman distinction between reason and revelation. The divine possession that erases individuality requires no professional or moral character from the one announcing the divine message, and Josephus applies it to the inspiration of a Gentile magician, such as Balaam. Contemplative excellence is a prerequisite for divine inspiration through reason, as in the case of a scientist such as Joseph. Although Joseph and Daniel are both Jewish interpreters of the dreams of foreign emperors, Daniel was asked to supply the content

102. E.L. Ehrlich, *Der Traum im Alten Testament* (BZAW, 73; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1953), p. 72; Gray, *Prophetic Figures*, p. 68.

103. Levinson, 'The Debut of Divine Spirit', pp. 123-38 (124).

of the dream along with the interpretation, a task that lies outside human reasoning and requires divine intervention. What a human being could do is to pray to be worthy of the divine revelation and/or its understanding. This kind of supernatural inspiration is given to exceptional personalities who keep in the transmission of the divine their individualities in full. Josephus identifies it as prophetic inspiration. Thus, Josephus's Daniel is a prophet. The essence of these prophecies is to predict the distant future, mapping out cosmic and social events that are determined and unavoidable. Thus, Daniel ends up as a prophetic figure rather than a skilled oneiromancer (*Ant.* 10.266).

A good dream interpreter for Josephus, in addition to being one who correctly interprets dreams, must also offer a solution to the problems that he identifies in his interpretation and thus is essentially a *hierogrammateus*.¹⁰⁴ Hence, Joseph's suggestion of economic reform fits perfectly into the image of a *hierogrammateus*, whose job was largely this kind of dream interpretation (*Apion* 1.289; *Ant.* 2.205). Advice on action beside the preparation for the realization of the revelation may include an attempt to avert the predictions. Such is the case with Pharaoh's *hierogrammateus*'s advice to kill little Moses because of the prediction that he would bring the 'abasement of the Egyptian Empire' (*Ant.* 2.234).

3. *Dream Ritual.* As a historian Josephus is interested in the cultural and social background of the phenomena that he describes. Not only are Joseph's education and professional development presented in their cultural context, dividing sharply between the Egyptian and Israelite environment, but in contrast to Philo, the ritualistic setting of oneiromancy or lecanomancy plays a much more important role than its philosophical foundation in Josephus's narration. This fact is well illustrated in Josephus's favorite form of RVE: dreams. In contrast to the Bible and in agreement with widespread practices of his day, incubation seems to be for him a natural prelude to dreams, as he testifies in his presentation of Solomon's dream at Gibeon (1 Kings 3) and Jacob's vision at Beersheba (*Ant.* 1.170-71).¹⁰⁵ Josephus

104. Later Jewish tradition defines the role of dream interpreter nicely as a mediator between 'the dreamer and the god who sent the dream . . . The interpreter would not simply acknowledge the message of the dream but would actively formulate and recommend a solution to the dreamer's problem as expressed in the dream' (Joel Covitz, *Visions of the Night: A Study of Jewish Dream Interpretation* [Boston: Shambala, 1990], p. 87).

105. This fact is so significant because the biblical account lacks descriptions of ritualistic settings of dreams. There is no description of an incubation dream in the Bible. The most that we have are some indications that make it possible to assume that an incubation was present (1 Sam. 3.3-10; 1 Kgs 3.4-15; 2 Chron. 1.3-13; and Ps. 3.5-6).

leaves no doubt that Solomon's sacrifices at Gibeon (*Ant.* 8.22 on 1 Kgs 3.4) are a deliberate dream incubation. After the sacrifice upon Moses' altar, Solomon sleeps at the sacred site, and God emerges in his dream. Jacob offers a sacrifice to God, opens his fears to the divinity and, lifting his thoughts, he falls asleep at the site of the 'Well of the Oath' (*Ant.* 1.170-71). As a result, God appears to him.¹⁰⁶

The acknowledgment of a ritualistic setting for dreams alludes to a similar attitude to ritualistic settings of other types of RVE, such as lecanomancy, which are, as I have shown, treated in much less space and with less enthusiasm by Josephus. The cultic setting of lecanomancy, according to our main source for the period, Greek (*PGM*) and Demotic Magical Papyri (*PDM*), includes the use of virgin boys as mediums in lecanomancy and lychnomancy. Josephus, who appears to be well acquainted with ritualistic dimensions described in *PGM*, and *PDM*, should also accept the role of virgin boys as helpers in ritual preparation for an incubation dream.¹⁰⁷ Because of the nature of dreaming as an impetrated omen, where the client is usually a dreamer, the need for a medium becomes redundant. Still virgin boys play a part in it, an auxiliary job in the preparation of the incubation, which indicates that they were standing personnel of the cults: 'having a virgin boy grind grain, sweeping and sprinkling the roof with clean water, drawing a circle, offering incense and flour' (*STT* 4b, 6b, 7b).¹⁰⁸ And who else but apprentice dream interpreters would play a more suitable role for virgin boys? Their suitability for this avocation may be tested when, as young boys, they had dreams worthy of interpretation, as did young Joseph. Then they would join the oracular sites, or other places, where they would receive education and training. According to Josephus, Joseph was getting his education in Potiphar's house. In agreement with his age and the fact that he was a dreamer before he entered Potiphar's household and appearing as a dream interpreter after leaving it, when tempted by Potiphar's wife,

106. According to Gnuse, the dream of the high priest Jaddus (*Ant.* 11.326-28) displays more characteristics of dream incubation than other dream reports in Josephus. It follows the general pattern for the incubation dreams: '1) sacrifice and prayer, 2) sleep in a sacred place, 3) a divine theophany—a dream, 4) awakening, 5) public proclamation, and 6) fulfillment of divine directives' (Robert Karl Gnuse, 'The Temple Experience of Jaddus in the Antiquities of Josephus: A Report of Jewish Dream Incubation', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 83.2-3 [1993], pp. 349-68 (354-55). The sacrifice and the prayer are public events.

107. See *PGM* 7.548; 12.749, 751-59, 560-565; *PDM* 14.8, 10, 15-25, 29-35, 54; 14.150-231.

108. Reiner, 'Fortune-Telling', p. 27. See the 'fortune-telling' tablets from Sultantepe, such as 4b.2.65-68, 5a1.2.71-75. For more detailed treatment, see the Introduction.

Joseph was very likely at the stage of training where he served as virgin boy medium.

In developing the image of Joseph to a full character, Josephus seems to anticipate Joseph's job formation as a dream interpreter in three stages. First, he dreams dreams in visions that require an interpretation back in Canaan. Second, he serves as a boy medium and helps incubation in Potiphar's household. And finally, he interprets dreams and visions in prison, and in the Egyptian court serves as *hierogrammateus*.

6. *Conclusion: Revelation by Visual Effects in Josephus*

According to Josephus, Joseph's hydromantic inquiries with his cup and his dream interpretations depend on his skills and his esoteric knowledge, which is reached by human reasoning. Joseph lives and acts under the care of God, but his achievements are accomplished by rational thinking and not directly by divine help. Applying the established Greco-Roman categories of divine inspiration, Josephus makes Joseph operate under divine inspiration by acting as a *hierogrammateus*, that is, Hellenistic scientist, in contrast to the divine possession of Balaam and the prophetic inspiration of Daniel.

True to his apologetics for Judaism and his historiographical method of correctly depicting events to reveal their truth, Josephus narrates Joseph's cup episode by describing the results of the scientific application of lecanomancy in the human realm as intellectual and spiritual union. Dealing more freely with oneiromancy, Josephus depicts Joseph as a skilled professional, who relies only on his talent, knowledge and training and carefully removes any allusion from the biblical narrative to divine intervention.

Josephus points out several issues important for defining RVE:

1. Dreams and visions are interchangeable. Therefore, they belong to the same category.
2. Symbolic dreams belong to the same phenomena as well divination, hydromancy, necromancy and lychnomancy.
3. An interpretive stage must be followed by an advisory stage in RVE.
4. Josephus supplies the cultic setting of RVE and points out the overt presence of virgin boys in the ritual.
5. He hints what the education of RVE practitioners could have been like and gives the description of the office of *hierogrammateus*, who, for Josephus, is a holistic Hellenistic scientist.

7. *The Exceptionality of Joseph in Josephus:
Joseph Tradition*

According to Josephus's understanding of virtue and his paradigm for the exceptional, Joseph's character must be the reason for his election as the carrier and transmitter of Jewish intellectual and cultural tradition from Jacob to Moses. Josephus considers Joseph's personality very important for his professional success. His moral integrity is essential for his achievements in life and work.

That Joseph has a problem with establishing his identity is not surprising. While his father adored him, members of own family had rejected and abused him. Innocent, he was cast out from the protection of his kin; yet he managed not only to survive but also to achieve incredible power in a foreign country. Josephus himself had similar identity issues to resolve, being a Jew in the Greco-Roman world. Josephus's Joseph remained Hebrew, faithful to the Hebrew God, so much so that Joseph is the only son exalted by the dying Jacob and the one who receives a double portion of inheritance. Josephus, who does not elaborate on Jacob's blessings of his sons (Genesis 49), makes Jacob insist that Joseph's two sons receive individual land appointments in Canaan (*Ant.* 2.194-95).

Joseph's Egyptization, having an Egyptian wife from the highest class and achieving great prosperity in Egypt, constitutes no problem for Josephus. On the contrary, it strengthened Joseph's character, who consciously treated the Egyptians, the Hebrews and other foreigners as equals, considering all humankind as his kin. Remembering his roots, Joseph was truly liberal, fairly treating all social classes and protecting the poor (*Ant.* 2.191-92). He never behaved as an oppressor even when he was in power. He remembered how it felt to be innocently accused and hated without reason. Josephus describes him as σωτήρ ὁμολογουμένως τοῦ πλήθους ('by common consent the savior of the people', *Ant.* 2.94).

As a youth, Joseph was an innocent victim, entirely because of his trusting nature and naivete. Naively trusting his household to support him and help him discover and develop his talents, he found himself mistreated and thrown into a pit. According to Josephus, Joseph was neither a vain-glorious nor a boastful child. He was generous, modest, moderately ambitious, certainly not cruel or cunning. He became wiser and more careful as a result of his life experience. Troubles of sincere and outspoken youth taught him to keep his thoughts to himself and his mouth shut, the experience that Joseph applied regarding the alleged seduction by Potiphar's wife. Moreover, he was inclined to postpone, unless absolutely necessary, the disclosure of any facts in advance. As a successful political and scholarly figure he declined to reveal the purpose of his collecting grain from the farmers.

Joseph now drove in a chariot throughout all the land, gathering in the corn from the farmers, meeting out to each such as would suffice for sowing and sustenance, and revealing to none for what reason he so acted (*Ant.* 2.90).¹⁰⁹

In the same manner Joseph treated his brothers in order to check if they had changed before forgiving them for their past mistreatment of him. He was not vengeful, just careful as a result of his life experience.

In his appearance Joseph was good looking (εὐμορφος, *Ant.* 2.41) and beautiful (σώματος εὐγένειαν, *Ant.* 2.9). These looks he inherited from his mother, according to Josephus. Of the numerous interpretations of Joseph's sexuality in the episode of Potiphar's wife, Josephus makes him a wise and benevolent person. He was neither asexual nor overly self-righteous, but justly cautious, protecting himself, without wishing to hurt good people.¹¹⁰ He was certainly God-fearing, wise and a self-made man, who accomplished his fortune by his own merit. This merit was neither dependent on his superior ethnicity (being a chosen Hebrew among the ignorant Gentiles) nor on his prophetic election (God did not act through him for the purpose of announcing distant future).

We can conclude that experience molded Joseph's character: he knows how to handle his brothers maturely when he sees them again in Egypt. This is knowledge he lacked back home in his youth. Now he knows how to test their feelings. According to Josephus, Joseph is quick to understand and extremely intelligent.¹¹¹ He is wise, but perhaps also lonely. Moreover, Josephus sees it as commendable that Joseph, being a Hebrew, makes a suc-

109. It is possible to identify Josephus's projection of his own situation on his hero, Joseph, psychologically. Josephus may have felt that if he himself had kept quiet instead of attempting to convince his own countrymen that they should not oppose the all-powerful Romans so vehemently, he would have had more success, and would not have been ostracized and pronounced a traitor. Or he might have regretted writing *Jewish Wars* in an eyewitness style as suits a good historian, describing in detail his own involvement (*Apion* 1.8-9). He might have felt that his honest personal disclosure of the events had been misunderstood and distorted, making him into a traitor.

110. The ancient interpretations of Joseph's feelings while tempted by the wife of Potiphar range from sexual attraction to sexual disgust. Joseph's virtuous self control and reluctance to betray his master win over his readiness to succumb to her charms (*4 Macc.* 2.2-4). The image of Jacob that appeared to Joseph at the crucial moment saved him the fall (*Jos. Asen.* 7.4-5; *Gen. R.* 87.8; *b. Sot.* 36b). Not attracted to her, Joseph tries to protect his virginity, ethics and social standing (*Jub.* 39.8-9, *T. Jos.* 3.1-3; 9.1-2, 5).

111. Josephus uses the broadest range of synonymous words to describe Joseph's wisdom in comparison with his other wise figures, σοφία, σύνεσις, δεξιότης, φρόνημα, λογισμός (Louis Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993], p. 212).

cess in the empire of his time, although it matters that he is of noble birth (*Ant.* 2.78).

All his life experience, knowledge, observations and skills add together to form a person into a wise one: a scholar-scientist. Josephus certainly has a holistic approach to Joseph's character and identity. Upon Joseph's death, Josephus summarizes who Joseph was in an *encomion*, 'a man of admirable virtue, who directed all affairs by the dictates of reason (λογισμῷ) and made but sparing use of his authority' (*Ant.* 2.198). Joseph is one of the greatest heroes of Josephus's writings.

3

THE ETHIOPIC STORY OF JOSEPH: JOSEPH TRADITION IN RABBINIC MIDRASHIM

Midrashim: The Mixture of Approaches

Secret and open things are revealed before you, O Egyptian, said Judah;
For everything you do my cup informs me, said Joseph (*Tosefta Targums*
11-12; Niehoff, *Figure of Joseph*, p. 162).

1. Introduction

a. *Why and How the Ethiopic Story of Joseph*

The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* (*Ethiopic Joseph*, *Eth. Jos.*) is chosen as representative of Hellenistic midrashic tradition because it best meets two main criteria of this research.¹ First, it addresses the question of Joseph being

1. There is no consensus among scholars about the definition of midrash. It can designate a method of exegesis or a type of literary genre. In the case of the former, a small biblical passage or a word that seems problematic or is dense or vague is explained and elaborated by later readers, usually with several possible interpretations. Ancient midrashic method developed sets of hermeneutical rules that controlled its application and should not be confused with 'contemporary midrash', which is a late-twentieth-century literary method that varies from undisciplined free associations to a principle popular in Jewish spiritual circles that the best explanation of a story is by making a new story (see Jacob Neusner, *Invitation to Midrash: The Workings of Rabbinic Bible Interpretation: A Teaching Book* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989], p. 264). Midrash as a genre is a single exegetical unit that may consist of a single phrase, or even a long exposition, such as O.S. Wintermute's understanding of *Jubilees* as midrash on Exod. 24.18 (O.S. Wintermute, 'Jubilees', *OTP*, II, pp. 35-142 [39]). This research adopts the definition of the midrashim (plural form of midrash) as a genre, in which in a broader sense all of the examined rabbinic texts in this chapter belong as 'an accumulation of diverse exegetical pieces of uncertain date and authorship' (Maren Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* [Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums, 26; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992], p. 11) that lacks a continuous paraphrase, of which *Genesis Rabbah* is a typical example (for discussions

a scientist with the cup of divination being his primary scientific instrument. Not only is the most elaborate midrash of the Ethiopic text the one on Joseph's magical cup, but there is no other text of the same tradition that treats this cup so extensively.²

The second criterion is that the text's tradition can be traced to Hellenistic Judaism, the time of a proliferation of works classified as apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, but also equally energized by creative midrashic activity.³ Biblical words, passages, events and characters have been elaborated,

of definitions of 'midrash', see Jacob Neusner *et al.* (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Midrash: Biblical Interpretation in Formative Judaism*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), especially Gary Porton's entry, 'Midrash, Definition' (pp. 520-34). The genre midrashim is different from the genre of 'rewritten Bible', which, while using the same midrashic exegetical method, is a continuous verse-by-verse paraphrase of a longer biblical passage, such as *Jubilees*, or *The Book of Yashar*, and resembles midrashic commentary in a narration (for the historical development of both genres, see Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (SPB, 4; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961). Thus, the later texts of different genres can contain very old midrashic traditions. When referring to 'midrash' as an exegetical method I will write it with capital M, Midrash, to distinguish it from midrash as a genre with a small m. It is worth noting that a part of Ethiopian Christian exegesis 'does exhibit methodological and formulaic parallels with the Jewish material' (Roger W. Cowley, *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics* [Cambridge University Press Oriental Publications, 38; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], p. 374). It engages a selection of rabbinic 'rules of hermeneutics' of Midrash in its interpretation of the biblical stories, i.e. of Midrash *haggadah*—Midrash of non-legal parts of the scripture. I use the term 'Ethiopic' to refer to the language, and 'Ethiopian' to designate people, culture or the country. For Ethiopian biblical interpretation see, Cowley, *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation*; and G. Haile, 'Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation', in John H. Hayes (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), II, pp. 353-56.

2. There exists a group of rabbinic texts that delight in elaborating on the use of Joseph's cup in divination, in contrast to many others which try to ignore it or cover it up (James Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998], p. 481).

3. Already Louis Ginzberg at the beginning of the twentieth century observed that midrash on the stories (midrash *aggadot*) 'both antedated the period of Rabbinic Judaism . . . and left its traces far beyond the confines of the literature that Rabbis themselves produced' (Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. 2 [trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2nd edn, 2003], p. xvii). In his introduction to the 2003 edition of *Legends*, David Stern remarks that for Ginzberg the real origins of *aggadah* (midrash) 'lay (in) early postbiblical literature, particularly in the works known as Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, which were composed in the last centuries before the turn of the common era and the first centuries afterward' (*LoJ*, p. xvii). Accordingly, this study uses the term 'rabbinic midrashim' in the broadest possible sense, addressing rather the type of the literary context in which they are preserved rather than their character and origin.

explained, supplemented and rewritten.⁴ The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, many rabbinic midrashim and some Christian works of the same type preserve many cultural memories of Joseph that stem from Hellenistic times.⁵ Midrash as a genre promotes a microcosmic use of traditions and facilitates the conservation of ancient lore out of its own historical settings, preserving, oftentimes, antagonistic traditions that parallel each other. The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* as a whole belongs rather to a dramatic genre similar to Syriac dialogue hymns and to Greco-Roman theatrical spectacles. However, its parts regarding Joseph as a scientist demonstrate their roots in midrashic material and show a close connection to the corresponding rabbinic traditions.⁶ Although the focus of this chapter is the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, rabbinic midrashim, which reflect the same tradition or some sides of it, will be introduced regularly to clarify or to evaluate the tradition with some precision. Christian texts, preserved within the Syriac Church, seem to reflect

4. Both Vermes (*Scripture and Tradition*, pp. 228-29) and Kugel (*Traditions of the Bible*, p. 46) appropriately observe that Ginzberg in *Legends* calls midrashim legends (*aggadot*), thus making them into folk literature, a move suitable for the climate of the beginning of the twentieth century. 'Moreover, Ginzberg made a deliberate decision to call them "Legends of the Jews", and not "Legends of the Rabbis", (which would then make them into "rabbinic midrashim")', because he was convinced that they are "both earlier and greater than what was represented in rabbinic literature. . . . Many Haggadot not found in our existing collections are quoted by the authors of the Middle Ages' (*LoJ*, p. xxxi). However, in order to distinguish between midrashim as collections of atomic exegetical units and Ginzberg's *aggadot* (midrashim, legends), I prefer to call the latter 'traditions'.

5. Ginzberg's understanding that the late dating of a text in Jewish tradition did not necessarily rule out its containing early traditions that had been preserved only by this text (*LoJ*, p. xviii), when applied to Christian tradition, opens up the presence of Hellenistic concepts in Syriac literature on Joseph, such as those found in Ephrem of Syria, 'Commentary on Genesis' 37.7; 38.3 (*St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose* [trans. E.G. Mathews and J.P. Amar; Works of Fathers of the Church, 91; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994], pp. 59-213), or in Ephrem Graecus, *Sermon on Joseph the Most Virtuous* (trans. Archimandrite Ephrem Lash; <http://www.anastasis.org.uk/Joseph.pdf>, 2008), pp. 709-25. Aramaic, a Semitic language of Judaism, is the same as Syriac, a Semitic language of Christians, which suggests that the transmission of traditions could have relied more on language than on religion. Thus, against Robert R. Phenix (*The Sermons on Joseph of Balai of Qenneshrin: Rhetoric and Interpretation of Fifth-Century Syriac Literature* [STAC, 50; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], p. 140) that the lore was transmitted from Greek into Syriac, it seems very possible that both Syriac- and Greek-speaking Syrian Christians could have transmitted this lore from Syriac into Greek.

6. The study of the genre of the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, besides establishing its historical and cultural context, could illuminate not only the cultural continuation of Hellenistic ideas but also the exchange of ideas between Semitic-speaking Christianity and rabbinic Judaism.

the same midrashic line regarding Joseph's cup as the Ethiopic story but with less elaboration.⁷ Although they may be important for establishing the history of the transmission of this tradition, they are less likely to offer the insights into alternative midrashim.⁸

This chapter will show the overwhelming presence of the image of Joseph as a scientist of RVE in midrashim. Their special contribution is in the understanding of the practical side of RVE phenomena. The genre's focus on action supplies the details of lecanomantic ritual. Their literary use of it testifies to the popularity of RVE divination and its connection to scientific and spiritual expertise because it operates on the assumption of the familiarity of the audience with these procedures. Moreover, midrashic concern for different interpretations brings in the range of opinions about Joseph's portrayal as a Hellenistic scientist extending from the most accepting ones of Joseph tradition to the most unfavorable ones of the same or of other brothers' traditions.

b. Date and Reception

Ethiopic Story of Joseph is a part of the *Ethiopic History of Joseph*, which exists in a single manuscript dated in the fourteenth or fifteenth century CE, written in the Semitic classical language of Ethiopia, Ge'ez. It is found among the rich manuscript collection of the ancient Ethiopian monastery of Dabra Bizon not far from the Red Sea and is identified as EMMML 1939 fols. 124a-168a in the Hill Monastic Microfilm Library at St John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota.⁹ In 1990 Ephraim Isaac published a preliminary

7. Ephrem of Syria ('Commentary on Genesis' 37.7, 38.3), mentions that Joseph arranged the seating of the brothers at the dining table by means of his cup, using the same image as our texts: 'Joseph struck it [the goblet] and arranged them in order'. Also Ephrem Graecus, *Sermon on Joseph* (709-25), preserves the same tradition. Scholars argue that both of these works are heavily influenced by rabbinic midrashim (see Ephrem Graecus, *Sermon on Joseph*, p. 2). I could not locate any work done on Joseph as a diviner in Christian literature thus far. In Islamic tradition, in the famous *sura* 12 on Joseph in the Qur'an, there is nothing about Joseph as a diviner, although it contains several Hellenistic memories about Joseph. Islamic literature is rich in works on Joseph, but I am not familiar with one that discusses Joseph's cup.

8. Only recently, several works on Syriac texts on Joseph addressed their relation to the *Ethiopic History of Joseph* (see especially Kristian S. Heal, 'Identifying the Syriac Vorlage of the Ethiopic History of Joseph', in *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock* [ed. George A. Kiraz; Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies, 3; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008], pp. 205-10; and also Phenix, *The Sermons on Joseph of Balai of Qenneshrin* [pp. 145-52]).

9. Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa, and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Microfilm Library, Collegeville* (Collegeville, MN: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, 1978) V, p. 429. For details about the manuscript see, Hill Museum &

translation with notes and introduction in *JSP* 6 (1990), pp. 3-125.¹⁰ The *Ethiopic History of Joseph* consists of two Ethiopic texts about Joseph, the *Story of Joseph* (124a-162a) followed by a shorter tale, the *Death of Joseph* (162a-168a).

Although the *Story of Joseph*, called in this study *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, is in the line of a long tradition of interpretations of Joseph generally, and of him as a scientist particularly, this story is not a part of the received tradition. Forgotten in an ancient manuscript, it was rediscovered as a result of an antiquarian interest in a search for an Ethiopic version of *Joseph and Aseneth*.¹¹ The text does, however, contain much familiar lore that can be traced back to Hellenistic times.¹² In this sense it is not much different from the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (*Targ. Ps.-J.*) or the *Apocalypse of Abraham*,¹³ which both contain very old traditions. Moreover, *Targ. Ps.-J.* is also preserved in a single manuscript.¹⁴ A good example of the recurrent old tradition is the scene with Joseph 'sounding' his cup in a divinatory manner when seating his brothers and uncovering their sins. This episode at the end of Genesis 43 is greatly elaborated on in *Ethiopic Joseph*. It also exists in a shorter form in *Genesis Rabbah* (*Gen. R.*), *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (*Targ. Ps.-J.*), *Midrash on Proverbs* (*Midr. Prov.*), *Tanḥuma Yelammedenu* (*Tanḥ.*), *Aggadah Berešit* (*Ag. Ber.*), Greek Ephrem's *Sermon on Joseph the Most Virtuous* (*Ser. Jos.*) and *The Book of Yashar* (*Yashar*).¹⁵

Manuscript Library, 2011, <http://www.hmml.org/research2010/catalog/detail.asp?MSID=105752> (13 August 2011)

10. Ephraim Isaac, 'The Ethiopic History of Joseph; Translation with Introduction and Notes', *JSP* 6.3 (1990), pp. 3-125. Isaac remarks that it is a preliminary translation. As no other translation is yet available, I have based my argument on this one. All the citations are from it. All the references are listed by page number.

11. Isaac, 'The Ethiopic History', p. 4.

12. Although some more extreme notions of Louis Ginzberg are rejected by the majority of scholars, his idea that midrashim are very old, or as he prefers to call them, *aggadot*, and have origins in Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha literature is generally acknowledged by the scholarly world (Ginzberg, *LoJ*, p. xviii).

13. *Apocalypse of Abraham* is a good example of a non-midrashic text that preserves old traditions; see Alexander Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005).

14. The sixteenth-century manuscript is in the British Library filed under 'Aramaic Additional MS 27031'. There is a debate if *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* is a Targum, an Aramaic translation of the HB, or if it is collection of midrashim. While *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* shares positive evaluations of Joseph with other Targumim, it preserves 'more narrative material which it shares with the midrash, and more loosely with intertestamental sources' (Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, p. 151).

15. For details, see below in this chapter. *Tanḥuma* in Buber's edition, 1885 is referred to as *Tanḥ. B.*

In contrast to rabbinic midrashim which consist of groups of miscellaneous exegetical passages containing diverse ancient traditions that need to be sorted out, *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* is a complete story, a dramatized remaking of the Joseph story of Gen. 37.1–47.27, ending with Jacob's settlement in Egypt.¹⁶ With large sections of intertwined dialogues and monologues, emphasis on action and suspense, play with coincidence, sudden character appearances and plot twists, it evokes a comic drama. It seems likely to have been used as a theatrical spectacle meant to be performed on a stage. It also displays the Hellenistic fascination with written evidence, such as using documents as proof of sales and legal status (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 53, 62, 96–97, 99, 82), which *Ethiopic Joseph* cites in full (pp. 53, 99). Exchange of letters, the popular mode of communication of the period, play a prominent role in the plot development (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 74–76, 82–83).¹⁷ Moreover, the story advances by action and events, not by the development of characters. This fact is also often related with Greco-Roman dramatic and biographical literature.¹⁸ And the description of main characters resembles Hellenistic novels.¹⁹ The horses as the main mode of transportation and scribes as practitioners of the science of vision only add to Isaac's proposed classification of the *Vorlage* of *Ethiopic Joseph* in Hellenistic Jewish literature.²⁰

Regarding the provenance of the fourteenth/fifteenth century manuscript we should keep in mind that Hellenistic theories of vision were in place until the sixteenth century when they were definitively replaced by Kepler's

16. The death of Jacob and his blessings are excluded (Gen. 47.28–50.26).

17. The correspondence between Joseph and Qatīfan's wife (Qatīfan corresponds to biblical Potiphar) settles the matter between Joseph and Qatīfan's household (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 74–76). The popularity of letters in daily communication of Hellenistic times is reflected in their use as a literary form of the period as well. It suffices to mention that most of the books of the New Testament were written as letters.

18. Greco-Roman dramatic and biographical literature starts with the Aristotelian establishment of tragedies and comedies as focusing on action and life and not on representations of humanity (Aristotle, *Poet.* 6.1450a20). In the light of the focus on character development in modern novelistic genres, the lack thereof has been often underlined in Greco-Roman writings, such as the biographer par excellence of the early Roman Empire, Plutarch (for the bibliography of the discussion and also for the importance of education in the formation of the hero, see Timothy E. Duff, 'Models of Education in Plutarch', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 128 [2008], pp. 1–26).

19. For example, external beauty is related to divine blessings and inspires love in observers (such as in Heliodorus, *An Ethiopian Story* 1.4 [Collected Greek Novels (ed. B.P. Reardon; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 619–49], p. 356). External beauty is the expression of inner beauty, has a divine origin, and renders its carrier into the highest social ranks, oftentimes among royalty or the gods. Romantic novels today share this concept: instead of goddesses and princesses the protagonists are successful professionals who end up wealthy and loved.

20. Isaac, *The Ethiopic History*, p. 44.

optics. The date of the manuscript of *Ethiopic Joseph* corresponds to the date of the manuscript of the South-Slavonic (*Slaw*) version of *Joseph and Aseneth*. As the latter seems to be a product of the Byzantine renaissance of Hellenistic literature of the time (eleven out of sixteen manuscripts of *Jos. Asen.* are dated to fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), it is very possible that *Ethiopic Joseph* is the offshoot of the same literary movement in Ethiopia.²¹

2. Joseph Tradition

The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* contains many accounts from Hellenistic and rabbinic midrashim. It may be grouped with the rich Jewish midrashic literature that contains the Joseph tradition, such as those preserved in *Genesis Rabbah* (fourth-century midrashim), *Midrash on Proverbs* (ninth-century exegetical midrashim), *Tanḥuma Yelammedenu* (*Midrash Tanḥuma*; the oldest parts of this earliest homiletic midrashim on Torah are dated to the fifth century), *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (ninth-to-tenth-century Aramaic translation of the Bible), *Aggadah Berešit* (ninth-to-tenth-century homiletic midrashim on Genesis) and *The Book of Yashar* (twelfth-century rewritten bible). Thus, these texts will help define the *Ethiopic Joseph* tradition(s). This Joseph tradition carries the succession from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through Joseph and on to Moses. Frequently, it continues on to David and especially Solomon, linking Joseph and Solomon in the same tradition.²² The versions of this tradition may differ on the designation of the transmitted intellectual property and religious values, but they all agree that Joseph was the chosen one of the twelve brothers to carry on the succession.²³ Thus, all our sources agree on treating Joseph in a more favorable light than the rest of the brothers.

21. Ljubica Jovanović, 'Aseneth's Gaze Turns Swords into Dust', *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 21.2 (2011), pp. 83-97, doi:10.1177/0951820711426744.

22. Joseph–Solomon tradition would usually have the transmission of wisdom or knowledge (e.g. *Ag. Ber.* 81.B, p. 237).

23. For *Ag. Ber.* 81.B, p. 237, knowledge is transmitted; for *Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 49.23, it is the crown that is transmitted. The promise of the descendants, that is, generations of twelve tribes, is carried on through Joseph (*Gen. R.* 84.5.2, *Tanḥ.* 9.1), while a late Ps. 105.9-11, 17 preserves the notion of the transmission of the promised land. *Genesis Rabbah*'s laws are transmitted through Joseph from Eber and Shem to the rabbis (*Gen. R.* 84.8.1). A good example of the Joseph tradition is preserved in *Ag. Ber.* 68.B, pp. 203-205 (see also *Tanḥ.* 11.10, *Tanḥ. B.* 11.11), where Joseph, instead of Judah, is compared to Zion. Moreover *Ag. Ber.* 61.C, p. 183, and *Genesis Rabbah* preserve a tradition against the one that blames Joseph for Israel going to Egypt. It argues that if it were not for Joseph, God would have brought Jacob to Egypt in chains (e.g. *Gen. R.* 86.2.2).

JOSEPH TRADITION IN MIDRASHIM

<i>Joseph in Joseph Tradition</i>	<i>Ethiopic Story of Joseph</i> 14th –15th century <i>manuscript</i> <i>Comedy-drama</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i> 4th century <i>Exegetical midrashim</i>	<i>Midrash Tanhuma</i> 5th century <i>Homiletic Midrash</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i> 9th century <i>Exegetical midrashim</i>	<i>Aggadah Berēšit</i> 9th–10th century <i>homiletic midrashim</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i> 9th–10th century	<i>Book of Yashar</i> 12th century <i>rewritten Bible</i>
<i>Joseph's identity</i>	Noble birth, born to rule-prince, inherits profession from birth and foster parent,	Exceptional Hebrew who brought Israel peacefully to Egypt 86.2.2.C, and ruled Egypt 82.2.1.C	Faithful Hebrew 9.8, 9.9, 10.7		Unstable, Has many names 73.C		
<i>Joseph's Character</i>	Inherited, righteous, no development Talent develops through education	Ethical example Develops in morality 83.5.3-4, 87.4.1.B-D	Handsome, faithful to God 9.5, Vain 9.8 Prone to sin 9.8	Wise, righteous, sustainer of his kin pp. 18, 23-44, 83-84	Righteous, forgiving 73.C		
<i>Joseph=><Jacob</i>	Joseph>	Joseph> 84.5.2 Joseph= 84.6	Joseph= 9.1, 10.3 Joseph< 12.6, 9.8	Joseph> pp.18, 83-84	Joseph> 73.A	Joseph< Gen. 37.3	

JOSEPH TRADITION IN MIDRASHIM (*continued*)

<i>Joseph in Joseph Tradition</i>	<i>Ethiopic Story of Joseph</i> 14th –15th century <i>manuscript</i> <i>Comedy-drama</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i> 4th century <i>Exegetical midrashim</i>	<i>Midrash Tanhuma</i> 5th century <i>Homiletic Midrash</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i> 9th century <i>Exegetical midrashim</i>	<i>Aggadah Bereshit</i> 9th–10th century <i>homiletic midrashim</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i> 9th–10th century	<i>Book of Yashar</i> 12th century <i>rewritten Bible</i>
<i>Transmitted ideal</i>	Spiritual expertise	Promise of descendants 84.5.2 Laws 84.8.1	Promise of descendants 9.1 Zion 11.10	Wisdom p. 18, way of righteousness pp. 83-84	Beauty, wealth, strength, and wisdom 40.A Knowledge 81.B Zion 68.B Blessings 81.B 84.C	Crown Gen. 42.43	
<i>Reason for the election of Joseph</i>	Rachel's firstborn	Talent and wit 84.8.1.C, Merit 84.5.2 Resemblance to Jacob 84.6 Moral growth 86.4.2.B-C Reuben's sin 87.5.5, 87.6.4	Resemblance to Jacob 9.2, 10.3 Moral growth 9.8-9 Parental care in old age 9.2 Reuben's sin 9.2		Reuben's sin 83, p. 242 Wisdom 83, p. 245 Flame 59.	Resemblance to Jacob Gen. 37.3 Reuben's sin Gen. 49.7	

JOSEPH TRADITION IN MIDRASHIM (*continued*)

<i>Joseph in Joseph Tradition</i>	<i>Ethiopic Story of Joseph</i> <i>14th–15th century manuscript</i> <i>Comedy-drama</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i> <i>4th century</i> <i>Exegetical midrashim</i>	<i>Midrash Tanhuma</i> <i>5th century</i> <i>Homiletic</i> <i>Midrash</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i> <i>9th century</i> <i>Exegetical</i> <i>midrashim</i>	<i>Aggadah Berēšit</i> <i>9th–10th century</i> <i>homiletic</i> <i>midrashim</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i> <i>9th–10th century</i>	<i>Book of Yashar</i> <i>12th century</i> <i>rewritten</i> <i>Bible</i>
<i>Child</i>	Noblest character, lovable, attractive	Vain, foolish 84.7.1.C Gossiping 84.7.2	Liar, slanderer 9.7			Truthful, devoted to his father Gen 37.2	
<i>Joseph's main virtues</i>	forgiveness	Merit, 84.5.2 Moral integrity 86.4.2 B-C, 98.5.1.B	Faithfulness 9.5	Sustainer of family pp. 83-84	Morality 61.A-B		
<i>Joseph's sufferings</i>	Righteous, undeserved	Deserved, retribution for his evils as a child 84.7.2.F-G, 87.1	Deserved, retribution for his lies as a child 9.7	Righteous, undeserved p. 23	Righteous, victim 61.B		
<i>Joseph heroic sufferer</i>	Sobs, pleads, complains				Silent forbearance 61.B		Afraid, sobs, pleads 41.28-34

JOSEPH TRADITION IN MIDRASHIM (continued)

<i>Joseph in Joseph Tradition</i>	<i>Ethiopic Story of Joseph</i> 14th –15th century <i>manuscript</i> <i>Comedy-drama</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i> 4th century <i>Exegetical midrashim</i>	<i>Midrash Tanhuma</i> 5th century <i>Homiletic Midrash</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i> 9th century <i>Exegetical midrashim</i>	<i>Aggadah Bereshit</i> 9th–10th century <i>homiletic midrashim</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i> 9th–10th century	<i>Book of Yashar</i> 12th century <i>rewritten Bible</i>
<i>Reasons for Joseph's Suffering</i>	Social degradation: From prince to slave	Divine retribution for his child malevolence 87.3.1.H-1-2	To bring Israel to Egypt with dignity 9.3, 9.4	Innocent victim p. 24	To bring Israel to Egypt peacefully 61.C		
<i>Reasons for Joseph's success</i> <i>In Egypt</i>	Professional merit, nobility of birth		Divine plans 9.4, 9.9		Divine plans 67.B-C		Divine providence 41-44, 46, 48-59
<i>What makes Joseph great</i>		Moral development, religious maturity 87.4.-5, 87.8		Old age as result of his material care for his parents and siblings pp.18, 83-4			
<i>Joseph's moral development/integrity</i>	No development Righteous, forgiving, compassionate by birth victim	Yes, afflictions=youthful evil 87.7.2	Vain child (9.8) becomes wise 11.4				Grows through divine chastising 46.19-20

Ethiopic Joseph presents the Joseph tradition in a similar manner as Josephus.²⁴ The succession is passed from Jacob to Joseph, and Joseph emerges as a greater personality and of greater importance than Jacob. On the other hand, *Ethiopic Joseph* does present Jacob in an exalted manner that is in agreement with other midrashim in Joseph tradition.²⁵ Also, like Josephus, *Ethiopic Joseph* is cosmopolitan and non-nationalistic. However, while Josephus's cosmopolitanism is very carefully chosen and developed at the expense of nationalism, *Ethiopic Joseph* seems almost oblivious to ethnic values. Instead of ethnicity, it is social position that determines one's character, moral integrity, fate and future. There is no possibility of social mobility. Birth and heredity determine personal, professional and social standing. Moreover, it is possible to tell a person's social status from external appearances.²⁶ For example, the Egyptians truly accepted Joseph as their king only after they *saw* Jacob, and by the looks of him and his entourage they approved of his high standing (p. 102).²⁷

The beautiful Joseph is the firstborn son of the patriarch Jacob and of the beautiful, beloved and highborn Rachel, the only woman that Jacob wanted to marry. Thus, Joseph is the heir. The only other truly positive character among the brothers is Joseph's younger full brother, Benjamin, who swears by his nuclear family:

Then Benjamin [turned and] and said, '[By] the God of my father Jacob and the grave of my mother Rachel! [By] the One who separated me and my brother Joseph!' I do not know who stole it [the cup] and put it into my load!' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 95). Hence, *Eth. Jos.* appears to promote Rachel tradition and also a monogamous union (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 56-57).

a. Heredity over Merit in the Ethiopic Story of Joseph

While the midrashim in Joseph tradition agree that Jacob's love for Joseph is a major factor in the elevation of Joseph (Gen. 37.3), they list various

24. See Chapter 2, on Josephus.

25. In all examined midrashim in this chapter Jacob's image is uplifted. He is morally perfect and appears as much wiser, shrewder and has deeper insights than the Joseph of the biblical account (compare *Ag. Ber.* 61.C, p.184, with Genesis 37, 49-50). While some of the sources exalt Joseph over Jacob (*Ag. Ber.* 73.A, pp. 214-16, *Gen. R.* 84.5.2), some have Jacob greater than Joseph (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 37.34, *Tanh.* 12.6). The others embellish extensively and poetically on Joseph's and Jacob's similarities (*Gen. R.* 84.6, *Tanh.* 9.1).

26. See above about the characteristics of Greco-Roman Hellenistic literature, especially on romantic novelistic literature.

27. 'And the Egyptians marveled at Jacob's gray hair, and at that which they saw of the cows, the sheep and the donkeys [which he owned]. They conversed with each other [saying], "It is meant that his kingdom shall be firmly established for Joseph"' (*Eth. Jos.* p. 102).

reasons for this affection and for Joseph's birthright privileges. Joseph is exalted because of his talent and wit (*Gen. R.* 84.8.1.C), because of his resemblance to Jacob (*Targ. Ps.-J.* *Gen.* 37.3; *Gen. R.* 84.6; *Tanḥ.* 9.2, 10.3), because of his moral development (Joseph has grown to be great [*Gen. R.* 86.4.2.B-C; *Tanḥ.* 9.8-9]), his care for his parent in his old age (*Tanḥ.* 9.2), and even because of Reuben's sin (*Tanḥ.* 9.2).²⁸

The mother's status determines children's character and social position, with no possibility of it changing in the future according to *Ethiopic Joseph*. Promoting Joseph means promoting Rachel. Thus, *Ethiopic Joseph* belongs to Rachel tradition.²⁹ It also places genetic determination over cultural influence. Sins and virtues are inherited along with physical features. Thus, in a midrash that all our sources contain, the brothers do not hesitate to scold Benjamin when a planted cup was found in his sack,

They said, 'O son of a [woman] thief! Your brother was a thief [too]! ... You, your mother, and your brother could not relent from throwing us into trouble. Your mother is a thief—[she stole] her father's golden idol that he used to worship' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 93)!

Also, Judah fakes an inherited physical disability,

[Judah] said to Joseph, 'O my master, I cannot see it [the writing] because my eyes are oblique like my mother's eyes' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 97).

Leah's children are of ambiguous character: both positive and negative. Although Reuben acts as a true protector of Joseph, the greatest praise that he receives from Joseph is the recognition that he is the son of his mother's sister (Leah). However, the sons of the maidservants are shown to be consistently corrupt and wicked throughout the story, as is appropriate for the low social standing of slaves.³⁰ Accordingly, they are the ones who conspired to kill the young boy Joseph. They also beat him, strip him of his precious garment, and mock the humiliated Joseph, who is already sitting deep in the pit. It was Dan and Asher, the sons of the two slave wives, who presented the bloody garment to Jacob and did not hesitate to accuse Jacob of Joseph's death by sending the child alone in the wilderness (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 55). Moreover, at the very end of the story they try to pass as innocent by blaming Benjamin before Joseph the Egyptian dignitary.

28. Jacob favored Joseph 'because Joseph's features were like his own features' (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on *Gen.* 37.3). *Tanḥuma* 9.1 elaborates, 'Joseph resembled his father in every way, and ... everything that happened to Jacob also happened to Joseph' (*Tanḥ.* 9.1). A long, analytic and poetic elaboration on the same theme is preserved in *Gen. R.* 84.6.1.

29. See the discussion about Rachel tradition in Chapter 2, on Josephus.

30. The same tradition is in *Gen. R.* 84.5.2.

Other midrashim in the Joseph tradition elaborate further on this topic. Reuben is depicted in a relatively positive light, although there is an interpretation that he wanted to save Joseph from the pit only to win his father's favor.³¹ The portrayal of Judah is ambiguous. The presentation of his positive side depends on the extent in which the midrash in question values the Judaic tradition. According to a midrash, to kill Joseph is the idea of Levi and Simeon (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 37.34), and it is the reason why Simeon was detained in Egypt as a hostage (*Gen. R.* 84.7.3). But because Jacob liked Levi, Joseph lets him return with the rest of the brothers. In the midrashim that are less damaging to the maidservants' sons, Joseph was brought up with them and informed on them unjustly (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 37.3).

The Joseph tradition of *Ethiopic Joseph* does not follow the Judean tradition of elevating Judah over Reuben. Although both Reuben and Judah emerge as positive and powerful characters, Reuben remains the firstborn. Moreover, the role of Levi and Simeon is irrelevant. As our story ends with the settlement of Jacob and his sons in Egypt and omits the genealogies and Jacob's blessings, it displays a lack of interest in tribal succession of Israelite kingship and priesthood. The rabbinic midrashim, in contrast, elaborate extensively on the blessings of Jacob. The biblical passage (Genesis 48–49) already endorses the Joseph tradition, because it is Joseph who gets a double portion of inheritance (through Manasseh and Ephraim, Gen. 48.5–6) as the right of the firstborn.³² Although Joseph in the biblical passage is the favorite brother, the midrashim in the Joseph tradition embellish this point even more. Moral integrity, wisdom and good deeds made Joseph great. His ability to control his sexual urge is the reason why the crown was passed to Joseph from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 49.22). The most explicit pointer to the Joseph tradition is preserved in the blessing of Reuben. Probably based on the statement that the birthright was taken from Reuben and given to Joseph (1 Chron. 5.1–2), it states that Reuben's rights as the firstborn were taken from him because of his sin with Bilhah and divided among Joseph (birthright), Judah (kingship) and Levi (priesthood).³³ Jacob turns his blessings to Levi and Simeon into curses because of their wrath against Joseph (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 49.7).

31. Reuben needed to do a favor for his father in order to rectify his own sin (*Yashar* 41.26). Also Reuben is not very smart, and Jacob complains about the wisdom of his firstborn (*Gen. R.* 91.9.4.B, *Tanḥ.* 10.8). Judah is the smart one, and he urges Reuben to wait, act and speak only when it is appropriate (*Yashar* 52.6).

32. Simultaneously Reuben loses his right (Gen. 49.3–4). In the light of the biblical prescription that the younger son of the favorite wife gets the birthright in place of a firstborn son of a non-favored wife (Deut. 21.15–17), Joseph traditions had to find a plausible explanation why Reuben lost his birthright. Thus, the midrashim tend to expand extensively on the nature of Reuben's sin.

33. *Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 49.22, *Gen. R.* 98.4, *Ag. Ber.* 83).

b. The Ethiopic Story of Joseph's *Image of Joseph*

In contrast to *Ethiopic Joseph*, the midrashim as collections of autonomous and multiple different traditions do not contain a complete or even a unified image of Joseph. Thus, Joseph tradition turns up periodically alongside other traditions in the same chapter. Sometimes Joseph appears as either pious and chaste, a righteous sufferer and the victim of his adversaries or as a guilty person righteously punished for his sins. Sometimes it is religious and other times moral purity that he wanted to maintain. Joseph may also be an ordinary Hebrew, not in any way exceptional, with the single advantage of being the only Hebrew in Egypt. In this light, it is only through divine providence that Joseph became accomplished and successful in Egypt.

According to *Ethiopic Joseph*, Joseph is Jacob's heir by birthright, because his is the noblest birth of all his sons, the firstborn son of his only love, Rachel. This position makes him destined for great things. His nobility determines his upright character. His character shows in his beautiful features and his elegance and constitutes the reason that strangers who see him for the first time love him without knowing anything about him. His great piety and good character stay the same throughout the story. His status as a prince, heir, king is his natural social standing. All Joseph's sufferings consist in being pushed down the social ladder and forced to pass as a slave. As social mobility is not possible in *Ethiopic Joseph*, the greatest sin of Joseph's brothers was that they sold him as their slave. In this context, Qatifan (= biblical Potiphar) and his wife are closer to Joseph than his half-brothers born by maidservants. Joseph's ties stretch mostly to his nuclear family, his father Jacob, the departed mother, Rachel, and his full brother, Benjamin.

Joseph proclaims Qatifan and his wife as his foster parents.³⁴ He writes to her,

As for me, I only ask that you praise the Lord for having given him [your husband] to me. Who should rejoice but you and the master who became like a righteous parent unto me? For you, you are [by my order] the mistress of all the wives of the people of Egypt! (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 76).

He said to his mistress,

‘you have done me a great deal of good!’ He began to praise her before the elders [lit. ‘scholars’, ‘learned people’, ‘the great ones’] of the people of Egypt, and revealed to them her kindness (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 77).

34. Qatifan's wife is the only one who seems to feel the competition with Jacob over Joseph. When she has to ask for mercy she puts Joseph's other patrons in front of herself, ‘Now [I ask] you only of this one thing, and make you take an oath—by him who gave you this great, exalted, and high position and authority—by him—by your father [fol. 142b]; by your progenitors; by him who saved you from sorrow, by him who rescued you from prison, by him who will make you see your father's face—that you forgive me’ (*Eth. Jos.* p.75).

While Joseph's character stays the same, he gains experience and power and undergoes full professional development.³⁵ As a boy at his father's house he is ignorant, uneducated and trusting. He does not seem to believe that his brothers will hurt him. He is not a heroic figure either in the pit or the prison or in any other part of the story. Joseph sobs in the pit and pleads for help (see also *Yashar* 51.34). Silence, whether in the pit or in the matter concerning the false accusation of adultery or in asking favor from the butler is not seen as a virtue by *Ethiopic Joseph*.³⁶

Joseph's professional development in *Ethiopic Joseph* is very similar to Josephus's understanding of it. Joseph gains his basic education in Potiphar's household and very likely passes through the stage of boy medium at the time of his encounter with the passions of Potiphar's wife. He is in the early stage of his career as a dream interpreter in prison and at its peak before Pharaoh. At the moment when he appears as a lecanomancer, Joseph is at the height of his professional skills.

The focus of Joseph's moral character, according to *Ethiopic Joseph*, is his forgiveness. There are two parties that harmed Joseph, his brothers and Qatifan's family. He needs to forgive them both. So, the story introduces a new section about the repentance of Qatifan's family and about Joseph's forgiveness of his Egyptian family.³⁷ It precedes the main plot of forgiving

35. It resembles Josephus, with whom *Ethiopic Joseph* shares a certain cosmopolitanism in the sense of anti-parochialism or non-nationalism. It stands in opposition to the parochial or nationalistic interpretation of several rabbinic midrashim. In these, Joseph's moral character develops, while his professional progress is reduced to his native home education. See other references for details.

36. This image is in contrast to the presentation of Joseph as the pious and righteous sufferer whose moral superiority is seen in his forbearance in the pit, his refusal to defend himself before being taken to prison, and in relying always on divine rather than on human help (see especially *Ag. Ber.* 61.B, p. 183).

37. The parallel between the two parties, or between his adopted Egyptian and his blood family, serves as a main idea in the plot development of *Eth. Jos.* According to it Joseph subdued the same inclination toward both his mistress and his brothers, probably anger and revenge. Moreover, Potiphar's wife does not appear as intrinsically evil, or incredibly influential, but just a woman who was overpowered by her passion. She uses her position of authority, but she is sincere, giving Joseph a choice: 'I give you two choices: make love to me and be a free person; or, I swear by Pharaoh's life, I will put my hand[s] over my head and cry out [for help], saying that you were attempting to rape me by violating your master's bed. Which of these two things do you choose?' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 64; see also *Targ. Ps.-J.*'s tradition on Gen. 39.9-12). According to her husband, Qatifan, her testimony was found untrustworthy from the beginning and was the reason why Joseph was not whipped but only detained (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 74). Qatifan/Potiphar is afraid that he would suffer for his mistreatment of Joseph, now that Joseph is in a position of power, and he blames his wife for it. She accepts the blame and prepares to rectify the matter. Then, she writes a letter of apology to Joseph (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 74-75). For example,

his brothers, who are much greater sinners than his foster Egyptian family. Moreover, the maidservants' sons never truly repent, but, as born slaves, not much better is expected of them.³⁸

Although Jacob is portrayed in a more positive light than he is in the Bible, Joseph of *Eth. Jos.* is raised above his father.³⁹ Joseph never discloses to Jacob that it was his brothers who harmed him, threatened to kill him and sold him into slavery. He settles the matter only between them and himself (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 106-107).

3. Hellenistic Science

Self-contained exegeses of small passages of rabbinic midrashim are not the best sources for defining ancient science. Concentration on different interpretations and diverse approaches is not very useful for systematizing a science. *Ethiopic Story of Joseph's* interest in action and external appearances opts for a descriptive style and practical applications, leaving out theoretical considerations. In agreement with its dramatic genre suitable for stage performance, *Ethiopic Joseph* is concerned with human affairs instead of cosmological facts. It focuses on describing scientific practice and on setting science in action. Thus, Joseph appears as a practical scientist, whose objective is to know 'the actions of all human beings' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 94), with his cup serving as his main scientific tool. The science in question is the science of vision, that is, ancient optics, and it is the only science that is featured in *Ethiopic Joseph*. Dream interpretation is presented as a part of the broader interpretation of visual effects in *Ethiopic Joseph*. Joseph interprets the visual effects reflected from the surface of the cup or emerging in visions or dreams, as well as those revealed from appearances and the behavior of the people around him.

Ethiopic Joseph focuses on the force of human presence as a source of power and the application of science in vision in interpersonal relations. It uses emission of energy by the eye to move the action and control events—a unique contribution of *Ethiopic Joseph* among the texts examined by this study. A look has a power to inflict awe and fright. 'Joseph . . . stared at them

Targ. Ps.-J. on Gen. 39.9-12 stands in sharp contrast with other Targums that insist that Joseph's inclination was his sexual passion and that his merit consists in his controlling it. His moral integrity, then, is the result of Joseph's refusal 'to go after appearances of his eyes and the imagination of his heart'.

38. For a similar notion about slaves, see *Gen. R.* 86.3.

39. Midrashim in *Ag. Ber.* 73.A, pp. 214-16 and in *Gen. R.* 84.5.2 also lift Joseph over Jacob, a relatively rare occasion in any of the brothers' tradition, which tends to lift Jacob over all his sons, probably because of his participation in naming the divinity, as the 'God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'.

with an ominous look, and they [again] became like corpses' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 87). The look is part of the most basic lecanomantic formula, 'He sounded his cup with his fingers, and looked at them' (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 86, 97). Although its role is not explicitly stated, it seems to emit energy. 'He [Joseph] took the cup . . . in his hand and sounded it with his fingers and laughed and looked at them with a frightening look. And they became frightened with exceeding fear' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 89).

The focus on scientific practice in fragmented episodes of midrashim does not support the discussion of the development of the science of vision in these texts, rendering the topic as irrelevant. Some theoretical support, though, could be found occasionally along with moral evaluations in rabbinic midrashim. Thus, *Tanh.* 9.5 (pp. 237-38) and *Gen. R.* 18.2 proclaim the eyes as the starting place of human inquiry, acknowledging the use of senses in finding the truth. Sense information in itself is neutral, but the moral dispositions of human agents turn it into deception for the wicked and the path to the truth for the righteous. Only the righteous are exalted through their eyes (*Tanh.* 9.5; *Gen. R.* 18.2). To unworthy dreamers and observers such as Eve in the above passage (*Tanh.* 9.6) both dreams and eyes function mostly as deceptive informants. For the righteous, such as Abraham (*Tanh.* 9.5), however, dreams and eyes are the source of enriching knowledge and divine access that lead to the elevation of the individual.

Scientific knowledge is primarily accessible through reason and senses, the principal sensory organ being the eye.⁴⁰ Interpretations of its receptions form the basis of scientific depository. According to midrashic sources, scientific information is mainly about human affairs present, past and future. It is accessible not only through reasoning but also through feelings such as love. By eliciting the affection of his superiors, Joseph shows that he is not the slave that his actual position suggests but a free and noble person, according to *Eth. Jos.* Moreover, Pharaoh's love of Joseph is crucial for his belief that Joseph's interpretations of his dreams are correct.

Validation of RVE predictions is important for the next step of a planned and timely action. Dreams are the only type of RVE that forecast the remote future in the texts of this chapter. Because the interpretation of RVE determines which action is appropriate to take, the availability of methods of verifying the interpretation is of crucial importance. Waiting for the fulfillment of the predictions is, without doubt, the most accurate mode of evaluation, but would render the human participation in channeling the future unnecessary. While for *Ethiopic Joseph* the quality of feelings that the inter-

40. The other senses also play a significant part, such as sound in 'sounding [like sounding shofar] the cup', or smell, as in Jacob's remark, 'O my son Joseph, on this day in which I see you and smell your scent, the light of my eyes has returned to me' (*Eth. Jos.* p. 104).

preters brought forth in their audience is a valid criterion, some midrashim address the issue of verification of dream interpretation in a more rational manner. One is that correct dream interpretation presupposes that the interpreter already knows the content of the dream from other sources before the dreamer tells it. Consequently, the reliable dream interpreter can be tested. If they know the dream before they are told, then their interpretation is trustworthy (*Tanh.* 10.3).⁴¹ Another is that the reputation and credibility of a dream interpreter can be tested by the results of their delivery. If their predictions of the near future are fulfilled, then it is possible to trust their predictions of remote events as well (*Yashar* 49.62-66).

The importance of the sight as sensory reception of light is present throughout *Ethiopic Joseph*. Light represents wisdom and perfection (*Eth. Jos.*, p.74). Thus, Qatifan's wife testifies, 'Who does not love light and hate darkness?' Furthermore, *Ethiopic Joseph* contrasts the light in the form of the reflection from the liquid surface as the symbol of knowledge and bliss with the darkness that is a container without liquid as signs of ignorance and suffering. The light of the full divining cup of water is opposed to the darkness of the empty pit into which Joseph was thrown.⁴²

Ethiopic Story of Joseph also testifies that revelatory knowledge is possible only through the participation of a human interpreter or intermediary. Joseph's youthful dreams do not make him any more knowledgeable or wiser because he did not understand them and there was no professional to explain them.

The best measure of the reliability of scientific propositions is in their realization. Because Joseph did not have an interpreter for his own youthful dreams, he understood them only much later, when he saw them fulfilled (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 99), 'Lord ... made my dreams true. Behold, you have yourselves done obeisance to me. As for the moon [in my dreams], it is Pharaoh, the king! And the eleven stars are yourselves [right] here now' (p. 99). Afterwards, Jacob adds to this testimony, 'Now I know that the dream[s] of my son Joseph were truthful, and not in falsehood' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 102).

Scientific insights are accessible to people with special skills and powers. Their noble birth and status as free persons are presupposed. Training is also necessary, because Joseph as a boy dreamer was unable to understand eve-

41. For an interesting version see *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Genesis 40: both butler and baker saw their own dream along with the interpretation of the dream of the other; thus, they could recognize Joseph's interpretations as correct ('And they dreamed a dream, both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man his own dream, and the interpretation of his companion's dream' (*Targ. Ps.-J. Gen.* 40.5)).

42. Many rabbinic midrashim lack this notion of the empty pit of water. Thus, Joseph's dry pit, however, is said to be full of snakes and scorpions (*Targ. Ps.-J. Gen.* 37.24; *Gen. R.* 84.16; *Tanh.* 9.2; *Yashar* 41.28)

rything. Moreover, the acquisition of skills and powers is inseparable from religious piety and ritualistic purity (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 60). For *Ethiopic Joseph* the professional scientists of vision seem to have been titled ‘scribes’.⁴³

The highest scientific goal is to know the secrets of human affairs and nature, and, according to *Ethiopic Joseph*, the ultimate scientific activity in the service of this purpose is lecanomancy. It is by means of the cup that ‘he knows everything’ (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 91). Correct prediction of the future is a natural consequence of correct reasoning for a carrier of scientific intellectual property. And thus, a reliable forecast is verification of the correctness of an interpretive method and the evaluating techniques of the interpreter.⁴⁴

The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* is not against magic per se, as magic is not separated from religion or science.⁴⁵ It is only against its use for depravation.⁴⁶ Midrashic lore that considers divination along with magic as false religious expressions often includes science in this evaluation, testifying that divination is a scientific pursuit. If this lore belongs to the Joseph tradition, it exonerates Joseph’s magical practice and presents him as a rabbinic/Hebrew scholar or a prophet but not as a scientist.

4. Revelation by Visual Effects

a. Lecanomancy

The most important contribution of the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* and rabbinic midrashim to our understanding of RVE is in the details of lecanomantic ritual. They elaborate on the same divinatory procedure, the core of which is the following formula: ‘Joseph took his cup, struck, looked, and said . . .’

43. See the discussion below.

44. In contrast to midrashim, biblical prognoses, although praised and believed in, are not necessarily realized in the future if read literally. For instance, Josiah dies at the battlefield (2 Kgs 23.29), although the prophetess Huldah prophesized his peaceful death (2 Kgs 22.20); and Isaiah’s prophecy to King Ahaz of Judah that he would not be harmed if he goes to battle king of Syria was misleading (Isa. 7.3-7). According to 2 Chron. 28.5, Ahaz was defeated and captured by the king of Syria.

45. At least the term that is translated in English as ‘magic’. It seems that the very word translated as ‘magic’ is used undoubtedly only once. ‘But the news of this chalice had reached your country, so you came to steal the chalice from us through your magic’ (*Eth. Jos.* p. 91); and see the comment: ‘Lit. for you have performed magic on us and stolen from us that cup’ (*Eth. Jos.* p. 91 n. 2).

46. When the brothers accuse Joseph, the Egyptian, of sorcery, they have just spent an evening of feasting in constant fear of Joseph’s supernatural and political powers. Thus, they feel his ‘magic’ as malevolent: ‘Cursed is Egypt and [cursed is] her grain! Even if death came upon us from hunger and every [kind of] trouble, we shall [never] ever come [back] to the land of Egypt, the land of sorcerers’ (*Eth. Jos.* p. 90).

1. *Lecanomancy at Joseph's Second Encounter with the Brothers*1.1. *Lecanomancy in The Ethiopic Story of Joseph*

1.1.1. *Content.* The most expansive subject in the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* is about the power of divination in Joseph's drinking cup (Gen. 44.5, 15). Joseph divines with his cup on three different occasions using the same divinatory method. All three are retellings of Gen. 43.33–44.34 and happen during the second journey of Joseph's brothers to Egypt. The first two take place at the meal to which Joseph invites all his brothers, including Benjamin. Joseph asks his Minister of Food to bring him 'the cup . . . with which I drink' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 86), and he uses it to impress his brothers that he is finding out the personal information about his guests so that he can seat them in exact order according to their birth seniority.⁴⁷

Then Joseph took the cup and looked at their faces.

And when they [his] brothers saw how he was staring at them, they became exceedingly frightened of him and they all stood up before him [immediately].

Joseph sounds the cup with his fingers and looked at them.

And he said, 'Where is Reuben?'

And he [Reuben] said to him, 'Here I am, your servant!'

And Joseph said to him, 'As this cup says, you are the firstborn of your father, and you are senior' to all your brothers. So [please] sit first at the head of the table.'

Once again he [Joseph] sounded the cup with his fingers for the second time and said, 'Where is Simeon?'

And he [Simeon] said, 'Here I am, your servant!'

And Joseph said to him [Simeon], 'Sit at the side of your brother [Reuben].'

He [Joseph] then sounded the cup for the third time and said, 'Where is Levi?'

And he [Joseph] said to him [Levi], 'Come, sit at the side of your brother [Simeon].'

In this manner he [Joseph] called [all their names in order].

'Where is Judah? Where is Issachar? Where is Zebulun?

Where is Dan? Where is Asher?' (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 86–87)

He then seats Benjamin separately on the pretext that Benjamin lacks a brother beside whom he can dine. The brothers are frightened by the manner in which Joseph looks at them. They tremble throughout the meal (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 87–88).

Once again during the same night, Joseph repeats the ritual with his cup with the purpose of finding out the hidden truth about human relationships.

47. The brothers murmured, 'Unless this person is born into our family, how can he know our names and orders [of seniority]?' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 87).

LECANOMANCY (+/–) RVE

	<i>Ethiopic Joseph</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	<i>Tanhuma</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i>	<i>Aggadah Bereshit</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>	<i>Yashar</i>	<i>Legends of the Jews</i>
<i>1st Journey</i>	— <i>Other RVE</i> <i>Direct energy from/to eyes</i>					<i>Other RVE</i>	<i>Other RVE</i>	
<i>Gen. 42.7-9 Detection</i>	<i>Other RVE</i> <i>Sight, gaze</i> <i>p. 78</i>	91.6.8-9 Magician Joseph <i>Other RVE</i> 91.7.2 Joseph's beard	10.8 Magician Joseph		73.C Magician Joseph	<i>Other RVE</i> <i>Gen. 42.8</i> Joseph's beard	<i>Other RVE</i> <i>Sight, gaze</i> <i>51.19-20</i>	
<i>Gen. 42.9, 12.14-17 spies</i>	<i>Other RVE</i> <i>Sight, gaze</i> <i>pp. 78-79</i>	91.6.9.G Brothers' guilt/sins <i>Other RVE</i> 91.6.3-7 <i>Evil eye</i>	10.8 Brothers' guilt/sins <i>Other RVE</i> 10.8 <i>Evil eye</i>			<i>Other RVE</i> <i>Gen. 42.5</i> <i>Evil eye</i>		
<i>2nd Journey</i> <i>Gen. 43.26-44.34</i>	+ <i>Other RVE</i>							

LECANOMANCY (+/–) RVE (continued)

	<i>Ethiopic Joseph</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	<i>Tunhuma</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i>	<i>Aggadah Bereshit</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>	<i>Yashar</i>	<i>Legends of the Jews</i>
<i>Gen. 43.33 Seating</i>	+ pp. 86-87 <i>Joseph's gaze frightens brothers (other RVE)</i>	+ 93.7.3.B 92.5.3 Drunk and merry	+ 11.4	+ pp. 24-5	—	+ Gen. 43.33	+ 53.11-14	+ 2.1.247-8
<i>Gen. 43.33-4</i>	+ p. 89 Truth about Joseph	+ 92.5.2.B Cup smelling					+ 53.18-21 Astrolabe	+ 2.1.251-2 Astrolabe
<i>Gen. 44.15 Stealing the cup to use it in divination</i>			+ 10.10				+ 53.30 Whereabouts of Joseph	
<i>Gen. 44.34</i>	+ pp. 97-98 Brothers' sins							

Under the influence of the wine, Benjamin asks Joseph to consult his cup, 'which chronicles to you mysteries [secrets]', in order that the cup would reveal the truth about his brother Joseph.⁴⁸ Joseph complies.

He took the cup [fol. 150b] in his hand and sounded it with his fingers and laughed and looked at them with a frightening look. And they became frightened with exceeding fear (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 89).

He tells Benjamin that the cup reveals to him that Benjamin's brother is alive, but he refuses to tell him at that time where he is.⁴⁹

The third occasion is unique to this story tradition; it is not found in our rabbinic midrashim. It takes place on the next day, after the planted Joseph's cup had been found in Benjamin's sack. The brothers followed the summoned Benjamin accused of theft to the presence of Joseph, who 'was sitting upon the Seat of Government' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 93) with all the important people of Egypt standing in front of him. The scene takes place in a public space: in the Egyptian 'parliament'. Judah has just delivered a speech in defense of Benjamin (cf. Gen. 44.18-34), and at the very moment that Joseph appeared to be convinced by Judah's speech of their uprightness, and ready to grant them a pardon, the Canaanite merchants who had traded Joseph enter the scene. They came to Pharaoh's highest judicial official in order to settle a dispute among themselves about a sale document. Like on a stage, the document happens to be the proof of their purchase of Joseph from his brothers, signed by Judah himself. Joseph happens to ask Judah, who is in the limelight, to read it aloud. Judah tries to avoid this by excusing himself on account of having weak eyes, 'like his mother' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 97).⁵⁰ Provoked by Judah's lies, Joseph orders that his cup be brought

48. As they were drinking, Benjamin also drank and became intoxicated from the wine. And he said to Joseph, 'I would like to explain to you that I had a brother. My father sent him to [the field] where the sheep were, to these brothers of mine [who were looking after them]. But [fol. 150a] he did not return to us. And for twenty years we have not seen him. . . . I would [now] like to ask you in [the name of] the Lord that you speak to this cup which talks (Lit. 'chronicles', 'converses') to you in mysteries [secrets], so that it can chronicle to you about my brother Joseph and you can tell me whether in truth wild beasts devoured him or some human being murdered him' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 88).

49. At that moment, Joseph said to Benjamin, 'Behold you have asked the cup, O young fellow, about your brother. It says to me that lions did not devour him, neither did any human being murder him. He is indeed still alive! Now, go to your father and extend to him my [greetings of] peace. And when your [brothers] return [to me] once again shortly, I shall tell you [Benjamin] where your brother is found' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 89).

50. 'Then Judah took the document and opened it in order to read [it]. And, he found his [own] name [written] at the head of the document. For it was he who had written [the document]. [So] he [Judah] said to Joseph, "O my master, I cannot see it [the writing] because my eyes are oblique like my mother's eyes"' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 97).

to him with a comment, 'The Lord knows that I would have not preferred that they would take out the cup and your deeds are revealed through it' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 97). The episode follows wherein Joseph consults his cup four times, enumerating the crimes of the brothers against humanity. He starts with the oldest, Reuben's sin against his father's bed,

[Then] he sounded the cup with his fingers and looked at them. And he said, 'Where is Reuben?'

And he [Reuben said] [fol. 155b] to him, 'Here I am, your servant!'

Joseph said to him [Reuben], 'Hear what this cup is saying, what it is chronicling concerning you: that you slept with your father's wife and defiled your father's bed. How can you not fear the Lord, your God, that you commit such a sin? And yet you [pl.] say that your father is a just man?' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 97).

He continues with Simeon and Levi's murder of people of another country:

He [Joseph] sounded the cup the second time and said,

'Where are Simeon and Levi? For they committed a grave sin on account of one woman. They destroyed a certain country adjoining their own [country] and murdered the people' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 97).

Then Joseph calls the next brother in the line of seniority, Judah, pronouncing his sin against his daughter-in-law:

Again he sounded the cup and said, 'Where is Judah?'

He [Judah] said, 'Here I am, your servant!'

Joseph said to him, 'I had thought that you are a kind man, but this cup has related to me that you slept with your son's wife and by her begat two sons. How could you not fear the Lord, the Most High, when you committed such a sin in his sight?' (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 97-98).

The scene culminates with the brothers' collective crime of selling their own brother into slavery (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 97-98):

Joseph sounded the cup [one more time], and [the brothers' facial] color altered and their intestines were quivering from the shock. Then he snapped his hand and looked at them [his brothers] with a frightening look.

And he said to them, '[You say,] "We are from the Lord and we shall return to him". Yet, how extensive your [fol. 156a] transgressions and your sins which you have committed! . . . Where, in the whole world, did you hear of brothers selling their own brothers—except you who slaughtered a goat and stained [your brother's garment] with its blood and took it [the garment] to your father? You had no compassion upon his gray hair! You did not fear the Lord!' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 98).

1.1.2. *Access to Divine.* The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* details much of the supernatural power of Joseph's cup. In the elaborate account of its theft (Genesis 44) the Minister of Food in charge of pursuit of the thieves accuses the brothers of stealing this cup, 'the king's chalice' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 90), as the greatest possible theft imaginable. Anything else, garments, jewels, gold or silver would not matter as much, but they chose to steal the very tool 'by means of which he (Joseph) knows everything . . . divines everything possible' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 91 n. 1).⁵¹ The brothers had seen with their own eyes how he could discern 'the actions of every person' by the use of his cup (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 91).⁵² Joseph also scolds them, 'Then you stole this cup of mine by which means I get to know the actions of all human beings' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 94). Moreover, their theft of this cup is the very reason why they came to Egypt with the pretext that they needed to buy grain. 'The news of this chalice had reached your country, so you came to steal the chalice from us through your magic.'

Joseph appears here as a powerful scientist who knows the secret workings of the world and as a great detective whose forensics are unmistakably successful, in the manner of great heroes of English detective novels, Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot. Belief in the efficacy and accuracy of using the cup to learn about the world beyond the rational immediacy of the five human senses is certainly asserted by *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*. Lecanomancy functions rather as a metaphor, alluding to an established convention easily recognizable by the audience as an accepted scientific method. The purpose of its literary use does not diminish its cultural function. Even if its narrative role is not to show that lecanomancy is efficacious, and Joseph's action might be interpreted as mocking the ritual, it does not necessarily mean that the text rejects its authenticity. Both Joseph and the audience are aware of Joseph's prior knowledge of the facts that he reveals; Joseph discloses nothing new. Lecanomancy serves as a device to impress the brothers, but it is a convincing device that both the brothers and the audience would recognize. Neither Joseph's brothers nor his entourage question lecanomancy's power in discovering the unknown.

When the brothers leave Egypt, after the terrifying experience at Joseph's dinner table, they swear not to come back to Egypt, 'the land of sorcerers' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 90). Accusing Joseph of sorcery works only as an offense and

51. Garments in *Ethiopic Joseph* are indicators of social status, and a change of garments signifies the endorsement of or withdrawal from political and social standing. Not only is Joseph's coat one of the principle motifs of the story (e.g. *Eth. Jos.*, pp. 45, 50, 55, 66, 81, 88, 98, 105), but garments are the main item in gift exchange and symbolize promotion or demotion (see my forthcoming article on the topic).

52. 'Behold, you saw with your own eyes this very thing [that] by means of it [the cup] he can divine [know] the actions of every person' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 94).

verbal revenge, because the Egyptian pursuers also accuse the brothers of being evil men and sorcerers (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 90). While sorcery is certainly a negative activity, it is not intrinsically related to the use of the cup. It is important to distinguish this understanding from the pejorative understanding of cup divination in late medieval Judeo-Christian traditions.

1.2. *Rabbinic Midrashim on Lecanomancy.* In contrast to the elaborate treatment of Genesis 44 in the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, midrashic legendary sources (*Genesis Rabbah*, *Aggadah Berešit*, *Midrash on Proverbs*, *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Book of Yashar*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and also Louis Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews* [*LoJ*])⁵³ showed little concern in expanding on divination in the biblical chapter that mentions it in connection with Joseph (Gen. 44.5, 15). Although they delight in elaborating on the biblical implication that Joseph was a diviner and in detailing Joseph's use of his cup, these sources lose interest in the cup as a diviner's tool when focusing on its theft and restoration.⁵⁴ The partial exceptions are *Midrash Tanhuma* (*Tanḥ.* 10.10) and the *Book of Yashar* (53.30), with their mention that Benjamin stole the cup to find his brother Joseph.⁵⁵ Although this midrashic

53. Louis Ginzberg, in his monumental work, published at the beginning of the twentieth century, *Legends of the Jews*, collected Jewish legends (*aggadot*) from rabbinic literature, apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, church fathers, and also tried to include other sources preserved by Christianity and Islam. He did not leave out Zohar and Hasidic literature, because he 'understood that in Jewish tradition the late dating of a text did not necessarily rule out its containing very early traditions that had not been preserved anywhere else' (Ginzberg, *LoJ*, p. xviii). Ginzberg's *LoJ* is the author's compilation of all the traditions known to him, which he collated into a continuous narrative. Thus *LoJ* includes some traditions that are not covered by the rabbinic books examined by this chapter.

54. They seem, though, to share *Ethiopic Joseph*'s interest in the setting of the scene of Joseph's trial of his brothers, elaborating on Gen. 44.14, 'Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house while he was still there'. Their main concern is if the trial was a public or a private affair. While *Ethiopic Joseph* emphasizes the full public denunciation of their deeds (p. 93), *Tanhuma* insists that there was a reason why the biblical text mentions that Joseph was still at his house. He did not go that morning to court (to work), but stayed at home to interrogate his brothers and thus to avoid their public shame (*Tanḥ.* 10.10). *Yashar* has Joseph carry out his duties from home, where he sits on his throne and is surrounded by the highest Egyptian dignitaries (*Yashar* 53.29). So although he was at home, he encounters his brothers in public. At this point in the story, only *Ethiopic Joseph* reveals their sins in full public view. *Genesis Rabbah*, in accordance with its general lack of concern for the context, does not address this issue. It implies though, that all the proceedings were not public knowledge. Judah's speech is introduced with 'Judah going up to Joseph' (*Gen. R.* 93.1-10). Also, Joseph calls 'his brothers to come near to him in order to disclose his identity to them' (*Gen. R.* 93.9-10).

55. Ginzberg, *LoJ* (2.1.251), elaborates on the same story. It also adds the part that Benjamin at the preceding dinner saw in the cup that the mighty Egyptian governor was

lore does not comment in general on divination or divining in Genesis 44, it also does not interfere with the biblical mention of them, testifying that it does consider these activities as acceptable. This fact is more pronounced when compared with the midrashic traditions that took great care to relieve Joseph of such unseemly activities, such as the Levitical tradition of *Jubilees* or of *Targum Onkelos*.⁵⁶ The latter almost seem to align more with modernity, replacing the term divining with a more scientific term, ‘testing’ in the sense of experimenting.⁵⁷ Here, Joseph conducts tests with his cup (*Targ. Onq.* on Gen. 44.5, 15).⁵⁸

The above-mentioned midrashim share an interest with *Ethiopic Joseph* in the use of the ‘magical cup’ at the dinner party, especially in the seating of the brothers according to their descending age or status.⁵⁹ According to midrashic exegesis, Joseph’s astonishment in Gen. 44.15 that the brothers do not know that he divines supposes an opportunity within the previous biblical account where the brothers could have seen the Egyptian governor perform divination with his cup. As it is also a drinking cup, the most likely moment for the brothers to see Joseph with his cup is the night before when they dined with him. The shared meal and drink provide an exceptional circumstance for the occasion (Gen. 43.25, 31–34). Moreover, the Egyptian official’s extraordinary knowledge of each brother’s age and status is just stated in the biblical passage without any indication of the brothers’ thoughts about it. Thus, the passage calls for an explanation.

in fact his brother Joseph. As a result Joseph reveals to him his plan to plant his cup in Benjamin’s sack. In this case, then, this accusation really serves as a rhetorical device.

56. For *Jubilees* see the next chapter.

57. *בדקוא מנד* implies ‘harmless tests or experiments designed—already pointed out by Saadia—to discover whether people exposed to the temptation of theft would maintain their honesty’ (Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld (eds.), *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text [Based on A. Sperber’s Edition]* [New York: Ktav, 1982], p. 257 n. 3).

58. It can be argued that *Yashar* deviates from this rule, because it does not mention divination in regard to the cup of Genesis 44. It has, though, Joseph accusing the brothers of stealing the cup in order to establish with it the whereabouts of their brother Joseph, which implies that they are capable of divining with it (*Yashar* 53:30). It may indicate that both *Yashar* and *Targum Onkelos* tried to preserve the initial meaning of the divination in the text. But because in the cultural context of the early centuries of the second millennium CE divination was almost exclusively related to magic and pseudo-science, they needed to replace it with another term that preserves the ancient meaning.

59. The only exception is *Aggadah Berešit*, which omits the dinner-party episode in favor of the occasion of the first descent of the brothers to Egypt (*Ag. Ber.* 73.C, pp. 217–18). The cup-divination served to make Joseph unrecognizable, i.e. make him a ‘magician’ to his brothers. Being a late rabbinic midrash, *Aggadah Berešit* could reflect here a late midrashic tradition (ninth to tenth century).

‘When they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birth-right and the youngest according to his youth, the men looked at one another in amazement’ (Gen. 43.33). The thought that Joseph acquired this knowledge by some esoteric means or magic neatly fits a lecanomantic scene. Another question that midrashim asked is what that order of seniority was and how they were seated.⁶⁰

Genesis Rabbah, *Midrash on Proverbs*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Yashar* and Ginzberg’s *Legends of the Jews* have Joseph use his cup to seat his brothers according to a mixed order of their status, considering birth-right and their mothers.⁶¹

And they sat around him, the greatest according to his majority, and the less according to his minority. For he *had taken the silver cup in his hand, and, sounding as if divining* he had set in order the sons of Leah on one side, and the sons of Zilpha on the other side, and the sons of Bilhah on another side, and Benjamin the son of Rachel he ordered by the side of himself. And the men wondered each at the other (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 43. 33).

Genesis Rabbah narrates this incident twice. In the first incident Joseph ‘pretends to smell the cup’,

He took his cup and pretended to smell [as if divining]. He said, ‘Judah, who is the king, will sit at the head. Reuben, who is firstborn, will sit second to him’ (*Gen. R.* 92.5.2.B).

Judah as king sits at the head of the table, while Reuben gets the second place, as maintained also by *LoJ* 2.1.247-48.⁶²

60. Did they all sit at one table or at several? Except for *Yashar*, all our texts agree that the brothers, including Benjamin and Joseph, sat at the same table. The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, however, indicates that Joseph and Benjamin sat apart from the other brothers (p. 87). *The Book of Yashar* follows explicitly the same arrangement. *Yashar* has Benjamin sit with Joseph by his throne, that is, at the separate space (*Yashar* 53.14). Ginzberg, *LoJ* 2.1.245, indicates that the table was set in three separate sections.

61. ‘And Joseph had a cup from which he drank, and it was of silver beautifully inlaid with onyx stones and bdellium, and Joseph struck the cup in the sight of his brethren whilst they were sitting to eat with him. And Joseph said unto the men, I know by this cup that Reuben the first born, Simeon and Levi and Judah, Issachar and Zebulun are children from one mother, seat yourselves to eat according to your births. And he also placed the others according to their births, and he said, I know that this your youngest brother has no brother, and I, like him, have no brother, he shall therefore sit down to eat with me. And Benjamin went up before Joseph and sat upon the throne’ (*Yashar* 53.11-14).

62. ‘When all was ready, and the guests were to be seated, Joseph raised his cup, and, pretending to inhale his knowledge from it, he said, “Judah is king, therefore let him sit at the head of the table, and let Reuben the first-born take the second seat”, and

In the second narration he strikes the cup and seats his brothers according to their mothers (*Gen. R.* 93.7.3B, pp. 306-307).⁶³ *Midrash on Proverbs* (pp. 24-25) preserves exactly the same tradition,

When they sat down to dine, he took his chalice and struck it, saying, 'Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon, the sons of the same mother, come and be seated; Dan and Naphtali, the sons of the same mother, come and be seated; Dan and Asher, the sons of the same mother, come and be seated.' Then he struck the chalice again and said, 'Benjamin is an orphan [and I too am an orphan]. It is fitting for an orphan to sit with an orphan' (*Midr. Prov.*, pp. 24-25).

Midrash Tanhuma and the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* have Reuben seated at the first place as the firstborn.⁶⁴

While *Ethiopic Joseph* has the brothers feeling frightened and miserable during the meal, the majority of the examined texts and *Gen.* 43.34 describe the mood of the brothers as happy, enjoying the meal and the drink at the side of the Egyptian dignitary.

1.3. *Variations on the Cup.* In the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* Benjamin asks the Egyptian dignitary to examine his cup to find out what happened to his brother Joseph. Joseph complies, sees the truth but declines to disclose it to Benjamin at that moment (pp. 88-89). The *Book of Yashar* (53.18-21) and *Legends of the Jews* (2.1.251-52) retell this episode. Instead of the cup they ask Joseph to use the astrolabe, an ancient astronomical instrument in broad use in Hellenistic period.⁶⁵ The astrolabe, or 'the map of the stars' (transla-

thus he assigned places to all his brethren corresponding to their dignity and their age' (*LoJ* 2.1.247).

63. 'When he came to recline, he took his cup and struck it and said, "Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, are sons of one mother. Where are they?" They brought them in and seated them beside one another. "Dan, Naphtali are sons of one mother." They brought them in and seated them together. "Gad and Asher are sons of one mother." They brought them in and seated them together. Benjamin was left. He said, "This one is an orphan and I am an orphan. Let me and him sit together"' (*Gen. R.* 93.7.3B, pp. 306-307).

64. Reuben is naturally seated before Judah as the firstborn. *Tanhuma* even elaborates on the reasons for it (*Tanh.* 11.4). If the brothers are grouped together according to their mothers (see above *Genesis Rabbah*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Midrash on Proverbs*, *LoJ*), then Joseph could justify his preference for Benjamin and his seating of Benjamin next to him.

65. Astrolabe is an instrument used to solve practical problems in astronomy. The word is compound of ἄστρον (ἀστήρ), star, and λαβεῖν, to take, meaning 'the one that catches heavenly bodies'. Hipparchus's use of an astrolabe in the second century BCE is the earliest report about it. Astrolabes were in use from the time of classical Greece at least until the seventeenth century for measuring time, terrestrial measurement of height and angles, and navigation.

tion from *Yashar*'s Hebrew), replaces the cup in lecanomantic ritual as a truly scientific tool. In the tradition of *Yashar* and *LoJ* it is Joseph who initiates the lecanomantic procedure instead of Benjamin, as in *Ethiopic Joseph* Joseph orders that his astrolabe be brought to him,

And he ordered them to bring before him his map of the stars, whereby Joseph knew all the times, and Joseph said unto Benjamin, I have heard that all Hebrews are acquainted with all wisdom, dost thou know any thing of this? And Benjamin said, thy servant is knowing also in all the wisdom which my father taught me, and Joseph said unto Benjamin, look now at this instrument and understand where thy brother Joseph is in Egypt, who you said went down to Egypt (*Yashar*, 53.18-19).

Benjamin by looking at the lecanomantic instrument immediately sees that this very Egyptian dignitary is his brother Joseph.

Since Ginzberg used *Yashar* among other midrashic sources for reconstructing his story, *Yashar* will serve as the reference. *Yashar* calls the astrolabe the 'map of the stars' and regards it as a serious scientific tool. Joseph used it to acquire the knowledge of 'all the times'.⁶⁶ Joseph is a scientist or scholar who knows how to read the map of the stars, or astrolabe, and through this skill communicates with the divine.⁶⁷ According to the more nationalistic *Yashar*, this knowledge and competence is derived from the teachings of his father, Jacob, and not from Egyptian learning, as it is in *Ethiopic Joseph*. Therefore, assuming that Benjamin received the same training from Jacob, Joseph asks him to read the map of the stars.

And Benjamin beheld that instrument with the map of the stars of heaven, and he was wise and looked therein to know where his brother was, and Benjamin divided the whole land of Egypt into four divisions, and he found that he who was sitting upon the throne before him was his brother Joseph, and Benjamin wondered greatly (53.20). . . . And Benjamin said unto Joseph, I can see by this that Joseph my brother sitteth here with me upon the throne. (*Yashar* 53.21)

Yashar devalues the cup, which, in contrast to the efficacious, scholarly astrolabe, is ineffective, nourishes prejudice and is the tool for deceit. This idea probably reflects a prominent late medieval interpretation of cup divination as superstition. The cup does not have any intrinsic value, as in *Ethi-*

66. The longer, creative and stylized adaptation (seventeenth-century manuscript) of *Yashar*'s Ladino version (all Ladino versions are translations from Hebrew), also has 'the map of the stars', 'la carta de las estrellas que tenia, que por aí Yōsēf savia a todas las oras', in Moshe Lazar (ed.), 'Ladino SĒFĒR HA-YĀŠĀR', *Joseph and his Brethren: Three Ladino Versions* (Culver City, CA: Labyrinthos, 1990), p. 300.

67. Joseph's image corresponds to that of a medieval scientist here, who practices astrology and uses the astrolabe as a scientific instrument, while rejecting cups as the magical tools of popular belief.

opic Joseph, and serves only as a literary device to move the plot.⁶⁸ *Yashar* is very likely a product of the period (around twelfth century CE) when many legends and romances based on historical or mythological figures were composed or written down from oral traditions.⁶⁹ Many cultures with ancient roots, including Jews, whose product of the time was *Yashar*, turned to their own traditional oral or written stories and incorporated them in the new compositions.⁷⁰ This antiquarian tendency to revive one's own cultural history is the basis of the approaching Renaissance in Western Europe.

Yashar is a rich source of old midrashic traditions and therefore worthy of investigation despite its late composition. The designation of the astrolabe as a scientific tool and the cup as an implement of widely held prejudice is a common characterization at the time of the composition of *Yashar*. This is shown clearly by the sharp division between serious philosophy and science on the one hand, and uneducated citizen's superstitions on the other. The fact that the astrolabe is here an astrological device is an indicator of the high Middle Ages in the Latin Mediterranean world, when theology and philosophy were still undivided but sharply separated from the common religion of the unschooled.⁷¹ Antecedent to the Reformation and scientific revolution, this period would still have astrology and astronomy as part

68. *Yashar* makes Judah's speech into a dialogue of power between Judah and Joseph, based on the mockery of the alleged worth of the cup. Judah says, 'For a little silver the king of Egypt wrangled with the men, and he accused them and took their brother for a slave. And Joseph answered and said, "Take unto you this cup and go from me and leave your brother for a slave, for it is the judgment of a thief to be a slave". And Judah said, "Why art thou not ashamed of thy words, to leave our brother and to take thy cup? Surely if thou givest us thy cup, or a thousand times as much, we will not leave our brother for the silver which is found in the hand of any man, that we will not die over him". And Joseph answered, "And why did you forsake your brother and sell him for twenty pieces of silver unto this day, and why then will you not do the same to this your brother?"' (*Yashar* 54.17-18).

69. *Yashar* is a very coherent text. It delivers a single explanation for each situation in a logical narrative, and thus its style is very unlike rabbinic midrashim, typically represented by *Genesis Rabbah*. However, its content draws very heavily, almost exclusively, on these midrashim.

70. Byzantium experienced a twelfth-century renaissance of Hellenistic romance novels in the form of romantic hagiography that are behind many preserved manuscripts of Hellenistic texts such as of *Joseph and Aseneth*. See Chapter 4.

71. *Yashar* is the product of the time of the rise of Roman Catholic Scholasticism that re-discovered ancient Greek intellectual traditions through the Islamic cultural heritage. Medieval Islamic philosophy was strongly influenced by the Neoplatonic worldview, which promoted the unity of religion, philosophy and astrology/astronomy, making the planets and stars into layers of heaven. This worldview became the intellectual property of the Latin-speaking literati and the elite, dividing it sharply from the popular religion of everyday folk.

of the same science, and miracles as a part of the official religion. A later antagonistic separation between science and philosophy on the one hand and religion on the other will more readily deny the use of material instruments and human senses for accessing the world of divine.⁷² Nevertheless, Joseph's use of a scientific tool for theosophical purposes corresponds to the Hellenistic understanding of Joseph as a scientist and a scholar. The difference lies in *Yashar's* denial of the use of the cup of divination for these purposes, a refusal that expresses the norms of its time period, the refusal to accept the role of the cup as a scientific tool.

2. *Lecanomancy at Joseph's First Encounter with the Brothers.* The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* presents the cup for the first time on the second descent of the brothers to Egypt, but later uses it once again in the narrative to enumerate the brothers' sins. In contrast, rabbinic sources (excluding *Targ. Ps.-J.* and *Yashar*) have Joseph use his cup on the brothers's first descent to Egypt and their very first encounter with Joseph as an Egyptian dignitary. There are two obvious occasions in which he could appear to the brothers to have esoteric powers and knowledge of human secrets. The first one is when they did not recognize him, but he recognizes them instantly (Gen. 42.7-9), and the second is when he accuses them of being spies (Gen. 42.9, 12, 14-17). The purpose of Joseph's use of his diviner's cup is either to hide his potential recognition by his brothers or to reveal their hostile intentions as foreign agents. In the first case, the obscurity of the Hebrew word *wayyitnakkēr*, וַיִּתְּנַקֵּר, in Gen. 42.7, which could be translated as 'he made himself strange unto them' (*Aggadat Berešit* 73.C, p. 218), 'he acted like a stranger towards them' (JPS), or 'he treated them like strangers' (NRSV). The midrash invites the question: how was it done and what does it really mean? This midrash introduces lecanomancy. Joseph took his cup and performed a divinatory practice with it, so that they would see him as a magician, that is, as a gentile (*Ag. Ber.* 74.C, p. 218; *Gen. R.* 91.6.8-9; *Tanḥ.* 10.8).⁷³ Joseph took no chance that they could recognize him. *Aggadat Berešit* has Joseph use his cup to show his brothers that he is a magician. 'He said to them: "Don't you know that I am a magician?" because he took the cup and smelled it, and pretended that he was a magician' (*Ag. Ber.* 74.C, p. 218).

72. For the time being, western Europe of the twelfth century was especially rich in intellectual, mystical and artistic enterprises, which occurred entirely under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. A good example is the tenth- to twelfth-century cluniac style started by the French Cluny Abbey that celebrated the use of the senses in approaching the divine.

73. All three sources preserve the same tradition, with great agreement between *Gen. R.* 91.6.8-9, and *Tanḥ.* 10.8. *Genesis Rabbah* preserves the tradition of smelling the cup in an act of pretence when Joseph wanted to present himself as a magician.

In the second instance, there is neither an apparent reason nor a justification in the biblical account for why Joseph proclaims his brothers to be spies (Gen. 42.9, 12, 14). Thus, Joseph must have had some evidence of the brothers' evildoing. Both *Genesis Rabbah* and *Tanḥuma* make Joseph employ his cup to establish the brothers' guilt. When they deny it, Joseph uses his cup again, declaring that he saw their sins in his cup.

He took his cup, struck it and said to them, [I see in my cup] You are spies ... I see in my cup that two of you destroyed a great city and sold your brother (*Gen. R.* 91.6.9.G). 'Which of us did so', they asked. He smote the goblet once again and replied: 'Their names were Simeon and Levi' (*Tanḥ.* 10.8).

In conclusion, all the examined texts apply a midrashic approach to the biblical portrayal of Joseph as a lecanomancer (Gen. 44.5, 15). They have Joseph use his cup to establish the truth about human relations in the area of forensics. They use the following recurring themes: Joseph employs his cup to show that he is an Egyptian magician, to pronounce the brothers spies, to reveal their sins, to seat them at the banquet table in order of their birthright and to establish the truth about Joseph and his whereabouts on Benjamin's behalf.

3. *The Cup*. The scientific, divinatory, or 'magical' device used by Joseph for the acquisition of higher knowledge is described either as a drinking cup, a cup/vessel with an unspecified purpose, or as an astrolabe. *Ethiopic Joseph* identifies it as a drinking cup from its very introduction into the story. To establish the seniority of the brothers by his own power, without questioning the Hebrews, he asks his 'Minister of Food to bring him 'the cup [of wine] with which I drink!' In *Targ. Ps.-J.* Gen. 43.33, Joseph 'took the silver cup in his hand' at the meal, implying that it was a drinking cup.⁷⁴

Aggadat Berešit uses the Biblical Hebrew word *gēbīa* ' (גְּבִיָּא) for the cup, which is an unusual word for an ordinary drinking cup. Joseph uses this cup solely to make himself look like a magician, 'because he took the cup and smelled it, and pretended that he was a magician' (*Ag. Ber.* 73.C, p. 218). However, although *Midrash on Proverbs*, like *Aggadat Berešit*, mentions only the cup without any explicit specification, it uses yet another unusual word for it, כְּלִיד (*klyd*), probably a Greek loanword from κάλυξ, which is not the word used in the Bible.⁷⁵ The midrash on Gen. 43.33 is used to

74. Moreover, the Aramaic word used for the cup here is the regular Semitic word for a drinking cup, *ks*, כּוּס. However, *Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 44.2 has another word for Joseph's silver cup, אֲוִגְבִּי, probably imitating the biblical choice of an unusual term.

75. The same *kalid* is used frequently by Aramaic texts, e.g. *Targ. Onq.* for Genesis 44 (Samuel Krauss, *Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrash und Targum*, vol. 2 [Berlin, 1899; repr. edn, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964], p. 289). Burton L.

explain Prov. 1.14, playing on the similarity of the words for *purse*, *kīs* (כִּיֶּס) and the regular Hebrew word for a drinking cup, *kōs* (כּוֹס). *Kīs* is taken to mean *kōs*, the cup, which renders the passage as follows: ‘Throw in your lot with us, we shall all have a common purse’, that is, cup. It connects the casting of the lots, which is a sanctioned divinatory device of the Hebrew Bible, with Joseph’s cup. *Klyd* corresponds to *ks* and not *gēbīa* ‘of Genesis 44. Not only does the biblical text use an unusual word for Joseph’s cup, *gēbīa*, but our sources seem to respond by freely selecting terms for it, without giving any specific significance to their choice of words. This suggests that the ancient rewriters did not understand the biblical term, in the sense that they could not relate it to any known vessel or cup.⁷⁶

Tanḥuma omits any reference to drinking at the moment that Joseph employs his cup/goblet in divination at the first meeting with the brothers and also at the banquet. It is, nevertheless, the same silver goblet that is placed into Benjamin’s sack and about which he is asked, ‘Is not this it [silver goblet] in which my lord drinketh?’ (*Tanḥ.* 10.10). Apart from direct biblical quotations, similarly to *Tanḥuma*, *Genesis Rabbah* (91.6.9; 92.5.3.B) leaves out any specification, either of material or the purpose of the cup, only stating that Joseph uses the cup to reveal hidden secrets of people. However, given that midrash as a method presupposes a detailed knowledge of the biblical verses and that the cup was used at the banquet, it may be assumed that both *Tanḥuma* and *Genesis Rabbah* probably are referring to Joseph’s silver drinking cup.

Yashar, like *Ethiopic Joseph*, mentions the use of the cup in divination for the first time at the banquet scene but is quite original in giving us an elaborate description of it. ‘And Joseph had a cup from which he drank, and it was of silver beautifully inlaid with onyx stones and bdellium, and Joseph struck the cup in the sight of his brethren whilst they were sitting to eat with him’ (*Yashar* 53.11). However, for *Yashar*, the cup is an ineffective tool used to scare and deceive the brothers. As shown above for *Yashar*, the real scientific tool for revealing the truths of the universe and human relations is the ‘map of the stars’, or astrolabe (*Yashar* 53.18-21).

To conclude, no source seems to object that the same cup that Joseph uses for drinking is also used as a tool for revealing truths and events. The differences lie in the effective power they grant it. On one end is *Ethiopic Joseph* and *Tanḥuma*, which acknowledge the scientific validity of lecanomanancy; on the other is *Yashar*, which considers it a tool of fraud and deceit,

Visotzky, *The Midrash on Proverb: Translated from the Hebrew with an Introduction and Annotations* (Yale Judaica Press, 27; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 24, translates it with ‘chalice’, probably following the etymology of the English word, the Latin *calyx* from Greek κάλυξ.

76. The Greek writers behave the same, from those of the LXX to Philo and Josephus.

introducing another scientific device of serious research, ‘the map of the stars’.

4. *The Ritual of Lecanomancy*. The most important contribution of *Ethiopic Joseph* and rabbinic midrashim to the understanding of RVE phenomena is in the description of the lecanomantic ritual. The texts in this group are unique in revealing details of the procedures involved in lecanomancy. Each of them contains the basic introductory formula, ‘Joseph took his cup, struck it and said’.

All of the references to Joseph’s cup divination acknowledge the use of senses in lecanomancy, unrelated to whether or not they acknowledge its scientific or religious validity. Among the senses, sight is the leading one in providing access to the truths and secrets, although its role is not always mentioned explicitly. Beside *Ethiopic Joseph*’s emphatic use of sight in revealing all types of human relations—secret, emotional, true and false—the other midrashim either have Joseph *seeing* in his cup a brother’s secret (*Gen. R.* 91.6.9.G; *Tanḥ.* 10.8) or Jacob foreseeing his future from the shiny surface (*Gen. R.* 91.6.2.C). They play on the use of the sight of Joseph’s audience while he strikes the cup in the sight of his brothers (*Yashar* 53.11), or simply declares a special insight provided by the cup, ‘I know by this cup’ (*Yashar* 53.12). Moreover, Benjamin is called to ‘look [at] and understand’ the ‘map of the stars’, whereupon he ‘observes and concludes’ the truth of the matter (*Yashar* 53.18–21). The use of sight is taken for granted; therefore reference to it is not regarded as necessary.

Some passages explicitly mock the use of the cup for divination by emphasizing that Joseph pretends to use it to appear as a magician. They achieve irony by its most popular rhetorical device: reversals. Reversals are realized by a substitution of the senses. Instead of looking at the cup, Joseph ‘smells it’, or even pretends to smell it.⁷⁷ ‘Joseph raised his cup, pretending to inhale his knowledge from it’ (Ginzberg, *LoJ* 2.1.247). Here is a double rhetorical play. On the one hand, a lecanomancer bows over the cup to see, appearing to smell it.⁷⁸ On the other hand, a diviner’s cup employs all the senses but smelling. By looking attentively at the cup, sight is used; by taking and lifting it, touch is used; by drinking, taste; and by sounding it, the procedure present in all our sources, hearing is utilized. The one omitted is smell, and it is with smell that the pun is produced. Instead of ‘seeing’

77. ‘He took the cup and smelled it, and pretended that he was a magician’ (*Ag. Ber.* 73.C, p. 218).

‘He took his cup and pretended to smell [as if divining]’ (*Gen. R.* 91.5.3.B).

78. A good illustration of this image is the famous depiction of the Delphic Pythia on the fifth-century BCE Greek vase bending over and looking into a cup to see the future of the standing king Aegeus (Delphi, 440–430 BCE).

the knowledge, 'Joseph pretends to inhale knowledge from the cup' (*LoJ* 2.1.247).

The sense of hearing is engaged not only by mentioning what is read through the cup but also, along with the sense of touch, by striking the cup. This is the first part of the formula that our texts use to describe what was done in cup divination. The very core of the formula is, 'He took his cup and struck it, and said. . . .'

The texts differ from one another in short elaborations that they add to this basic formula. An elaborated example of *Ethiopic Joseph* reads as follows:

He took the cup [fol. 150b] in his hand and sounded it with his fingers and laughed and looked at them with a frightening look (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 89).

Genesis Rabbah and *Tanḥuma* read:

He took his cup, struck it and said to them, '(I see in my cup) You are spies. . . . I see in my cup that two of you destroyed a great city and sold your brother' (*Gen. R.* 91.6.9.G; cf. to *Tanḥ.* 10.8).

Whereupon, he took the goblet, struck it (like a diviner) and said to them: I was of the opinion that Judah was the firstborn . . . but now I discover that Reuben is the firstborn (*Tanḥ.* 11.4).

'Which of us did so?' they asked. He smote the goblet once again and replied: 'Their names were Simeon and Levi' (*Tanḥ.* 10.8).

Lecanomanancy involves striking the cup at the beginning and closing with pronouncing a judgment at the end. We can only speculate on the significance of striking, as no text elaborates on the reason why it is done. If we expect Joseph to look at the cup after striking it, the striking may serve to move the liquid in the cup, enabling the observer to decipher the patterns of reflection, refraction of light or the images formed by the disturbed liquid. There is no suggestion that unmixable liquids were put in the cup, such as oil and water.

As discussed in the Introduction, in the post-Hellenistic period there is evidence of the abundant presence of reflective and refractive lecanomanancy over other types of cup divination. Its creation of imagery, which was a portal to knowledge of the material and spiritual universes, facilitated the image of Joseph as a Hellenistic scientist of ancient optics. Moreover, the fact that our texts fail to describe or explain this process, but assume the audience would know the procedure by mentioning striking the cup, testify to the general popularity of this method. *Yashar* is the only source that describes the method of the 'map of the stars', probably because an astrolabe was not as widespread a tool as a cup. Cups began to loose their stand-

ing as a scientific tool in discerning the future and universal secrets in the late medieval period.

Striking the cup may also produce some significant sound effects. *Ethiopic Joseph* uses ‘sounding the cup’, and the Hebrew word *teruah* is also used to mean sounding a *shofar*. This detail opens up a new way of understanding the phenomenon. Its significance may be only to enhance the ritual, assigning it the same religious and theosophical value as any event that is introduced by sounding the *shofar* in biblical and Jewish cultic history.⁷⁹ The sounding of the *shofar* accompanies either great transitions in human life and history or introduces miracles. These associations indicate that *Ethiopic Joseph* could not have considered the cup as a mockery of magic or deceit in the sense some rabbinic traditions do, but as a powerful tool in the acquisition of wisdom.

In addition to its symbolic meaning, the use of the term *teruah* probably appealed to the sense of hearing as well. *Teruah* means a joyful shout, a blast of war or an alarm. By the use of the *shofar* as a battle trumpet, the walls of Jericho fell (Josh. 6.4-16). Using this term to describe striking the cup may have been intended to produce a feeling of awe and fear of God.

To conclude, our texts reveal some particulars of lecanomancy. They concur in the details of the ritual performance with the cup, but they differ in the credibility that they grant it. Thus, *Ethiopic Joseph* considers cup divination a true scientific engagement. *Midrash on Proverbs* confirms its credibility by linking cup divination with the casting of lots, which is a sanctioned method of establishing the divine will in the Hebrew Bible. Traditions that reject its effectiveness fall into two groups: one considers lecanomancy a gentile preoccupation that belongs to false religions and ineffective foreign magicians (e.g. smelling of the cup); the other sees it as a popular folk prejudice that Joseph uses (e.g. *Yashar*) to accuse the brothers of stealing the cup in order to use it in divination. With reasonable certainty we can conclude that the examined texts knew all about acquiring esoteric and scientific knowledge from reflected images in cups.

b. The Other Revelation by Visual Effects

In contrast to rabbinic traditions, which have Joseph use his cup as a tool of inquiry into secret and supernatural knowledge at the first encounter of Joseph as an Egyptian dignitary with his brothers, *Ethiopic Joseph* employs other kinds of visual effects. Divinely charged energy features directly in visual communications. The very force of a person’s appearance could affect the observers. Joseph uses the energy emitted by his eyes to produce powerful emotions and control the people physically present to whom this

79. Num. 10.1-10; 29.1; Lev. 23.24; 25.9; Josh. 6.4-16; Hos. 5.6; Judg. 6.34; 7.16-22; Pss. 47.6; 89.18, 25; 98.6.

energy is directed. Being propelled by divine force, this power is given only to elected members of humanity. In *Ethiopic Joseph*'s story line it manifests itself as a forensic power game that Joseph as an Egyptian king initiates and directs.

The same problematic passages of Genesis 42 that invited rabbinic midrashim also called *Ethiopic Joseph* to offer its own. Where *Aggadah Berešit* (*Ag. Ber.* 73.C) has Joseph use his cup to make himself into a magician to avoid any risk of recognition by his brothers (midrash on Gen 42.7), in *Ethiopic Joseph* the reason the brothers failed to recognize Joseph is 'because they *saw* in him [the majesty] of the exalted kingdom' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 78).⁸⁰ Again, where *Genesis Rabbah* has Joseph seeing in his cup that the brothers are spies, *Ethiopic Joseph* frightens them by using his sight: *staring*, or literally, *eying* them and remarking, 'you *appear* to me to be from among the powerful giants . . . you have dared to come to our country as *spies* (lit. 'eye people' or 'people of eye[s]') . . . and [to re]search our kingdom (lit., 'see and know our kingdom') . . . when Joseph's brothers heard this statements . . . they became greatly terrified and [froze] as if dead' (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 78-79). And again Joseph repeats, 'I can tell from your *looks* (lit. "*face*") that you are evil and deceitful people' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 79). Thus, lecanomancy is replaced by other RVE in *Ethiopic Joseph*, which places much emphasis on the importance of the sight in spiritual expertise.

Yet another popular midrash on the accusation of the brothers as spies is that they raised a justified suspicion because each of them entered the city by a different gate. One explanation is based on RVE phenomenon: to avoid the *evil eye*. It is Jacob who advised them that it is an auspicious sign to enter the city by different gates because in this manner they will avoid the evil eye (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 42.5).⁸¹ *Yashar*, however, in contrast

80. There are three midrashic reasons why the brothers fail to recognize Joseph: (1) his exalted position (*Ethiopic Joseph*, *Yashar* 51.19-20); (2) his appearance as a gentile or magician (*Gen. R.* 91.6.8; *Ag. Ber.* 73.C); and (3) (most popular) his beard, which he did not have as a young boy (*Gen. R.*, 91.7.2; *Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 42.8).

81. Another tradition, most elaborately presented in *Gen. R.* 91.6.6-7 and *Tanḥ.* 10.8, cited as the reason for the brothers' entrance to the Egyptian city through different gates was that they wanted to search for the handsome Joseph in Egyptian brothels. Joseph, who issued a command to register everyone who enters the city, has them captured in the brothels. The reason for their arrest was that it took them too long to appear before the Egyptian officials. Although they said that their purpose for being in Egypt was to purchase grain, they were obviously doing something else. Thus, their delay in purchasing the grain could have been interpreted as suspicious. This tradition is also a midrash on Joseph's accusation that the brothers were spies. The accusation of spying is due to their lingering in the city among the brothels. All the rabbinic sources that address this part of the Joseph story incorporate some part of this tradition: evil eye, brothels, delay, arrest. While *Gen. R.* 91.6.3-7 and *Tanḥ.* 10.8 have all the parts, *Yashar* omits

to Hellenistic midrashim that validate the power of the evil eye, excludes the evil eye, probably analogous to its denial of revelatory credential to the cup, considering both as popular prejudice.⁸² *Yashar* agrees, however, with *Ethiopic Joseph* in that the impression of Joseph's appearances on his brothers' vision is the reason for their failure to recognize him. In contrast to the theatrical constriction of *Ethiopic Joseph*'s style of expression, *Yashar* elaborates extensively on visual effects in this episode,

The brothers saw Joseph sitting on his throne in his temple, clothed with princely garment and upon his head was a large crown of gold, and all the mighty men were sitting around him. And the sons of Jacob saw Joseph, and his figure and comeliness and dignity of countenance seemed wonderful in their eyes, and they again bowed down to him to the ground. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but they knew him not, for Joseph was very great in their eyes, therefore they knew him not (*Yashar* 51.18-20).

Both *Ethiopic Joseph* and *Yashar* incorporated into their account the same midrashic tradition; the difference in style of the episode is due to the different literary genres of the respective authors.

There are many places in *Ethiopic Joseph* where the power of Joseph's look frightened the brothers, and some that accompany the handling of the cup:

Then Joseph took the cup and looked at their faces. And when they [his] brothers saw how he was staring at them, they became exceedingly frightened of him and they all stood up before him [immediately] (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 86).

And others where only Joseph's gaze is employed,

Joseph [again] stared at them [his brothers] with an ominous look, and they [again] became like corpses (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 87).

The interpretive side of RVE concerns the reception of visual energy and appears in these cases as the explanation of the looks of the brothers as the objects of the gaze. Joseph uses this device to justify that the brothers are spies:

any reference to the evil eye, and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* omits Joseph's search for the brothers and their arrest. The overall characteristic of this tradition is an attempt to rationalize Joseph's ability to know the brothers' movements and control the encounter with them. For example Joseph's knowledge about the whereabouts of the brothers is not due to some supernatural insight but through seeing the registration polls.

82. For example, Hellenistic midrashim elsewhere, 'His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to have dominion over us?" R. Levi said, "Because they answered him with an evil eye, he produced wicked offspring"' (*Gen. R.* 84.10.4).

Lo, you *appear to me* to be from among the powerful giants. They have sent you [to us], and you have dared to come to our country as spies (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 78).

As for me, I can *tell from your looks* that you are evil and deceitful people. There is nothing good in you (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 79).

The dynamics of psychological communication are transmitted through people's looks. A beautiful person radiates light showing virtue and nobility and therefore is loved. 'Do not despise me because I love you! Who is it who does not love light and hate darkness?' Qatifan's wife justifies her lust for Joseph (p. 74). Joseph's beauty and elegance made not only Qatifan's wife fall in love with him, but also the merchants who bought him, gazing 'upon his appearance and beauty, they loved him with great love' (p. 52), and could hardly believe that Joseph was a slave.

Then when those merchants looked upon Joseph as they were taking him out [from the pit], and *gazed upon his appearance and beauty, they loved him* with great love (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 52).

Qatifan's wife is moved by Joseph's looks:

Now as Joseph was coming in and going out [of the house], his lady/mistress saw Joseph and *gazed upon his appearance and his face—his beauty and elegance—and how his face shone like the moon*. And the love of Joseph pierced her heart; and she began to love him with exceedingly great love (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 59).

Even Pharaoh, when he met Joseph, looked upon him, and 'he admired his beauty and youth; and a very deep love for Joseph came [upon him]' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 70).

The story's preoccupation with garments, their quality and their symbol of social status, their use in gift exchange, and the attention paid to the dress change also support the importance of the comprehension of the world by sight. As shown before, not only is the dress code in *Ethiopic Joseph* crucial for deciding one's social standing, but the indication of promotion and honor is also expressed through the gift of a garment. 'And Pharaoh dressed Joseph with vestments that are worthy [to be worn] only by kings' (pp. 72-73). Wearing the appropriate vestments, which are a great part of external appearances, is an indication of one's place in society. The determination of social status is through the impression made on the sense of vision and comes from sight. It is immediately related to the interpretation given to the sight of a specific type of vestment.

Proof in the form of evidence and knowledge comes from information received by sight. In *Ethiopic Joseph* Benjamin convinces Jacob that he is telling the truth about Joseph's success in Egypt when he *shows* him 'the decorations with which his brother Joseph decorated him' (*Eth. Jos.*,

p. 101). Proof of Joseph's alleged death was provided through sight again. Jacob saw Joseph's bloody colorful garment: 'Now, when Jacob saw his son Joseph's garment smeared [in blood], his visage was transformed, the light of his eyes [extinguished], and he cried a very loud cry' (p. 55). We see also that this visual information has the power to affect the sight of the receiver as well, as Jacob loses his eyesight when he sees the proof of Joseph's death.

Moreover, the play of light and darkness in describing the human condition is an essential part of the narrative style of *Ethiopic Joseph*. Not only does Qatifan's wife reason, 'Who is it who does not love the light of day and run away from the darkness of night?' (p. 74), but *Ethiopic Joseph* describes the prison as a 'darkened [jail] compound inside which none of you can see his neighbor's face' (p. 81). Jacob rejoices that Joseph is alive,

the light of my eyes will return to me. And with great joy, I shall wear a white garment and abandon the dark cloth [which I now wear—when [fol. 148b] I look upon your face (p. 85).

For *Ethiopic Joseph* besides the reception and transmission of world knowledge, sight affects the emotional state. Our midrashim make extensive use of direct energy emitted by the eye as the source of power and knowledge—a gaze that frightens or the evil eye, or of reception of visual energy—impression and interpretation of visions, looks and dress.

The knowledge acquired by RVE method in midrashic sources is mainly about human relations, secrets, private and individual events. So, its subject matter belongs to forensics. The acquisition of this understanding is accomplished through a profound comprehension of the laws of the material and spiritual universes or, in the words of modern science, of the laws of physics.

c. *Dreams, Visions and Seeing*

1. *In the Literary Context.* In contrast to the extended elaboration on Joseph's cup of divination and a general emphasis on the impressions received through sight, the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* neglects dreams. Carefully following the biblical story, it remains disinterested in any expansion on the dream passages and eventually makes proportionally fewer changes in accordance with its own interpretive strategy of visual reception, as compared to other examined midrashim (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 68-71). For instance, it focuses only on measures to prepare for the predictions. It excludes any question of averting them, and thus underplays any human involvement in controlling the future revealed in dreams. There is also no allusion to a prayer for a dream or incubation because dreams are not invoked but inspired. As such, they are revelatory messages that are going to be realized in the future, as Joseph testifies, when he sees his brothers prostrating in

front of him, 'For you [God] have made my dream a reality' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 78).⁸³ Human reasoning is limited to correct interpretation. A dream interpretation is confirmed by its fulfillment. The urgency to know the correct interpretation in advance is less than in cases when human action could change the predicted course of events.

The expansions on dream interpretation in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* follow its nationalistic view that no non-Israelite could rise up over an Israelite in divine knowledge and communication with God. Thus, *Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 40.12-19 attaches to each of the interpretations of the butler and baker another layer of meaning intended only for Joseph and Israel and not for the uninitiated ears of the butler and the baker.⁸⁴ It calls it an 'inner interpretation', and it appears as an additional, more universal and esoteric message concerning a redemptive history of Israel.⁸⁵ *Tanḥuma* and especially *Yashar* expand the story of Pharaoh's dreams. The former (*Tanḥ.* 10.2-3) incorporates dream interpretations from Daniel 1-3; the latter (*Yashar* 48.16-25) adds false interpretations by Egyptian magicians and sages. They are both interested in explaining how Pharaoh could know that Joseph's forecast of the remote future is correct.

Dreams are a very important mode of divine revelation for most midrashim in our sources, except for one adopted by *Aggadah Berešit* that remains critical to divine communication through senses and considers dreams a minor form of divine revelation (*Ag. Ber.* 70.A, p. 207; 67.A, p. 198).⁸⁶

83. Also Joseph reveals himself to the brothers, 'I am your brother Joseph whom you sold! I am verily the one who saw the dreams and told them to you! Behold, now you can see with your own eyes that the Lord is Most High, and blessed: he made my dreams come true. Behold, you have yourselves done obeisance to me' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 99). Jacob, upon seeing the rich gifts from Egypt, comments, 'Now I know that the dream[s] of my son Joseph were truthful, and not in falsehood' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 102).

84. *Genesis Rabbah* 88.5.1 also interprets these dreams at another level which is the real meaning and concerns Israel's redemption.

85. See Philo for the similar idea of a layered understanding of dreams. Patriotic tendencies in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* appear often as added refutation of the enemies of Israel. Thus, in order to discredit Esau's character even more than the Bible does, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* adds to the biblical mention of Esau's marriage to foreign women that he also practiced idolatry and committed evil deeds (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 26.35).

86. Eyes and ears are not a good source of information because their receptions are involuntary and deceptive (*Ag. Ber.* 70.A, p. 207). Dreams are a lesser form of divine revelation because they are nightly visions, involuntary, and could be sent to the wicked (*Ag. Ber.* 67.A, p. 198) in order that the divine message is communicated. Indirect revelation is inferior to direct.

DREAMS/VISIONS

	<i>Ethiopic Joseph</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	<i>Tanhuma</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i>	<i>Aggadah Bereshit</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>	<i>Yashar</i>	<i>Legends of the Jews</i>
<i>Expansions on biblical account</i>	— No	Yes Inner interpretations (butler & baker) 88.5.1	Yes Daniel 1–3 to Pharaoh's dreams 10.2-3			Yes Inner interpretations (butler & baker) Gen. 40.12-9	Yes Interpretations of Egyptian magicians 48.16-25	
<i>Actions on interpretations</i>	Preparation for predictions							
<i>Control of the future Averting the interpretations</i>								
<i>Types of dreams</i>	Inspired dreams only							
<i>Validation of dream interpreter</i>	1. Fulfillment 2. External appearance and performance	All are equally inspired and will be fulfilled 89.7.2	Knows dream before told 10.3		Dreams are only a minor form of divine revelation	Knows dream before told Gen. 40.5	1. Intuition 48.25 2. Correct prediction of near future 48.62-6	
<i>Source of dream interpretation</i>						Revelatory Gen. 40.23		
<i>Dream Interpreter</i>						Prophetic office Gen. 40.23		

2. *Dreams in RVE Theory.* The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* does not distinguish dreams from daily visions. Symbolic dreams are characterized as visions that dreamers see in their sleep. Thus, young Joseph tells his brothers, 'Hear from me [the story of] a vision as I saw it this night. I saw as one sees [a vision] in sleep' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 46), implying that it was not a dream.⁸⁷ The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* comments further, 'Jacob [himself] actually marveled at the vision which Joseph saw' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 47). The importance of these visions as a means of divine revelation is seen in Jacob's subsequent comment, 'As for me, I have no regrets concerning the visions which Joseph my son saw. It could indeed not be in falsehood but in truth; it is the Lord that revealed to him this matter, and so it is. I know this fact [lit. "deed"] has been ascertained with the Lord' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 47).

There is a natural connection between visions in dreams and other visions in the story, so much so that dream interpreter is not recognized as a singular occupation, but rather as part of the job of scientist or 'magician'. Visions are but one of the tools of these professionals, which include dreams, cups or just the eye.⁸⁸ The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* confirms that symbolic dreams belong to RVE phenomena and should not be classified with dreams. Thus, symbolic dream narratives belong to a separate genre of RVE texts and are not a subgenre of dream accounts.

Both *Tanḥuma* and *Aggadat Berešit* (*Ag. Ber.*) add a new dimension to the connection between knowledge received through eyes and the understanding of dreams. They support a tradition that regards knowledge acquired through the senses of seeing and hearing as genuine only if they serve God. Personal moral integrity is necessary for receiving divine authorization to learn through one's eyes and ears. However, God often gives dreams to the wicked to communicate truth to the righteous.

Tanḥuma 9.6, in one of the most misogynist midrashic passages, links natural human inquiry to the eyes and thus connects knowledge and sight. However, the passage presents this kind of knowledge in a negative light. Eve's inquisitiveness was the source of her transgression, and it is her eyes that misled her.⁸⁹ 'He did not fashion her from [Adam's] eyes, lest she be

87. At least this English translation suggests that Joseph's dreams could have been visions, but it would not make much difference for *Ethiopic Joseph* because it does not differentiate between the two.

88. At the first encounter with his brothers in Egypt, Joseph frightens them simply by the way in which he looks at them. See the discussion in the section on 'The Other Revelation by Visual Effects'.

89. 'When the Holy One ... was about to fashion Eve, He gave considerable thought to the parts of Adam's body out of which He would create her. He said: If I create her out of a portion of his head, she will be haughty; if I fashion her from his eyes, she will be inquisitive; if I mold her out of his mouth, she will babble; from the ear, she will be an eavesdropper; from the hands, she will steal; and from the feet, she will be gadabout.

inquisitive, yet Eve was inquisitive, as it is said: *And the woman saw that the tree was good* (Gen. 3.6). *Tanḥuma* does not claim that all visual knowledge is misleading, but that personal moral integrity is a requirement for the reception of truth through sight: 'You find that the righteous are exalted through their eyes' (*Tanḥ.* 9.6). *Tanḥuma* discusses dreams in the same manner. To pure and righteous people dreams are revelations from God. But God sometimes chooses to 'contaminate the purity of His divine glory on behalf of the righteous' (*Tanḥ.* 7.12), and comes into the dreams of the impure and the wicked such as Abimelech or Laban.

Aggadat Berešit follows the same logic in a more systematic elaboration on the topic. True knowledge through sight and hearing is possible only when 'the Holy One gives eyes and ears authorization to know' (*Ag. Ber.* 70.A-B, p. 2). Moral purity is the necessary presupposition for the acquisition of this knowledge. Eyes and ears by themselves are poor source of information and genuine knowledge because their reception of light and sound is involuntary and thus the opportunity for deception. *Aggadat Berešit* could state, though, that Joseph began to see in his dream hints of the unfolding of the divine promise to Israel, constituting a complex knowledge which neither Jacob nor any of the previous patriarchs could grasp (*Ag. Ber.* 73.A, pp. 214-16). When God sends dreams to the wicked, it is to communicate truth to the righteous. Upon awakening, the wicked despise their dreams as phantomlike and unreal (*Ag. Ber.* 67.A, p. 198).

3. *Validation of Dream Interpretation.* Rabbinic sources (*Genesis Rabbah*, *Yashar*, and *Tanḥuma*) are aware of the uncertainty that is involved in the correct interpretation, especially if the predictions are set in the distant future. The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, not being overwhelmingly interested in establishing the right interpretation, applies its judgment process according to external appearances and the emotions of the interpreter. Pharaoh knew that Joseph's interpretation was correct from the love and admiration of Joseph's beauty that he felt in his presence.⁹⁰ *Tanḥuma* and *Yashar* introduce a rational concern about the legitimacy of a dream interpreter who predicts the remote future. How is it possible that Pharaoh knows that Joseph's predictions are correct as opposed to the interpretations of Egyptian experts? Why would Pharaoh believe Joseph, when years need to pass to test the realization of his interpretations? *Tanḥuma* solves the problem by making Pharaoh alter his dream exposition slightly to check if Joseph

What did he do? He fashioned her out of one of Adam's ribs, a chaste portion of the body, so that she would stay modestly at home' (*Tanḥ.* 9.6).

90. 'And Pharaoh welcomed Joseph. And when he [Pharaoh] looked upon Joseph, he admired his beauty and youth; and a very deep love for Joseph came [upon him]' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 70).

will notice it. Thus, it presupposes that the dream interpreter knows the dream and its interpretation simultaneously (*Tanḥ.* 10.3). While Pharaoh in *Tanḥuma* tests Joseph, the king in *Yashar* intuitively makes a distinction between true and false, 'And the king knew in his wisdom that they [Egyptian interpreters] did not altogether speak correctly in all these words, for this was from the Lord to frustrate the words of the wise men of Egypt' (*Yashar* 48.25). In contrast to the Egyptian analysts, in *Yashar* Joseph supplies a counsel immediately following his interpretation, 'this is the proper interpretation of thy dream, and this is the counsel given to save thy soul and the souls of thy subjects' (*Yashar* 48.61). But in order for Pharaoh to test his skills, Joseph adds another prediction of the near future, which can be verified in a few days. When it does come true, a convinced Pharaoh decides to take action in accord with Joseph's counsel (*Yashar* 48.62-66). At this point he promotes Joseph to the highest court office. *Genesis Rabbah* handles the problem of the legitimacy of dream interpretation by stating that all dream interpreters were possibly equally inspired. In the rabbinic fashion of embracing multiple opinions, it claims that any interpretation suffices and it will come to pass (*Gen. R.* 89.7.2).

4. *Dream Interpreter.* For *Ethiopic Joseph* a dream interpreter is not necessarily a professional, but the dreamer and the dream interpreter must not be the same person.⁹¹ Joseph's father and brothers understand the meaning of his youthful dreams, while Joseph seems to be unaware of their meaning. Only much later, when Joseph became skilled in dream interpretation and when he sees his dreams realized, does Joseph understand the meaning of his youthful dreams. Hence, he acknowledges that in his youth at the point when he revealed them to his family, he was ignorant of their meaning and significance. 'Behold, now you can see with your own eyes that the Lord . . . made my dreams come true. As for the moon [in my dreams], it is Pharaoh, the king! And the eleven stars are yourselves [right] here now' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 99).

Likewise, Joseph in prison appears neither as a professional dream interpreter nor as a very skillful one. The butler and the cook seek primarily a third person to investigate for them the interpretations of their respective dreams. Joseph trusts the Lord and not his own ability to arrive at their meaning. Only later on, Joseph appears before Pharaoh as a professional, skilled and confident dream interpreter.

91. Only the latest rabbinic midrash, *Yashar* (twelfth century), seems oblivious to the ancient status of a dream interpreter as a separate person from a dreamer, where a dreamer cannot interpret her/his own dreams. Thus, *Yashar*'s Joseph as a dreamer knows without any doubt, the meaning of his dreams, and boasts about them (*Yashar* 41.10-17).

The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* suggests that Joseph's skills as an oneiromancer gradually developed as the story unfolds. While a boy he could not make anything out of his visions; years later in prison he discerns how they function and realizes fully their significance. Joseph 'said to them [royal butler and cook], "Dreams do indeed have hidden meanings which belong to the Lord, the Most High. So, just tell me what it is that you saw, and I trust the Lord, the Most High, will help [me in finding] the interpretation[s] for you"' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 68). These two dreams predict the near future. Instead of the advice that a professional oneiromancer was expected to deliver, Joseph pleads for himself to the butler, 'remember me in the presence of Pharaoh' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 68).

Later the butler describes Joseph to Pharaoh as 'young Hebrew boy who used to interpret dreams there [in jail], and his name was Joseph' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 70). He certainly does not appear as a professional in jail. His dress and appearance in prison would not inspire confidence in his abilities, according to *Ethiopic Joseph's* understanding of visual presentations. However, the simultaneous description of Joseph's character and affairs, as a boy and a medium, may allude to a stage in his professional development as a boy-medium in visual revelations.⁹² At that time he meets the royal officials and interprets their dreams. '[Now] after Joseph had been in the prison for a few days, Pharaoh was angry at two of his servants. . . . Pharaoh threw them into jail where Joseph was being held' (p. 67). The fact that Joseph considers Qatfan and his wife as his foster parents, and that he was an exceptionally talented and efficient slave in their household would make the Greco-Roman audience take for granted that they educated him.⁹³

At the final stage, Joseph is confident before Pharaoh, interprets his dreams and immediately offers him advice on how to meet the devastating prediction and prevent the disastrous consequences. Here the image of a dream interpreter coincides with the one in Josephus: a professional who interprets and advises on necessary future measures.

Moreover, according to *Ethiopic Joseph*, Pharaoh summons 'magicians, sorcerers, wise persons and scribes' (p. 70) to interpret his dreams. Instead of two biblical categories, wise men and magicians/interpreters (LXX), *Ethi-*

92. This interpretation is in contrast to a popular negative characterization of Joseph in a midrash of this verse (*Gen. R.* 89.7.C-E; *Tanḥ.* 10.3), where the butler is accused of slandering Joseph by saying, 'And there was with us there a young man, a Hebrew, servant to the captain (*Gen.* 41.9-12). . . . For he said a young man, as though describing a young man without understanding; a Hebrew, as if to suggest that he was different from them; and a slave, an expression of contempt. Furthermore, it is written in Pharaoh's constitution that a slave is not permitted to rule over them' (*Tanḥ.* 10.3).

93. See the section on Joseph's education in this chapter and n. 118 for selected bibliography.

opic Joseph adds sorcerers and a new category, scribes.⁹⁴ This addition of an extra item to biblical lists characterizes the style of *Ethiopic Joseph*. This new entry is usually a contemporary parallel to those in the biblical record. For instance, the transportation vehicles sent to bring Jacob down to Egypt consist not only of the donkeys and chariots mentioned in the Bible but also of 'horses and wheeled vehicles' (p. 100). If we draw an analogy with dream interpreters, then scribes/scholars would be frequently in charge of dream interpretations at the time of the composition of this midrash and of the story in *Ethiopic Joseph*. This fact is not dissimilar to Josephus's *hierogrammateus*. It is an exceptional testimony among our midrashim, which, in contrast to *Ethiopic Joseph*, stress that Joseph's ability to interpret dreams makes him also a prophet, while some even draw on the parallel with Daniel (*Tanh.* 10.3). *Genesis Rabbah* characterizes Joseph as a 'seer, redeemer, prophet, sustainer, interpreter, subtle, understanding and visionary' (*Gen. R.* 90.4.1.D-E).⁹⁵ Beside the biblical terms wise men and magicians, the midrashim mention sorcerers (e.g. *Yashar* 48.14) and astrologers (*Tanh.* 10.2). *Tanhuma* adds to each of these three categories job descriptions with overtly negative connotations.⁹⁶ According to it, only a prophet of God can discern the workings of the supernatural.

5. *Purity and Morality*. The butler's dream in *Ethiopic Joseph* allows the dream interpreter to be a medium between God and the dreamer (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 68). Not only does Joseph present himself as a medium, but the butler describes him as a boy to Pharaoh (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 70). It is possible to see Joseph serving as a boy medium at an early stage of his training, such as in Qatifan's household, or even in the prison. Joseph bears witness to purity when he avoids love-making with Qatifan's wife, 'I am made pure by the Lord (lit. 'I am pure from the Lord')'. The ritual purity is also appreciated by other sources of rabbinic midrashim. Joseph is mindful of ritual purity not only in the encounter with Potiphar's wife, but also in his bad report on his

94. Sorcerers are part of other midrashim, e.g. *Yashar* 48.14. *Tanhuma Y.* has magicians, astrologers and sorcerers, and explains the role of each category in detail (*Tanh.* 10.2).

95. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* calls Joseph the prophet of the Lord, 'And Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find a man like this, in whom is the *spirit of prophecy* (נְבוּאָה) from the Lord?' (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 41.38) translating 'spirit of God' רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים of Gen 41.38 with the 'spirit of prophecy'.

96. *Tanhuma Y.* gives a job description of each of the three categories, based on lexical analysis: 'the magicians are those who inquire of the bones of the dead; the astrologers are those who examine the planetary constellations (for their answer) . . . and the sorcerers are those who diminish the power of the heavenly and earthly courts' (*Tanh.* 10.2). They all represent illegitimate sources of revelation and fictitious acquisition of knowledge, according to many rabbinic sources. It is probably the reason why they single out a prophetic office for Joseph as a dream interpreter.

half brothers, sons of maidservants, regarding their transgression of dietary laws (*Tg. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 37.3).⁹⁷

In contrast to most of the other midrashim, *Ethiopic Joseph* is not concerned with moral integrity but rather with external appearance.⁹⁸ There are indications that appearances can tell what kind of person someone is. Thus, Joseph scolds his brothers, 'I can tell from your looks that you are evil and deceitful people' (p. 79). And certainly a pure person who escapes from sin is a wise one and destined for a successful existence (p. 74). Purity and wisdom also can be determined by a person's looks. Joseph's beauty contributed to his personal and professional success more than hindered it.

In most of the midrashim of the examined texts (*Genesis Rabbah*, *Aggadah Berešit*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Tanḥuma*), it is moral integrity that makes Joseph prosper in his professional and private affairs.⁹⁹ While all of the above sources recognize Joseph's merit as an important factor in his success, *Yashar* disregards the quality of Joseph's character and assigns all his success to the divine will.¹⁰⁰

5. Joseph as a Hellenistic Scientist

Secret and open things are revealed before you, O Egyptian, said Judah.
For everything you do my cup informs me, said Joseph (*Tosefta Targums*).¹⁰¹

Based on previous discussion, according to midrashim concerned with Joseph tradition, a clear image of Joseph's occupation can be reconstructed. At the height of his career, Joseph belongs to the wise men of Egypt, 'learned in all things' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 72). He is a prominent scholar versed in discovering the secrets of the universe and human affairs and controlling

97. Joseph's evil report, 'He had come forth from the school, and was a youth brought up with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpha his fathers wives. And Joseph brought their evil report; for he had seen them eat the flesh that had been torn by wild beasts, the ears and the tails; and he came and told it to his father' (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on Gen. 37.3).

98. We saw above how important moral purity is for a reception of truth and divine revelation, especially for *Tanḥuma* and *Aggadah Berešit*.

99. According to *Targ. Ps.-J.* 49.22-23, Joseph became great because of his moral deeds and wisdom.

100. *Yashar* displays a different Joseph tradition, in which Joseph is a very shady character (*Yashar* 41.6-17), and his success is due to the divine will and guidance and not to Joseph's merit (*Yashar* 41-44, 46, 48-59).

101. Niehoff, *Figure of Joseph*, p. 162. Niehoff's translation is of a longer version 'recently found in a MS of Columbia University' (p. 161).

the laws of nature.¹⁰² Joseph knows how to read the laws of the universe. This knowledge enables him to predict the future and, therefore, control the present. This tradition is represented in its purest form by *Ethiopic Joseph*; there is no separation between science and ‘magic’ or between divination and religion. Within this Hellenistic holistic approach to intellectual skills, *Ethiopic Joseph* establishes Joseph’s profession as a scribe. Possible dream interpreters are to be found among ‘magicians, sorcerers, wise persons and scribes’ (p. 70), scribe being the only new term that *Ethiopic Joseph*’s midrash introduces to the list.¹⁰³ Thus, *Ethiopic Joseph*’s designation of Joseph as a scribe is not dissimilar to Josephus’s *hierogrammateus*, which suggests that it was a term for RVE interpreters in Hellenistic times.

Joseph is a practical scientist of vision according to *Ethiopic Joseph*’s attention to scientific application rather than to the systems of thought. Some *theoretical aspects* of his job are supplied by other sources. First, visual perception is directly related to inquiry. Eyes make people interested and provoke questions and exploration.¹⁰⁴

The quality of this inquiry is determined by the moral quality of the RVE interpreter. We have seen that the deepest visual insights are produced by ritually pure and/or righteous people. It is, then, important in establishing trustworthiness to examine a professional’s reputation and moral standing. According to *Ethiopic Joseph*, the ethical status of experts can be checked by their emotional impact on observers (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 67, 70), as well as by the social standing of their family (p. 68).¹⁰⁵

Second, when a professional predicts the remote future, a verification of the forecast at the time of its proclamation is of utmost importance in determining what action to take, especially if the appropriate human response could change the course of events. As dreams are the only RVE medium through which the divine reveals the future in the literature of this chapter, rabbinic midrashim are much invested in developing a method for validat-

102. Joseph has control over the evil eye (e.g. *Ag. Ber.*, p. 246, *Gen. R.* 78.10.2), because he was so wise and discerning.

103. Magicians and wise men are part of the biblical verse (Gen. 41.8). If sorcerer is a pejorative term for a magician, as it seems in *Ethiopic Joseph* (see the discussion above), then the only new term that *Ethiopic Joseph*’s midrash introduces is ‘scribe’. See the discussion above.

104. Through the eyes Eve became inquisitive. But the righteous are exalted through their eyes (*Tanh.* 9.6).

105. Joseph justifies himself to butler: ‘I am not a slave, nor from a family of slaves; [that] I am [indeed] a free person from among the mighty ones of the Hebrews; and [that] I have committed no sin in the land of [fol. 138a] Egypt’ (p. 68). Also Pharaoh, ‘And he [Pharaoh] was happy when he heard that Joseph’s brothers had come to him. Moreover, he [Pharaoh] was happy that Joseph was Jacob’s son, for Pharaoh had [often] heard about Jacob—that he was a spiritual person (p. 100).’

JOSEPH’S PROFESSION

<i>Aspects of profession related to spiritual expertise</i>	<i>Ethiopic Joseph</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	<i>Tanhuma</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i>	<i>Aggadah Bereshit</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>	<i>Yashar</i>	<i>Legends of the Jews</i>
<i>Name</i>	Scribe	Seer, redeemer, sustainer, prophet, interpreter, visionary 90.4.1 D	Prophet 10.2		Magician 73.C	Prophet Gen. 41.38		
<i>Description</i>	Spiritual expert versed in the workings of universe <i>controls present and future</i>	Reveals hidden things, sets minds at ease 90.4.1 B-C Divinely revealed, no personal merit 90.4.1 controls natural powers, controls evil eye 90.4.2 D-H	Divinely revealed, no personal merit 10.2		Spiritual expert controls natural powers, controls evil eye 83 (p. 246)	Divinely revealed, no personal merit Gen. 41.38		
<i>Activities</i>	Practical scientist of vision Forensics Psychological impact	Lecanomancy Dream interpretation 88.4-6; 89.8-10 Controls evil eye 90.4.2 Forensics	Lecanomancy Dream interpretation 10.3	Lecanomancy pp. 24-25	Lecanomancy Control of evil eye 83 (p. 246) Divination 42	Lecanomancy Gen. 43.33 Dream Interpretation Gen. 40.8-19, 41.15-36	Lecanomancy Use of astrolabe	

JOSEPH'S PROFESSION (continued)

Aspects of profession related to spiritual expertise	Ethiopic Joseph	Genesis Rabbah	Tanḥuma	Midrash on Proverbs	Aggadah Beresit	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan	Yashar	Legends of the Jews
Instruments and methods	Cup; Lecanomancy; interpretations of visions and human appearances; Eyes emit energy	Cup; Lecanomancy 91.6.8-9 91.7.2 92.5.2.B 93.7.3.B	Cup; Lecanomancy 10.8 10.10 11.4, 11.5 Evil eye 10.8	Cup; lecanomancy; pp. 24-25	Cup; Lecanomancy 73.C Control of energy emitted from eyes 83 (p. 246)	Cup; Lecanomancy Gen. 43.33 cup	Astrolabe 53.18-19 'Lecanomancy' 53.18-30	Astrolabe 2.1.251-2 Cup; Lecanomancy 2.1.247-8
Theoretical basis			Vision promotes inquiry 9.6, 7.12 Divine revelation in vision 10.4	Wisdom is light; Knowledgeable is radiant p. 22	Sight as source of knowledge 70.A-B 73.A 67.A			
Requirements	Ritual purity Noble descent Professional training	Talent 90.4.2.D-H Ethical purity Study of Jewish law 87.5.3-4	Moral virtue 9.6 Faithfulness 9.8					
Source of RVE	Correct reasoning to committed scientists	Correct reasoning to observant of religious law 87.5.3-4	Divinely revealed 10.2			Divinely revealed Gen. 41.38		

JOSEPH'S PROFESSION (continued)

<i>Aspects of profession related to spiritual expertise</i>	<i>Ethiopic Joseph</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	<i>Tanhuma</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i>	<i>Aggadah Beresit</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>	<i>Yashar</i>	<i>Legends of the Jews</i>
<i>Proof of expertise</i>	Radiance of benevolence Proper heredity	Divine blessings	Knowing the dream content 10.3				Intuition 48.25	
<i>Trustworthiness of teaching</i>	By feelings	Divine presence	Testable delivery (dream content) 10.3				Proofs from success in other forecasts 48.62-6	
<i>As a child</i>	Ignorant, innocent, noblest birth, attractive	Knowledgeable, talented, versed in laws 84.8.1.C 87.6.4 Righteous 84.13	Educated, 11.11 liar, slanderer 9.7			Knowledgeable, talented, Proficient in ritual Gen. 37.3	Lazy, show off, informant on hard working brothers 41.6-9	
<i>Education Egypt</i>	Potiphar's house	Study Torah by himself 86.5.1.B 87.6.4.B, 95.3.1.D-H Development of moral character 87.5.3-4	No development of moral character only 9.8			Potiphar's house Gen. 39.11		

JOSEPH'S PROFESSION (continued)

<i>Aspects of profession related to spiritual expertise</i>	<i>Ethiopic Joseph</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	<i>Tanḥuma</i>	<i>Midrash on Proverbs</i>	<i>Aggadah Beresit</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>	<i>Yashar</i>	<i>Legends of the Jews</i>
<i>Education</i> <i>Canaan, home</i>	None Belief in God, knowledge of family secrets	Beth Midrashim 84.8.1.C	Jacob teaches his sons law 11.11			Beth Midrashim Gen. 25.27; 37.2	Wisdom only from learning of Hebrews 53.19	
<i>Professional Development</i>	Yes In Egypt	No Skill from divine revelation 89.9.2 89.2.2				No Measure of trust in God Gen. 40.23	No	
<i>Reason for success</i>	Professional merit Noble birth	Divine providence 89.3.1 Moral deeds 89.3.2	Divine plans 9.4, 9.9	Way of righteousness pp. 83-4		Moral and religious integrity Gen. 40.23; 41.8	Moral deeds 46.19-20 Divine providence 41-44, 46, 48-59	
<i>Administrative officer in Egypt</i>	Prime Minister Supreme judge Commander-in-chief	Shepherd of Israel 91.5.2 Secretary of state and treasurer in Egypt 91.4.1			Great king of Egypt 73.C 79.D Provisioner of Egypt 67.B	Prince, vice-regent Gen 42. 40-45	Commander-in-chief 49.43-50.6,58 Supreme judge 58.5 King of Egypt 58.6	

ing the predictions of a dream interpreter. One of the two main approaches tries to determine the quality of the prediction, and the other focuses on the moral integrity and reputation of the interpreters. As shown earlier, some of the midrashim cut directly into the scientific method. If a scientist correctly predicts a near-future event, its fulfillment can give credibility to his long-term prediction, just as Joseph does to Pharaoh in *Yashar* 48.62-66. When Pharaoh asks Joseph why he should believe his interpretation and future prognosis, Joseph prophesies the near events in the king's personal life. When they came true, it is then that Pharaoh accepts Joseph's advice. Yet another solution appears in *Tanḥuma* Y. 10.3, p. 249, where the dream interpreter is expected to know both the dream and its interpretation. Pharaoh changes slightly the narration of his dream to see if Joseph would notice it (*Tanḥuma* Y. 10.3, p. 249). Thus, midrashic sources are concerned with establishing a system of assessing the soundness of the scientific results.

Joseph's job description in *Gen. R.* 90.4.1.B-C is that he reveals hidden things, declares them and 'sets the minds of people at ease'.¹⁰⁶ It lists Joseph's trade titles: 'seer, redeemer, prophet, sustainer, interpreter, subtle, understanding, visionary' (*Gen. R.* 90.4.1.D).

Prophet is the title given to Joseph by the lore that does not highly regard his scientific practice, classifying his dream interpretation under the office of prophet. His ability flows from direct divine revelation and is not due to his power of reasoning or his personal merit (*Targ. Ps.-J.*, *Gen.* 41.38; *Gen. R.* 90.4.1; *Tanḥ.* 10.2, p. 247). Those midrashim that are in the Joseph tradition but that deny access of divination and science to the divine realm negatively regarding them as magic, have Joseph intentionally construct a public image of a powerful pseudo-scientist.¹⁰⁷ In order to keep Joseph's credential as a patriarch, they make Joseph into a prophet.

In his scientific practice Joseph uses three different instruments or techniques: (1) the cup and astrolabe, (2) interpretations of apparitions in visions or dreams, and (3) interpretations of people's look, dress or appearance. The latter is the special contribution of rabbinic midrashim to the understanding of the methods and tools of RVE. In *Ethiopic Joseph* the eyes function according to the holistic dimension of ancient optics. They are the main organ of both the emission and the reception of light. The emission of energy makes the eyes the source of psychological impact. This manifests itself in *Ethiopic Joseph* as an ability to instill fright and panic in others by staring or looking at them in a certain way. Its malevolent expression, popu-

106. It comes as an explanation of the meaning of the Egyptian name Zaphenath-paneah, which Pharaoh gave Joseph. The pun continues with the letters of the name disclosing different titles that Joseph held in Pharaoh's service.

107. See also the job description of Egyptian magicians, astrologers and sorcerers in *Tanḥ.* 10.2, pp. 245-46.

larly called ‘evil eye cast’, is a topic of several midrashim.¹⁰⁸ The reception is seen in the dress, look, and scenery that convey information and invoke feelings. The role of the eyes as receptors is to supply the bulk of data for reason, which is necessary in processing divine revelatory information for the professional RVE interpreter.

According to a midrashic tradition, some of the skills and/or powers of an RVE expert are due to talent or heritage. In the texts of the Joseph tradition that elaborate on Jacob’s blessings of his sons, Gen. 49.22, ‘[Joseph] is a fruitful vine before the eye/spring’, is interpreted as Joseph’s invincibility to the evil-eye spell (midrash on Gen. 49.22). Joseph is above the eye; the evil eye does not touch him (e.g. *Ag. Ber.* 83, p. 246). The key to this midrash is found in the passage about Joseph’s control of the evil-eye’s emanation, in which Joseph is said to bow low to Esau in front of Rachel in order to protect his mother from the evil eye (*Gen. R.* 90.4.2.D-H).¹⁰⁹ This skill in a small child could only be taken as a special talent, making Joseph into a gifted child for RVE. This reading supports the notion of Joseph as sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced in his profession that he can conquer the common laws of nature.

The question now becomes, how much of RVE skill is a gift, how much of it is a learned practice, and how much is divine power with the RVE practitioner as a conducting tool? Our midrashim contain a range of different answers to these questions.

Correct reasoning is not accessible to everyone. *Ethiopic Joseph* teaches that it is a prerogative of committed scientists, who must complete several requirements to be successful in obtaining knowledge and power. First, they must be of noble birth, and then they must acquire skills through professional training. Next, they must maintain moral and professional integrity and remain ritually pure. In contrast, the patriotic midrashim claim that correct reasoning is accessible only to the ethnically and religiously pure (that is, to Israelites) and tend to reject scientific endeavor. The only scholarship that some of these traditions acknowledge or even promote is the study of Jewish law (*Gen. R.* 86.5.B). In this tradition Joseph’s wisdom is the result of careful observance of religious law, especially in the matter of Potiphar’s

108. See especially the entrance of brothers by different gates. See n. 81 (p. 157).

109. Genesis 33.1-7 is about Jacob’s children and their mothers bowing to Esau in a specific order, in which Rachel and Joseph are put last because Jacob wanted to protect them best. The order of prostration had a mother bowing first and then the children. The only exception is in the case of Rachel and Joseph. The order is reversed: Joseph bows first, and then Rachel. According to rabbinic midrash, there must be a reason for it that needs to be explained. Joseph has a power over the evil eye that Esau could cast, so he goes first to protect his mother. It is a midrash on ‘Then the maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed down; Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down; and finally Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down’ (*Gen.* 33.6-7).

wife (*Tanh.* 9.8, pp. 240-41; *Gen. R.* 87.5.3-4). Joseph, who excelled in wisdom, is the most honored and well-versed scholar, who applies the law in practice (*Yashar.* 58.6).

Ethiopic Joseph and rabbinic midrashim add to an image of Joseph, as a skilled interpreter of visual effects, a scientist of vision, the dimension of mystery solver or great detective. Ancient optics is primarily applied in forensics, the scientific inquiry with which our sources are fascinated.¹¹⁰

a. Other Aspects of Joseph's Profession

While the science of vision is Joseph's specialty, his position in Pharaoh's service is mainly administrative. The midrashim, following the biblical text, stress Joseph's executive administrative power as second in command of Egypt (*Gen.* 41.39-44; 42.6), such as *Gen. R.* 90.2-3; 91.2.5-6; *Ag. Ber.* 37.B, p. 114; 67.B, p. 199; *Targ. Ps.-J.* 42.6; *Yashar* 49.16-31. He is the grain collector and distributor of goods (*Gen.* 41.56-58) and is in charge of economic transactions in Egypt (e.g. *Gen. R.* 90.5, *Tanh.* 10.8, p. 254; *Yashar* 49.32-35; 50.8-14, 26-31). Joseph's duties as administrative officer and as treasurer are of secondary importance for *Ethiopic Joseph*.

For *Ethiopic Joseph* Joseph is the prime minister or vice ruler of Egypt under Pharaoh (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 72, 73).¹¹¹ His authority is absolute; he decides who lives and who dies.¹¹² Thus, he is the supreme judge, sitting at 'the seat of Government' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 93) in the courthouse and settling disputes (p. 96). Joseph is also a commander-in-chief, because he leads the Egyptian cavalry to greet Jacob on his entrance to Egypt (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 104), and leads the army in war (*Yashar* 49.43-50.6, 58).

The fact that Joseph as a foreigner rose to be the ruler of a world empire of the time kindled the imagination of the midrashim. The introduction of Aseneth and her father serves to elevate Joseph's social position in Egyptian society. His standing as a foreigner is erased by marrying into a highly ranked Egyptian family. Aseneth is not mentioned in *Ethiopic Joseph*, probably because according to its non-nationalistic outlook, the in-laws were unnecessary for Joseph's social status.¹¹³ *Ethiopic Joseph*, while ignoring ethnicities, reinforces Joseph's social position in Egypt

110. It coincides well with the idea of the theft of Joseph's cup (*Gen.* 44), which calls for an investigation, and also with the use of lecanomancy in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages to identify and find thieves.

111. 'You are, indeed, [as of now] Prime Minister of the people of Egypt. As for me, the only thing I retain is my royal throne' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 72).

112. Joseph proclaims general amnesty in celebration of Jacob's settling in Egypt. 'And Joseph ordered that they open the jail [house] wide and release all those in it; and he pardoned everyone whatsoever [they had committed]' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 103).

113. This is probably the reason why Aseneth is not mentioned, and it agrees with *Ethiopic Joseph's* general lack of interest in genealogies and the descendants of Jacob.

with the discovery that his father is Jacob, a ruler of another country, whose fame reached even Pharaoh.¹¹⁴ When Jacob arrived in Egypt, Pharaoh treats him as an equal.

b. *Joseph's Professional Development*

As the biblical tale of Genesis 37–50 is a biography of Joseph, covering the period from his youth to his death, the important issue for midrashim becomes Joseph's maturation, his moral and professional growth. The Joseph traditions of the midrashim underline his spiritual expertise in Egypt but do not agree on the source of his skill or on how and where Joseph developed professionally.

The sources that address Joseph's professional development in Egypt are most likely to contain favorable images of Joseph as an RVE specialist, of which the *Ethiopic Joseph* is the most exhaustive.¹¹⁵ According to *Ethiopic Joseph*, as a child, Joseph was the favorite son of his father, but he was neither exceptionally talented nor knowledgeable (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 45–53). Joseph told his dreams to everyone, because he was ignorant of their meaning and did not know what to do with them.¹¹⁶ As Rachel's firstborn he was of the highest nobility in the patriarch Jacob's household. He had an attractive appearance in his beautiful 'garments with colorful shoulders' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 50). His features were also fine-looking, and this is cited as the reason for the love he receives from the merchants who purchased him (p. 52). Instead of the natural position of a prince and a free person with such looks and heritage, Joseph becomes a slave, stripped of his 'golden garment' (p. 45).¹¹⁷

Joseph receives none of his professional education at home. The only knowledge that he acquired from his family is his belief in the God of Jacob (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 50–51) and some insight into family secrets, such as that Judah's power resides in his chest hair (pp. 81, 90). Joseph and his brothers are obedient to their father, Jacob, and faithfully perform the

However, in the short narrative, *Death of Joseph*, that follows *Ethiopic Joseph* in the manuscript, Aseneth holds a prominent role.

114. 'Moreover, he [Pharaoh] was happy that Joseph was Jacob's son, for Pharaoh had [often] heard about Jacob—that he was a spiritual person' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 100).

115. The exhaustive continuous story of *Yashar* belongs to patriotic midrashim that do not support Joseph's professional evolution in Egypt.

116. Joseph is not in control of any event or decision in *Ethiopic Joseph's* retelling of Genesis 37. Jacob is the wise one, aware of the emotional undercurrents, and the significance and immediate impact of Joseph's dreams (p. 47); he also tries to channel brothers' hatred to protect Joseph.

117. In light of the non-existence of social mobility for *Ethiopic Joseph* the enslavement of a member of the elite is the main disruption in the narrative, and plays the role of complicating the plot to move the story forward.

tasks they are given.¹¹⁸ Other sources that, like *Ethiopic Joseph*, do not accept Joseph's schooling in Canaan, present him either as a shepherd along with the other brothers or as a lazy boy, showing off in his beautiful garment, doing no work, but informing on his hard-working brothers instead (*Yashar* 41.6-9).

The patriotic midrashim with Joseph tradition, in contrast, tend to have Joseph as a knowledgeable and talented child, proficient in details of ritual (e.g. *Targ. Ps.-J. Gen.* 37.3), versed in laws (*Gen. R.* 84.8.1.C; 87.6.4) and righteous against corrupt brothers (*Gen. R.* 84.13). Several different reasons, besides being Rachel's firstborn in *Ethiopic Joseph*, are offered for Joseph's elevation to be Jacob's heir: he resembles Jacob (*Targ. Ps.-J.* on *Gen.* 37.3; *Gen. R.* 84.6); he is wise and talented with the greatest merit (*Gen. R.* 84.5.2); he grew to be the most ethical of Jacob's sons (*Tanh.* 9.8); and the birthright was given to him, because Reuben's sin stripped him of his right as the firstborn (*Gen. R.* 87.5.5; 87.6.4; *Ag. Ber.* 83, p. 242). Little attention is paid to Joseph's professional development, and all his skill comes from divine revelation (*Gen. R.* 89.9.2). The only allowed development in Joseph's character is ethical. According to this tradition he matures through the afflictions that he endures, which are proportional to his own evil behavior as a youth (e.g. *Gen. R.* 87.7.2).

According to *Ethiopic Joseph* Joseph's status in Qatifan's house is an interesting one. He is sold to Potiphar as a slave, and *slave* is his legal position. However, Qatifan makes him his house manager, and Joseph appears to have enough security to receive an education and professional training. Three things from the story testify in favor of Joseph's education under Qatifan's patronage. First, in dealings with the passion of Qatifan's wife, Joseph appears a far more sophisticated, knowledgeable and clever person than the one his brothers dropped into the pit. Second, Joseph treats Qatifan and his wife as his foster parents, thanking them for all the good that they have done for him (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 76). As parents they would be expected to take care of their child's education, which for upper-class families would have meant prestigious schooling.¹¹⁹ Moreover, as mentioned earlier, it was not unusual in the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman period for masters to edu-

118. Jacob sends all his sons but Joseph and Benjamin, who must have been very young, to shepherd the flocks, a job usually done by small children; he later he sends Joseph to check on them (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 47).

119. For patriotically colored sources these data are irrelevant, if not offensive. According to them, Joseph needs to keep his moral superiority to this household and all Egyptians, and by remaining morally clean he was awarded the position of Egyptian court official. In one of these traditions, preserved in *Gen. R.* 86.5.1.D, Potiphar mocks Joseph, 'What is this, Joseph, straw to Ephron, pitchers to Kefer Hananiah, fleece to Damascus, witchcraft to Egypt?—witchcraft have you brought to the capital witchcraft?'

cate their exceptional slaves.¹²⁰ Third, as discussed before, when Qatifan's wife tried to seduce Joseph, he is more concerned about keeping his purity than his high morality, which suggests that he has reached the phase of a boy medium in his training (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 60).

More information about this stage is given in description of Joseph's interpretation of dreams of the royal butler and the baker in prison, because it took place very shortly after Joseph's imprisonment. The prison warden appointed Joseph in charge of all detainees. Professionally, he is still an oneiromancer in the making. Joseph is aware of the importance of the hidden meaning of dreams, but at this point he is able only to serve as a medium between God and the dreamer.¹²¹ He was also in no position to give advice after the interpretation.¹²² He pleads for himself instead.¹²³ Only at a later stage in front of Pharaoh does Joseph appear as a professional dream interpreter, who can interpret dreams by his own skills and offer advice on subsequent action. At the summit of his professional development, years later when he meets his brothers, Joseph is able to know everything and all human affairs through the nuanced practice of the science of vision.

It is interesting to note how Joseph the Egyptian appears to his brothers professionally. First, they 'saw in him [the majesty of] exalted kingdom' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 78). Then, they are afraid of him because he has the power to know the secrets of the universe and, especially, the secrets of human affairs. He is also the supreme judge of Egypt as he sits on his throne at the court house (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 80) with all the Egyptian dignitaries surrounding him. Reuben and Judah call him the king of Egypt; Jacob refers to him as an Egyptian prince (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 83). In *Ethiopic Joseph* he certainly acts

120. See e.g. S.L. Mohler, 'Slave Education in the Roman Empire', in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 71 (1940), pp. 162-82; also A. Booth, 'The Schooling of Slaves in First-Century Rome', in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 109 (1979), pp. 11-19; and C.A. Forbes, 'The Education and Training of Slaves in Antiquity', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 86 (1955), pp. 321-60.

121. 'Dreams indeed have hidden meanings which belong to the Lord, the Most High. So, just tell me what it is that you saw, and I trust that the Lord, the Most High, will help [me in finding] the interpretation[s] for you' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 68).

122. It is also arguable whether advice is necessary for the prediction of the near future.

123. For the opposite tradition, Joseph's dream interpretation is a part of the prophetic office—a revelatory one. No stages of Joseph's professional development are anticipated here. His plea for himself is seen as his flaw, according to moralistic interests. He trusted a human being instead of God, and thus, he must stay in prison for two additional years (*Targ. Ps.-J. Gen. 40.23; Gen. R. 89.2.2*).

as a ruler of all Egypt. Joseph is all-powerful both in the political and the esoteric sense (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 95).¹²⁴

Joseph succeeds because of his own merit in *Ethiopic Joseph*. Although some of the other sources acknowledge Joseph's merit in building his own moral integrity and staying faithful to his religion and culture as the reason for Joseph's professional and social success (*Targ. Ps.-J. Gen.* 41.8), others put all the merit in God's hand and divine providence, considering Joseph as a tool for Israel's divine destiny or praising his trust in God (*Gen. R.* 89.3.1; *Targ. Ps.-J. Gen.* 41.16).¹²⁵ In a moralistic image of Joseph, he prospers or fails because of his moral deeds. For example, his plea to the royal butler to speak good words about him to Pharaoh is seen as Joseph's ethical failure for trusting a human instead of God. For this failing he was chastised with two extra years in prison (*Targ. Ps.-J. Gen.* 40.23; *Gen. R.* 89.3.2; *Yashar* 46.19-20).

c. Joseph's Education

There are two opposite traditions about Joseph's education and professional development preserved in the midrashim of Joseph tradition. One, of which *Ethiopic Joseph* is the best example, sees the ignorant and inexperienced young Joseph receive all his scientific education and professional training in Egypt. The story contains the stages of his pedagogical progress, mapping the development of his expertise. The formation of Joseph's character and his education are not explicitly addressed, because of *Ethiopic Joseph's* interest in action and description of external appearances and events. More theoretically oriented midrashim are more direct about Joseph's schooling. However, the majority of them belong to the opposite tradition, which denies to Egypt educational value and places Joseph's schooling in his home country. They emphasize Joseph's Jewish training in the law and the transmission of learning and morals from Jacob to Joseph.

In *Ethiopic Joseph* Joseph was untrained, unqualified and inexperienced. He just dreamt his dreams, the meaning of which he did not comprehend.¹²⁶ His father loved him above all his children, probably because he was his beloved Rachel's firstborn. In agreement with the *Ethiopic Joseph's* position

124. It is worth noting that some rabbinic midrashim elaborated with remarkable imagination on the power game between Joseph, the Egyptian, and his brothers, the Hebrews, in a very different manner from *Ethiopic Joseph*. An important feature plays on their physical strength and supernatural abilities so that they could destroy Egypt if they chose to do it, and Joseph needs to restrain them. The brothers also haughtily despise Egypt and Egyptians (e.g. *Yashar* 51.37-42; 54.25-30).

125. Joseph's success is due to 'the Memra of the Lord', and not Joseph's merit (*Targ. Ps.-J. Gen.* 39.3-4).

126. In contrast to *Gen. R.* 84.8.1.C, where Joseph was talented and Jacob handed him all the laws.

that no social mobility is possible, Joseph could fulfill the highest office in Egypt because he was already predestined by birth for this position as a high-born prince, and Jacob and Rachel's firstborn.¹²⁷ In this sense, heritage matters more than Joseph's merit, although merit and heritage are not altogether separated because merit itself is predetermined for those of noble birth.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, expanding on the nature of Joseph's work (Gen. 39.11), agrees with *Ethiopic Joseph*'s position that Joseph was a privileged slave-student in Potiphar's household. Joseph's going back to the house 'to do his work' of Gen. 39.11 becomes 'to study his reckoning tablets' or 'to study his tablets of invention'. The same word 'tablets' is used by *Targ. Onq.* (Gen. 39.11), translated in English as 'accounts' or 'writings of his affairs'. Both clearly designate them as Joseph's, and thus, make them more likely to be his study tablets. Furthermore, the term for determination of tablets, 'of invention', 'of reckoning' is derived from the verb חשב (*khashav*), 'to think, account, devise, plan, invent (often ingenious and artistic things)', pointing to a more creative study than of household accounts.¹²⁸ It provides a contrast to other midrashim that argue that the nature of Joseph's work in Gen. 39.11 is to labor on Potiphar's household accounts (*Gen. R.* 87.7.1-2).

The most paradigmatic of the 'home-country-education' lore is one that places Joseph's education in *Beth Midrashim* (*Targ. Ps.-J.*, Gen. 37.2), where he absorbs the teachings transmitted from the founders of rabbinic midrashim, Eber and Shem (*Gen. R.* 84.8.1.C).¹²⁹ Schools and learning are extremely important for many Jewish traditions.¹³⁰ Joseph goes to school up to his seventeenth birthday (*Targ. Ps.-J.*, Gen. 37.2), and this knowledge enables him to continue to study Torah all his life (*Gen. R.* 86.5.1.B; 87.6.4.B; 95.3.1.D-H). He does that by himself, because no formal education was available until the Israelites settle in Egypt and set as

127. Judah said to the Egyptian prince (Joseph), 'I know that it is the Lord who gave you this greatness from your mother's womb. He honored you in this great deed so that you might become chief, executive, and governor over the land of Egypt' (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 94-95).

128. That *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* incorporated parts of the same tradition that *Ethiopic Joseph* knew becomes clear from its treatment of Gen. 49.22 (see the discussion above on Jacob's blessing).

129. The transmission of rabbinic midrash starts with Shem and Eber, is handed over to Jacob, who gives it to Joseph, and is handed on to Moses and so on up to the rabbis. *Genesis Rabbah* 84.8.1.C attempts to explain Jacob's favoritism of Joseph (Gen. 37.3) by stating that Jacob handed on to Joseph all the laws that he had learned from Shem and Eber.

130. Jacob is a scholar, who was 'perfect in his works, ministering in the schoolhouse of Eber, seeking instructions from before the Lord' (*Targ. Ps.-J.* Gen. 25.27). *Genesis Rabbah* 84.8 also mentions the schoolhouse of Shem and Eber.

their primary goal to build schools for their children (*Gen. R.* 95.3; *Targ. Ps.-J.*, *Gen.* 47.27).¹³¹ Hence, Joseph's two sons study law every day with Jacob (*Tanḥ.* 12.6).¹³² No true Hebrew could be educated by foreigners, and no formal development of Joseph's skills occurred in Egypt. Consequently, the young dreamer was already formed and educated at home by Jacob, and all that he does from then on is derived from this formation of his character under the guidance and protection of God.¹³³ The traditions that espoused this patriotic stance had to develop strategies to cope with the unfavorable image of Joseph as a youth, his 'childish' or immoral behavior, because they could not justify it with Joseph's lack of education, and his ignorance, as *Ethiopic Joseph* could.¹³⁴ An accepted answer was that he lacked the experience necessary for ethical maturity. While Joseph did not develop professionally in Egypt, his moral character shaped itself there. By making the right choices and with God's help he became wise; Joseph grew to be great.¹³⁵

6. Joseph's Identity and Character

The Ethiopic Story of Joseph's idea of Joseph's identity is stated by Joseph himself at the revelation of his true identity to his brothers, 'I am Joseph, son of Jacob and son of Rachel! (p. 99).' Joseph's religion is Jacob's religion. Rachel is the favorite legitimate wife, the only woman Jacob wanted to marry, and Joseph is her firstborn. We have seen that according to *Ethiopic Joseph* Jacob is a ruler of a people, so Joseph is his heir. Joseph, as Rachel's child, is born to rule, and that is what he does in Egypt. His noble birth determines who Joseph is. There is no social mobility. The nationality,

131. The rabbinic concern for scholarship and the importance of studying Torah is ingeniously demonstrated by *Gen. R.* 95.3.1, in a midrash on *Gen* 46.28, according to which Judah was sent before Jacob in Goshen in order to 'set up a study-house there, so that he would teach Torah, in which the tribal fathers would recite Torah' (*Gen. R.* 95.3.1.C).

132. In *Gen. R.* 95.3.1.D-H Jacob remembered the passage of the Torah that Joseph was studying when he last saw him. Joseph uses the passage that he left off studying when he departed as a sign of recognition. The midrash ends, 'This serves to teach you that wherever he (Joseph) went, he engaged in study of the Torah, just as his fathers did, even though, up to that moment, the Torah had not yet been given' (*Gen. R.* 95.3.1.H).

133. Thus, it is the vision of his father, Jacob, that stops him from transgression with Potiphar's wife (*Gen. R.* 87.7.1.B).

134. Such a child should be aware of the significance of its dreams. If so, Joseph's report of his dreams to his brothers must have been an intentional act of showing off.

135. Joseph's choice to keep the law in the encounter with Potiphar's wife made him great. Therefore, there is a development in Joseph's moral character (*Tanḥ.* 9.8, pp. 240-41; *Gen. R.* 87.5.3-4).

Hebrew or Egyptian, is irrelevant to *Ethiopic Joseph*. Moreover, because his Egyptian foster-father, Qatifan, held Joseph's office before him, it appears that Joseph inherited the position. Hence, Qatifan testifies, 'There is no [other] person in Pharaoh's [palace] who has authority as I do. I am he who governs on his behalf. And you, lad, are now in charge of everything [in my house]' (p. 59). We see that Joseph does not actually move up the social ladder; he was born to this office. *Ethiopic Joseph* explains in this manner that Joseph was always naturally in charge, first of Qatifan's household, then of the prison, and finally of the whole land of Egypt. Thus, Joseph is chosen because of his noble birth, which determines his character and talents. While his character remains constant, his abilities came to their full potential through his education in Egypt.

Because social status is inherited, marriage neither adds nor subtracts from it, making Joseph's wedding into the Egyptian elite irrelevant to the narrative progression. Aseneth is not mentioned in the story. According to *Ethiopic Joseph*, Joseph's highborn condition determines Joseph's character and looks. The beauty of his personality reflects his forgiveness, compassion and generosity. The ideal hero is not a silent, stoic hero. Joseph sobs and pleads in the pit (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 50-53) and asks the butler to return a favor (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 68). His alleged cruelty toward his brothers on their encounter in Egypt is a sign of his fairness. Joseph's granting of forgiveness demands true repentance from the guilty parties, both Qatifan's wife (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 76) and then his brothers (*Eth. Jos.*, pp. 99, 105-106).

Joseph is not vengeful; he is a just and noble person. He refuses to tell Jacob who it is who condemned him to death, sold him into slavery and stripped him of his garment. 'This is not, O abba, a time for disputation, nor for confession that I [need to] explain to you all that happened to me' (*Eth. Jos.*, p. 105). As it is his heritage that matters the most, there is no real development of any individual character in *Ethiopic Joseph*.

The view that Joseph's professional ability and his communication with God depend on his education in Egypt was not an especially popular one in rabbinic midrashim, for which the identity questions were of the utmost importance, especially whether Joseph was a Hebrew or an Egyptian. In many rabbinic writings, Joseph's identity is presented as developing throughout his life. Because of the disconnected nature of the midrashic writings, the sequential development of Joseph's personality is not possible to delineate. However, some contradictory points of this tradition are well known. For example, rabbinic midrashim about the Joseph tradition had to struggle with negative representations of Joseph as a youth (e.g. *Gen. R.* 87.1; 84.7.1.C). Despite the fact that *Aggadah Bereshit* preserved very favorable traditions about Joseph, there is a long midrash based on Joseph's

identity crisis in which Jacob refuses to call him by name because Joseph had many names (*Ag. Ber.* 73.C, p. 217).¹³⁶

Joseph's identity crisis was brought about by his siblings's rejection of him. In this conflict Joseph may appear as a victim, whose righteousness goes so far that he wanted to forgive his brothers the moment he saw them in Egypt. However, an angel appeared to him and convinced him that his brothers did not deserve his mercy (*Ag. Ber.* 73.C, pp. 217-18).¹³⁷

In contrast to this cultural memory of *Aggadah Berešit*, *Genesis Rabbah* preserved lore that Joseph's sufferings were divine retribution. Joseph himself brought calamities on himself by his vainglorious behavior, lies, informing on his brothers and showing off in his youth (*Gen. R.* 84.7.1-2; 87.1).¹³⁸ But being a collection of midrashim, *Gen. R.* 84.5.2 also preserves a flattering midrash on *Gen.* 37.2, where the generations of Israelites 'came along only on account of the merit of Joseph'. 'These generations thus waited until Joseph was born' (*Gen. R.* 84.5.2.D). '... Who brought them down to Egypt? It was Joseph. Who supported them in Egypt? It was Joseph. The sea split open only on the account of the merit of Joseph. . . . R. Yudan said, also Jordan was divided only on the account of the merit of Joseph' (*Gen. R.* 84.5.2.B-H).

In the traditions that consider Joseph a Hebrew who received all his education and training at home transmitted from his forefathers, he was an educated and shrewd young man. Thus, the most immediate reason for his youthful misbehavior would be because he was a vainglorious and malevolent child, a liar and an informer. Joseph changed in Egypt by building his character, performing his greatest deed when refusing to sin with Potiphar's wife. Thus, Joseph's merit consists in developing a highly moral character by correcting his faults and choosing suffering over moral transgressions, exceeding all his brothers in moral integrity (*Ag. Ber.* 61.A-B, pp. 181-83; *Gen. R.* 86.4.2.B-C; 98.5.1.B).¹³⁹

136. 'His mother called him Joseph, as is stated . . . (*Gen.* 30.24). Pharaoh called him *Zaphenath-paneah* (*Gen.* 41.45). The Egyptians called him: *Bow the knee!* (*Gen.* 41.43). But Jacob put aside all those names and only told his sons: *May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man*' (*Ag. Ber.* 73.C, p. 217).

137. 'When the tribes went down to Egypt, he took mercy on them as soon as he saw them, as is stated: *Joseph has recognized his brothers* (*Gen.* 42:8). *He turned away from them and wept* (v. 24). Immediately the angel came down and appeared to Joseph in the image of a man, and he said to him: You show mercy on these?! Don't you know how much trouble they caused you, that they threw you in a pit and sold you four times. He began to bring charges against them before Joseph' (*Ag. Ber.* 73.C, pp. 217-18).

138. According to this tradition, Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife (*Gen. R.* 87.1), because although he was already seventeen years old, 'he did childish deeds, decorating his eyes, curling his hair, and prancing along on his heels' (*Gen. R.* 84.7.1.C).

139. Non-Joseph traditions do not agree with this evaluation of Joseph's character, considering him rather as a traitor and an Egyptian. All the good that he has done came

7. Conclusion

The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* and the relevant rabbinic midrashim contain much material on RVE. Their understanding of RVE is based on the Hellenistic theory of vision while focusing on its applications in practice. Their special contribution lies in enriching our knowledge on the details of lecanomancy, which Joseph as a scientist would practice. They also add a new dimension to the practice of dream interpretation: verification of the credibility of an oneiromancer, either by the fulfillment of their near-future predictions, or by expecting a dream interpreter to have a prior familiarity with the main contents of a dream before it is told.

Joseph's specialty is the science of vision. Caring for its practical dimension, *Ethiopic Joseph* focuses on Joseph's methods. These methods include the interpretation of surface reflections and refractions of light and visual effects in visions, and the interpretation of information received by sight of exterior appearances, primarily of dress and garments. The selection of the appropriate clothing for an intended visual impression plays a major role in the dynamics of story building. Moreover, the story plays generously on the use of the emission of the energy from the eyes for powerful visual effects and control of people and events. Joseph's most prominent scientific tool is his drinking cup, or in some cases an astrolabe, a scientific instrument of the time that performed a task that corresponded to the cup of the Hellenistic era. Visual effects in our texts are mainly accomplished through ritualistic performance and through the arrangement of dramatic scenes.

While *Ethiopic Joseph* belongs to Joseph tradition, with its *cosmopolitan/global attitude* and an absolute lack of interest in ethnic issues and with its presentation of Joseph as a scientist of vision, it is sometimes difficult to determine to which tradition individual midrashim belong. Some could be assigned to the Joseph tradition because they explicitly state that Joseph inherited and transmitted important values of spiritual and/or intellectual expertise. Some directly celebrate Joseph's use of the cup in the quest for the truth, as is the case in most of the midrashim of the sources examined by this chapter. It is only possible to infer from their treatment of the subject where the rest may belong. Certainly those that assign Joseph's education to Egyptian teachers may belong to the liberal Joseph tradition, and those denying Egyptian influence and supporting the Hebrew schooling of Joseph may belong to some more conservative Joseph tradition. Those that vehemently criticize Joseph's character and his way of life may represent a reaction to an overly cosmopolitan Joseph

from God, who used him as a tool, because God did not have any other available Hebrew around. As Jacob's son, he is still a better Hebrew than a mere Egyptian (*Gen. R.* 86.4.1). But nothing good came from Joseph's own merit (*Gen. R.* 86.5.1.F; 87.10.2; *Tanh.* 12.3).

tradition, or they may be behind an anti-Joseph tradition, such as is well defined in the works of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria.¹⁴⁰ Traditions that reject Joseph as an exceptional brother and deny him a role as a holder of Jewish values may be assigned to one of the non-Joseph traditions.

140. See Chapter 5, on Philo.

4

UNDERMINING JOSEPH'S PATRIARCHAL ROLE

Claude os, aperi oculos!

‘Usta zatvori, a oči otvori’

‘Shut your mouth, open your eyes’

(Shut up and watch)

Latin/Serbian Proverb

Revelation by visual effects was not only a phenomenon dominant in the Joseph tradition and limited to Hellenistic science; it was also a part of a much larger and more popular understanding of access to esoteric knowledge and to religious and scientific experience. This will be demonstrated by examining other traditions that embrace and describe this phenomenon but transfer its practice to a different figure while still having Joseph as one of the main protagonists of the story. The opposite case is also verified: the denial of RVE's methodological principles and its effectiveness in providing access to the supernatural realm, divine law and the mysteries of the world. The rejection of RVE is usually reserved for those texts that explicitly deny to the sense of vision communication with the supernatural or reject intellectual inquiry altogether as an approach to the divine.

Three Texts of Levitical Tradition

This chapter examines how some texts not belonging to the Joseph tradition treat Joseph, the image of a Hellenistic scientist, the concept of RVE and the use of lecanomancy as a tool. In these texts one of the twelve brothers (other than Joseph) is the carrier of the esoteric knowledge and of the time-honored learning through which religious insight, wisdom, knowledge and scientific prediction are transmitted to future generations of Hebrews and Jews. If the office of Hellenistic scientist is acknowledged and accepted, then its specialist would be the chosen patriarch, Levi, for example, instead of Joseph. If it is rejected, then Joseph, as its practitioner, would be projected as a traitor or an improper Jew. Yet another approach was to suppress Joseph's divinatory practices, either by avoiding reference to them in the

genre of rewritten Bible such as *Jubilees*, or by focusing solely on Joseph's ethics, his chastity and suffering, as in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

It is interesting that all texts that hold a position on Hellenistic science and its practitioners belong to the Levitical tradition. Three texts will be examined that promote the image of Joseph in accord with traditional scholarship: *Jubilees*, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Joseph and Aseneth*. *Jubilees* (*Jub.*) belongs to a branch of the Levitical tradition that holds that the sense of vision is deceptive and cannot be relied on as a source of divine revelation. I name it the conservative Levitical tradition. It outlaws lecanomancy as a religious practice, and Joseph's symbolic dreams, which consist of images, cannot be trustworthy. *Jubilees* suppresses any mention of divination in relation to Joseph's cup or his activities, although it follows the biblical text quite faithfully in other ways.

Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (*Test. XII Patr.*) emerges as partly conservative and a product of a militant Levitical branch. Joseph is presented as an almost entirely positive figure but only as a moral role model. There is no allusion to his special access to the divine. Nor is there a depiction of him as a Hellenistic scientist or lecanomancer. Any specific revelation by vision related to Joseph is ignored. It is Levi who is in contact with the divine and is the transmitter of religious, scientific and traditional knowledge and learning. Levi is also the receiver of several types of RVE.

Joseph and Aseneth (*Jos. Asen.*), on the contrary, belongs to what I call a liberal branch of Levitical tradition. In it Joseph is a truly positive character, almost a saintly figure; but he is aloof and a background personage rather than a hero of the story. Aseneth is the heroine, and she is the one who wields what were Joseph's scientific/divinatory practices. Although mentioned second in the title, Aseneth is featured as the lecanomancer in the story. She gains access to the divine and performs miracles. The prominent male character is Levi, who has access to the divine and cosmic mysteries and who is the confidant and special friend to Aseneth, the convert to monotheism.

Without entering into the details of the literary and historical background of these three compositions, a few common features that may influence the nature of their evidence on RVE should be noted. In contrast to the works of the historian Josephus and philosopher Philo, their authorship is unknown, and each of them is a part of a popular literary genre of the time. This genre specificity relies heavily on presupposed conventions, including those on RVE phenomena. Therefore their information on the cultic and theoretical context of RVE are more indirect than in the historical or philosophical writings of Josephus and Philo. We classify them among the pseudepigrapha, and two of them belong to the wider scriptural canon of individual

churches: *Jubilees* to the Ethiopian Church, and *Joseph and Aseneth* to the Armenian Church.

*JUBILEES*¹

The book of *Jubilees* is especially interesting because it retells the biblical story quite faithfully (Genesis 1–Exodus 12); so much so, that many scholars classify it as a ‘rewritten Bible’ rather than a midrash.² It serves as a good illustration of Levitical tradition and specifically of the type that I label ‘conservative Levitical tradition’. Because the most extensive biblical story in *Jubilees* is that of Joseph (Genesis 37–50), it also serves as an excellent example of how conservative Levitical tradition treats every aspect of biblical Joseph.

1. *Joseph of Jubilees*

a. *Joseph's Professional Life*

With Levi as the carrier of religious and intellectual tradition, Joseph is not *Jubilees*' favorite character. The Joseph of *Jubilees* is not a scientist, scholar, diviner or magician; he has no religious office. Joseph is not part of Jewish learning, which flows from Jacob to Levi. Joseph is a politician. He becomes the ruler of Egypt and is a successful administrator. He is in full charge of Egypt's economy. Moreover, he is its foreign minister, as he hosts foreign delegations and is in a position to accuse them of spying and treason. He certainly achieves wealth and splendor (*Jub.* 43.20). Although telling the meaning of dreams is the immediate cause of Joseph's shining career, in *Jubilees* dream interpretation is not his job.

1. If not otherwise indicated, all the citations are from the critical edition of James C. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees* (trans. James C. Vanderkam; Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 511; Scriptores Aethiopici, 88; 2 vols.; Leuven: Peeters, 1989).

2. James C. Vanderkam discusses ‘rewritten Bible’, ‘commentary’ and ‘Targum’ as possible genres for *Jubilees* (Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, pp. 135–36). For its classification as a midrash, see O.S. Wintermute, ‘Jubilees’, *OTP*, esp. I, pp. 39–41; see also B. Halpern-Amaru, ‘Jubilees, Midrash of’, *EM*, I, pp. 333–50. According to R.H. Charles, *Jubilees* is ‘Primitive history rewritten from the standpoint of Law’ (*OTP*, I, p. 37). Wintermute opts to see *Jubilees* as midrash on Exod. 24.18, on what Moses learned for forty days on Mount Sinai (*OTP*, I, p. 39), while Vanderkam applies Geza Vermes's term ‘rewritten Bible’ to *Jubilees*. (Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* [SPB, 4; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961], p. 228). The genre rewritten Bible describes midrashic exegesis that explains the biblical text systematically, verse by verse, and covers long passages of the Bible, resembling a commentary. Thus, rewritten Bible is a midrashic exegetical biblical commentary. *Yashar* is one of the latest examples of rewritten Bible.

Joseph is certainly not a Hellenistic scientist.³ The closest that Joseph gets to any lasting involvement in the human enterprising spirit is his alleged invention of taxation and its durable implementation in praxis in the Egyptian economy (45.12). There is no development of his character, knowledge or wisdom; no professional education is related to him. He is a passive tool for the glory of the Lord. His superiority over the Egyptians and his success among them is due to his tribal identity as Jacob's son. To *Jubilees*, convictions and lineage matter much more than education.

Jubilees tells us nothing about Joseph's own personality. He is more of a passive character. Not once does Joseph speak or think until he interprets a dream to Pharaoh and advises him what to do. Because his decoding of the dreams of a butler and a cook came true, he receives an audition with the Pharaoh. Pharaoh is so impressed by Joseph's performance that he appoints him as the second in command of the entire kingdom of Egypt, stating as the reason that Joseph's wisdom and knowledge come from the spirit of the Lord (40.5). This appointment and Joseph's elevation are narrated in detail (40.6-13). Later Joseph sends a message to Jacob that the Lord made him like a father to Pharaoh (43.19), enabling him to rule his household and the entire land of Egypt. But more importantly the Lord gave him splendor and wealth, which constitute Joseph's success in the eyes of *Jubilees* (43.19-20). His most important contribution to Israelite culture is to have been the best provider for his family (45.6-7).⁴

b. Joseph's Identity

Joseph is a Jew. Because of his lineage, heritage and beliefs, he is better, wiser and more just than foreigners such as the Egyptians. He is one of Jacob's sons, although not morally as impeccable and important as Levi and Judah. He is Rachel's firstborn son, but Rachel appears as inferior to Leah, because she keeps idols and is at first barren. Also *Jubilees* nowhere states that Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons, or that Joseph is

3. The only roundabout way to see Joseph as a scientist in *Jubilees* is from his predictions of famine, i.e. climate change, and the advice on how to prevent the consequences. It is a distant prediction involving long-term measures. Today, this task would be the task of a scientist: a meteorologist or a geologist. Hellenistic science would put all these functions under its wings. However, the method of obtaining the relevant data is clearly stated: dream interpretation that is classified under the religious function of prophecy.

4. *Jubilees* does not forget to remark, 'Joseph provided as much food for his father, and for his brothers, and also for his livestock as would be sufficient for them for the seven years of famine'. Moreover, it amends the biblical treatment of Goshen (Gen. 46.34), where 'Israel and his sons lived', making it into 'the best part of the land of Egypt' (*Jub.* 44.10). This fact certainly elevates Joseph as the caretaker for his kinsfolk (*Jub.* 46.6).

his favorite child.⁵ Joseph's success in Egypt, in Potiphar's household, in prison and in dream interpretations is attributed solely to his Jewish background. It is the reason why the Lord was with him and why he was better than the Egyptians. Nothing is credited to Joseph's merit. Even his refusal of the advances of Potiphar's wife's is due to his remembering his father's Jacob's teachings (39.5-10). 'He [Joseph] remembered the Lord and *what his father Jacob would read to him from the words of Abraham*' (39.6). It is worth noticing that for *Jubilees* teaching happens through the word, oral or written, and is handed on from father to son.

Joseph ruled Egypt in a just way, again because the Lord was with him, which also meant that he was a Jew. Everybody around him loved him because 'he was not arrogant, proud, or partial, nor did he accept bribes because he was ruling all the people of the land in a just way' (40.8-9). However, *Jubilees* mentions several events about Joseph that it assesses negatively. The change of his name by Pharaoh and taking as a wife the daughter of the priest of Heliopolis, Potiphar (40.10), is the sign of degradation of Joseph's Jewishness. Jacob's blessing of Joseph and Aseneth's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, is omitted in *Jubilees*. Also, Joseph treats his brothers harshly. He makes his whole family afraid of him. Joseph accuses his brothers of spying on Egypt. He puts them on trial for treachery and makes them appear as thieves. His use of the silver cup is for his own pleasure and at best is a sign of political power.

In addition, *Jubilees* condenses the material regarding Joseph, making it into a shorter Joseph story than the biblical one (Genesis 37-50 = *Jubilees* 39-45). At the same time it expands and supplements significantly the stories of Abraham (*Jubilees* 11-21), of Isaac and Rebecca (e.g. *Jubilees* 35), of Jacob, and even of all Joseph's brothers (34.20-21), in addition to Levi, as expected. Still within the Joseph story itself, some parts are enhanced,

5. Even the biblical presentation of Jacob's prolonged grief for Joseph is rationalized by *Jubilees* in order to bolster its promotion of Joseph's mediocrity. Jacob's prolonged and deep mourning for Joseph in the Bible is reinterpreted by *Jubilees* as grief not only for Joseph but also for two other family deaths, the death of his daughter, Dinah, and of the mother of his two children, Bilhah (*Jub.* 34.15-16). Moreover, in order to undermine Jacob's biblical grief for Joseph, but not to change the fact, *Jubilees* inserts the story of Leah's death and a lengthy discussion of Jacob's love and mourning for his beloved dead wife. On the other hand, no sorrow or grief is attached to Rachel's death, who is made to die at a convenient moment, so that Jacob could introduce Leah, instead of Rachel, as his beloved wife to his parents along with her two sons, Levi and Judah. Moreover, Rachel's burial apart from the other women of the family is a kind of righteous ostracization (*Jub.* 32.34; 36.21). *Jubilees* shows disrespect for Rachel, justifying Jacob's renaming her younger son as Benjamin (*Jub.* 32.33): 'During the night Rachel gave birth to a son. She named him Son of my Pain because she had difficulty when she was giving birth to him. But his father named him Benjamin' (*Jub.* 32.33).

such as the incident with Potiphar's wife (39.5-11), and others, like Joseph's youthful dreams, are omitted altogether and many are shortened.

2. Revelation by Visual Effects

a. *Dreams*

In *Jubilees* dreams and 'visions' are accepted ways of divine revelation as long as the dreams are obvious and not symbolic. While occasionally *Jubilees* reports symbolic dreams and interpretations, it omits any description of them. Joseph's dreams as a youth are omitted, and only the facts that he interpreted the dreams of the chief butler and the chief baker and that his interpretations came true are mentioned. The episode with the royal prisoners's night visions is limited to a short imageless statement. 'The chief butler and the chief baker—had a dream and told it to Joseph. Things turned out for them just as he had said they would. The Pharaoh restored the chief butler to his job, but he hanged the baker, as Joseph had interpreted for him' (39.16-17).

Pharaoh's dreams are not described either. It is noted only that they are about famine. There is no description of their content and no visual image, which implies that *Jubilees* rejects the use of the sense of vision. 'At that time the Pharaoh had two dreams in one night about the subject of famine which would come on the whole land.' More attention is dedicated to their interpretation, 'And he said before Pharaoh that his two dreams were one, and he said to him: "Seven years shall come (in which there shall be) plenty over all the land of Egypt, and after that seven years of famine, such a famine as has not been in all the land."' Joseph's advice on the action Pharaoh needed to take as a result of the dreams is not shortened: 'And now let Pharaoh appoint overseers in all the land of Egypt, and let them store up food in every city throughout the days of the years of plenty, and there will be food for the seven years of famine, and the land will not perish through the famine, for it will be very severe' (40.1-5).

It is obvious that *Jubilees* systematically suppresses any indication that these prophetic dreams could be symbolic. Accordingly, *Jubilees*' dreams would need no interpretation. However, it still remains faithful to the biblical narration and records all the cases of dream interpretation.⁶

6. Joseph's dream interpretations appear as motifs in plot development. Omitting the reference to them would employ a drastic change in plot development, a deviation that *Jubilees*, remaining true to its genre as rewritten Bible, or even midrash, would perform very unwillingly.

b. *Rejection of Revelation by Visual Effects*

The rejection of the divine message contained in symbolic dreams is in agreement with *Jubilees*' position on phenomena of RVE in general. While dreams are accepted as a mode of divine communication, this revelation can occur only by word and through the sense of hearing. 'Rebecca was told in a dream what her older son Esau had said' (27.1). 'We [angel talking] told him in a dream that . . .' (41.24). Even if the text calls it a vision, it features just the presence of an angel or of the Lord, who gives instructions to the dreamer (e.g. 32.21; 1.1, 5; 2.1; 16.15). 'In a night vision he saw an angel coming down from heaven with seven tablets in his hands. He gave (them) to Jacob, and he read them. He read everything that was written in them—what would happen to him and his sons throughout the ages' (31.21). All the visions are just speeches devoid of imagery or description (e.g. 1.1-27; 16.15-19; 32.17; 21; 26). Even Moses's ascension to the divine realm and his encounter with God are not presented in images but in speech, quite an unusual case for ascension accounts (1.1-27).⁷ In contrast to symbolic dreams, the speech/vision dreams that exist in the biblical text are not abbreviated by *Jubilees* but are reported in full. Thus, Jacob's vision at Beersheba in *Jubilees* (44.5-6) corresponds to Gen. 46.2-4.

The rejection of divine communication through the sense of vision is present throughout the book. The rainbow as a visual symbol of the covenant between God and humans is mentioned only once in *Jubilees* (6.16) in contrast to Genesis (9.13-17) where it is mentioned three times. Any vision or description of the way God is seen by humans is out of its scope. *Jubilees* is not interested in how Jacob saw God in his vision, although it bluntly states that Jacob saw God at Peniel face to face. The episode about Moses at the burning bush is omitted altogether.

c. *Jubilees' Anti-Iconic Cosmology*

Jubilees never includes any visual detail or any play between light and darkness. This stance is certainly in agreement with its cosmology, which does not replicate the prominence of light and water from the biblical creation story (Gen. 1.3-8). Even the creation of the light and darkness serves calendric issues (*Jub.* 2.8-9). There is no separate creation of light on the first day (see Gen. 1.3), but it is created together with the heavens, earth, the waters and different kinds of angels.⁸ Thus, *Jubilees* builds from the very

7. In the accounts of physical ascent to heavenly regions, or mystical journeys to heaven, images play a most important role. As apocalyptic literature regularly contains this motif, it prompted O.S. Wintermute (*OTP*, p. 37) to state that the lack of imagery in *Jubilees* is a reason not to classify it as an apocalyptic writing.

8. 'For on the first day he created the heavens that are above, the earth, the waters, and all the spirits who serve before him, namely: the angels of the presence. . . . [There

start a theoretical basis for its consistent omission of descriptions and of visual appeal.

Jubilees, however, designates hearing and speech as the exclusive means through which communication with God is realized. Hence, the tools for access to the divine are ears and mouth.

Then the Lord God said to me [the angel]: ‘Open his [Abram’s] mouth and his ears to hear and speak with his tongue in the revealed language.’ For from the day of the collapse it had disappeared from the mouth(s) of all mankind. *I opened his mouth, ears, and lips* and began to speak Hebrew with him—in the language of creation (12.25-26).

Then, *Jubilees* continues,

He took his fathers’ books (they were written in Hebrew) and copied them. From that time he began to study them, while I was telling him everything that he was unable (to understand) (12.26-27).

For transmission of the divine communication to occur through hearing and speech, the message in words must be written down, preserved on a lasting material and used for the instruction of the chosen carriers of learning and tradition. Therefore, the writing down of what the Lord did for posterity is of the utmost importance. From its prologue *Jubilees* establishes the framework of ‘the book of Jubilees’: ‘these are the words regarding . . . as he related (them) to Moses on Mt. Sinai when he went up to receive the stone tablets—the law and the commandments’, to its epilogue: ‘as it was written in the tablets which he placed in my hands so that I could write for you . . . here the words regarding . . . are completed’ (50.5). In addition to the reception of the two stone tablets from God, Moses is to write down everything about which God instructs him in a book for the offspring (1.5). It is done in the following manner: the angel takes the tablets and dictates, making Moses write down what is in them (1.27). The transmission of the books is a crucial issue for *Jubilees*, so that the final act of the dying Jacob is to entrust Levi with them. ‘He gave all his books and the books of his fathers to his son Levi so that he could preserve them and renew them for his sons until today’ (45.16). Clearly, it is the text that is sacred for *Jubilees*.

were also] the depths, darkness and light, dawn and evening which he prepared through the knowledge of his mind. . . . [H]e made seven great works on the first day’ (*Jub.* 2.2-3). We can compare this account of *Jubilees* with the creation of light in Genesis 1. ‘In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep. . . . Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day’ (Gen. 1.1-4).

While the sense of hearing serves as the conductor of divine revelation, the sense of vision is believed to lead people astray and into sin. Trusting the eyes is the cause of the fall of humankind or of the curse on Ham. 'Then the serpent said to the woman: "You will not really die because the Lord knows that when you eat from it *your eyes will be opened, you will become like gods, and you will know good and evil*"' (3.19), implying that the use of eyes leads to idolatry, polytheism and divisions. 'The woman *saw* that the tree was delightful and *pleasing to the eye* . . . its fruit good to eat . . . [Adam] ate (it), *his eyes were opened*, and *he saw* that he was naked' (3.20-21).⁹ The eyes should not be freely used, 'Ham *saw* his father naked' (7.8-10), and thus earned the curse of his father.

3. Hellenistic Science

According to *Jubilees*, the observation of natural phenomena is not the means to the truth or knowledge of the future. This is shown well in the contemplations of *Jubilees*' hero, Abraham.

Abram sat at night . . . to *observe* the stars from evening to dawn in order to see what would be the character of the year with respect to rains. He was sitting and *observing by himself*. A voice came to his mind and said: 'All the signs of the stars and signs of the moon and the sun—all are under Lord's control. Why should I be *investigating* (them)? If he wishes he will make it rain in the morning and evening; and if he wishes, he will not make it fall. Everything is under his control' (12.16-18).

The latter passage discloses *Jubilees*' rejection of the basic principles of Hellenistic science and the ancient science of optics. The former is based on the observation of phenomena, with a focus on light and vision. It is not in the vision, but in the voice that the truth lies. Thus, it is not the observation of the world but the studying of books that is commendable. Accordingly, *Jubilees* would disapprove of the office of Hellenistic scientist. And indeed in *Jubilees*, Levi is not a scientist or a scholar but a Jewish priest. For *Jubilees* science is linked to the Chaldeans, and *Jubilees* identifies this science with divination, openly condemning augury.

His father taught him [Nahor] the studies of Chaldeans: to practice divination and to augur by the signs of the sky (11.8). . . . The child [Abram, Nahor's son] began to realize the errors of the earth—that everyone was going astray after the statues and after impurity (11.16).

Abram's intellectual progress was secured when he was taught the art of writing and then, 'he separated from his father in order not to worship idols

9. Compare 'having the eyes open' in the fall story with 'opening the mouth and ears' of Abram in his divine election (*Jub.* 12.25).

with him. He began to pray to the creator of all that he would save him from the errors of mankind and that it might not fall to his share to go astray after impurity and wickedness' (11.16-17).

Thus, science and augury are 'errors of the earth' and impurity. Lecanomancy is nowhere directly mentioned in *Jubilees*, but it too would probably be categorized among these 'errors of the earth'.

4. *Lecanomancy*

The employment of a cup to look at and see how the light reflects on its liquid is unacceptable to *Jubilees* as a method to discern the true nature of phenomena. As with any other device that enhances the function of the sense of sight, it would be classified as serving idolatrous and polytheistic purposes. Lecanomancy belongs to magic and divination, to the practices that lead people astray and into sin. The extent to which *Jubilees* sees magic as evil is nicely demonstrated in *Jubilees*' take on Moses's encounter with Egyptian magicians in a severely compressed account about plagues.¹⁰ *Jubilees* certainly does not omit condemning idol worship; it quotes biblical laws (36.5) and alludes to the sins of those who practiced it (11.4).¹¹

Jubilees omits any allusion to Joseph's cup being used for divination (Gen. 44.5). It restricts itself to the biblical remark about the use of Joseph's silver cup for drinking and ignores the other half of the biblical verse about its use for divination. The biblical passage presenting the major problem for the ideology of *Jubilees* reads as follows: 'Joseph said to them, ... Do you not know that one such as I can *practice divination*?' (Gen. 44.15). Where divination is mentioned, it is rendered in *Jubilees* (43.10) as, 'Do you not know that a man *takes pleasure in his cup as I do in this cup*?' *Jubilees*' version is in sharp contrast to the regular use of the cup by most texts to express some sort of human bonding and fellowship.¹² *Jubilees* seems to portray this act as anti-social, as if the cup itself has a negative connotation. Is 'divination' replaceable with the self-centered 'taking pleasure'? Within the conservative Levitical tradition of *Jubilees* and *Testaments of the XII*

10. 'The prince Mastema [the evil power] ... would help the Egyptian magicians and they would oppose (you) and perform in front of you. We permitted them to do evil things, but we would not allowed healings to be performed by them' (*Jub.* 48.9-10).

11. 'Abram said to his father . . . "What help and advantage do we get from these idols before which you worship and prostrate yourself? For there is no spirit in them because they are dumb. They are an error of the mind. . . . [God] created everything by his word; and all life (comes) from his presence. Why do you worship those things which have no spirit in them? . . . they are great shame for those who make them and an error of the mind for those who worship them"' (*Jub.* 12.1-5).

12. See the discussion of Josephus (Chapter 2) and Philo (Chapter 5) on this subject.

Patriarchs, the two are on one side dependent on each other and on the other closely related to the sense of vision and its negative role in human enterprise and development.¹³

Any divination or magical act is so negative for *Jubilees* that it removes any hint or allusion to biblical practices that might be related to idolatry. The mandrake incident is omitted in the Reuben and Rachel story. No mention of divination is present in the Joseph story; his cup serves him only for drinking. No symbolic dreams that need decoding, such as Joseph's dreams of glory, exist. Because Joseph is not *Jubilees*' favorite character, it fails to explain many of his actions with the result that we have no idea why Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery or wanted to kill him. One very rare motivation is present, though, in the account of Joseph's cup, probably in order to cover up any connection with divination as part of the biblical text (Gen. 44.5). Joseph has his cup put in his brothers' sacks in order to learn their thoughts, 'whether there were peaceful thoughts between them' (42.25). In other words, according to *Jubilees*' ideology, Joseph wants to check if there is uniformity in their feelings and actions.

Only obvious dreams, therefore, are accepted as a tool of divine revelation. People believe in them if they come true. Although an interpretation is also sanctioned, no symbolic dreams are mentioned or any dream content described. If there is a report on the contents, no images or visual details are given, 'Levi dreamed that he—he and his sons—had been appointed and made into the priesthood of the most high God forever. When he awakened, he blessed the Lord' (32.1). There is no mention of Joseph's youthful dreams.¹⁴ Thus, *Jubilees* can serve as an excellent example of the necessity to divide obvious and symbolic dreams into two different genres. As *Jubilees* classifies and clearly rejects symbolic dreams and phenomena of RVE as being magic and divination, it divides dreams into two sharply distinguished categories.

At the heart of this division is the choice of a different sense organ as the emitter and receiver of divine communication and of a corresponding transmitter as the conductor. RVE, with symbolic dreams as its subcategory, uses sight as the sensory organ and light as the conductor; obvious dreams employ the sense of hearing and sound as the transmitter. The former needs interpretation; the latter is to be taken literally and no explanation is necessary.

13. See below in this chapter.

14. No reason is given also for his brothers' malicious treatment of Joseph (*Jub.* 34.10), which makes the motivation of the characters in the narrative confusing and unresolved.

5. Levitical Tradition

Jubilees' treatment of RVE, lecanomancy, science and Joseph reflects its conservative Levitical tradition. Levi is the carrier of the priesthood and not of scientific, scholarly or political office. There is one single way to heaven. Every religious, ritualistic or ethical expression must comply with it. The ideal of conservative Levitical tradition is summarized: 'They became populous nation, and *all of them were of the same mind* so that each one loved the other and each one helped the other. They became numerous and increased very much' (46.1). Every deviation from the single, established course is regarded as idolatry, magic or evil.

a. *Undermining Joseph and Revelation by Visual Effects*

Rachel's involvement with her father's idols serves to diminish her moral character while heightening Leah's (31.2-12), thereby enhancing the significance of Leah's sons, Levi and Judah.¹⁵ It is ethics and obeying laws, especially submission to parents, that matter. It is all about morality, obedience to laws, and parents or tribe. The higher ranking a hero(ine) of conservative Levitical tradition, the more morally impeccable (s)he is. Thus, Abram never approved that his wife Sarai would be given to Pharaoh (cf. Gen. 12.10-16), 'the Pharaoh took Abram's wife Sarai by force for himself' (13.13).

The right of the firstborn son must be preserved, unless he proves himself to be morally flawed. Thus, Judah is cleared in the story with Tamar, while Reuben is accused in the expanded story with Bilhah of an inexcusable moral transgression against his father (33.2-16). Judah's Canaanite wife is to blame for the improper behavior of his sons toward Tamar (41.23-25).¹⁶ Judah must be morally correct as the secular leader, but Levi is more important, and consequently his morality is impeccable. For killing all the Shechemites in revenge for the alleged rape of his sister Dinah, Levi and his descendants were given the priesthood as a reward, which is sealed by a written text. 'A written notice was entered in heaven for them (to the effect)

15. It is interesting how *Jubilees* narrates the story about Jacob taking Leah's sons, Levi and Judah, to see his parents immediately after mentioning Rachel's idols. Hence, it justifies the election of Leah's progeny over Rachel's: Levi and Judah over Joseph. 'Jacob told to all the people of his household: . . . Remove the foreign gods which are among you. They *handed over* the foreign gods, their earrings and necklaces, and the idols that Rachel had stolen from her father Laban. She gave everything to Jacob, . . . Jacob . . . took his two sons with him—Levi and Judah . . . to his father Isaac and his mother Rebecca' (*Jub.* 31.1-5).

16. As far as Judah's guilt goes, it is against his sons, and he repents. *Jubilees* offers a justification for Judah, or the exemption of his case, because his sons did not actually sleep with Tamar (*Jub.* 41).

that they carried out what was right, justice and revenge against the sinners. It was recorded as a blessing' (30.23).

To insure that there is no possibility of a stain on Levi's moral character, *Jubilees* omits the Shechemites's circumcision and conversion. Omitted as well is Jacob's reproach on religious grounds to his sons for their murderous act (30.25), and Jacob's curse of Levi and Simeon (Gen. 49.7).

This interpretation is representative of *Jubilees*' theology, which is against foreigners. Killing foreigners is a divinely ordained action (30.5-6). Exogamy (25.5), intermarriage with foreigners, as well as generally engaging with foreigners, is among the greatest sins (30.7, 11-15). Foreigners are bad, as are who love them. Joseph married Aseneth, the daughter of an Egyptian priest, and made a successful career in Egypt. Logically, he cannot really belong among *Jubilees*' heroes.

At the same time kinship, love and harmony, as well as care and obedience to parents are promoted as the highest virtues (36.8-11). The material care of aging parents is a must for *Jubilees*. *Jubilees* respects and loves wealth. Affluence plays a significant role in the story and is related to familial relations. Thus, it was of utmost importance for Jacob to send money regularly to his parents from abroad (29.15-16, 20). Similarly, Jacob had to see 'the wagons that Joseph sent' as the indicator of his wealth and success in order to believe that Joseph was alive and to decide to go to Egypt (43.24).

b. *Levi as the Chosen Brother*

Levi is the chosen among the twelve brothers to carry on and transmit the most holy and precious expressions of culture and tradition, articulated through the Jewish priesthood. *Jubilees* designates Levi to the priesthood on four different occasions (32.1; 31.11-17; 30.18-19; 32.2-9).¹⁷ First, Levi is chosen for the priesthood and as the successor to Jacob because of his participation in Shechem's slaughter, which *Jubilees* perceives as an act of purifying Israel (30.18). The justification is found in the law that daughters are forbidden to marry foreigners. On the second occasion Jacob takes his

17. James Kugel ('Levi's Elevation to the Priesthood in Second Temple Writings', *HTR* 86 [1993], pp. 1-64) calls this treatment of the subject 'duplication-of-means', or 'overkill'. It is a frequent phenomenon 'that ancient texts like *Jubilees* present two separate and even mutually contradictory explanations for something.... Now in the case at hand, we have an extraordinary instance of 'overkill', four apparently independent explanations of how Levi came to acquire the priesthood and levitical service: (1) this special status was granted to him in a (divinely sent) dream-vision (*Jub.* 32.1); (2) it is said to have come about as a result of Jacob's mechanically counting backwards in the 'human tithe' at Bethel (*Jub.* 32.2-9); (3) it was granted to him as a reward for his zeal in avenging Dinah (*Jub.* 30.18-19); and (4) it was given to him in prophetic blessing by his grandfather Isaac (*Jub.* 31.11-17)' (Kugel, 'Levi's Elevation', p. 7).

two sons, Levi and Judah, to meet his parents. They first blessed Levi, then Judah. Isaac directed where Jacob's sons would sleep: Levi on his right and Judah on his left. 'A spirit of prophecy descended into his [Isaac's] mouth. . . . May the Lord . . . make you [Levi] and your descendants (alone) out of all humanity approach him to serve in his temple like the angels of the presence and like the holy ones' (31.12-14). The third is when Levi dreamt of his future priesthood, which his sons will carry on (32.1). Finally, Jacob elects Levi to the priesthood by a mechanical count, as the tenth of his sons counting backward from the youngest, before Benjamin was born, to be dedicated to God as his priest (32.2-9).

c. The Chain of Succession from Adam to Moses

Levi participates in the chain of succession that goes from Adam to Moses. This chain of succession plays an important role in *Jubilees*. It starts with the first human, Adam, and continues through his descendant, Enoch, who

was the first of the mankind who were born on earth who learned (the art of) writing, instruction, and wisdom and who wrote down in a book the signs of the sky . . . He was the first to write a testimony. . . . While he slept he saw a vision of what has happened and what will occur—how things will happen for mankind during history until the day of judgment. He saw everything and understood. He wrote a testimony for himself and placed it upon the earth against all mankind and for their history (4.17-19).

Enoch introduces the nature of the transmitted material: literacy, education and the ability to predict the future by communication with the supernatural or divine. *Jubilees* articulates this transmission usually by handing down the books or tablets by the elected leader to his successor. Noah is the next man to communicate directly with God (5.20-23) and to officiate in ritualistic sacrifice, thus serving as a priest (6.1-3). Noah is given the knowledge of the future and a covenant and the conditions are 'written on the heavenly tablets' (6.17, 29).

After Shem, Abraham is the next elected leader, one of the most beloved figures in *Jubilees* (one-fifth of the book is about Abraham: *Jubilees* 11-21). Abraham combines divine communication and blessing with learning, priesthood and technical innovations (11.23ff.). After blessing Isaac, Abraham follows with a blessing for Jacob as the carrier of the tradition.

My dear son Jacob whom I myself love, may God bless you from above the firmament. May he give you all the blessings with which he blessed Adam, Enoch, Noah, and Shem. Everything that he said to me and everything that he promised to give me may he attach to you and your descendants until eternity—like the days of heaven above the earth (19.27).

As we have seen, among Jacob's sons, Levi is the one to transmit the holy tradition to Moses. The dying Jacob's last bequest was to give 'all his

books and the books of his fathers to his son Levi so that he could preserve them and renew them for his sons until today' (45.16). Levi's descendants were to be 'princes, judges, and leaders of all descendants of Jacob's sons' (31.15). Moses is a direct progeny of Levi, and received the holy tradition from his father. 'Your father Aram taught you (the art of) writing' (47.9). The commission to Moses to write in a book the whole message of the book of *Jubilees* for the Israelites establishes the framework for *Jubilees*.

An important characteristic of Levitical tradition is that succession is carried along the bloodline from father to son. *Jubilees*, which is very specific about obeying kinship laws and customs, needed to explain why the third son of an unloved wife, Leah, became the naturally elected one.

In order to justify a legitimate succession to Levi, *Jubilees* prefers Leah to Rachel. Rachel is the one whose idols are collected to be destroyed (31.2) (along with foreign gods, earrings and necklaces), purifying Jacob and his family and allowing them to enter the holy land. Rachel's infertility plays a role in the belittling of her character. Rachel dies so that Jacob can take his wife, Leah, to his father Isaac (33.1). The text mentions that Jacob now loves Leah because of her moral qualities. Thus, Joseph as Rachel's firstborn is not really important, especially because he marries a foreigner. Jacob's learning is transmitted to Levi, not Joseph.

If the right of the firstborn of the lineage is not maintained, its elimination must be carefully explained in detail. Jacob's older brother, Esau, is bad, immoral, does not keep his promises and does not take care of his parents (35.9-12). In turn, Esau's sons do not honor their father by doing what he tells them. They gather foreigners, that is, their neighbors, and force Esau to lead them against Jacob, displaying total insubordination. Reuben must be bad: his incident with Bilhah is narrated in detail; sexual impurity is the greatest sin (33.20). Simeon, the second son is rejected because he marries a Canaanite (34.20). In contrast to older Esau, Jacob takes care of his parents, shown by sending them 'money' regularly when he was abroad. Submission to parents is favored to an extreme in *Jubilees*' patriarchal system, which involves total control of children by healthy and strong parents.

d. *Jubilees*' Levitical Tradition in Context

Jubilees and *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* are texts written in the conservative Levitical tradition; yet they show some minor differences. *Jubilees* is not misogynistic. One of its heroines, Rebecca, is elevated more than Isaac for her protection and love of Jacob. Leah's image is one of moral integrity; because of it she is not deprived of love or respect by her husband, Jacob.

Jubilees' obsession with calendars, measurement of time and the establishment of proper chronology for everything and everyone is its dominant concern. Timing is most important to *Jubilees*' narration. Thus, Rachel

is properly buried at the convenient time, after which Jacob takes Leah, whom he now loves (36.23), to meet his parents. Numbers are also incredibly important in *Jubilees*. The whole book uses numbers such as seven in symbolic ways. Jubilees means the 49th year (7x7).¹⁸ Numerical devices underline both creation and history.¹⁹ Finally, *Jubilees* may be against any deviation from a single path to heaven, but affluence and gaining material wealth are not among them. On the contrary, the acquisition of material wealth and affluence is commendable, especially if it is used for the support of aging parents.

6. Conclusion

Jubilees, representing typical Levitical conservative tradition, undermines Joseph's contribution to Israelite intellectual property mainly because of his connection with foreigners. It honors only his role as a good provider for his extended family. The single way to receive divine insight and access to the truth is through the sense of hearing, and this is accomplished by an oral or written message. This communication is possible through dreams or visions only in the form of obvious instructions delivered by a voice or written word.

Access to the divine is denied to the sense of vision, which leads people astray and into sin. That the divine message does not come through the eyes is made quite clear by *Jubilees* in its creation story, where the biblical creation of light is ignored. *Jubilees* rejects all forms of RVE, expunging any biblical reference to them from its narrative. Therefore, it contains neither an allusion to lecanomancy nor a hint of a symbolic dream, suggesting that these phenomena belong to idolatry and magic. By making this clear distinction between obvious dreams, which rely primarily on the sense of hearing, and classifying symbolic dreams with other visual phenomena, *Jubilees* supports the idea that symbolic dreams belong to the genre of RVE. Symbolic dreams are not a subgenre of dreams and a counterpart of obvious dreams.

In agreement with the stance of rejecting the phenomena received or emitted by the sense of sight and its consequent rejection of RVE, *Jubilees* could not approve of the office or person of the ancient scientist of vision. Hellenistic holistic science with its scientific inquiry based mainly on the observation of phenomena is in opposition to the conservative Levitical worldview, which is centered on revelation through the voice and its recep-

18. Sabbath; 'God made seven great works on the first day' (*Jub.* 2.3).

19. The creation includes twenty-two kinds of work (*Jub.* 2.15), while there are twenty-two leaders of humanity up to Jacob.

tion by the sense of hearing. Levi, a bridge for this tradition that goes from Adam to Moses, is heir to the priesthood and to scholarship.

*THE TESTAMENTS OF THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS*²⁰

Testaments were a beloved genre of Hellenistic Jewish literature. Farewell discourses of prominent biblical figures such as Adam, Job, Abraham, Isaac and Solomon have their biblical models in Jacob's (Genesis 49), Moses's (Deuteronomy 33) and David's (1 Chronicles 28–29) last addresses to their descendants. Before their deaths they settle their inheritance, which is mainly spiritual and ethical. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* consists of individual testaments of the twelve sons of Jacob. Each tribal leader advises his progeny and family to learn from his experience and also predicts their future. Ethics is the central theme, and autobiographical details serve mainly for moral exhortations.

1. *Joseph in The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*

Joseph's ethical character, his chastity, his self-control, his righteous behavior when sexually harassed and his unselfishness in forgiving his brothers, serve as the exemplary conduct almost uniformly throughout the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.²¹ But here too, it is not Joseph who receives the most direct divine revelation, has continuous access to divine, esoteric gnosis or is the carrier of traditional learning and religious customs, but Levi.²² Although Joseph emerges as a prototype of Christ, he has no privileged connection to transcendence, and his access to the divine is played down. There is no mention of any RVE in relation to Joseph, neither of his divinatory activities nor his dream interpretation. A remnant of the symbolic dreams from the Joseph story in Genesis can be found in that section of his own testament which each testament dedicates to predicting the future of a

20. If not recorded differently, all the English citations are from H.C. Kee, 'Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs: A New Translation and Introduction', in *OTP*, I, pp. 775–828.

21. The *Testament of Gad* (*T. Gad*) 1.4–6 is the only place in *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* where Joseph's moral integrity appears slightly stained.

22. Robert A. Kugler notes that 'Joseph is a key figure in the *Testaments*' ethical speculation and biographical accounts' (Robert A. Kugler, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* [GAP, 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], p. 20). But, later on, in the discussion of Levi's call to priesthood in *T. Levi* 18.14, Kugler remarks, '*T. Levi* 18.14 joins Levi to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for whose sake the *Testaments* say God will give even the lawless of Israel a second chance through the return of the messiah (*T. Levi* 15.4; *T. Ash.* 7.7). Thus the *Testaments* elevate Levi to the same status as his father, grandfather and great-grandfather' (Kugler, *Testaments*, p. 56).

dying patriarch (*T. Jos.* 19.1-12). However, the interpretation of Joseph's dream shows that its important purpose was to single out the special position of Levi and his descendants.²³

The *Testament of Joseph* (*T. Jos.*) consists mainly of a long account of Joseph's chastity in his dealings with Potiphar's wife, interspersed with testimonies about Joseph's unlimited love for his brothers. Hence, the title of several manuscripts has a descriptive note, *Περὶ σωφροσύνης* ('about/concerning chastity').

2. *Levi as a Hellenistic Scientist*

It is Levi who is featured as the carrier and transmitter of religious learning and cultural tradition in *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, making it the main theme of his testament (*T. Levi*). 'Therefore counsel and understanding have been given to you so that you might give understanding to your sons concerning this' (*T. Levi* 4.5). He is the one who has insight into the esoteric world and direct contact with the deity. This is accomplished through several forms of RVE, including the emission of light by a human agent (*T. Levi* 4.3), and symbolic visions and dreams (*T. Levi* 2.5-3.10; 8.1-19). In these passages Levi is featured as a prototype of a Hellenistic scientist, according to the popular understanding of Hellenistic science.

3. *Revelation by Visual Effects*

a. *Emission of Energy by a Human Agent*

Levi shines as 'the light of knowledge'. 'The light of knowledge you shall kindle in Jacob, and you shall be as the sun for all the posterity of Israel' (*T. Levi* 4.3). And he calls his sons to be lights of heaven, 'You are the lights of heaven, as the sun and the moon' (*T. Levi* 14.3).²⁴

In another example of RVE, which rarely appears in the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* but is to be found in the *Testament of Naphtali* (*T. Naph.*),

23. Joseph's knowledge of the future is expressed through a symbolic dream. 'Twelve deer were grazing at a certain place; nine were scattered over the whole earth, and likewise also the three' (*T. Jos.* 19.1-2). Twelve deer symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel, but instead of the usual division into ten northern tribes and two southern (1 Kgs 12.21), we have here three tribes of Judah, adding the tribe of Levi to Judah and Benjamin (cf. *1 En.* 89.72; *1QM* 1.2; *Hebrew Testament of Naphtali* 3.9) (Kee, 'Testaments', p. 824).

24. Some manuscripts have 'Israel' instead of heaven, making the passage, 'you are the light to Israel' (*T. Levi* 14.3). See Marinus de Jonge and Harm W. Hollander (eds.), *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), p. 167.

Naphtali sees Levi shining like a sun (*T. Naph.* 5.4).²⁵ In Naphtali's symbolic vision Isaac sets a competition among the twelve brothers to determine who will catch the sun and the moon that stopped at the mountain top: 'And behold, Isaac, my father's father, was saying to us, "Run forth, seize them, each according to his capacity; to the one who grasps them will the sun and the moon belong"'. Levi grasped the sun, Judah the moon and each started to illuminate the appropriate light (*T. Naph.* 5.3). Levi, as the one who emits solar energy, was put in charge of the twelve tribes (*T. Naph.* 5.1-5), 'When Levi became like the sun, a certain young man gave him twelve date palms' (*T. Naph.* 5.4). Thus, the brother who was able to emit the most energy becomes the chosen one. Judah as the moon comes second.

b. Symbolic Dreams

The first of Levi's dreams is a typical revelatory vision (*T. Levi* 2.5-12) whose symbolism requires an interpretation by a third party, in this case an angel (*T. Levi* 3.1-10). It constitutes the mode in which Levi's election into a mediatory office between the divine and humans is realized. The descent of 'a spirit of understanding (πνεῦμα συνέσεως) from the Lord' on Levi preceded the revelatory dream (*T. Levi* 2.3). The expression πνεῦμα συνέσεως is usually related to permanent knowledge (cf. Exod. 31.3; 35.31; Deut. 34.9; Isa. 11.2; Sir. 39.6; Sus. 63; Justin, *Dial.* 87.4), with the meaning that the divine spirit is and remains upon someone.²⁶ The same phrase is employed for 'special knowledge of the future, visions and ecstasies' (Num. 24.2; 1 Sam. 19.20, 23; 2 Chron. 15.1; 20.14; Ezek. 2.2; 11.5; *1 En.* 91.1; *Jub.* 25.14; 31.12). The corresponding passage in the Aramaic *Testament of Levi* (4Q213 TestLevi^a 1.14) involves permanent knowledge rather than the immediate experience alluded to in *T. Levi* 2.3.²⁷ Πνεῦμα συνέσεως has the same meaning of permanency in chap. 18: 'And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him in the water' (*T. Levi* 18.7).

The action that follows the acquisition of this spirit is that Levi 'observes, sees' what the world and humans are like (*T. Levi* 2.3). Thus, he employs the sight of vision to discover the laws and mysteries of the world. Interestingly enough, instead of the use of sight in the analogous passage (*T. Levi* 18.7), the involvement of water is mentioned, καὶ πνεῦμα συνέσεως καὶ ἁγιασμὸς καταπαύσει ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἐν ὕδατι ('And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him in the water'). That should not surprise us

25. See also below the discussion about the role of the sense of sight in a human being that is created according to the God's own image in *T. Naph.* 2.5-10.

26. De Jonge, *Testaments*, p. 133 n. 2.3.

27. De Jonge, *Testaments*, p. 133 n. 2.3.

because both water and visions are important elements of the RVE and of access to the divine.²⁸

The symbolic dream itself consists of Levi's ascent through the heavens into the presence of the Lord. On this journey Levi is led by an angel, who is also the interpreter of the vision. After he passes through all the heavens, Levi is to stand near the Lord, and he will become divine λειτουργός. The explanation of the term λειτουργός follows immediately in the text; it is God's mediator, the one who will transmit the divine mysteries to people, 'you shall tell forth God's mysteries to human beings' (*T. Levi* 2.10). Nowhere in this first vision is Levi called to the priesthood.²⁹ He is rather summoned up to learn the 'secrets of the heavens' and the future.³⁰ And his

28. The usual commentary on this verse (*T. Levi* 18.7) is that 'in the water' is the Christian interpolation alluding to baptism. This reading comes from applying the New Testament (Mark 1.9-11) to *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* in a source-critical approach that tries to establish the evolution of the text of *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* to determine if the passage is Jewish or Christian (Hollander and de Jonge). In my view, the Jewish or Christian provenance of the text is irrelevant. The importance is the symbolism of the imagery that Hellenistic audience could immediately relate to activities of a Hellenistic scientist and a popular way to access the supernatural and the transcendent. It would be interesting to compare this use of water with the LXX's intentional neglect to translate it (see introduction and Cécile Dogniez, 'De la disparition du thème de l'eau dans la LXX: Quelques exemples', in *XIII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Ljubljana, 2007* [ed. Melvin K.H. Peters; SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series, 55; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008], pp. 119-32).

29. Λειτουργός according to *LSJ* can mean public servant, including an official of the *gerousia* (a government body) in ancient Greece, private servant, an astral god or a religious minister. Thus, the translation of de Jonge and Hollander, *Testaments*, p. 132, 'minister', or Kee, 'Testaments', p. 788, 'priest', is an anachronistic, or implied, translation from the later function of Levites.

30. James Kugel comments in the same sense: In 'the first vision, which takes up much of the present *Testament of Levi* 2-5 . . . the whole point seems to be that Levi is called on high to be told of the secrets of the heavens and the coming judgment to be passed on humankind' (Kugel, 'Levi's Elevation', p. 27). The latter is nothing else than a predictions of the future in Hellenistic science. 'He is also told of a special role that he is to play in Israel, but this part (*T. Levi* 2.10-12; 4.2-6) is considerably shorter than the section devoted to the "secrets of heaven". It should be noted further that the description of Levi's future role does not particularly center on the priesthood—indeed, the words "priest" and "priesthood" nowhere appear. Instead, Levi is informed in rather general terms of his future functions (*T. Levi* 4.2-3): "ministering" in God's presence. Nor are his descendants specifically described as priests. All that is said in this regard is that "a blessing will be given to you and to all your seed" (*T. Levi* 4.4). As a matter of fact, the cultic side of things, whether priestly or levitical, is only part of what Levi is promised; alongside "ministering", another function is associated with the future tribe of Levi: "For you will stand near the Lord and will be his minister and will declare his mysteries to men (*T. Levi* 2.10). You will light up a bright light of knowledge in Jacob, and you

professional call will be to become to the 'Most High', 'a son and servant and a minister (λειτουργόν) of his presence' (*T. Levi* 4.2 [de Jonge]). It is teaching the esoteric that is the primary function of Levi.

c. *Cosmology of the Revelation by Visual Effects*

What Levi is shown in this vision constitutes the main principles and theoretical cosmological basis of the phenomenon of RVE. The description of Levi's ascent through the heavens consists mainly of water and light elements. Water is the first barrier, between the first and the second heaven; and behind this veil is light that increases in magnificence and brightness as the ascent continues (*T. Levi* 2.7-8):³¹

And I entered from the first heaven into the second one, and I saw there water hanging between the one and the other. And I saw a third heaven, far brighter and more brilliant than these two; for in it there was also a boundless height (*T. Levi* 2.7-8 [de Jonge, Hollander]).

Do not marvel at these, for you will see four other heavens, more brilliant and incomparable, when you ascend there (*T. Levi* 2.9).³²

Thus, in this cosmology, water divides the world of immediate senses from the divine realm. By looking at the light that comes from the sacred water of the springs, wells and cups, it is possible to get a glimpse of the transcendent. The interpretation of these visual effects is a guide toward the understanding of the mysteries of the world and human existence. It reproduces the popular Hellenistic worldview of the corporeal image or illusion formed

will be as the sun to all the seed of Israel (*T. Levi* 4.3)'" (Kugel, 'Levi's Elevation', pp. 27-28). In my opinion, chaps. 2-4 make a unit. Chapter 5 does not belong to it; it is here that Levi's priesthood is mentioned for the first time (*T. Levi* 5.2). Kugel tries to go around this fact by designating it a Christian interpolation (p. 27 n. 23). Moreover, chap. 5 is a prime example of the militant Levitical tradition; Levi is divinely ordained to wipe out the inhabitants of Shechem (*T. Levi* 5.3), and a sword and a shield are given to him by the angel. As I argue, this tradition is incompatible with the tolerant tradition that embraces diversity, the one that incorporates RVE and Hellenistic science.

31. De Jonge notes that in the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Ber.* 58b; *b. Hag.* 12b) the first heaven, called 'Vilon', 'is a curtain; if it is rolled up the second heaven becomes visible'. 'Regarding "a water hanging between the one and the other", they refer to biblical cosmology, "the waters which are above the firmament" (Gen. 1.7; see also Ps. 148.4, *Jub.* 2.4, 6, *1 En.* 54.8, *2 En.* 3.3, *3 Bar.* 2.1, *Rev.* 4.6; 15.2. In *2 En.* 3.3 and *3 Bar.* 2.1, the water is also mentioned in connection with a heavenly journey and the first heaven' (de Jonge, *Testaments*, p. 134 n. 2.7). The idea of each heaven being brighter than the preceding one is to be found elsewhere, testifying to a cosmological device known to a broader audience (cf. *Asc. Isa.* 7.19-20, 27, 31ff.; 8.1, 21, 25) (de Jonge, *Testaments*, p. 134 n. 2.8).

32. Cf. *Asc. Isa.* 8.25 and *3 Bar.* 5.3; 2.6.

on the other side of the reflected surface, well supported as the basis of Hellenistic sciences and learning.³³

The popularity of this concept and imagery could probably be traced to the presence of reflection pools or other mirrored surfaces in the precincts of ancient temples. Not only did the Parthenon and the Temple of Zeus in Olympia have reflective pools of water in front of the statues, but probably there were also pools in the portico of the Jerusalem Temple.³⁴

As diverse scientific inquiry and enterprise started to fade giving way to unification and synthesis in Imperial Rome, Neoplatonic cosmology gained popularity and universalism. The theoretical basis of this cosmology left an imprint on many intellectual movements of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages such as Gnostic schools, the Christian descriptions of heavenly ascent and Jewish *merkabah* mysticism of Late Antiquity and beyond.³⁵ Its traces

33. Kee describes the cosmology of *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* as the following, 'the universe is ceiled by three heavens, in ascending order: of water, of light, and of God's dwelling place (*T. Levi* 2.7-10)' (Kee, *OTP*, p. 779). Sometimes, it is taken that there are seven ascending heavens instead of three (*T. Levi* 2.9). The idea of seven heavens is especially prominent in Jewish *merkabah* mysticism and is comparable to the prominent so-called Neoplatonic cosmology of the time. The similar understanding of the natural world in relationship to heaven is also present in biblical lore, such as the idea that there is water over the dome of the sky (Gen. 1.7; 7.11).

34. We should keep in mind that what I mentioned before that 'reflection' is not best word to describe this phenomenon. Frances Flannery-Dailey connects the first heaven in *T. Levi* 2.7 with this imagery: 'If the first heaven in the *T. Levi* is mirrored by the outer court or portico (*ulam*) of the tripartite Jerusalem Temple, the 'much water suspended' (*T. Levi* 2.7) may refer to the outer marble façade of the temple, which several ancient writers likened to water due to the reflection of the sunlight on its highly polished surface' (Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests; Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* [Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 90; Leiden/Boston: E.J. Brill, 2004], p. 184). For the Greek temples, see the references in the chapter on the principles of the RVE.

35. A pioneer among those who were to relate *merkabah* visions to a mystical praxis was Gershom G. Scholem. His contribution was mainly in his discussions of the *Hekhalot* texts, which he dated much earlier (first century CE) than scholars before and after him (Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* [New York: Schocken Books, 1954], pp. 43-46; *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1962], p. 16). He claimed a direct connection of the *Hekhalot* texts to the celestial journeys of the pre-Christian apocalypics. This position is adopted by modern scholars, and indeed if we compare the ritual performed by a sage before undertaking this journey, we notice striking similarities to the descriptions of PGM-Greek magical papyri (see my treatment in the Introduction). For a nuanced treatment of the provenance and development of *Hekhalot* texts and *merkabah* literature, see David J. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (AOS, 62; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1980). He offers an in-depth survey on *merkabah* tradition in rabbinic sources and their

can be found in apocalyptic, magical theurgical practices and especially in *hekhhalot* literature. All these movements sprouted from the popular cosmologies of the Hellenistic scientific schools.³⁶

relation to the ecstatic praxis of Jewish mysticism (pp. 182-85). For a description of the concept of the heavenly ascent from a structuralist point of view, see Alan F. Segal, 'Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment', *ANRW*, II, 23.2 (1980) pp. 1333-94. For current scholarly views and a summary of Jewish mysticism, see Vita Daphna Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003). *Hekhalot* describes 'visionary heavenly ascents through the seven divine palaces' while *Merkabah* 'features meditations and interpretations of the chariot vision' (Arbel, *Beholders*, p. 8). The aspects that distinguish this mystical school are 'contemplation', 'ascent to heaven', and 'vision of divine places' (Arbel, *Beholders*, p. 1). There are some explicit similarities to the concepts of Hellenistic sciences: 'The Hekhalot and Merkavah mystical accounts claim the existence of an alternative realm of ultimate reality which stands beyond the physical phenomenological world. Seen from the specific religious perspective, this sphere is classified in terms such as the Heaven of Heavens, the King's palaces, or God's Merkavah (chariot). These traditions, likewise, acknowledge an inner contemplative process of attaining the absolute achieved by human seekers. The experience is depicted as visionary contemplative journeys out of this world into celestial realms. The members of Merkavah circle undergo a series of mental inner stages, through which several qualified individuals acquire a unique spiritual perception, awareness, and consciousness. This state enables them to attain the divine reality in a personal, direct manner, which seems to be of private concerns. They see God's celestial palaces, behold the King at his beauty, and gaze at Merkavah' (Arbel, *Beholders*, pp. 18-19).

Psychology is an integral part of science of vision of Hellenism. Thus, Arbel cites Dan Merkur on the specific nature of the mystical state of mind: 'Mystical experiences are religious uses of otherwise secular states of consciousness—or more precisely, alternate psychic states. What makes an alternate state experience a religious one is its personal or cultural valuation' (Arbel, *Beholders*, p. 17). Further, 'M. Gaster, considered the Hekhalot and Merkavah literature as a remnant of an ancient school of thought dating from the Second Temple period' (Arbel, *Beholders*, p. 9). On the dependence of this Jewish mystical school on a broader context, 'the literature shares many characteristics with several major religious movements which flourished in the same cultural climate both within Judaism and outside of it. Similarities have been drawn on the level of general structure of ideas and as well on the level of detailed literary motifs and themes . . . with the Talmudic and Midrashic literature . . . Jewish traditional prayer . . . priestly-angelic traditions from the First and Second Temple periods with . . . several other traditions and texts from a similar cultural environment. These include apocryphal and apocalyptic literature, the Qumran texts, Gnostic traditions, and early Christian literature . . . and various Jewish and Greco-Roman magical traditions of late antiquity' (Arbel, *Beholders*, p. 11).

36. For a detailed treatment of cosmology in Hellenistic science, see the Introduction.

d. *Theoretical Basis of 'Emission of Energy by a Human Eye'*

The theoretical basis of another RVE phenomenon, the emission of energy by a look or a gaze, is present in the story of Levi's ascent to the throne of God. In the uppermost heaven God dwells as the very source of light (*T. Levi* 3.4), 'the Great Glory'.³⁷ When the Lord, as the source that emits energy and light, 'looks upon us we all tremble (σαλευόμεθα). Even the heavens and earth and abysses tremble (σαλεύονται) before the presence of his majesty' (*T. Levi* 3.9).³⁸ Analogously, human agents such as Levi, who ascended to God's glory and gained access to this esoteric existence and knowledge, become the emitters or rather transmitters of energy or light through their gaze. In other words, the human sense organ of sight can emit enough energy to perform what we like to call miracles or magic.³⁹

To conclude, Levi appears in this first vision (*T. Levi* 2–4) as a Hellenistic scientist of vision and not as a Jewish priest.

4. *Levitical Tradition*

a. *Levi as a Priest: Conservative Levitical Tradition: Non-RVE Dreams*

Levi's call to the priesthood is articulated only in the second vision (*T. Levi* 8.1-19), 'From now on be a priest, you and all your posterity' (*T. Levi* 8.3), or 'put on the vestments of the priesthood' (*T. Levi* 8.2). This is a very different kind of dream from the first one; no wonder that James Kugel separated the two visions of *T. Levi* into independent sources. Although the second dream consists of some symbolic images and actions, they are either obvious or are given an explanation *epi topou*, and it is explicitly emphasized that they are not told to any other person.⁴⁰ Subsequently, this dream lacks an interpretation, 'When I awoke, I understood, that this was like the

37. Cf. *1 En.* 14.19; 102.3; *Isa.* 6.1-5; *1 En.* 25.3, 7; 47.3; 'The great Glory is a favorite name of God in Markabah circles' (Kee, *OTP*, p. 789 n. 3c).

38. 'Tremble' is a term traditionally connected with theophanies: 'The verb σαλεύειν/σαλεύεσθαι occurs in the context of theophany in, e.g., *Judg.* 5.4f.; *Ps.* 96(95), 9ff.; 98(97), 7ff.; 104 (103), 32; *Micah* 1,4; *Nah* 1,3ff.; *Hab* 3,6; *Jdt* 16,15; *1QH* 3,32ff.; *Ass. Mos.* 10,4f.; *Sir* 16,18f.; 43,16. In *Ps* 104(103), 32 (cf. *Amos* 9,4); *Hab* 3,6; *Sir* 16,18f., ἐπιβλέπειν is used, with God as a subject' (de Jonge and Hollander, *Testaments*, p. 139 n.3.9).

39. See Aseneth's miraculous gaze (*Jos. Asen.* 28.8 Phil.) or Ethiopic Joseph's 'scary' gaze. For the scientific basis, see Section 3 on Hellenistic Science.

40. For there to be an RVE phenomenon, the symbolic image must be followed by an interpretation by a specialist. In the case of a dreamer, it must be another person to whom the dream is told and not the dreamer her-/himself.

first dream. And I hid this in my heart as well, and I did not report it to any human being on the earth' (*T. Levi* 8.18-19).⁴¹

Contact with the divine is accomplished through action and primarily through senses other than sight such as touch, taste and hearing (*T. Levi* 8.3, 5, 10): 'each carried one of these and put them on me and said' (*T. Levi* 8.3); 'the second washed me with pure water, fed me by hand . . . and put in me a holy and glorious vestment' (*T. Levi* 8.5); 'the seventh placed the priestly diadem on me and filled my hands with incense' (*T. Levi* 8.10). Thus, this dream does not belong to RVE.⁴² Its sole subject is Levi's initiation into the priesthood.

There is neither the revelation of otherworldly secrets nor travel through the heavens. The symbolism of numbers, especially 7, 3, and 70, plays a major role in this passage. Also, the promise is extended to Levi's descendants, who are to hold the positions of high priests, judges and scribes (*T. Levi* 8.17) (ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ κριταὶ γραμματεῖς).

b. Succession in Levitical Tradition

1. *Bloodline.* While in the Joseph tradition the succession is spiritual, in the Levitical tradition it is hereditary from father to son. In contrast to Joseph's tradition, where the human carriers and transmitters are individuals bestowed with appropriate talents (e.g. Moses and Solomon), in the Levitical tradition it is Levi's blood descendants that keep and transfer learning, divine law, wisdom and understanding. Of course, Moses and Aaron belong to the tribe of Levi. This transmission is accomplished mainly through education of one's children. 'And now, my children, I command you . . . teach your children letters that they may have understanding all their life, reading unceasingly the law of God (*T. Levi* 13.2) . . . Get wisdom in the fear of God with diligence' (*T. Levi* 13.7).⁴³

The importance of the transfer of learning to the children through education is also stressed in *Aramaic Levi Document*.⁴⁴

41. In order to distinguish their function and genre, James Kugel calls the first dream, 'Levi's Apocalypse', and the second dream, 'Levi's priestly Initiation' (Kugel, 'Levi's Elevation', pp. 27-30).

42. Kugel notices that there seems to be no connection between the two dreams: 'Each of these two visions seems quite unaware of the other's existence' (Kugel, 'Levi's Elevation', p. 29).

43. De Jonge and Hollander, *Testaments*, pp.164-65.

44. *The Aramaic Levi Document (ArLevi)* has been known from the beginning of the twentieth century, as a number of text fragments were found in the Cairo Genizah. It is closely related to the *T. Levi*. Source criticism proposed either a common *Vorlage* or the present Greek *T. Levi* for direct or indirect dependence on *ArLevi* (de Jonge, *Testaments*, pp. 21-32).

And now, my sons, teach reading and writing [and] the teaching of wisdom to your children and may wisdom be eternal glory to you. He who learns wisdom will (attain) glory through it, but he who despises wisdom becomes an object of disdain. Observe, my children, my brother Joseph who taught reading and writing and the teaching of wisdom (*ArLevi* 17-23; de Jonge, Hollander, *The Testaments*, p. 468).⁴⁵

2. *Priestly*. While in the Joseph tradition the succession flows from Abraham to Jacob and then to Joseph, in the Levitical tradition the priesthood is carried from Isaac to Levi, skipping Jacob. According to the Genesis account, Abraham builds altars and offers sacrifices (Gen. 12.7-8; 13.14-18) to God, while there is no mention of Jacob ever erecting an altar for ritual sacrifice. Thus, according to Levitical tradition of *Jubilees* and *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* Jacob was never a priest, while the dying Abraham initiates Isaac into the priesthood (*Jubilees* 21; 22.3).⁴⁶ In the same way, it is Levi's grandfather, Isaac, who performs human election and blessings of Levi into the priesthood (*T. Levi* 9.2-3). Moreover, Isaac educates Levi in the trade (*T. Levi* 9.6-8).

And Isaac kept calling me continually to bring to my remembrance the Law of the Lord, just as the angel had shown me. And he taught me the law of the priesthood: sacrifices, holocausts, voluntary offerings of the first produce, offerings for the safe return. Day by day he was informing me, occupying himself with me (*T. Levi* 9.6-8).⁴⁷

And Levi serves as Jacob's priest as well, surpassing him in God's blessings. 'Jacob saw a vision concerning me that I should be in the priesthood. He arose early and paid tithes for all to the Lord, through me' (*T. Levi* 9.3-4).

In Jacob's blessings in Genesis to Levi (49.5-7), there is nothing about Levi's priesthood. On the contrary, both Levi and Simeon are reproached for killing the circumcised and converted Shechemites. In the Levitical tradition, Levi is exalted over Jacob because he took vengeance on Shechem,

45. It is the only time in the texts related to the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* that Joseph is mentioned in this function. This fact shows the omnipresence of the texts of the Joseph tradition at the same chronological and geographical point. And the Levitical tradition is certainly aware of their existence.

46. Kugel, 'Levi's Elevation', pp. 17-21.

47. In the *Aramaic Levi Document* (*ArLevi*) Isaac's teachings on the office of priesthood are elaborated extensively in minute details (see de Jonge and Hollander, *Testaments*, Appendix III, pp. 462-65). And the election of Levi over his brothers is described in these terms: 'you are the beloved of your father and holy to the Most High Lord. And you will be more beloved than all your brothers. And blessing shall be pronounced by your seed upon the earth and your seed shall be entered in the book of the memorial of life for all eternity. And your name and the name of your seed shall not be annihilated for eternity, And, now, child Levi, your seed shall be blessed upon the earth for all generations of eternity' (de Jonge and Hollander, *Testaments*, pp. 465-66).

defending his sister Dinah under divine command; and it is Jacob who misunderstood it. 'Then the angel led me back to the earth, and gave me a shield and a sword, and said to me, "Perform vengeance on Shechem for the sake of Dinah, your sister, and I shall be with you, for the Lord sent me"' (*T. Levi* 5.3-4). Consequently, according to this Levitical tradition, conversion and repentance are ineffective as rectifications for the sin of exogamy and are ineffective in making a foreigner into an insider.

When my father heard of this he was angry and sorrowful, because they received the circumcision and died, and so he passed us by in his blessings. Thus we sinned in doing this contrary to his opinion, and he became sick that very day. But I saw that God's sentence was 'Guilty', because they wanted to do the same thing to Sarah and Rebecca that they did to Dinah, our sister. But the Lord prevented them (*T. Levi* 6.6-9).

3. *Hierarchy among Brothers.* In contrast to Levi, who emerges as greater than Jacob, Joseph's greatest accomplishment in the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* was to be like Jacob. God bestowed Joseph with blessings, so that, 'in every way, I was like Jacob' (*T. Jos.* 18.4).

The whole *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* belongs to Levitical tradition, showing Levi as the chosen patriarch and as the carrier of the spiritual property of the people. While Joseph serves as the ethical role model or occasionally as the type of Jesus (e.g. *T. Sim.* 5.1-2; *T. Benj.* 3.1-2)⁴⁸ and the prominence of his place in the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* is often emphasized by current scholarship,⁴⁹ Levi is the one who communicates directly to the divine and to whom the other tribes are called to submit (e.g. *T. Reub.* 6.8-12; *T. Sim.* 5.5-6; *T. Jud.* 21.1-6; *T. Naph.* 5.3-6; *T. Jos* 19.2).⁵⁰

Thus, Reuben gives commands to his children,

I command you to give heed to Levi, because he will know the law of God and will give instructions concerning justice and concerning sacrifice for Israel until the consummation of times; he is the anointed priest of whom the Lord spoke (*T. Reub.* 6.8-9).

Judah is frequently mentioned together with Levi as the brother chosen to carry on the kingship and subsequently as the secular ruler of the people

48. 'Because nothing evil resided in Joseph, he was attractive in appearance and handsome to behold, for the face evidences any troubling of the spirit' (*T. Sim.* 5.1).

49. See the whole monograph dedicated to the figure of Joseph in the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, Harm Hollander, *Joseph as an Ethical Model in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981).

50. Even though both the *Testament of Judah* (26 chapters) and the *Testament of Joseph* (20 chapters) are longer than the *Testament of Levi* (19 chapters), the praise of Judah usually depicts Levi as the second patriarch, while Joseph serves as the ethical role model or occasionally as the ethical type of Jesus.

(e.g. *T. Iss.* 5.7-8).⁵¹ In most cases it is stressed that his role is second to Levi, a fact that he himself clearly states in his Testament (*T. Jud.* 21.2-4; 25.1-2). Judah states,

To me God has given the kingship, and to him [Levi], the priesthood; and he has subjected the kingship to the priesthood. To me he gave earthly matters and to Levi, heavenly matters. As heaven is superior to the earth, so is God's priesthood superior to the kingdom of the earth (*T. Jud.* 21.2-4).

Later on he gives us the hierarchy of the brothers,

And after this Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be resurrected to life and I and my brothers will be the chiefs (wielding) our scepter in Israel: Levi, the first; I, the second; Joseph, third; Benjamin, fourth; Simeon, fifth; Issachar, sixth; and all the rest in that order. And the Lord blessed Levi; the Angel of the Presence blessed me (*T. Jud.* 25.1-2).

c. *Characteristics of the Levitical Tradition of The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*

1. *About Vision.* The Levitical tradition of the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* is a composite one. In most instances it displays the same features as the conservative Levitical tradition of *Jubilees*, denying a portal to truth and the supernatural through the sense of vision. In these passages Levi's elected leadership concerns only priestly matters. As discussed above, there is also another, more liberal Levitical tradition that embraces the phenomena of RVE and in which Levi appears more as a Hellenistic scientist than a priest, such as in passages of *T. Levi* and *T. Naphtali*.

1.1. *In Liberal Tradition.* For phenomena of RVE in *T. Levi* see the discussion above about Levi in *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*. Here a passage in *T. Naph.* (2.2-10), demonstrating nicely the accepted theoretical concepts of the function of the sense of sight in the time period, will be examined.⁵² The sense of vision is discussed in the context of the creation of human beings in God's image (cf. Gen. 1.26-7; Wis. 2.23). Bodily organs, soul and spirit are

51. In the *Testament of Judah*, Judah emerges as a conqueror of everything that moves. He has enormous strength and miraculous power to overpower both enemies and animals. Thus, he appears as a natural ruler and leader. He is given the kingship because of his obedience to his parents (*T. Jud.* 1.5-6).

52. The reports of vision and dreams are the main characteristics of the passages in the liberal Levitical tradition. As I show, the conservative Levitical tradition considers dreams as fantasies, and sleep as evil and sense of vision as deceptive. Thus, as Kugler says, 'Levi's two visions (2.5-6.2; 8.1-190) set his testaments apart from the others, and align it with Naphtali's, which also includes two dream reports (*T. Naph.* 5-6, 7)' (Kugler, *Testaments*, p. 53).

parts of a harmonious functional system in the sense of a Hellenistic holistic approach to a subject matter. Thus, God 'forms the body in correspondence to the spirit, and instills the spirit corresponding to the power of the body. And from one to the other there is no discrepancy, not so much as the third of the hair, for all the creation of the Most High was according to height, measure, and standard' (*T. Naph.* 2.3-4).

Naphtali deliberates further how each of the bodily organs has its matching spiritual function and how they should work in agreement. These pairs are matched according to the popular understanding of physiology and psychology. Thus, the eye is connected to sleep, showing there was no sharp distinction between the function of the sense of vision when a person is awake or asleep.

As a person's strength, so also is his work; as is his mind, so also is his skill. As is his plan, so also is his achievement; as is his heart, so is his speech; *as is his eye, so also is his sleep*; as is his soul, so also is his thought (*T. Naph.* 2.6).

Using the metaphor of light and seeing as recurs in RVE phenomena, Naphtali affirms the diversity of individual human beings, acknowledging both sexes in an equal fashion. 'As there is a distinction between light and darkness, between seeing and hearing, thus there is a distinction between man and man and between woman and woman' (*T. Naph.* 2.6-7). And again the symbol of vision is used to demonstrate that it is up to each human being to make use of their abilities in a good or a bad way, 'If you tell the eye to hear, it cannot; so you are unable to perform the works of light while you are in darkness' (*T. Naph.* 2.10).

As we have seen before, this liberal Levitical tradition, acknowledging that the sense of vision serves as a portal to the divine, sees Levi as a carrier of God's energy and the light of knowledge—in other words as a Hellenistic scientist. The imagery of water and light holds an important role in its cosmology. Now we also see that the diversity of humanity is promoted. Moreover, men and women are treated as equals.⁵³

1.2. *In Conservative Tradition.* In contrast to liberal Levitical tradition a typical conservative one denies the sense of vision access to truth. Moreover, sight is considered ontologically corrupted, while the other senses can serve a good and beneficial purpose.

53. It is not only obvious in *T. Naph.* 2.7, but especially in *Jos. Asen.*, where she takes up the role of a Hellenistic scientist. It was certainly not difficult for liberal Levitical tradition to find biblical support for such a positive attitude of Levi toward women. Levi, together with his brother Simeon, will wipe out the Shechemites in order to avenge Shechem's violation of their sister (Gen. 34.25-31). Thus, Levi could function naturally as the protector and confidant of women.

Seven ... spirits are given to man at creation so that by them every human deed (is done). First is the spirit of life, with which man is created as a composite being. *The second is the spirit of seeing, with which comes desire.* The third is the spirit of hearing, with which comes instruction. The fourth is the spirit of smell, with which is given taste for drawing air and breath. The fifth is the spirit of speech, with which comes knowledge. The sixth is the spirit of taste for consuming food and drink; by it comes strength, because in food is the substance of strength. The seventh is the spirit of procreation and intercourse, with which come sins through fondness of pleasure (*T. Reub.* 2.3-9).

While the sense of vision is the source of desire, the sense of hearing is a beneficial sense because through it comes instruction. Also speech serves a positive purpose because through it comes knowledge. Thus, knowledge and learning do not come through the eyes but through the ears, and the medium is not light but speech.

Through eyes comes deception; visual perception and images lead people astray. The deliberations of the good man are not in the control of the deceitful spirit ... For he does not look with passionate longing at corruptible things, ... He does not find delight in pleasure ... nor is he led astray by visual excitement (*T. Benj.* 6.1-3).

This means that images per se constitute plurality, while there is but one path that leads to divine illumination. God dwells in a mind that

has one disposition, uncontaminated and pure, toward all men. There is no duplicity in its perception and hearing, ... for [this person] cleanses his mind in order that he will not be suspected of wrongdoing either by men or by God. The works of Beliar are twofold, and have in them no integrity (*T. Benj.* 6.4-7).

Consequently, there is but one path to God and salvation, and this way does not lead through the sense of vision.

I lived my life with singleness of vision. Accordingly, when I was thirty-five I took myself a wife because hard work consumed my energy, and pleasure with a woman never came to my mind; rather sleep overtook me because of my labor. And my father was continually rejoicing in my integrity (*T. Iss.* 3.4-6).

Thus, Issachar testifies that pleasure is also excluded from the single path of salvation. Not only eyes, but also sleep in its nature is taken in a thoroughly negative spirit. The only image connected to sleep is the image of death. 'In addition to all is an eighth spirit: sleep, with which is created the ecstasy of nature and the *image of death*' (*T. Reub.* 3.1). The spirit of sleep goes together with the spirit of error and the spirit of fantasy, destroying every young man by 'darkening his mind from the truth', so that he neither

gains understanding in the law of God nor heeds the advice of his fathers (*T. Reub.* 3.1-9).

Not only is sexual pleasure evil, but it is closely related to the sense of vision. Reuben advises his progeny,

Do not devote your attention to woman's looks ... nor become involved in affairs of women. For if I had not seen Bilhah bathing in a sheltered place, ... so absorbed were my senses by her naked femininity that I was unable to sleep until I had performed this revolting act (*T. Reub.* 3.10-12).

Judah relates that the most evil human desires are the love of money and gazing on female beauty: 'Because on account of money and attractive appearance ... I was led astray to Bathshua the Canaanite' (*T. Jud.* 17.1).

The mythological creatures, the Watchers (*Gen.* 6.1-4), were charmed by women's looks, initiating the disastrous chain of events that eventually led to the Flood. We can observe how these initial events unfold into tragic consequences solely through the employment of the sense of vision,

As they *continued looking* at the women, they were filled with desire for them and *perpetrated the act in their minds*. Then they were transformed into human males and while the women were cohabiting with their husbands they *appeared* to them. Since the women's minds were filled with *lust for these apparitions*, they gave birth to giants. For the Watchers were *disclosed* [the verb of seeing is used here: ἐφαίνοντο] *to them as being as high as the heavens* (*T. Reub.* 5.6).

2. About Prudence.

2.1. *Abstinence.* Abstinence is good and sexual intercourse should be performed only for procreation. Enjoying sexual pleasure is ontologically evil (see above *T. Iss.* 3.4-6). Thus, Rachel was barren because she used to lie with Jacob merely for sexual gratification (*T. Iss.* 2.3). She bore two children eventually, only 'because she despised intercourse with her husband, choosing rather continence' (*T. Iss.* 2.1). She finally opted to have sex with Jacob 'for children rather than for pleasure' (*T. Iss.* 2.3). God allowed Rachel to have children because she abstained from all her passions, which, according to *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, she seemed to have many: 'Even though she longed for them [mandrakes] passionately, she did not eat them, but presented them in the house of the Lord' (*T. Iss.* 2.5).

Closely related to abstinence from any pleasure is absolute sobriety. Drinking wine is not bad by itself and therefore, it is not prohibited.

But if you wish to live prudently, abstain completely from drinking, in order that you might not sin by uttering lewd words, by fighting, by slander, by transgressing God's commands, then you shall not die before your allotted time. The mysteries of God and men wine discloses, just as I dis-

closed to the Canaanite woman the commandments of God and mysteries of Jacob, my father, which God told me not to reveal (*T. Jud.* 16.3-4).

2.2. *Exogamy.* Another important characteristic of Levitical tradition appears in this passage: the prohibition and condemnation of exogamy. It is not permitted to marry outside the clan. 'Take yourself a wife . . . who is not from the race of alien nations' (*T. Levi* 9.10), Isaac teaches Levi. Judah's greatest sin was that he married a Canaanite. He was led astray by eyes and desire into this transgression. Moreover, his Canaanite wife was evil and is to blame for all Judah's faults, especially for the so-called wickedness of their children (*T. Jud.* 10.1-6).

'And I knew that the race of the Canaanites was evil, but youthful impulses blinded my reason' (*T. Jud.* 11.2). According to conservative Levitical tradition all foreigners are evil, while all Hebrews are good and loveable. This concept is especially well demonstrated in the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife that is much elaborated upon and expanded in *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* (*T. Jos.* 2-16). Joseph is the ethical role model in *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* mainly because he managed to resist the multiple and ingenious advances of a shameless Egyptian woman from Memphis (*T. Jos.* 3.6).⁵⁴ She is thoroughly evil; anything coming from her that seems good is just pretense (*T. Reub.* 4.9-11). In order to lure Joseph into sexual embrace, she pretended either that he is her adopted son (*T. Jos.* 3.8) or that she converted to monotheism (*T. Jos.* 6.5). Moreover, Potiphar is also pictured as evil (*T. Jos.* 13.1-9). This representation of both Potiphar and his wife in *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* (*T. Jos.* 2-16) is among the most negative in world literature. Even in the passages where Joseph attempts to convert the Egyptian woman, he testifies that he is not doing it for her sake but in the hope that God will divert her from her evil desire and leave Joseph alone (*T. Jos.* 3.9-10).⁵⁵

While liberal Levitical tradition also condemns exogamy, it condones and even promotes conversion.⁵⁶ For its conservative branch, conversion is unacceptable, and the slaughter of converted Shechemites by Levi and Simeon is divinely ordained (*T. Levi* 5.3; 6.3-9). The killing of foreigners and enemies is permissible (*T. Jud.* 2-7). Moreover, Judah is ready to kill Tamar, after he heard that his former daughter-in-law was pregnant ('it was my wish to kill her', *T. Jud.* 12.5).

54. She does not have a name in *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, but is called the Egyptian woman, Memphian woman, or both at the same time (e.g. *T. Jos.* 3.1.6; 14.1; 16.1).

55. 'She did not understand that I spoke in this way for the Lord's sake and not for hers' (*T. Jos.* 7.7).

56. A converted Aseneth is the heroine in *Jos. Asen.*

2.3. *Kinship*. Simultaneously, kinship is raised to the primary position. The rest of *T. Jos.* 15–18 is about Joseph's love for his brothers, which stayed firm no matter how badly they treated him.

So you see, my children, how many things I endured in order not to bring my brothers into disgrace. You, therefore, love one another and in patient endurance conceal one another's shortcomings. . . . After the death of Jacob, my father, I loved them [my brothers] beyond measure, and everything he had wanted for them I did abundantly in their behalf (*T. Jos.* 17.1-6).

The solidarity of kinship is promoted at the expense of individual disposition and feelings. Love toward kin goes hand in hand with absolute obedience to parents. 'I lived my life in rectitude of heart; I became a farmer for the benefit of my father and my brothers. . . . And my father blessed me, since he saw that I was living in rectitude' (*T. Iss.* 3.1-2).

And as previously mentioned, Judah was given the kingship because of his obedience to his parents and close relatives.

In my youth I was keen; I obeyed my father, and I honored my mother and her sister. And it happened that as I matured, my father declared to me. 'You shall be king, achieving success in every way' (*T. Jud.* 1.5-6).

This insistence on blood relations and the focus on progeny conforms with the concept of Levitical succession or cultural and intellectual transmission in the context of Levitical tradition. We should keep in mind that the lineage from Levi to Moses and Aaron is hereditary, through direct blood descent, as Moses and Aaron belong to tribe of Levi, while the transmission from Joseph to Moses in the Joseph tradition must be spiritual, because they belong to different tribes.

2.4. *Misogyny*. Conservative Levitical tradition is misogynistic. It denigrates not only foreign women or passionate Rachel but all sexual activity for pleasure. Women primarily use men's sense of vision in order to deceive men and lead them astray:

Women are evil, . . . and by reason of lacking authority or power over man, they scheme treacherously how they might *entice him* to themselves *by means of their looks*. And whomever they cannot *enchant by their appearance* they conquer by stratagem. Indeed, the angel of the Lord told me and instructed me that women are more easily overcome by the spirit of promiscuity than are men. They contrive in their hearts against men, then by *decking themselves out* they lead men's minds astray, *by a look they implant their poison*, and finally in the act itself they take them captive. For a woman is not able to coerce a man overtly, but by a harlot's manner she accomplishes her villainy (*T. Reub.* 5.1-5).

Consequently, it is evil that women beautify themselves: 'order your wives and your daughters not to adorn their heads and their appearances so as to deceive men's sound minds' (*T. Reub.* 5.5). Eventually, because of their sinful ways, women are to blame for bringing the flood on humanity (*T. Reub.* 5.6).

While Joseph's beauty reflects his inner goodness and moral integrity, it never occurs to the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* to treat a woman's appearance in the same manner.⁵⁷ 'Because nothing evil resided in Joseph, he was attractive in appearance and handsome to behold, for the face evidences any troubling of the spirit' (*T. Sim.* 5.1). Even Tamar (Genesis 38) is not a positive character. She is the reason that Judah declares,

The promiscuous man is unaware when he has been harmed and shameless when he has been disgraced. . . . And an angel of the Lord showed me that women have mastery over both king and poor man: (for ever). From the king they will take away his glory; from the virile man his power; and from the poor man, even the slight support that he has in his poverty (*T. Jud.* 15.1-6).

3. *Against Popular Religion and Lecanomanancy.* The singleness of the path to the divine and salvation excludes any manifestation of popular religion. Any kind of deviation is marked as witchcraft, magic and idolatry. We should not be surprised by now that all these practices involve women.

My grief is great, my children, on account of the licentiousness and witchcraft and idolatry that you practice contrary to the kingship, following ventriloquists, omen dispensers, and demons of deceit. You shall make your daughters into musicians and common women, and you will be involved in revolting gentile affairs (*T. Jud.* 23.1-2).

Joseph's divinatory practices were never mentioned in *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*. Extispicy/liver omens are stigmatized as idolatry belonging in the same category as enchantments (γοητεία), leading to a logical parallel conclusion that lecanomanancy would belong to the same category for *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*.

Predictably, in *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, it is Potiphar's wife who employs these methods. It is interesting that this fact is contrary to the biblical account, where it is Joseph according to his own declaration (Gen. 44.15) and not any female character who practices divination (Gen. 44.2, 5). 'For the Egyptian woman did many things to him, summoned *magicians*, and brought *potions* for him, but his soul's deliberation rejected evil desire' (*T. Reub.* 4.9). And Joseph complains,

57. This treatment is in striking contrast to the representation of Aseneth in the liberal *Jos. Asen.* Levitical tradition (see below in this chapter).

she sent me food mixed with enchantments. . . . A day later she came to me and said, when she recognized the food, 'Why didn't you eat the food?' And I said to her, 'Because you filled it with *a deadly enchantment*. How can you say, "I do not go near the idols, but only to the Lord"' (*T. Jos.* 6.1-5).

5. Conclusion

In the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* the chosen patriarch, the communicator with the divine world and the carrier of tradition is Levi. While Joseph serves as the ethical role model of the Testaments, he has neither special access to the divine nor any jurisdiction in any form of RVE in both types of Levitical traditions.

The *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* displays two different Levitical traditions, liberal and conservative. The parallel presence of two diametrically different views in the same text allows us to compare *epi topou* the treatment of each of them respectively of Joseph, of the image of the Hellenistic scientist, of the concept of RVE and of the use of lecanomancy as its tool.

In the liberal Levitical tradition vision is the main sense by which humanity approaches the truth and the divine through forms of RVE: symbolic dreams and visions and the emission of energy by a human agent. Levi is promoted as the human agent and, thus, as a Hellenistic scientist of vision. Lecanomancy is not mentioned directly. The main contribution of the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* to the phenomena of RVE rests in supplying its theoretical concepts based on the popular understanding of cosmology and holistic scientific approach of Hellenistic times. Within this worldview the imagery of water and light plays a major role. There is no real distinction between dreams and daily visions, as sleep and eyes share the same sensory and communication organ. Moreover, the plurality of expression and of existence is promoted, accepting forms of popular religion and treating of women and men as equals.

Conservative Levitical tradition denies to the visual sense access to truth and the divine. The information received through vision detracts from the singularity of the path to truth and the divine. Sight is an ontologically negative sense, deceitful and closely related to sleep and pleasure, leading people astray and to death. Women use it deliberately and extensively to ruin men and humanity in general. This school of thought promotes the singularity of thought that there is only one way to salvation. This path leads through the sense of hearing and is transmitted through speech. Levi features as the human agent in the priestly office. By denying the plurality of visions, this tradition rejects the pluralistic expressions of popular religion, regarding them as witchcraft and magic, including lecanomancy in this classification.

By relating women to the sense of sight, it emerges as strikingly misogynistic. It is also xenophobic. Foreigners and others are not accepted even if they convert. Tribal solidarity and blood lineage form the most important social relations. The conservative Levitical tradition of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is very militant; killing the other is not only permissible but also commendable.

Succession in the Levitical tradition is hereditary, through the bloodline from father to son. Kinship relations are the only social relations that matter.

ASENETH

1. *Joseph and Aseneth*⁵⁸

The famous ancient tale under the modern title *Joseph and Aseneth* (*Jos. Asen.*) is not primarily about Joseph but Aseneth. This fact is pointed out by most recent scholarship and there is a tendency to rename it *Aseneth*.⁵⁹ It is a correct approach, because the tale tells us almost nothing about Joseph's character and absolutely nothing about Joseph as a Hellenistic scientist. Moreover, if the title appears in an ancient version of the story, it usually primarily considers Aseneth, while the mention of Joseph is omitted.⁶⁰

58. If it is not otherwise indicated, the English translation of Marc Philonenko's edition of the Greek text is by D. Cook, 'Joseph and Aseneth', *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (ed. H.F.D. Sparks; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 465-503. The Greek text cited is Philonenko's edition from Marc Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (SPB, 30; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968). In order to avoid any doubt, I add 'Phil.' after the verse number of this Greek edition.

59. See the works by Edith M. Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth* (GAP, 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). 'Even the work's title remains unknown; although many scholars name this narrative *Joseph and Aseneth*, the earliest surviving manuscript refers to it as the *Book of Aseneth* and the most thorough study (Kraemer, 1998, 2003) simply terms it *Aseneth*' (Michael Penn, 'Identity Transformation and Authorial Identification in *Joseph and Aseneth*', *JSP* 13.2 (2002), pp. 171-83).

60. The shorter Greek version of the text (*d*) mentions only Aseneth in the title, *Confession and Prayer of Aseneth, the Daughter of Pentephres, the Priest* (my translation). Marc Philonenko (*Joseph et Aséneth*, p. 128) and recently several other scholars, such as Ross Kraemer (*When Aseneth Met Joseph: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and his Egyptian Wife Reconsidered* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], p. 309; and 'How the Egyptian Virgin Aseneth Becomes a Devotee of the God of Israel and Marries the Patriarch Joseph: *Aseneth* 1-21', in *Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], pp. 308-27 [295-96]) and Angela Standhartinger (*Das Frauenbild im Judentum der hellenistischen Zeit: Ein Beitrag anhand von 'Joseph und Aseneth'* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995]) consider this version the closest to the original, and therefore, the earliest. The South Slavonic translation, which Philonenko considers to be a translation of a more reliable Greek text than the Greek MSS, B and D of *d* version, points out in its title that

In my opinion Joseph's role in the story is an excellent argument for labeling it a romance.⁶¹ In its ancient edition Joseph seems closest to the hero of a modern romance. Consequently, aside from highlighting his success and social position, the story shows little interest in his profession. All the makings of a male protagonist of a modern romance are present: Joseph is super successful and he is so handsome that all women chase after him (*Jos. Asen.* 7.2-6). However, he also holds the right beliefs and convictions, although a bit on the traditional side.⁶² Moreover, he accomplishes everything by himself. In the second part of the tale, Joseph, now a glorified husband of our heroine, plays even a lesser role than his brothers.⁶³

In contrast to the *Ethiopic History of Joseph*, which survives in only one recently discovered manuscript, this romance appears in many Greek

it is a story about Aseneth, while Joseph is mentioned only secondarily: *The Life and Confession of Aseneth, the Daughter of Pentephres, and How Beautiful Joseph Made Her his Wife* (my translation). Also, the first Latin version of the text that appeared in the West had the title *Ex historia Assenech* (Cook, 'Joseph and Aseneth', p. 465).

61. *Joseph and Aseneth* belongs to the genre of the Hellenistic novel in a broad sense, according to a scholarly consensus (e.g. Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*; A-J. Levine (ed.), 'Women like This': *New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* [Early Judaism and its Literature, 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press/Society of Biblical Literature, 1991]; Lawrence Wills, in *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995], pp. 158-84; 'The Marriage and Conversion of Aseneth' in *Ancient Jewish Novel: An Anthology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], pp. 121-62; Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*). Under the term 'Hellenistic' I also include Hellenistic influences in the later periods. Consequently 'Hellenistic' covers what others frequently call Greco-Roman, and sometimes even some phenomena of the Middle Ages. As a novel, *Joseph and Aseneth* is a 'written popular narrative fiction' (Wills, 'The Marriage and Conversion', p. 5). Thus, one of its main characteristics is that it was a written composition from its beginnings. A novel has never passed through an oral stage. Therefore, in the case of *Joseph and Aseneth* one can speak exclusively of the textual transmission.

62. We should not be lead astray by the connection of Joseph's beauty to his inner enlightenment, which reflects his dedication to God and his piety, because the complication of the plot of the romance is about the conflict that arose over the different religious affiliations of the main protagonists, the heroine and the hero.

63. According to the categories of characterization in narrative theory, Joseph's characterization in *Aseneth* would oscillate from the 'flat character' of E.M. Forster (flat characters are 'little more than caricatures—easily recognized and remembered, often comic', and they serve to set off the main, *round* characters) and the 'background character' of W.J. Harvey, which functions mainly in terms of plot, to Henry James's *ficelle* ('The character who while more fully delineated and individualized than any background character, exists in the novel primarily to serve some function. Unlike the protagonist he is ultimately a means to an end than an end in himself'). See William H. Shepard, *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), pp. 67-69.

manuscripts and translations. A scholarly consensus identifies roughly four versions, commonly labeled *a*, *b*, *c* and *d*. They fall into two groups: a long, predominantly *b*, version and a short *d* version.⁶⁴ Remarkably, 11 of 16 Greek manuscripts are from the fifteenth to seventeenth century, including a South Slavic translation which is considered one of the most important sources (fifteenth century).⁶⁵ A considerable interest in the story in this period was probably due to the renaissance of Hellenistic romance stories that started in the Byzantine Empire around the twelfth century. These romances served as a model for the new type of hagiographic literature.⁶⁶

64. Greek manuscripts differ considerably among themselves. After P. Batiffol's first critical edition ('Le livre de la prière d'Aséneth', *Studia patristica: Etudes d'ancienne littérature chrétienne* [2 vols.; Paris: Leroux, 1889–1890]), much of the work in this area was done by Christoph Burchard (see details for publications in 1965, 1996, 2003) and Marc Philonenko (*Joseph et Aséneth*). Greek MSS are divided into four types, designated as *a b c d*. While Burchard maintains that the most reliable text is contained in the witnesses to *b*, and that *d* is an abbreviated adaptation of it, and *a* and *c* are also improved texts in one way or another, Philonenko promoted *d* (the short recension) over longer *b*, *c*, and *a*, which he considers as expansions of *d*, and which he calls the first, the second and the third long recension respectively. Among the versions, the Slavonic is linked to the *d* group, and all the rest to the *b* group (Cook, 'Joseph and Aseneth', p. 467). Burchard still opts for the longer version in his latest critical edition of the *Joseph and Aseneth*, although it is not the *b* version that he favors any longer. It is dispersed into three other versions according to him, which he identifies now as *a*, *Mc*, and *d*. However, he basically reprinted his 1998 text with very few changes (Christoph Burchard, Carsten Burfeind and Uta Barbara Fink, *Joseph und Aseneth kritisch herausgegeben* [PVTG, 5; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003], pp. 10, 47–48). He hopes for a future new eclectic edition of the entirely reworked text. Uta Barbara Fink continued in the same direction, opting for the secondary character of the short version (*Joseph und Aseneth: Revision des griechischen Textes und Edition der zweiten lateinischen Übersetzung* [Fontes et subsidia ad Bibliam pertinentes, 5; Walter de Gruyter, 2008], p. 5).

65. Four other manuscripts are dated from the tenth to the twelfth century, and one is dated to 1802.

66. One of the most beautiful offshoots of this movement is a lovely tale of one of the earliest saintly royal couples of the Serbian hagiographical tradition, *The Legend of Vladimir and Kosara*, which is in fact a love story (see especially Pop Dukljan, *The Chronicle of the Priest Dukljanin*, twelfth century, where a version of their love story is included; <http://homepage.mac.com/paulstephenson/trans/lpd1.html>). For the impact of Christianity on the twelfth-century Byzantine imitations of the ancient Greek novels, see the monograph by Suzanne MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London: Routledge, 1996). The fifteenth-century South Slavonic manuscript is very likely the work of the large scribal school at the court of the Serbian prince Stevan Lazarevic. Beside composing original works, this school copied and preserved many important Slavonic, Byzantine and ancient texts (see Christoph Burchard, 'Joseph und Aseneth serbisch-kirchenslawisch Text und Varianten', in *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph und Aseneth berichtet und*

2. Liberal Levitical Tradition

Aseneth does not belong to the Joseph tradition but to the liberal Levitical tradition. Consequently, it is only to be expected that the story lacks interest in Joseph. Any intellectual quality and skill that could make Joseph into an exceptional personality and the chosen brother would be limited. Levi is the important and chosen brother, the carrier of blessings and tradition, the one who determines the intellectual direction of the faithful Jews. Levi is the most prominent figure, especially in the second part (*Jos. Asen.* 22–29).⁶⁷ He is just and a wise and natural leader of all the brothers who stayed with Jacob (*Jos. Asen.* 23.10), excluding Joseph, who lived apart from them and belonged to the Egyptian establishment. In one word, Levi appears as the hero of the second part of the story. He is also the one who has insight into the secrets of the universe and predicts the future. He is a prophet, morally superior and a discernor of mysteries who knows the future in advance (*Jos. Asen.* 23.8).⁶⁸ He is insightful and has access to the divine. Levi is a powerful magician and a great scientist (*Jos. Asen.* 26.6/7; 28.17 Burchard).⁶⁹

3. *Aseneth as a Hellenistic Scientist of Vision*a. *Lecanomancer*

Aseneth's conversion to Judaism is the culmination of the first part of the story, in which she becomes the ally of Levi and the carrier of supernatu-

ergänzt herausgegeben mit Unterstützung von Carsten Burfeind [SVTP, 13; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996], p. 53).

67. Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth', *OTP*, and Philonenko, as well as most other scholars, divide the story into two parts: 1–21, which is about *Aseneth's* marriage and conversion; and 22–29, the adventure of Pharaoh's son's attempt to abduct *Aseneth*. Although Wills convincingly argues that the original story should start and end as a romance-adventure narrative, but to which the penitential conversion was added as an interlude later on, I will still use the division in two parts to which all the critical editions of the text adhere (Wills, 'The Marriage and Conversion', p. 123).

68. 'And Levi was aware of what Simeon was about to do, for Levi was a prophet and foresaw everything that was to happen' (*Jos. Asen.* 23.8; Philonenko, *Joseph et Aseneth*, p. 202). Burchard has an even longer text, which describes a richer version of Levi's prophetic talents.

69. Burchard's version sometimes uses a different numbering of the verses from Philonenko's. I will note it with Burch. after the verse number (for his English translation, see Christoph Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth' [*OTP*; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985], II, pp. 202–47). For Philonenko's Greek text, I add Phil. after the verse number. 'Levi knew all the secrets, e.g. where the evil brothers were hiding; thus according to b, 'And Levi their brother perceived it and did not declare it to his brothers' (*Jos. Asen.* 28.17 Burch.). 'And Levi, the son of Leah, was informed about all this (for he was a prophet), and he told his brothers about *Aseneth's* danger' (*Jos. Asen.* 26.7).

ral powers. Accordingly, Aseneth and not Joseph is a diviner and lecanomancer, a ‘scientist of vision’, which the shorter *d* version of the ancient story makes clear.⁷⁰ Aseneth practiced lecanomancy as the final culminating act of her initiation following her religious conversion. Before meeting Joseph she gains access to the divine, access to the knowledge of truth and the supernatural, through RVE. Her powers will be displayed in the second part of the tale, where she, as an ally of Levi, became the conductor of divine energy and is able to perform miracles because God’s blessings rested on her.

According to the *d* version,⁷¹ Aseneth, on hearing about Joseph’s arrival, dresses in her best garments and jewels. After putting a golden crown of precious stones on her head, she covers her head with a veil and asks her maidservant to bring her water from a pure spring.⁷² Then she *leans over* the water in the bowl/cup and sees her face as the sun and her eyes as the stars at dawn (*Jos. Asen.* 18.6-7).

Καὶ εἶπε τῇ παιδίσκῃ αὐτῆς· ἄγαγέ μοι ὕδωρ ἀπὸ τῆς πηγῆς καθαρόν.
Καὶ ἔκυσεν Ἀσενεθ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι ἐν τῇ λεκάνῃ [ἐπὶ τῆς κόγχης]. Καὶ ἦν τὸ
πρόσωπον αὐτῆς ὡς ἥλιος καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῆς ὡς ἑσπέρη ἀνατέλλον.

And she said to her maidservant, ‘Bring me pure water from the spring.’
And Aseneth bent down to the water in the basin [on the cockle-shell], and
her face was like the sun, and her eyes like the rising morning star (*Jos.*
Asen. 18.6-7).

Philonenko (*Joseph et Aséneth*, p. 193) rightly remarks that there is no doubt that this scene reflects lecanomancy.⁷³ There are several issues in the setting of this episode that support his claims:

70. Ross Kraemer remarks, ‘For the author of the shorter text, that Aseneth is a woman seems generally unproblematic. The general representation of gender is fairly conventional and consistent with late antique notions both of gender and of marriage that themselves appear modified from earlier constructions’ (*When Aseneth Met Joseph*, p. 295). Angela Standhartinger argues that while *d*, or Philonenko’s version that incorporates the Greek rendering of the South Slavonic translation which he considers the closest to the original, is more ‘womanfriendly’, less sexualized and non-androcentric in contrast to Christoph Burchard’s redacted longer version based on *b*, *b*’s redactional interventions are gender related. They present Aseneth in a stereotyped and misogynistic light, as if *b* was rewritten to deny a woman the privileged status that she held in *d* (Standhartinger, *Das Frauenbild*, pp. 222-23).

71. Marc Philonenko (*Joseph et Aséneth*) proposes this version as the most reliable one, i.e. the closest to the original, and Ross Kraemer follows him in this view.

72. ‘And she put a golden crown upon her head, and in the crown, in front, were the costliest of stones. And she covered her head with a veil’ (*Jos. Asen.* 18.6).

73. Commenting on *Jos. Asen.* 18.7 Philonenko writes, ‘Il s’agit indiscutablement ici d’une scène de lécanomancie’ (*Joseph et Aséneth*, p. 193).

1. The purity of the water from a spring. Springs and wells functioned as outdoor sacred places where divination by reflection was performed before its popularization in lecanomancy with cups and bowls.⁷⁴
2. Aseneth bends over the water in the container, reminding us of the famous representation on the Greek vase of Pythia's bending over and looking into a cup to see the future of the standing king Aegeus (Delhi, 440–430 BCE). It also fits the satire in the rabbinic description of the same pose of Joseph: Joseph pretends to smell the cup.⁷⁵
3. Aseneth sees her own reflection on the surface of the liquid, but it is not the mirrored image of herself and it conveys a message to her. She sees herself more beautiful than ever, although she spent several days before in fasting and repentance and was deprived of sleep and food.
4. Aseneth's features change and her face shines through divine light, testifying that the communication with the supernatural occurred.⁷⁶
5. The scene closes the narrative of Aseneth's conversion in the same way that Joseph's rhetorical question in Gen. 44.15, 'did you not know that I am a diviner?', culminates in the narrative of Joseph's dealings with his brothers. Thus, in both cases the plot culminates in a reference to divination or an acknowledgment of the ability of the hero(ine) to access the divine.

74. For a discussion of hydromancy (divination on springs and wells) and lecanomancy, see particularly W.R. Halliday, *Greek Divination: A Study of its Methods and Principles* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1967), pp. 122–25, 145–62. For the ancient texts on divination at wells and springs, see Lucian, *Vera historia* A 26, and especially Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 3.25.8; 7.21.12–13. Pausanias (second century CE) writes about the popularity of divination using the example of a holy spring in the sanctuary of Demeter at Patrai: 'Here there is an infallible mode of divination, not however for all matters, but only in cases of sickness. They tie a mirror to a fine cord and let it down so far that it shall not plunge into the spring but merely graze the surface of the water with its rim. Then, after praying to the goddess and burning incense, they look into mirror, and it shows them the sick person either living or dead. So truthful is the water' (7.21.12). Pausanias continues by mentioning the water of the spring of Apollo near Cyaneae in Lycia, where the water will show anyone who looks into it whatever they wish to see (7.21.13). Elsewhere he remarks how these waters must not be made unclean. At Tainaron was once a magic spring, but, 'nowadays there is nothing wonderful about the spring; but they say that formerly when people looked into the water they could see the harbors and ships. A woman stopped these exhibitions by washing dirty clothes in the water' (Pausanias 3.25.8).

75. See Chapter 3, on Ethiopic Joseph.

76. Ross Kraemer goes so far as to compare 'Aseneth's angelic transformation' with the transformation of Moses on Sinai (Exod. 34.29–34). Analogously, Moses came down with a shining face after he spoke to God face to face, and they both needed to veil themselves in order to 'protect others from the brilliance of their faces' (Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, pp. 39–40).

Burchard rejects Philonenko's view that there is an allusion to 'magical practice involving the mirror effect of water in a basin' in this scene.⁷⁷ He calls upon the longer version *b*, which, he maintains, is closer to the original. His critical edition of the story is an eclectic leaning toward *b*.⁷⁸ An eclectic text involves the choice of the compiler among different versions in each section of the ancient text. The shortcoming is that it makes the product more subjective than a prevailingly diplomatic critical edition, such as Philonenko's, which is based on a shorter *d* version.

Burchard argues instead that Aseneth clearly asks for 'pure water from the spring' (*Jos. Asen.* 18.8/7) in order to wash her face. And she actually leans over the basin full of water with the intention of washing her face when she sees her altered image 'in the water' (*Jos. Asen.* 18.9). Burchard uses this pose to show that lecanomancy is out of question. His argument is that *d* is corrupt, because it is impossible that Aseneth leaned 'in' the water ἐν τῷ ὕδατι ἐν τῇ λεκάνῃ, showing that the phrase is grammatically incorrect and that it omitted some letters and words from the correct *b* version that originally indicate that Aseneth leaned over the water with the intention of washing her face, ἐνέκυψεν Ἀσενὲθ νίψασθαι τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς, and then she saw her face in the water, καὶ ὀρᾷ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ ὕδατι. However, the last part of the sentence clearly shows that the result was a revelatory event of the reflection from the liquid surface, even if Aseneth's intention was not to perform a divinatory ritual.⁷⁹ Neither the shorter *d* version nor the South Slavonic text mentions what Aseneth's intention was in asking for water, and an allusion to washing is completely misplaced because not only had she already gotten completely dressed but she had also put her veil on.⁸⁰ 'And she put a golden crown upon her head, and in the crown, in front, were the costliest of stones. And she covered her head with a veil' (*Jos. Asen.* 18.6). Moreover, Burchard's eclectic text does not omit the details of Aseneth's elaborate clothing in her best garments and jewelry that precedes her request for water. It seems very unlikely that the customs in the ancient world were so peculiarly different from ours that a person who

77. Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth', *OTP*, II, p. 232 n.o.

78. Burchard's newest revised edition of the Greek eclectic text of *Joseph and Aseneth* (2003) differs very little from the earlier one. He mentions that, as the result of examining new manuscripts, he must attribute a greater role to versions *a* and *c*.

79. Burchard, *Gesammelte Studien*, p. 23.

80. If *b* is not adding intentionally the mention of washing the face in order to undermine the divinatory ritual, it may just be repeating the scene with the angel (*Jos. Asen.* 14.12-17). The angel calls Aseneth to take off her repenting cloths and shake off the ashes from her hair, and to wash her face and put on a brand-new outfit (*Jos. Asen.* 14.12). She obeys, she gets dressed, washes her face, and then puts on her veil. The fact that in *Jos. Asen.* 18.6, Aseneth had already put on her veil before asking for water shows that she did not have washing in mind.

just put on her best necklace and jeweled crown would want next to wash her face.⁸¹

Furthermore, even if we accept Burchard's version that Aseneth initially ordered the water for purification purposes, the same text of Burchard confirms that what in fact took place was that she saw her face shining, beautifully reflected in the water. The only difference from Philonenko's edition is that Burchard's Aseneth experienced a revelation by reflection involuntarily by performing lecanomancy accidentally. Consequently, either another image of herself was mirrored from the surface of the liquid or she saw an exact reflection of herself, but she herself was changed miraculously.⁸² Both of these interpretations indicate some divine communication through the reflected image on the water's surface. Thus, even if we agree with Burchard's argument that Aseneth wanted to use the water only for washing, it does not exclude the fact that she experienced a revelation by reflection. Burchard's dismissal of an act of divination in this scene shows more of his own scholarly prejudice against magic than of a real scholarly investigation.

In contrast to the *d* version, which is very short in this passage and is cited in Greek above, Burchard's text follows with an elaborate description of Aseneth's reflected image from the liquid surface. Many details run parallel to the Song of Songs (Song 5.13), making the passage sound artificial and out of place. I am inclined to see this part as a later addition which was inserted in order to make the story sound more biblical.⁸³

Moreover, it is not the first time that the *b* version, or Burchard's eclectic text, shows bias against lecanomancy and dream interpretation. While Aseneth gives reasons why she refuses to marry Joseph, citing the rumors about him, in *d* she states simply that Pharaoh took Joseph out of prison

81. Ross Kraemer argues that Burchard's longer text of this passage is a later addition, done with the purpose of undermining the supernatural intervention in the scene: 'It seems quite possible, then, that the entire episode of the *tropheus* and his concern for Aseneth's appearance may have been inserted in order to downplay the angelic implications of this scene' (Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, p. 71). 'As with its treatment of her clothing, the longer text again appears to attempt to mute the significance of Aseneth's experience' (Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, p. 129).

82. For the common concept in divination of this phenomenon of mirroring images that are not exact reproductions of the mirrored objects, see Aristotle, *Prophesying by Dreams* 2.464b5-12, 'For anyone can interpret direct dream-visions. By resemblances, I mean that the appearances (*phantasmata*) are akin to images in water, as indeed we have said before. In that medium, if there is much disturbance, the reflection becomes in no way similar, nor do the images become a real object at all' (and we should not forget that Aristotle rejects dream apparitions as misconceptions and errors of sense-impression).

83. The physical description of a female beauty in the Hebrew Bible is almost non-existent, with a rare exception of the Song of Songs. Thus, it betrays the hand of a later harmonizer who may have intended to make *Aseneth* sound more canonical.

because he interpreted his dreams (*Jos. Asen.* 4.14). In *b*, however, she adds a scornful comment to this statement, ‘just as the older women of the Egyptians interpret (dreams)’ (*Jos. Asen.* 4.10/14 Burchard), which alludes to the fact that dream interpretation belongs to a shady area of popular culture and is not to be trusted or taken seriously.⁸⁴ Thus, *b* makes a strong religious statement here, suggesting a similar position on lecanomancy. I suggest further that Aseneth’s request for water to wash her face was *b*’s addition to an already existing divinatory scene, in order to cover it up, because the heroine who has just become enlightened and converted to the true religion cannot perform a disreputable ritual that goes against *b*’s piety.

b. Eye—Miracle Worker: Conductor and Emitter of Energy

That Aseneth gained access to the divine, is able to communicate with the supernatural and is spiritually empowered becomes clear in the second part of the romance. This time she performs a miracle at the culmination of the plot.

Aseneth saw them, [and she said: ‘O Lord, my God, that didst quicken me from death, that didst say to me, Thy soul shall live forever, deliver me from these men.’ And the Lord God heard her voice] and immediately their swords fell from their hands to the ground and were reduced to dust (*Jos. Asen.* 27.8).

Neither of the Greek MSS of *d* (B or D) contains Aseneth’s prayer and divine response before the miracle (*Jos. Asen.* 27.8). Philonenko took it from the South Slavonic version, which he considers a translation of a Greek text that is better and least reworked by later editors than *d*. Although representing the shorter *d* family, this epicletic prayer makes the Slavonic translation (*Slav*) of *Jos. Asen.* 27.8 into a longer passage that more closely resembles the long *b* version.

Moreover, it is worded in agreement with standard Slavonic liturgical prayers of the Eastern Orthodox Church.⁸⁵ A main trait of the Byzantine renaissance of the Hellenistic romances of the twelfth century onward was their transformation into Christian hagiographical biographies. Because the translation is done in the fifteenth century in the shelter of Serbian Orthodox Christianity it is not surprising that a supplication and divine response should precede a miracle at this point. By adding the epicletic prayer, the

84. Burchard adds a comment on this verse, ‘The meaning must be deprecatory. If a neutral or favorable meaning was intended, Aseneth could have referred, e.g., to the dream interpreters (among them women) who belonged to the staff of many pagan temples of the time’ (Burchard, ‘Joseph and Aseneth’, p. 207 n. y).

85. The epicletic prayer expresses the church piety of Eastern Christianity. The term *epiclesis*, which consists of a prayer followed by a divine response, has a special place in Eastern liturgical theology.

miraculous emphasis shifts from Aseneth's gaze to direct divine intervention: '*And the Lord God heard her voice* and immediately their swords fell from their hands to the ground and were reduced to dust'. The entirety of the action is transferred to the deity, while human participation is reduced to a humble request for help. Thus, it is probable that hagiographically inspired editors, insisting that the miracle related not to Aseneth's powerful gaze but to her piety and the divine response, added the verse and so shifted the focus from the powerful gaze to the power of piety.⁸⁶

The fact that Aseneth was able to *look at them* and their swords fell from their hands and turned into dust does not make her into a magician or trickster in the Hellenistic mind. Rather, the power accorded her sight fully corresponds with dominant theories of antiquity on the divine nature of light and on its propagation, and thus no additional explanation was necessary to convey to the Hellenistic listener that Aseneth had performed the task because she was a conductor and projector of divine energy. We see that Hellenistic audiences saw Aseneth as no less pious, God serving, or bestowed with divine blessings than their medieval Christian counterparts did, who had her uttering the prayer and receiving the divine grant in the form of a miracle. Theories of light did not change between Greco-Roman and Medieval times. On the contrary, they inspired the prevailing popular perceptions of energy in the Christian world until the dawn of what we call modern science, around the sixteenth century. Therefore, the insertion of a prayer and the divine response into *d* had nothing to do with a shift in the customary understanding of the propagation of light. Rather, it demonstrated a liturgical and literary convention that was taking root in eastern Christian hymnology. Piety and the evocation of divinity were the direct cause of supernatural signs.

Extensive research into ancient theories of light and vision is very recent.⁸⁷ Its results were unavailable in the 1960s when Philonenko was

86. Ljubica Jovanović, 'Aseneth's Gaze Turns Swords into Dust', *JSP* 21.2 (2011), pp. 83-97, doi:10.1177/0951820711426744.

87. See the Introduction for details. A considerable amount of work has been done by French scholars: two collections of the articles on the topic, Laurence Villard (ed.), *Couleurs et vision dans l'antiquité classique* (Rouen: University of Rouen, 2002), and Laurence Villard (ed.), *Études sur la vision dans l'antiquité classique* (Rouen: University of Rouen, 2005); a dissertation by Anne Merker, *La vision chez Platon et Aristote* (International Plato Studies, 16; Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2003). See also the recent work in English: David Park, *The Fire within the Eye: A Historical Essay on the Nature and Meaning of Light* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); David Frederick (ed.), *The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); and Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

working on his reconstruction of the Greek text of *Joseph and Aseneth*. Therefore, he readily rendered the *Slaw*'s Christian interpolation of *epiclesis* into his critical edition of the Greek text.

The analogous passage in the *b* version is even longer and more detailed than in the *Slaw*.⁸⁸ It adds Aseneth's feelings of fear and some personal details of her situation.⁸⁹ That *b* contains the prayer and God's answer is in agreement with its religious conviction. By rejecting lecanomancy, it is expected to reject other forms of RVE, such as the miracle enacted by energy emitted from an eye.

Consequently, critical editions and all modern translations include the prayer and God's response to it without questioning their existence in the original text. The closest Greek version to its Hellenistic counterpart should stand as:

Καὶ ἦλθον ἔχοντες ἐσπασμένας τὰς ῥομφαίας αὐτῶν αἵματος πλήρεις, καὶ εἶδεν αὐτοὺς Ἀσενὲθ καὶ ἐρρύησαν αἱ ῥομφααὶ ἀπὸ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν ἔπεσον ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ διελύθησαν ὡς τέφρα (*Jos. Asen.* 27.8, Philonenko).⁹⁰

With their swords drawn, covered in blood, they came, and Aseneth looked at them, and immediately the swords fell from their hands to the ground and were reduced to dust.

The meaning of this passage is that Aseneth *looked at them* and their swords fell earthward from their hands and dissolved or turned into dust. The miracle is directly connected to the use of sight as the emitter and transmitter of energy. As I have shown, since in the Hellenistic holistic science of vision the eye can serve as an emitter, receptor and transmitter of light, this event is perfectly possible if her gaze could emit enough energy. If Aseneth had access to a source of energy that was not commonly available to all human beings (divine, supernatural or 'nuclear'), she could easily perform

88. 'And Aseneth saw them [and was *exceedingly afraid* and said: "Lord my God, who made me alive again *and rescues me from the idols and the corruption* of death, who said to me, 'Your soul will live forever'. Rescue me *from the hands of* these wicked men." And the Lord God heard Aseneth's voice,] and at once their swords fell from their hands on the ground and were reduced to ashes' (*Jos. Asen.* 27.10-11). See Burchard, 'Joseph and Aseneth', p. 245.

89. This specification is not untypical for the hagiographies. More generic wording is standardized by frequent hymnological use in a liturgical setting.

90. The text cited is from Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, pp. 214-16. Burchard's eclectic text is almost the same. Slight differences are due to Burchard's incorporation of other versions, but they do not affect the meaning, e.g. instead of διελύθησαν ὡς τέφρα, Burchard has ἐτεφρώθησαν.

the task.⁹¹ Accordingly, Aseneth also appears here as a Hellenistic scientist, exactly like the plot's culmination in the first part of the story. What follows is the acknowledgment by Levi of her superior gift; hence he kisses her right hand (*Jos. Asen.* 28.15).

The versions are quite inconsistent on Levi's activities from this point until the closing of the story: according to *d*, Levi blesses Aseneth (*Jos. Asen.* 28.15, omitted in *b*). Toward the end of the tale, Pharaoh bows to Levi (*Jos. Asen.* 29.7, *d* and *b*, omitted in *Slaw*) and even blesses Levi, according to *b*. In spite of these differences all the versions testify to Levi's comradeship with Aseneth in their ability to communicate with the otherworld.

As we have seen so far, Aseneth takes up the role of the Hellenistic scientist of vision by performing lecanomancy and by being able to receive, transmit and emit energy. We saw the latter ability on two occasions, first when her face shines with the supernatural light after looking at the bowl, and the second when she performs miracles by just using her glance (*Jos. Asen.* 28.8, Philonenko).

4. Revelation by Visual Effects

The forms of RVE featured in *Joseph and Aseneth* are radiation of light and lecanomancy. There are no symbolic dreams or visions in the story. The divine communication occurs through the sense of sight. Moreover, the appeal of *Joseph and Aseneth* to the audience is mainly through the sense of vision, introducing chief characters by the description of their appearance and dress. The more they shine, the more beautiful they are. This attractive appearance is the optical expression of their divine blessings and inner beauty. That beautiful people transmit and emit divine light, God's energy, is made into a motif of the tale. Thus, even a passive character such as Joseph emits light and beauty (*Jos. Asen.* 6.3), like the sun-god in his chariots (*Jos. Asen.* 6.7; 13.10).

Aseneth passes through different stages of enlightenment until, at the resolution of the plot's complications, the converted Aseneth shines with the divine light and beauty (*Jos. Asen.* 18.7). In the cosmology of *Joseph and Aseneth*, God is pure light, whereas creation appropriates light according to its proximity to God. Creatures shine in proportion to their holiness. Aseneth gets to see a glimpse of this divine light,

And as Aseneth finished her confession to the Lord, lo, the morning star rose in the eastern sky. And Aseneth saw it and rejoiced and said, The Lord

91. As we have seen in the introductory chapter, according to ancient optics, the human eye in its normal function is capable of emitting enough energy to cast a spell on a fellow human being; evil eye is only an aspect of it.

God has indeed heard me, for this star is a messenger and herald of the light of great day. And lo, the heaven was torn open near the morning star and an indescribable light appeared (*Jos. Asen.* 14.1-3).

When the angel appeared to her, described in terms of shining energy, which she senses through her vision,

his face was like lightening, and his eyes were like the light of the sun and the hairs of his head like flames of fire, and his hands and his feet like iron from the fire. And Aseneth *looked at him*, and she fell on her face at his feet in great fear and trembling . . . the man vanished out of her sight, and Aseneth saw what looked like a chariot of fire being taken up into heaven toward the east (*Jos. Asen.* 14.9-10; 17.6).⁹²

Even the finest garments are described by the intensity of their transmission of light, 'And Aseneth . . . took out her finest robe that shone like lightning' (*Jos. Asen.* 18.3). According to *Joseph and Aseneth's* cosmology, the beauty of the world displays the presence of the mysterious, the unknown and the divine.

5. *Comradeship of Aseneth and Levi*

The special mystical and spiritual connection between Aseneth and Levi introduces the second part of the tale.⁹³ Levi is a visionary and a special confidant of Aseneth.

And Aseneth took Levi's hand because she loved him as *a man who was* a prophet and a worshiper of God and *a man who* feared the Lord. And he used to see letters written in the heavens, and he would read them and interpret them to Aseneth privately and Levi saw the place of her rest in the highest heaven (*Jos. Asen.* 22.8/13).⁹⁴

Levi is called a prophet, who communicates with the divine and knows the future (see also *Jos. Asen.* 23.8) and the secrets of human actions (*Jos.*

92. Chariots function as metonymy for solar light. Many sun gods of antiquity are depicted riding their chariots.

93. Humphrey states, 'Whereas in the first narrative there is a whole section devoted to revelatory, in the second tale the mystic strain is more typically associated with characterization. For example, the priestly brother, Levi, is highlighted as Aseneth's special confidant, and a visionary who sees the secrets of human hearts and of the Most High.... These visionary characteristics of Levi are neither ornamental nor incidental, but essential in shaping the plot, as it unfolds and comes to conclusion. Aseneth's own character mirrors that of this prophet/priest whose hand she "grasps" (22.12/8), as befits one who also is privy to the ineffable (16.12-14), and whose eternal place is in the heavens. At 27.10 . . . reminiscent of a high point in the first narrative (15.12), that catalyses a turning point in the action' (Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth*, pp. 41-42).

94. Cook, 'Joseph and Aseneth' pp. 494-95.

Asen. 26.7). 'And Levi was aware of what Simeon is about to do, for Levi was a prophet and foresaw everything that was to happen' (*Jos. Asen.* 23.8). Levi knows about Aseneth's proximity to God, 'And Levi, the son of Leah, was informed about all this (for he was a prophet), and he told his brothers about Aseneth's danger' (*Jos. Asen.* 26.7). Thus, regardless of other differences in the versions, in this case they all clearly testify that *Joseph and Aseneth* belongs to the Levitical tradition, not to the Joseph tradition.⁹⁵

6. Levitical Tradition of *Aseneth*

Joseph and Aseneth displays other characteristics of Levitical tradition that are also present in *Jubilees* and *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. First, there is only a single path to access the divine and earn the blessings. Every deviation from this way is seen as idolatry (e.g. *Jos. Asen.* 8.5; 10.13). All Egyptians, by definition, are idolaters (*Jos. Asen.* 11.6) and, thus, worse than Hebrews, but they can repent and convert to monotheism and become one of the Hebrews, just as Aseneth did (*Jos. Asen.* 8.10-11). Thus, *Joseph and Aseneth* promotes ethnic purity and is against exogamy, because only the Hebrews have a correct belief in God. Demonstrating the importance of kinship, Levi refuses the proposition of Pharaoh's son to act against Joseph because the betrayal of his own brother would be an outrageous act (*Jos. Asen.* 23.9-12). The slaughter of the Shechemites was divinely ordained to avenge 'the outrage on the sons of Israel' (*Jos. Asen.* 23.13). Also, Aseneth's beauty is so stunning because 'she was quite unlike the daughters of Egyptians, but in every respect like the daughters of the Hebrews. And

95. Gideon Bohak (*Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis* [EJL, 10; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996], pp. 51-52), addressing the exceptional role of Levi in our tale and in agreement with his own main argument in this book, proposes that the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* is very possibly a Jewish priest who declared a Levite descent and who was connected or in sympathy with the Jewish temple in Heliopolis. Before drawing this conclusion he examines in detail Levi's place in *Joseph and Aseneth*: 'One aspect of *Joseph and Aseneth* which has not received the attention it deserves is the author's admiring treatment of Levi, who is in some ways superior even to Aseneth and Joseph themselves. . . . Throughout *Joseph and Aseneth*, then, Levi is depicted as a prophetic visionary, Aseneth's best friend, and an extremely kind and pious person. . . . Neither Reuben, the eldest of the brothers, nor Judah, the eponymous father of the whole Jewish nation, have any role to play in our novel—in spite of their prominent roles in the biblical Joseph-story (Genesis 37–50)—and both are mentioned only once (27.6). It is Levi, and only Levi, who occupies center stage, together with Aseneth and Joseph, and sometimes outshining both. How are we to explain this phenomenon?', asks Bohak (*Joseph and Aseneth*, pp. 48-51), who then proposes Levite authorship. For my perspective, it suffices to place *Joseph and Aseneth* among the texts in the Levitical tradition, along with *Jubilees* and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

she was tall as Sarah, and as beautiful as Rebecca, and as fair as Rachel' (*Jos. Asen.* 1.7-8). Lastly, Jacob's character is superior to that of Joseph. Joseph received from his father, Jacob, a complete, proper education— theological, esoteric, as well as religious. Joseph was saved from sinning thanks to Jacob's upbringing. He applied it by keeping 'his father Jacob's face before his eyes continually, and he remembered his father's commandments . . . against the strange woman . . . for she is ruin and destruction' (*Jos. Asen.* 7.6). Strange means here a foreign woman, someone other.

7. Conclusion

According to the liberal Levitical tradition of *Joseph and Aseneth*, there is only one way to approach God. Any deviation from this established path is considered idolatry. Lecanomancy, together with the other types of RVE, serves as the portal to esoteric and supernatural knowledge. Communication with the divine happens mainly through the sense of vision. The divine nature is accessible to humans in the form of heavenly energy that can be seen by human eyes as different grades of celestial light and splendor. God is light in its purity and beauty. Human beings may serve as receptors, transmitters and emitters of the divine light.

Aseneth is a lecanomancer, that is, the Hellenistic scientist in the story. Levi and Aseneth are the active carriers of divine communication. Joseph is a marginal character, and his communication with the divine is defined in terms of his reliance on his father Jacob's teaching and not on his own direct contact with the esoteric world.

It is worth noting that in contrast to the conservative Levitical tradition of *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which is strikingly misogynistic, *Aseneth* is a fine example of the opposite. Aseneth, the female protagonist of the story, takes on the active role of a Hellenistic scientist and is the heroine of the tale.

PHILO: ANTI-JOSEPH TRADITION

The knowledge of these elements of love and discord in the heavenly bodies is termed astronomy, in the relations of men towards gods and parents is called divination. For divination is the peacemaker of gods and men. . . . Divination, therefore, is the practice that produces loving affection between gods and men; it is simply the science of the effects of Love on justice and piety (Plato, *Symposium* 188 c [Jowett] d [Hutchinson]).

But if not by knowledge, the only alternative which remains is that statesmen must have guided states by right opinion, which is in politics what divination is in religion; for diviners and also prophets say many things truly, but they know not what they say (Plato, *Meno* 99 c [Jowett]).

1. Introduction

a. Philo in Context

1. *Why Philo?* A separate chapter is dedicated to Philo, a Jewish free thinker from Alexandria who renders his own interpretation of the cosmological and social order, events and phenomena of the Jewish Scriptures.¹ This scope is contrary to the one in Josephus, the historian, who claims that he avoids giving his own interpretation, but instead attempts to tell what really happened from the point of view of an eyewitness (*Apion* 1.8-9). Postmodern society has no difficulty in accepting that a historian like Josephus interprets events fairly subjectively while a philosopher like Philo does not operate outside his cultural context. Still, because of the nature of narration and the methodology of their work, tracing the continuity of a tradition and establishing

1. There is no scholarly consensus about whether Philo was primarily a philosopher (Harry Wolfson), a biblical exegete (Valentin Nikiprowetzky), a mystic (Erwin Goodenough), a Gnostic (Hans Jonas), or just a faithful Jew (Peder Borgen, Naomi Cohen); see Kenneth Schenk, *A Brief Guide to Philo* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), pp. 3-8.

its working principles is more indirect and complex in the works of Philo than of Josephus.

Philo makes interpretations and explanations deliberately. At the same time he writes very little about his life, friends, and enemies. No direct evidence of schools of thought or of biblical exegesis can be found in his work. Although written and material evidence about early Roman Alexandria of Philo's time is relatively abundant, it is small in size in comparison to the vastness of Philo's preserved opus.² Thus, any enterprise of nuanced understanding of Philo's cultural context is compelled to depend on his own telling. However, Philo's ideas and approaches are the product of his own time, class and profession, which means that Philo cannot avoid building his opinions and theories on the existing concepts available in his immediate culture or by extracting from the circulating traditions. Although Philo applies allegory profusely, the symbols that he chooses are based on shared conventional metaphors from his cultural milieu.³ Identification and analysis of these conventional metaphors in Philonic discourse enable insights into both academic and public opinions that play a decisive role in Philo's understanding of Joseph, Hellenistic science, divination and RVE.

I chose Philo, because he wrote extensively on Joseph, devoting two major tracts to him—a kind of a biography, *De Josepho*, based on Genesis 37–50, and a treatise, *De somniis 2* (*On Dreams 2*). The latter, the conclusion of which has been lost, demonstrates nicely an important aspect of Philo's exegetical method. The whole exposition is about Philo's own interpretation of the dreams of the Joseph story, without taking into account Joseph's oneirocriticism of the biblical account. In both works Philo presents his views on Joseph and on the political officials of Egypt through his philosophical concepts and personal feelings.

We will see that Philo makes no connection between Joseph and Hellenistic holistic science or between Joseph and any form of visual revelation. Joseph's professional training is exclusively in politics, as a statesman, and his general education comes only from his Jewish upbringing. Even his skill as a dream interpreter, if acknowledged at all by Philo, is closely related to, if not derived from, his success as a leader who can decode present events and thereby correctly predict the future. It is in this function that Joseph

2. Wisdom of Solomon, *Sibylline Oracles*, *3 Maccabees*, and *Joseph and Aseneth*, which may have been written in early Roman times and are preserved relatively whole, are neither philosophical nor historical works and their authors are unknown, while, for example, the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Aristobulus is dated in Ptolemaic times and his works are preserved only in fragments.

3. The use of a certain number of conventional metaphors is necessary for communicating with the audience.

comes closest to the modern understanding of a scientist who can map out the immediate future on the basis of the interpretation of evidence.

2. *Philo Compared to Josephus*. Like Josephus's writings Philo's two texts on Joseph are authored by an individual whose other works are known, and thus are put into the context of their author's complete works and life. In other words, we are able to trace to a certain extent the subjectivity of Philo and Josephus in their dealing with the character of Joseph. In this sense they differ from the other documents discussed by this study.

Both Josephus and Philo were attached to their Jewish background but lived their mature and creative lives outside the Judean homeland. They died near the centers of the political and cultural imperial powers of their times, revealing destinies similar to that of the biblical Joseph. Thus, they could not avoid identification with, differentiation from and empathy with Joseph.

A main difference between them was that Josephus was born and raised in first-century CE Judea and immigrated to Rome after the Jewish revolt in 73 CE; thus, he represents the first generation of immigrants. Philo was born and grew up in the affluent and large Jewish diaspora community of Alexandria in Egypt—one of, if not *the* intellectual and cultural center of the Roman Empire at the turn of the Common Era. He died very likely around 45-50 CE, before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE by the Romans and the political demise of Judea.⁴

While grasping the opportunity of Roman royal patronage to safeguard and advertise the Jewish cause, Josephus had to fight those compatriots who regarded his efforts as treason and betrayal, either politically or culturally, or both (*War* 3.354). Josephus embraces the image of Joseph as his hero, as one who worked for his people by espousing cosmopolitanism and tolerance so that there would be enough space for the physical survival and freedom of cultural expression. Josephus demonstrated the possibility of political survival for small nations within the domain of an imperial power.

The search for identity also plays a major role in Philo's ambivalent presentation of Joseph. The frequent abhorrent undertones in his representation of Joseph in *De somniis* (see especially 2.42-67) are contrasted with those in *De Josepho*, where Joseph emerges not only as the chosen patriarch among the twelve brothers but also embodies virtue: the ideal statesman. Joseph is very important for Egyptian-born Jews, representing a Jew who became a prime minister of Egypt, but also an immediate cause for Jewish settlement

4. The last historical point, which may have corroboration by Pliny (8.160-61), that can be found in Philo's works is a horse race in honor of Claudius, in 41 CE (*Anim.* 58). Still, there is no evidence that he died soon afterward; only that he might have been around seventy years old.

in Egypt. The complexity of Philo's relation to the image of Joseph is generated by his status as a second-generation immigrant, who also happened to belong to the one of the wealthiest families of his time.

b. *Philo's Biography*

Philo was born between 20 and 10 BCE into one of the noblest Jewish families in Roman Alexandria in the Augustan Golden Age of peace and safety, when Herod the Great was refurbishing the Jerusalem Temple. His father probably held a prominent position in Palestine before he immigrated to Alexandria.⁵ Philo's first language was Greek, and he received the finest Greek education, reserved only for citizens. Beside Alexandrian citizenship his parents probably had also the most prestigious Roman citizenship. Philo's brother, Alexander Lysimachus, became one of the richest men in the Hellenistic world, funding major religious projects and political enterprises in Palestine. At the same time he was enormously influential in Roman politics as a good friend and confidant of the Emperor Claudius.⁶ His son, Philo's nephew, Tiberius Julius Alexander, became the Roman procurator of Judea during Philo's lifetime. After Philo's death, as a Roman governor in 66–69 CE, Tiberius Julius Alexander cruelly suppressed a Jewish uprising in Alexandria, ordering indiscriminate slaughter in the crowded streets of the Jewish quarter. The standing of Philo's family was one of the rich provincial elite of the Greek east with whom Roman emperors held close political and cultural contacts. Alexandria of Philo's time was an unsettling place of anti-Roman sentiments after its loss of cultural and political prominence in the Mediterranean world to Rome in 30 BCE. Not only had Roman legions replaced the Ptolemaic dynasty, but the question of citizenship became a burning issue among the diverse Alexandrian population.

Philo belonged, by the choice of his parents and not by his own, to the intellectual and political elite of Alexandria and also to a minority group—although quite affluent and influential—of the imperial Ptolemaic capital. Alexandrian Jews were, if not the largest Jewish diaspora group, then certainly its intellectual elite, taking part in the literary and political life of the Hellenistic cultural center. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint, occurred under their auspices, and many regarded it as divinely inspired. The Alexandrian diaspora was a dynamic community that

5. It is only a suggestion, because Philo says nothing about it. J. Schwartz proposes that Philo's family settled in Alexandria during the reign of Herod the Great (40–4 BCE); see J. Schwartz, 'Note sur la famille de Philon d'Alexandrie', *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves de l'Universitaire Libre de Bruxelles* 13 (1953), pp. 591–602.

6. Josephus mentions Philo's brother (*Ant.* 18.159–60, 259; 19.276–77; *War* 5.205) and nephew (*Ant.* 20.100–103; *War* 2.309; 5.45–46, 510; 6.237–42).

kept close cultural and religious connections with Jerusalem. The steady influx of new immigrants and the exchange of ideas and population made Alexandrian Jews into a very diverse society. While the elite was immersed in Hellenistic culture and most members of the old diaspora did not speak Hebrew or Aramaic, including probably Philo's family, many of new immigrants lacked facility in Greek.⁷ Alexandrian Jews were a vibrant and diverse community, 'which formed many opinions on the burning issues of the day'.⁸

Philo's biblical exegesis draws from a long, rich tradition of numerous and varied Jewish stories about biblical figures, laws and events of their sacred literature. Philo's Hellenistic learning colors every aspect of his method and exposition, producing no tension between Jewish and Greek values. The reconciliation of the Jew and Greek in Philo is not part of Philo's identity struggle.⁹ This struggle lies, as Maren Niehoff has put it, in 'Philo's individual construction of his Jewish identity'.¹⁰ Thereby in Philo's rhetoric it is the Egyptian way of life that is juxtaposed to ideal Jewish ways and Egypt to Judea as the ideal place.¹¹

In light of the relative independence and prosperity that Jews enjoyed in pre-70 CE Judea, many Jews in Alexandria were inclined to question the wisdom of their success in the diaspora. Philo is apprehensive that every member of the Jewish minority in Alexandria, however influential they become, remains a second-class citizen, serving a foreign ruler who always has the last word, and the Jew is thus by definition not free.¹² This concern is very likely behind the thesis of *De somniis* 2. The difference between officials is not in the nature of their job, but whom they serve, if they serve Pharaoh, as people do in Egypt, or God as the Jews do in Judea. Philo

7. On the complexity of the Jewish diaspora in Roman Alexandria, see John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (HCS, 33; Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 48–228.

8. Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (TSAJ, 86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), p. 10.

9. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, p. 161.

10. Niehoff, *Philo*, p. 10.

11. See Sarah J.K. Pearce, *The Land of the Body: Studies in Philo's Representation of Egypt* (WUNT, 208; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), p. 127.

12. All the citations, if not noted otherwise, are taken from *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (trans. C.D. Yonge; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993): 'Are they not mad, who desire to display their inexperience and freedom of speech to kings and tyrants, . . . they have not only put their necks under the yoke like brute beasts, but that they have also surrendered and betrayed their whole bodies and souls likewise, and their wives and their children, and their parents, and all the rest of the numerous kindred and community of their other relations?' (*Somn.* 2.83–85).

demonstrates this concept by analogy between Pharaoh's private cup bearer with 'the potent wine-cup of folly' (*Somn.* 2.192 [Colson, LCL]), and the Jewish high priest 'who pours the libation of peace' (*Somn.* 2.183).¹³

Remaining proud and faithful to his Jewish heritage, Philo might have pondered over the level of assimilation of his nephew. Was it the very involvement in politics that made people lose their virtue? He reports about his identity crisis in *On the Special Laws* (*De specialibus legibus*), describing his longing to escape from worldly concerns into the contemplative life (*Spec. leg.* 3.5). No wonder he became a Hellenistic philosopher. Philo continues to show sympathy to people who withdraw from civic life and the daily turmoil of life of Alexandria.

Nonetheless, he headed the diplomatic embassy to the emperor Caligula seeking the defense of Jewish rights.¹⁴ Is the very profession of a politician to be blamed, or is it possible to be at the same time a successful and virtuous statesman? No other biblical character but Joseph, a Jew who became Pharaoh's prime minister, is better fitted for the discussion.

2. Philo's Joseph

a. Characterization of Joseph

Philo's dissatisfaction with his own ambiguous identity seems to intrude into his portrayal of Joseph. While Philo's great hero, Moses, brought the Jews from Egypt back to the homeland, Joseph is the one to blame for why they are in Egypt, not historically but typologically.¹⁵ Jews came to Egypt following Joseph's example, who, according to Philo, arrived in Egypt not only because of vainglory but also in pursuit of it. All of them including Joseph, Alexandrian Jews and Philo's brother and nephew amassed material wealth to satisfy their desire for a privileged life, which Philo designates as a 'multitude of existence', that Alexandria so nicely permits. From his childhood onward, Joseph emerges as a vainglorious youth in his dreams and his tastes. Joseph's moral character is worse than of any of his brothers. Joseph's parents were not fooled by it when they named him Joseph, which according to Philo means 'addition', thus something completely unnecessary. His name already testifies to his idleness and uselessness. Both his

13. 'Mark how the difference between the cup-bearers corresponds to whom they serve' (*Somn.* 2.183).

14. See Philo's work, *On the Embassy to Gaius* (*Legatio ad Gaium*).

15. In contrast to Joseph, Moses is *the* hero for Philo. Moses is the most perfect human being, not only because he is the transmitter/giver of the laws but also because he is the author of the Pentateuch. The books of the Torah are the only books that Philo discusses in his opus. Philo even let Moses be called 'God', moreover, 'the God of Pharaoh' (*Somn.* 2.92).

dreams and dream interpretations give evidence of his falsehood and mental idleness.¹⁶

Philo's highly individual interpretation draws on an existing negative image of Joseph as a traitor of the Jewish people and as a spoiled, vainglorious youth.¹⁷ In the same manner Philo's analysis of the nightly visions of the Joseph story are based on an existing concept of dreams and dream interpretation as idle works of a frenzied imagination that are primarily concerned with the well-being of the body.¹⁸ Starting with these popular negative images, Philo constructs and develops further the unflattering sides of Joseph's character and actions, becoming the source for one of the most negative traditions on Joseph.

1. *Joseph the Dreamer*. Philo develops his most negative image of Joseph on the futility of Joseph's dreams in his treatise *De somniis* 2. Its subject matter is the third and lowest level of the 'god-sent dreams' (*Somn.* 2.1 [Colson, LCL]) that appear, 'whenever in sleep the mind being set in motion by itself, and agitating itself, is filled with frenzy and inspiration, so as to predict future events by a certain prophetic power' (2.1). They are of an enigmatic and impenetrable nature so that they demand 'a scientific skill in discerning the meaning of dreams' (2.4). Whenever they appear in sacred texts, these dreams 'received their interpretation at the hands of men who were experts in the aforesaid science' (2. 4). Philo takes this task upon himself, presenting the reader with his own allegorical interpretation of the dreams of the Joseph story, which he classifies into this third category.¹⁹

16. 'But the dreamer and interpreter of dreams himself, for he united both characters, makes a sheaf of empty opinion as of the greatest and most brilliant of possessions and the most useful to life' (*Somn.* 2.42). 'Moreover, his deliberate choice of life, and the life which he admires, is testified to in no slight degree by his name; for Joseph, being interpreted, means "addition"; and vain opinion is always adding what is spurious to what is genuine, and what is the property of others to what is one's own, and what is false to what is true, and what is superfluous to what is adequate, and luxury to what is sufficient to support existence, and pride to life.... So that the sacred scripture has very appropriately named "addition" the enemy of simplicity and the companion of pride' (*Somn.* 2.47).

17. Some of these traditions are preserved in midrashim (e.g. *Gen. R.* 86.4-5; 87.10.2). See Chapter 3.

18. For the widespread dream classifications of Philo's time, see Artemidorus, *Oneirocriticon* 1.1.3-13; Cicero, *De divinatione* 1.64; Macrobius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* 1.3.1-20.

19. Allegory according to Philo is to 'let these things be laid down first by way of foundation; and on this foundation let us raise up the rest of the building, following the rules of that wise architect, allegory, and accurately investigating each particular of the dreams' (*Somn.* 2.8).

‘Whose dreams then am I here alluding to? Surely every one must see to those of Joseph, and of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to those which the chief baker and chief butler saw themselves’ (2.5). For Philo dream interpretations are directly linked to the character of the dreamer. Because all these dreamers are of non-exemplary character, Philo refuses to recognize any quality in Joseph’s skill as a dream interpreter, omitting any reference to Joseph’s vision analysis. Instead Philo employs the standard critique that one who dreams should not interpret, accusing Joseph of being a charlatan by trying to appropriate both features in himself. ‘But the dreamer and interpreter of dreams himself, for he united both characters, makes a sheaf of empty opinion as of the greatest and most brilliant of possessions and the most useful to life’ (2.42).

According to Philo’s use of all that is Egyptian as a loathsome antipode to all that is Jewish, it was convenient that all these dreamers are Egyptian by conviction. They represent self-love, multitude, body, passions, senses, and are the subjects of movement, instability and drunkenness, just as are their sleep and dreams. They are in pursuit of material wealth and worldly glory, serving in the highest offices the mightiest living man, Pharaoh. The whole of Egypt belongs to this category including their river, Nile (2.159). Philo contrasts Pharaoh with God, whose servants distinguish themselves by care for their souls, wakefulness, use of reason, stability of character and moral integrity. They are led by the high priest of Judea, while Moses, their lawgiver, serves as the ideal of the perfect human being. Thus, all the Jews of Judea belong to this category, including Joseph’s brothers, as well as Judea itself and the river Euphrates.²⁰

Joseph, just as Philo’s brother, might have been the one of the most influential people of his time—a friend and confidant to the rulers of the world—but eventually he is just a servant. Judah, as the legendary brother who was elected to rule Judea, is the king, serving no other human being but serving God. He is free, and not the second in charge, although much less powerful and wealthy. The conclusion is that God should be king and not Pharaoh, which means that it is better to be a king in a small country than second in charge of an empire. It is better to live in Judea, having peace of mind, than in Egypt having material wealth, success and glory.

Let us extrapolate the characteristics of Philo’s Joseph from *De somniis* 2. Joseph is an Egyptian, even from the time he lived with his family in Judea, and his dreams serve as the best testimony. He is concerned with the well-being of the body and outward things, showing a many-sided soul. He lives in dreamland, where things are obscure and enigmatic, having a

20. The river Euphrates is contrasted to the Nile (*Rer. div. her.* 313-16).

variety of meanings and values.²¹ Philo compares Joseph in his dream about celestial beings with the Persian king Xerxes on the verge of insanity, who tries to control earth and sea and convert them into each other. Thus, Joseph,

the lover of indiscriminate study, and unreasonable contention, and vain opinion, being always puffed up by folly, wishes to assert a precedence, not only over men, but also above the nature of all existing things; and he thinks that all things were created for his sake, and that it is necessary that everything, whether earth or heaven, or water or air, should bring him tribute; and he has gone to such an extravagant pitch of folly, that he is not able to reason upon such matters as even a young child might understand, and to see that no artist ever makes the whole for the sake of the part, but rather makes the part for the sake of the whole (*Somn.* 2.115-16).

2. *Scholarship.* In light of recent more nuanced scholarship on Philo's Joseph, the still-influential opinion that Philo wrote two different and contradictory accounts about Joseph, in one, *De Josepho*, Joseph is idealized and in the other, *De somniis* 2, he is vilified, cannot be sustained.²² The same holds for the opposite attempt that insists on a coherent image of Joseph in Philo's entire corpus.²³ Thus, Jouette M. Bassler, by placing both works in their context and interpreting the hermeneutical circle of each, shows that Philo had a coherent image of Joseph and that apparent inconsistencies are due to different perspectives, audiences and modes of presentation.²⁴ Only quite recently F. Frazier in examining only one tractate, *De Josepho*, argues that contradictions and inconsistencies in Philo's characterization of Joseph

21. His multicolored garment symbolizes his Egyptian character, vainglorious and sensuous. Interestingly enough, Philo not only mentions but also discusses in more detail the symbol of the garment. Joseph's multicolored garment is contrasted with the garment of the high priest, which is 'thoroughly white and most shining raiment, virtue. But being clothed in the much-variegated web of political affairs, with which the smallest possible portion of truth is mixed up' (*Somn.* 1.219-22); 'Joseph is said to have had a coat of many colors. For a political constitution is a many-colored and multiform thing, admitting of an infinite variety of changes in its general appearance, in its affairs, in its moving causes, in the peculiar laws respecting strangers, in numberless differences respecting times and places' (*Jos.* 32).

22. See V. Nikiprowetzky's commentary on Philo, which embraces this theory (*Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie: Son caractère et sa portée, observations philologiques* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977]).

23. They differ from each other mainly in the method they employ. Thus, Samuel Sandmel, analyzing Philo's philosophical method, identifies a spiritual dimension of each of the characters of Philo, which remains the same throughout his work (S. Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature* [Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1956], pp. 188-89).

24. Jouette M. Bassler, 'Philo on Joseph: The Basic Coherence of *De Iosepho* and *De Somniis ii*', *JSJ* 16 (1985), pp. 240-55.

are part of the text, and that multiple images of Joseph should be recognized instead of trying to synthesize them into a single theory.²⁵

That Joseph in *De somniis* 2 is not without merit is seen first in acknowledging his role in dreaming divinely inspired dreams, even if of a lower order, and, second, in his role as a politician, a class inclined to dreams and fantasies (*Somn.* 2.138), but not devoid of the possibility of acting morally upright. All the dreamers of this category of dreams are politicians (2.291-95), and although politics is treacherous and leads easily to self-deification, right political practice is possible. *De somniis* 2 probably conveys this notion in the fact that it addresses political struggle within the Alexandrian Jewish community itself, in which Philo himself takes sides, promoting his viewpoint as the ruling attitude of the whole community. David Hay points this out in his discussion of *Somn.* 2.123-32.²⁶ Philo there gives the impression of a united opposition of Alexandrian Jews to the breaking of the Sabbath law imposed by the Roman prefect. Hay argues that Philo uses his allegorical technique in exploration of biblical dreams to convey a political message, that is, non-violent resistance, thus acting himself as a politician. If Philo takes the role of a politician in *De somniis* 2, then this treatise must allow for the positive traits of a politician to be fleshed out. And this reasoning, beside showing the complexity of construction even of a prevalently negative image of Joseph, also relates well to the other Philonic text about Joseph as an embodiment of statesmanship.

3. *De Josepho*. In *De Josepho* Philo retells the Joseph story of Genesis in biographical form. He is the fourth in a line of the three most excellent men in Hebrew history—Philo's real heroes, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These men represent in turn learning, nature and practice, the three factors 'which produce consummate excellence' (*De Josepho* 1 [Colson, LCL]). In order to reach the number of completeness, four, following the prevalent understanding of Greek cosmology and philosophical concepts, Philo adds to the lives of the three patriarchs constituting the name of the divinity (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), the fourth biography, about Joseph, who embodies the idea of the ideal statesman.²⁷

25. Françoise Frazier, 'Les visages de Joseph dans le *De Josepho*', *Studia philonica Annual* 14 (2002), pp. 1-30.

26. David Hay, 'Exegesis and Politics in *On Dreams* 1 and 2' (paper presented at Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, Philadelphia, November 14, 1979).

27. The basic four elements, air, water, earth and fire, emerge as constituents of the material world in Aristotle. They may appear under slightly different names in other Greek philosophers. 'And in numbers the number four is honored among other philosophers, who have studied and admired the incorporeal essences, appreciable only by the intellect, and especially by the all-wise Moses, who magnifies the number four,

As in his other biographies, Philo follows Hellenistic biographical conventions in *De Josepho*. He also appears as an exegete of the biblical tale, adding his point of view, explaining the open ends and gaps according to his philosophical beliefs, very likely building on the circulating traditions and established forms of biblical interpretation of his time and place.²⁸

4. *Joseph's Professional Life as Politician*. Joseph's professional identity is made clear in the title of the treatise, *De Josepho*, βίος πολιτικού ὅπερ ἐστὶ περὶ Ἰωσήφ, 'The Life of the Statesman/Politician, that is, on Joseph'.²⁹ The whole biography is about the life of an ideal statesman, and Joseph can well serve as the model for it. Joseph's life functions as a paradigm for the life of a perfect politician. Philo's Joseph is not a Hellenistic scientist or, to put it in Philo's terms, he is not a philosopher.³⁰ Even in his function as a dream interpreter, he is nowhere near a Hellenistic oneirocritic. Joseph's dream interpretations are revelatory acts from God, the only requirement being a desire for the truth from the receiver (*Jos.* 90; 95). Such an 'oneiromancer' is not a trained, skillful oneiromancer, but someone who temporarily functions as a conductor of the divine message that can forecast the future. He is not a real communicator with God. Philo makes Joseph explain this procedure to the royal prisoners when they complain that there is no oneiromancer around to decipher their dreams. Even Pharaoh can have similar insights (106). Also, Joseph's advice on how to act upon the interpretations of Pharaoh's dreams is not based on his reasoning but on the divine promptings that Joseph hears as an inward voice to communicate to the Egyptians (110).

Joseph's highest professional performance is when he shows the talents of a skilled oneiromancer, when he acts as a wise and clever politician who can predict the future based on his ability to interpret the present state of affairs (125).

and says that it is 'holy and praiseworthy (Lev. 19.24)' (*Abr.* 13). See also the appropriate tractates, of which only *On Abraham* is preserved.

28. For the possibility of the existence of an Alexandrian school of biblical interpretation that predates Philo and that continues after him as an alternative to rabbinic Judaism, about which we know, see Alan Mendelson, *Philo's Jewish Identity* (Brown Judaic Studies, 161; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), p. 1; and D.M. Hay, 'Philo's References to Other Allegorists', *Studia philonica* 6 (1979-80), pp. 41-75.

29. In contrast to the English translation of the title, 'On Joseph, That Is, the Life of the Statesman' (Colson, LCL), or the classification of the treatise as *On Joseph*, which favors Joseph and emphasizes the biographical function of the treatise, the original Greek title first mentions the statesman, 'The Life of a Statesman', and then adds Joseph as the example.

30. What I call a Hellenistic scientist with her/his holistic approach to scientific inquiry, Philo names a philosopher.

Every facet of Joseph's life either foreshadows his statesmanship or is a part of his training for the same.³¹ His very name, 'addition of a Lord', has the same meaning as politics. According to Philo, there is only a single natural state, 'one right reason of nature' (31), and all different local states and cities with their fragmented cultures, governments and multitude of laws are an artificial addition to this single polity of nature (28–31).³² Only this state of affairs needs politics and politicians. Joseph's garment of many colors symbolizes political life, which is unstable, constantly changing, with wide-ranging colors symbolizing multiple and varied political activities (32).³³ For Philo a successful politician is someone who can be a person of many sides and of forms, 'assuming many different appearances' to suit each situation, 'and a different character' to address each group of people (34).

In contrast to Josephus, who embraces multiculturalism as an option for a small nation, Philo considers diversity as counterproductive to wisdom. Multiplicity is the result of care for appearances and the lack of practice of 'what is truly excellent' (59). A statesman's job consists of pleasing the multitude of people through rhetoric, appealing to their sense of hearing on the one hand, but also serving the needs of the ruler on the other (*Jos.* 61).³⁴ Thus, a politician serving many masters is 'neither a private person, nor a king, but something between the two' (148).

Every event in Joseph's life foreshadows his political career. Philo elaborates on the tradition that Joseph was sold and purchased several times before

31. The importance of one's profession as one's identity is so typical of our age that Philo's treatment of Joseph as a professional should not surprise contemporary readers. However, Philo surpasses even our modern obsession with professionalism by presenting every event or fact in connection to Joseph as a manifestation of his role as a politician.

32. '[F]or the democratic constitution in vogue among states is an addition of nature which has sovereign authority over everything; for this world is a sort of large state, and has one constitution, and one law, and the word of nature enjoins what one ought to do, and forbids what one ought not to do: but the cities themselves in their several situations are unlimited in number, and enjoy different constitutions, and laws which are not all the same; for there are different customs and established regulations found out and established in different nations' (*Jos.* 28–31).

33. 'And it is not without a particular and correct meaning that Joseph is said to have had a coat of many colors. For a political constitution is a many-colored and multiform thing, admitting of an infinite variety of changes in its general appearance, in its affairs, in its moving causes, in the peculiar laws respecting strangers, in numberless differences respecting times and places' (*Jos.* 32).

34. '[T]he multitude, which is occupied with public affairs, studies only those pleasures and allurements which are conveyed by means of the hearing, by which the energies of the mind are relaxed, as one may say the nerves of the soul are in a manner loosened' (*Jos.* 61).

Potiphar bought him (36). He learned to adapt to a multitude of authorities, a skill that every successful public servant must master. By being sold and purchased several times and serving many masters, Joseph's life prefigured his political future. In these situations Joseph is a slave and not a free man, just like a popular orator at the marketplace is a slave to the listening crowd and his own vainglory (35–36).³⁵ The image of Joseph as the alleged prey of the wild beasts rings true when considering his submission to his vain-glory 'which lies in wait for a man, is an untameable wild beast, tearing and destroying all who give in to it' (35). And the golden chain, symbolizing at once great fame and disaster, around Joseph-statesman's neck is a sign of the instability of this high office: it is a decoration as well as a choking device (150).³⁶

5. Education and Professional Success

For it is impossible for great things to be brought to perfection before small ones (*De vita Mosis* 1.62).

While Moses gets the best Hellenistic schooling in Egypt (*Vit. Mos.* 1.23–24), Philo does not mention any formal education in connection with Joseph. However, his disposition and life experience are single minded directed to preparing him for the vocation of state leader and public servant. Thereby, Joseph undergoes similar practical training to Moses, given that both were to become national leaders. The first and perhaps most important part of the preparation for the future statesman is shepherding, which young Joseph learned in his home country. It is necessary to learn how to be in charge of flocks to one day take charge of people (*Vit. Mos.* 1.62; *Jos.* 2–3). No wonder that a popular metaphor for kings is 'shepherd of peoples' (*Jos.* 2).³⁷

Moreover, Joseph had a talent for exercising authority and leadership, which his father noticed and supported in order that Joseph develop it into

35. 'Again it is rightly said that this person is sold, for when the would-be popular orator mounts the platform, like a slave in the market, he becomes a bond-servant instead of a free man, and, through the seeming honours which he receives, the captive of a thousand masters'. (*Jos.* 35; trans. F.H. Colson in LCL).

36. Pharaoh tells Joseph, 'I, indeed, gave you this circlet, to be around thy neck, to be both an ornament while my affairs were going on well, and a halter when they were proceeding unfavorably' (*Jos.* 150).

37. 'Now, this man began from the time he was seventeen years of age to be occupied with the consideration of the business of a shepherd, which corresponds to political business. . . . for he who is skillful in the business of a shepherd will probably be also a most excellent king, having derived instruction in those matters which are deserving of inferior attention here to superintend a flock of those most excellent of all animals, namely, of men' (*Jos.* 2–3). See also *Vit. Mos.* 1.62.

excellence. The next stage of his training is in the household management that he executes over the Egyptian eunuch's property (*Jos.* 38). Philo argues the importance of this instruction,

For it was necessary that one who was destined to be a statesman should be previously practised and trained in the management of a single household; for a household is a city on a small and contracted scale, and the management of a household is a contracted kind of polity; so that a city may be called a large house, and the government of a city a widely spread economy. And from these considerations we may see that the manager of a household and the governor of a state are identical, though the multitude and magnitude of the things committed to their charge may be different (*Jos.* 39).

Philo does not share the view of many postbiblical interpreters of the Joseph story that placed Joseph's schooling in Egyptian wisdom and skills in Potiphar's house.³⁸ According to him, any bit of valuable education in philosophy and religion comes from the Jews. Philo will go only as far as to acknowledge that an Egyptian, Potiphar, played a positive role in Joseph's life. His role is defined in Joseph's statement, 'He, being my master, has made me, who was a captive and a slave, a free man and a citizen by his great goodness, as far at least as depended on him' (*Jos.* 47).

The last phase of Joseph's political training is in his self-control, which Joseph undergoes and passes with success in the temptation by his master's wife; again by remembering the family values that his father Jacob had taught him. These three parts of Joseph's training represent for Philo three characteristics of the statesman, 'his shepherd-craft, his household-management, his self-control' (*Jos.* 54). Having graduated from all three classes, Joseph is now ready to exercise this treacherous office in the best possible way. It is an extremely difficult task because it involves keeping moral integrity in a profession, which by definition asks of its practitioners that they adapt their ethical views to different masters and public opinions. According to Philo, a true statesman is fully aware of what is at stake and that he needs to balance contradictions. He knows that people are the masters, but he regards himself as a free person who shapes his activities as the truth and his conscience demand (67–68). He refuses to submit to passions or vainglory but chooses to chastise people as a parent or a teacher, risking his own physical well-being. Fundamentally, he must balance pleasing the masses with leading them in a way that is beneficial to them in a universal way (79), 'keeping a keener eye on the future than on the present' (162).

38. As we have seen, they probably rely on the popular custom of Hellenistic times of masters educating talented slaves.

It is possible to win people over and keep one's moral integrity only by setting the example of one's own conduct. The conduct of a teacher is much more effective than 'his wise words and doctrines of philosophy' (86). Joseph masters this skill in prison, winning over the hardened prisoners and making the house of confinement into the house of correction (85). Having the appearance of statesmanship is also necessary in order that his work can be positively assessed. Joseph's brothers comment on him, 'Great praise was bestowed on his affability and courtesy; for being acquainted with the insolence and rudeness of other governors, they marveled at the absence of pretence and display which they saw in him, and they admired his kindness' (249).

Philo puts into Joseph's advice to Pharaoh the distinctions of an ideal statesman, as one 'of great prudence, and great acuteness, and well approved in all matters, who may be able without incurring hatred or envy to do all . . . in a proper manner, without giving to the multitude any reason to suspect the impending famine'. The future disasters 'are in their nature uncertain, and in short so are all the different events which befall men unexpectedly at different times; for which therefore it is necessary to be prepared; and not when such things have befallen one, then to seek a remedy when it is no longer of any avail' (114). Joseph fulfills the requirements and executes the office admirably.

Philo concludes his treatise by praising Joseph as 'the most excellent manager and administrator both of scarcity and plenty, and the most competent of all men to manage affairs under either complexion of circumstances' (170).

And he lived a hundred and ten years, and then died at a good old age, having enjoyed the greatest perfection of beauty, and wisdom, and eloquence of speech. The beauty of his person is testified to by the violent love with which he inflamed the wife of the eunuch; his wisdom by the evenness of his conduct in the indescribable variety of circumstances that attended the whole of his life. . . . His eloquence of speech is displayed in his interpretation of the dreams, in his affability in ordinary conversation, and by the persuasion which followed his words; in consequence of which his subjects all obeyed him cheerfully and voluntarily, rather than from any compulsion (268–69).

These last extracts show nicely that there are two sides of a successful politician: his moral integrity and his scientific skill; namely, his ability to predict the future by assessing the present state of affairs, and to propose and execute a policy to prepare the state to meet future events in a most beneficial way for its citizens. This skill is nothing else than the skill of a dream interpreter. Thus, a politician at his best resembles a dream interpreter. Philo offers another definition of an ideal statesman: a politician is a dream inter-

preter concerning both the method and the subject matter.³⁹ There is not much difference between confusing images produced by a sleeper and ‘day-time visions and phantoms of those who think themselves awake’ (143).

6. *Relation with his Brothers.* Given that Philo could not change the plot line, he nevertheless allows Joseph’s brothers to emerge in the best light compared to the other texts examined in this study. Their father, Jacob, crowns them all as one of Philo’s great heroes. According to Philo, Jacob was never given political power while living as a foreigner, but his virtue made native citizens honor him and submit voluntarily to his authority (230). In the account of Joseph, Jacob is in control in the initial scene; he is not blinded by his love for Joseph. He is aware of the emotional strain between Joseph and the rest of his children (9–11). That is why he sends Joseph’s siblings away from him, and only when he thought that their hatred had died away did he send Joseph to find them. He is also able to discern Joseph’s talents and weaknesses. The reason for his favoritism of Joseph is rationally explained: Joseph promises exceptionality, which is not a synonym for excellence, and he is the child of his old age (4–5).

In *De Josepho* the brothers are not mentioned by their names but only by the order of their birth; for example, Reuben is called the eldest or the first-born, Judah is the fourth brother, Benjamin, the youngest.⁴⁰ Their hatred and envy are just temporary conditions that eventually brought contradictory results, leading not only to great evil but also to great good (12). Reuben is an absolutely positive character; Judah follows not far behind him, and even Simeon fares well.⁴¹ It would not even cross the mind of any of the brothers to suspect Benjamin of the theft of Joseph’s cup, let alone to sacrifice him in order to save their own skin (217–22).⁴²

39. ‘For as in the visions which appear to us in sleep, we use all our senses and motions, but they are mere empty fancies without any truth in them of the mind which fancies to itself a sketch . . . and in like manner the fancies which occur to waking people resemble the dreams of sleepers. They have come, they have departed; they have appeared, they have disappeared; before they could be scarcely comprehended they have flown away’ (*Jos.* 125–26).

40. None of the characters in *On Joseph* has a name, except Joseph, Jacob and the narrator, Moses.

41. Simeon’s responsibility for the plot to kill Joseph as the reason for his detention as hostage by Joseph, the Egyptian governor, is watered down by Philo. Philo explains, ‘[Joseph] commanded the second in age of the brothers to be bound in the sight of them all, since he, as it were, corresponded to himself, who was the youngest but one. . . . Perhaps too, he bound him because the greatest share of the guilt belonged to him, as he was almost the original author of the plot against him. . . . This is the reason why he appears to me to have been selected from the whole body for the purpose of being bound’ (*Jos.* 175–77).

42. See Chapter 4, on *Aseneth*, and Chapter 3, on *Ethiopic Joseph*.

Analyzing Joseph's dream about sheaves, Philo contrasts the modesty and integrity of each of the brothers to Joseph's conceit (*Somn.* 2.37-42). Each brother 'takes up in his hand what belongs to himself; and having taken it up, binds all the parts together' (*Somn.* 2.37). The rising and the uprightness of Joseph's sheaf is compared to vain, opinioned people who 'place themselves above all things, above all cities, and laws, and national customs, and above all the circumstances which affect each individual of them' (*Somn.* 2.78-79). When these demagogues become leaders, they dispose of the belongings of their neighbors and enslave people. The brothers' sheaves made obeisance to Joseph's sheaf because they were the lovers of modesty, and, as such, they marvel and fear 'the stiffnecked', as 'the cautious person fears the self-willed man, and he who reverences holiness fears that which is impious both for himself and for others' (*Somn.* 2.78-80).

Joseph's siblings are among those who withstand a vain ruler who chases glory (*Somn.* 2.93). In a similar manner Philo fully justifies their point of view.

For when right reason is powerful in the soul, vain opinion is put down; . . . it may well have confidence to attack and aim its arrows at the pride which resists it, and it may indulge in freedom of speech, saying, 'You shall not be a king, you shall not be a lord either over us, or during our lifetime over others; but we, with our body-guards and shield-bearers, the offspring of wisdom, will overthrow your attacks and baffle your threats with one single sally of ours' (*Somn.* 2.95-96).

Philo praised the brothers's alleged hatred of Joseph, because it was the expression of their hate toward his dreams and his words, which were the product of pride in contrast to the actions and energetic deeds of a wise person leading a righteous life. They appear as god-fearing judges who refuse to bow down to the conceit that takes over God's worship.

Let no one, therefore, venture to bring accusations against the virtues of such men, as if they exhibited a specimen of an inhuman and unbrotherly disposition; but let any one . . . learn that thoroughly that such judges are never deceived so as to wander from a sound opinion, but that, having learnt from the beginning to understand that it is not a man who is now being judged of, but the disposition which exists in the soul of each individual, which is mad on the subject of glory and arrogant pride; let him embrace these men who have adopted irreconcilable enmity and hatred toward this disposition, and let him never love what is hated by them (*Somn.* 2.93-98).

Thus Joseph emerges so arrogant and proud that he competes with the Lord for sovereignty, by appropriating the servitude to himself of those who 'are under the government of an immortal king, the only God' and who rejoice in being God's servants 'more than any one else can do in his liberty' (*Somn.* 2.100). Philo vehemently defends the brothers' decision to get rid of

Joseph. Then, he concludes this apology for Joseph's brothers, setting them as examples of his own conduct.

I, therefore, should pray that I myself also might be able to abide firmly in the things which have been decided by these men; overseers of things, not of bodies, and just, and sober all their lives, so as never to be deceived by any of those things which are accustomed to deceive mankind (*Somn.* 2.101-104).

Moreover, he also grants them the wisdom and skill of dream discernment as 'men of acute intelligence, and shrewd in divining the nature of a matter thus intimated to them by means of a figure, with very felicitous conjectures' (*Jos.* 7), the privilege that Philo keeps for himself in *De somniis* 2.

In this most unflattering image of Joseph, Philo justifies the actions of Joseph's siblings, not just in the sense that they expunged this manifestation of vainglorious Egyptian life from their midst, but also because by sending Joseph to Egypt they fulfilled his dream of living a life of a truly successful Egyptian. Consequently, it is not Joseph, but the brothers who need to forgive. Eventually, after Joseph repents, they accept him back as one of themselves, namely, as a Jew (*Somn.* 2.108).

All Hebrews are presented as positive in contrast to Egyptians. The brothers functioned as a united front against the foreign Egyptians (*Jos.* 204). They appear in charge of their emotions and reason even at the dinner party. Instead of being afraid of Joseph, the Egyptian, as we saw in *Ethiopic Joseph*, they judge and admire his behavior as exemplary for a politician. Invited to the Egyptian banquet, they were curious to verify the rumors that Joseph entertains each party in accordance with the national customs of the guests: 'They marveled to see whether the Egyptians would adopt the same habits as the Hebrews, having a regard to regular order, and knowing how to distinguish between the honours due to the eldest and the youngest' (*Jos.* 203).

The Hebrews offered a united front against the Egyptians because Philo makes kinship the most important social standard in *De Josepho* (240).⁴³ Joseph would not expose his brothers in front of Egyptians (*Jos.* 237), and he would do everything to protect them and further their own good (*Jos.* 247-48).⁴⁴ Although blood relations are extremely important for Philo, in

43. Thus, Joseph makes an agreement with his brothers never to harm them, 'first, by my piety towards my father, to whom I owe a great deal of gratitude, and also, secondly, by my own natural humanity, which I feel towards all men, and especially towards those of my own blood' (*Jos.* 240).

44. The reason why Joseph sends the Egyptians away before he reveals himself to his brothers is that he spares them from being publicly shamed (*Jos.* 237). Moreover, he never mentions their injury in any of his own misfortunes or in any case when it could work for his own advantage: 'And all the circumstances of their treachery towards him,

the final analysis they are worthless when confronted by higher spiritual demands.⁴⁵ A perfect man such as Abraham will leave the security of kinfolk and country to follow God and divine commandments (*Abr.* 62–68).⁴⁶ But for Joseph, who did not reach these heights, his ties with his family and his relatives should matter more than any other social dimension or personal feeling (*Jos.* 166).

b. Philo's Anti-Joseph Tradition

1. *Establishing the Term, Anti-Joseph Tradition.* All the brothers are elevated in reference to Joseph, but none is selected as the chosen one. The tradition, according to Philo's philosophical convictions, was transmitted from Isaac to Moses. Philo sets up this transmission in oppositions, Joseph as an antipode to Isaac, suggesting that the suitable name for Philo's image of Joseph would be 'anti-Joseph tradition'. According to *Somn.* 2.10–11,

and good company is the self-taught and self-instructed Isaac; for . . . he was weaned, not choosing to avail himself at all of tender, and milk-like, and childish, and infantine food, but only of such as was vigorous and perfect. . . . But the leader of the company, which yields and which is inclined to softer measures, is Joseph; for he does not indeed neglect the virtues of the soul, but he likewise shows anxiety about the stability and permanence of the body, and also desires an abundance of worldly treasures; . . . drawn in different directions, since he proposes to himself many different objects in life; and being attracted by each of them, he is kept in a state of commotion and agitation, without being able to stand firm.

Joseph is the chosen patriarch among the brothers, exactly as in the Joseph tradition, but his election is as an anti-hero in Philo. Not only is Joseph the only brother of the twelve to whom Philo dedicates an entire

and of their selling him, were so wholly concealed from, and unknown to any one, that the magistrates of the Egyptians sympathized with him in his joy, as if this was the first occasion of the brothers of the governor having arrived' (*Jos.* 250).

45. 'And the lawgiver magnifies the lover of virtue in such a way, that even when he is given his genealogy, he does not trace himself as he usually does other persons, by giving a catalogue of his grandfathers and great grandfathers, and ancestors who are numbered as men and women, but he gives a list of certain virtues; and almost asserts in express words that there is no other house, or kindred, or country whatever to a wise man, except the virtues and the actions in accordance with virtues' (*Jos.* 31).

46. 'He being impressed by an oracle by which he was commanded to leave his country, and his kindred, and his father's house, and to emigrate like a man returning from a foreign land to his own country, and not like one who was about to set out from his own land to settle in a foreign district. . . . And yet who else was it likely would be so undeviating and unchangeable as not to be won over by and as not to yield to the charms of one's relations and one's country?' (*Abr.* 62–68).

biography, but in it all other of Jacob's sons are just numbered according to their seniority, without being named. In discussing the names of the heroes of the three other biographies, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Philo elaborates extensively on the change of the names of the first, Abraham, and the third, Jacob, because the virtues they represent 'admit of improvement and advancement' (*Abr.* 52). 'The intermediate Isaac is an emblem of natural virtue' (*Abr.* 52). Because nature needs no perfecting, so Isaac's name stays the same.

Joseph is exactly the opposite case. His Hebrew name, which means 'addition', already mirrors his futile and vainglorious existence. It got changed not by God but by Pharaoh into an Egyptian name, Psonthomphanech, which Philo translates as 'a mouth judging in an answer' (*Mut. nom.* 89, 91). Philo informs us that this new name degrades Joseph's testimony for the true way of thinking and living and for wisdom.

For every foolish person thinks that the man who is very rich and overflowing with external possessions must at once be wise and sensible, competent to give an answer to any question which any one puts to him, and competent also of his own head to deliver advantageous and sagacious opinions (*Mut. nom.* 90-91).

Benjamin's name, 'son of days', does not fair much better. It represents desires of the senses, thus showing that he is of similar character as Joseph, which is to be expected from the younger son of the same mother, Rachel (*Mut. nom.* 92).⁴⁷ According to Philo, Rachel is the personification of vain-glory. Joseph inherited from her 'the irrational strain of sense-perception' (*Somn.* 2.16), which Philo calls 'Egyptness'.⁴⁸ Philo remarks that Joseph, because of his mother, 'represents opinion with its vast medley of ingredients' (*Somn.* 2.15).⁴⁹

47. Analogically, Benjamin, her second son, is the second worse of the brothers (*Mut. nom.* 92).

48. 'Egyptness' is described thus: 'that kind which is devoid of reason is likewise visible, that of the outward sense . . . being made in the likeness of his maternal race, according to Rachel' (*Jos.* 16).

49. The negative perception of Rachel was a well-known concept, especially in Levitical traditions (e.g. *Jub.* 31.2-12; 32.33-4; 33.1; 34.15-16; 36.21). Philo draws this negative image of Rachel from a popular opinion. There is a tradition that reports that Rachel was barren because of her love for pleasure and her passionate character (see Levitical tradition, especially in *T. Iss.* 2.2-3). This tradition is usually closely connected to a misogynist stance and the belief that sexual intercourse was appropriate only for procreation. 'For who is there who does not know that great calamities have befallen nations, and districts, and whole countries all over the world, both by land and sea, in consequence of intemperance; for the most numerous and most serious wars have been kindled on account of love, and adultery, and the wiles of women; by which the most

From his father he inherited 'the rational strain of self-control', which helped him change and repent when confronted with the passion of the Egyptian woman. By remembering his family values in this circumstance, Joseph resists temptation and reverts to God.⁵⁰ Philo calls Jacob's positive philosophy of life 'masculine' in contrast to Joseph's and Rachel's Egyptian femininity (*Somn.* 2.16-17).

All the other brothers remain virtuous and praiseworthy. Even Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, are redeemed by Jacob's direct adoption of them even though they were born in Egypt. They were compared to Jacob's first- and second-born sons, Reuben and Simeon. This reasoning shows that the real problem is Rachel. She is the real Egyptian by conviction, while Joseph's sons, like Philo, are born in Egypt but are still 'real' Jews.

If we are familiar with Philo's own identity crisis, then this ambiguous image of Joseph should not surprise us. In both treatises, *De Josepho* and *De somniis* 2, Philo pictures Joseph as an anti-hero, portraying him as an ambiguous character: what comes from Jacob is positive, what comes from Rachel is negative; what is Hebrew is positive, what is Egyptian is negative. Joseph oscillates between these poles. Moreover, he repents over the incident with Potiphar's wife, maturing and gaining moral integrity. Outwardly, he acquires power by becoming an Egyptian civil servant and receiving an Egyptian name. Joseph appears now as an ideal politician, terms that are contradictory in Philo's philosophy. However, contradictions are part of Philo's image of Joseph; many aspects of that image agree with the meaning of his name, 'addition', and with the nature of his statesman's office.

This anti-Joseph tradition would have spread among diaspora Jews who, like Philo, felt betrayed by their ancestors who, following Joseph's example, established themselves in Egypt. It means that they sold out their rightful traditions and convictions in pursuit of fading glory and material well-being; they sold their souls for vainglory. This idea could be quite prominent in the Jewish community of Alexandria among Philo's generation of Alexandrian Jews who were in search of their identity before the disasters of 70 CE. At that time, living a good life in Judea seemed feasible. The main obstacle for diaspora Jews could have been the lack of knowledge

numerous and most excellent portion of both of the Grecian and barbarian race has been destroyed, and the youth of the cities has perished' (*Jos.* 56).

50. Philo offers a detailed allegorical analysis of what happens in Joseph's soul elsewhere (*Leg. all.* 3.236-42). In *De Josepho*, Joseph refused to become a slave to passion, 'By leaving his garment in her hand, he fled, and escaped out of doors' (*Jos.* 240). Joseph escapes, 'He is a young man, and because as such he was unable to struggle with the Egyptian body and to subdue pleasure, he runs away. . . . On which account after folly has been utterly eradicated, the soul receives a twofold prize, and a double inheritance, peace and holiness, two kindred and sister-like virtues' (*Jos.* 241-42).

of their mother-tongue and familiarity with contemporary Judean culture. These were not a part of their Greek education in Egypt. For their ancestors who had lived in Egypt for several generations, the attraction of Joseph's rags-to-riches story hardly seemed appropriate. In this connection, Philo's image of Joseph could easily mirror the teachings of a prominent Alexandrian school of biblical interpretation.⁵¹

Philo romanticized the Jews of Judea, making them into Hellenistic heroes in mind and body.⁵² However, Philo seemed to have traveled only once in his lifetime to Jerusalem for a festival and a visit to the Temple (*Prov.* 2.64). One must wonder why he stayed all his life in Alexandria instead of moving back to Palestine, which he idealized. This contradiction in Philo's own character mirrors Joseph's representation of an ideal statesman and anti-hero at the same time.⁵³

Earlier I wrote that the number four symbolizes completeness for Philo. Thus, as the fourth biography, Joseph symbolizes an ideal, the ideal statesman. However, for Philo as a philosopher, the profession of a statesman is by definition on the opposite side of truth and wisdom—its ideal practitioner can only be an anti-hero. Philo's title for Joseph, πολιτικός, 'politician, or statesman', is never applied to Moses—Philo's perfect human being—although he celebrates him as a leader and a king, receiving the same education as Joseph in management, through shepherding (*Vit. Mos.* 1.62). Thus, as a hero, Joseph's character will display exceptionality in certain attributes and achievements, producing a mixed and complicated image of Joseph in Philo's works.⁵⁴

51. See B.L. Mack, 'Philo and Exegetical Traditions in Alexandria', *ANRW* II, 21.1, pp. 227-71 (242-43). 'In this study I assume that Philo was not unique in his approach to Judaism. Although it is impossible to determine how many Alexandrian Jews were sympathetic to him, there is every reason to regard Philo as *representative* of a school of biblical interpretation which had its beginnings earlier in the Hellenistic period and, by Philo's day, constituted a substantial presence in Alexandria' (see A. Mendelson, *Philo's Jewish Identity*, p. 3 n. 3).

52. Not only are they the only true believers and philosophers, but they are also the best in their strength of body and courage: 'men who are willing to die in defense of their national customs and laws with unshrinking bravery, so that some of those who calumniate them say that their courage (as indeed is perfectly true) is beyond that of any barbarian nation, being the spirit of free and nobly born men' (*Leg. Gai.* 215).

53. Contradictions in Philo's ideas are quite a common topos in his writings (e.g., see Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, p. 177).

54. See also Françoise Frazier's article, 'Les visages de Joseph dans le *De Josepho*', where she suggests that there are different images of Joseph that do not merge into a synthetic coherent figure of an ideal statesman, 'où les figures se refractent chaque fois différemment et c'est peut-être un faux problème que de chercher à toute force une cohérence du symbole Joseph dans l'ensemble de l'œuvre de Philon' (p. 2).

Philo's construction of an antipode to a hero is not arbitrary. Philo seems to exploit a beloved genre in the early Roman Empire, *exemplum*, which had a long tradition in Greek heroic tales about ancestors who served as models for imitation.⁵⁵ Philo carefully follows the conventions of *exempla* in his biographies of Moses, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This literary form had a primarily pedagogical purpose: to teach a lesson about a virtue or a vice.⁵⁶ Hellenistic cultural heroes are presented as embodiment of virtues.

The popularity of the genre led to the subversion of exemplarity in intellectual literary circles who inverted the idealization of heroic figures of humankind, after glorifying real humans with all their faults. During the late first and the second century CE, a little later than the time of Philo, there is a proliferation of humorous satirical works of this kind, such as Lucian's *True Story*, or *Testament of Abraham*, the latter probably the product of Roman Egypt.⁵⁷ Philo followed carefully neither the conventions of the Hellenistic biography in constructing *De Josepho*, nor its subversion in developing his anti-Joseph image; but he seems to have drawn on them.⁵⁸ Perhaps because it was a personal as well as a cultural issue, and because Philo was more of a philosopher than a literate, Philo formed the image of Joseph into an original piece of writing and thinking.

2. *Joseph in the Chain of Transmission.* As we have seen in both Joseph and Levitical traditions, there is a transmission of Hebrew intellectual heritage through exceptional biblical personages, featuring the same basic figures: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (or Levi) and Moses. It may continue through Solomon and beyond (Josephus), or it may include more early biblical characters such as Enoch. Philo also includes all these individuals, grading them in their excellence, culminating with Moses as the closest to a divine human being. Just under him Philo sets the three patriarchs who constitute the name of the divinity, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, representing virtues, which are by nature immortal and thus superior to mor-

55. *Exemplum* is a Latin word for Greek παράδειγμα and is already treated within rhetorical theories by Aristotle, *Rhetorics* 2.20.1393a25-30.

56. Teresa J. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 144-49.

57. Annette Yoshiko Reed, 'The Construction and Subversion of Patriarchal Perfection: Abraham and Exemplarity in Philo, Josephus, and the *Testament of Abraham*', *JSJ* 40 (2009), pp. 204-12.

58. The existential importance of Joseph for Philo emerges even in his construction of his biography. Philo folds his great heroes, Moses and Abraham, into typical Hellenistic biographies, while Joseph was bent less to fit the rules of a genre. 'By comparison to these two [Moses and Abraham], Philo's Joseph is less Hellenized and the *topoi* of political biography are not fully exploited in his case' (Niehoff, *Figure of Joseph*, p. 64).

tal humankind.⁵⁹ The next triad on this scale consists of men representing lesser virtues, Enos (hope), Enoch (repentance) and Noah (lover of virtue). In contrast to the ontological excellence of the first trio, these individuals emerge as the most virtuous of their generation, 'not perfect absolutely, but . . . in comparison with the others who lived at that time' (*Abr.* 36–37).

However, there is no transmission of knowledge or wisdom among biblical characters according to Philo. Thus, there is neither spiritual nor bloodline succession.⁶⁰ Each of these individuals is celebrated for his own excellence very much in accord with the Hellenistic treatment of heroic figures. This excellence consists of living a life 'irreproachably and admirably' consistent with nature (*Abr.* 4).

Since the earliest men easily and spontaneously obeyed the unwritten principle of legislation before any one of the particular laws were written down at all . . . the written laws are nothing more than a memorial of the life of the ancients, tracing back in an antiquarian spirit, the actions and reasoning's which they adopted (*Abr.* 5–6).

Thus they become themselves, 'living and rational laws' (*Abr.* 5–6).

This lack of direct succession allows projecting between Jacob and Moses an individual who represents an anti-tradition and lives as an anti-hero. Symbolizing an 'addition' to nature, just as any king or government is an addition to nature, Philo argues that the following description applies to Joseph: 'the man who is occupied with political affairs is an addition to the man who lives in accordance with nature' (*Abr.* 31–32).

3. Revelation by Visual Effects

a. Statesman and Dream Interpretation

Human life is nothing but a dream, a 'great general universal dream which is dreamt not only by the sleeping but also by the waking' (*Jos.* 125).⁶¹ This

59. 'Because having received a well disposed nature, they preserved it without any error or change for the worse; not fleeing from evil habits, but never having once fallen into them, and being by deliberate purpose practicers of all virtuous actions and speeches, by which system they had adorned their life' (*Abr.* 36–37).

60. Hence, Philo explains the kinship between Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, 'It happens then that they are all three of one household and of one family, for the last of the three is the son of the middle one, and the grandson of the first; and they are all lovers of God, and beloved by God, loving the only God, and being loved in return by him who has chosen, as the holy scriptures tell us, by reason of the excess of their virtues in which they lived, to give them also a share of the same appellation as himself' (*Abr.* 50).

61. 'And this dream, to speak the truth, is the life of man; for as in the visions which appear to us in sleep, which seeing we do not see, and hearing we do not hear, and tasting and touching we do not either taste or touch, and speaking we do not speak, and walking

symbolic image was taken from a conventional metaphor rather than being Philo's arbitrary choice, testifying that dreams were taken very seriously. It seems that in Philo's time dream interpretation produced a whole army of 'pseudo-scientific' oneiromancers, whose aim was to make money without being properly trained and without caring to search for the real meaning of dreams (*Jos.* 125). According to Philo, in contrast to these amateur dream interpreters, a statesman was a professional oneirocritic, like the one 'who is accustomed to judge with exactness that great general universal dream' (*Jos.* 125).⁶² A good politician should identify things for what they are, for example, good, bad, just, pious, shameful, harmful, religious, selfish or reasonable. People deceive themselves that they are able to discern the differences in nature accurately by their reasoning. In fact they behave as dreamers, tapping in darkness like blind people, 'without being able to arrive at anything with perfect accuracy of reasoning, or to seize hold of anything with a firm and retentive grasp; for all things are like shadows and phantoms' (*Jos.* 141–42). Consequently they need a politician to decipher for them present events.

The training of a public servant and a philosopher should include the science of dream interpretation in order to provide the apprentice with the necessary tools for performing the main task in their respective fields. From the signs that a politician gathers from the examination of the present, he predicts the future and leads people into it. By setting and enforcing laws and by applying necessary measures he teaches the masses how to behave.⁶³ Philo compares true dream interpreters and true statesmen with awake humans, or people able to access the divine, namely, heavenly things. Thus, Philo convinces his readers that Pharaoh gave Joseph, the one who was to be the highest Egyptian public servant, an Egyptian name based on 'his art of dream interpretation' (*Jos.* 121).

we do not walk, and while appearing to exert other motions or to win other positions who are not in reality in any such motions or positions; but they are mere empty fancies . . . before they could be scarcely comprehended they have flown away' (*Jos.* 126–29).

62. 'And I will say that the statesman is at all times an interpreter of dreams, not classifying him by this statement among the charlatans and vain chatterers, and men who put forth sophistical pretences by way of making money, or among those who profess the explanation of visions which have appeared to persons in their sleep in the hope of acquiring gain' (*Jos.* 125).

63. 'Since, then, life is full of all this irregularity, and confusion, and indistinctness, it is necessary that the statesman as well as the philosopher should approach the science of the interpretation of dreams, so as to understand the dreams and visions which appear by day to people who believe themselves to be awake, being guided by probable conjectures and rational probabilities, and in this way he must explain each separate one, and show that such and such a thing is honorable, another disgraceful, that this is good or that is bad; that this thing is just, that thing is on the contrary unjust' (*Jos.* 144).

In this understanding of a statesman as a dream interpreter (*Jos.* 121, 125, 143), Philo comes closest to presenting Joseph as a Hellenistic scientist, able to discern the future by his professional skills and able to access the divine. That the designation ‘dream interpreter’ is held in high regard by Philo is shown by the fact that he uses it only twice more and only for himself as a philosopher (*Somn.* 2.4, 110). A philosopher for Philo is a human who comes closest to God by human cognitive discipline and is able to divine, predict and interpret the future (*Migr. Abr.* 190; *Aet. mund.* 2).

b. *Dreams*

Not only does Philo argue that there was no difference between daily visions and dreams in sleep, but he often discusses them together as the same phenomenon under ‘dreams and visions’ (*Fug.* 129; *Cher.* 69; *Hypoth.* 6.1; *Vit. Mos.* 1.268; *Jos.* 143; *Somn.* 2.133). He uses the terms interchangeably (*Jos.* 6, 7), suggesting that they should not be classified into different categories.⁶⁴ This idea is in harmony with the prevailing imagination of antiquity: a sharp distinction between ‘dream’ and ‘reality’ would be alien to them.⁶⁵

Dreams are the only form of RVE that Philo addresses in relation to Joseph. Dreams in Philo’s discourses are developed from ‘the long and variegated traditions of Hellenistic dream theory and interpretation’.⁶⁶ Not only are they an important instrument in communication with the transcend-

64. Joseph’s dream in *Jos.* 6 (ὄναρ) is called the vision in *Jos.* 7 (φαντασία). Oftentimes visions and dreams are mentioned together: τὰ ὄνειρα καὶ φαντάσματα (*Fug.* 129).

65. We should keep in mind that most of the intellectuals, together with ordinary people, accepted the objective reality of dream figures and their significance in daily survival. Dreams had a significant role in revealing the divine reality and the knowledge of the world, of the future and of the human soul. Scholarship addresses the question of the relation of the dream world and the reality of antiquity in depth. Patricia Cox Miller argues, ‘It is important to note immediately the difficulty of speaking about relation between such categories as ‘dream’ and ‘reality’ or the ‘tangible’ and the ‘intangible’ without reifying or essentializing them and so missing a striking feature of the late-antique imagination’ (Patricia Miller Cox, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994], p. 3). Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, *Dreams, Illusions, and Other Realities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) shows how across the centuries people used to indulge in contemplation that dreams were real and the ‘real’ world was a dream.

66. Robert M. Berchman, ‘Arcana Mundi: Magic and Divination in *De Somniis* of Philo of Alexandria’, in *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), p. 132. Berchman was the first to undertake an oneirocritical analysis of Philo’s *De somniis* 1 and 2. ‘To this extent the *De Somniis* stands as an important and independent work within the *corpus Philonicum* that serves to link Philo with the long and variegated traditions of Hellenistic dream theory and interpretation. Finally, to view Philo’s *De Somniis* from

ent, but also Philo contextualizes dreams according to Hellenistic theory of *oneirocritica*, relating them to divination, magic and philosophy. In this context dreams are considered not as the personal property of the dreamer but rather as sent from a divine source. Philo shares the same term for God-sent dreams, *θεόπεμπτοι*, with Herophilus, Artemidorus and Posidonius, the main ancient scholars with whose dream classifications we are familiar.⁶⁷ The most basic ancient division of dreams was between predictive (true) and non-predictive (false) dreams.⁶⁸ Philo dedicates three whole treatises to them, of which the second and third are preserved (*Somn.* 1.1-2).⁶⁹ Each of them corresponds to one of the three kinds of dreams that are categorized according to the degree of direct divine revelation on the one hand and the grade of the involvement of human volition on the other.⁷⁰

To the first type belong ‘heaven-sent’ dreams in which human volition is absent, and visions seen in sleep are sent by the deity’s own motion (*Somn.* 1.1). In the second category are those dreams in which the human mind acts in accordance with the divine principles, that is, it moves out ‘of itself together with the Mind of the Universe’, and ‘seems to be possessed and God-inspired, and so capable of receiving some foretaste and foreknowl-

this perspective is to connect it with its proper contextual world—that of the relation of dreams to divination, magic and philosophy’ (p. 154).

67. Accordingly, Derek S. Dodson remarks, ‘Philo’s use of the term *θεόπεμπτοι* is another indicator that his *De Somniis* functions within the dream literature of the Greco-Roman world’ (‘Philo’s *De somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications’, *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no. 3 [2003], pp. 299-312). He concludes his essay, ‘An analysis of *De somniis* reveals that Philo is thoroughly acquainted with the contemporary theories, concepts, and classification of dreams’ (Dodson, ‘Philo’s *De somniis*’, p. 311).

68. The main discussion among ancient scholars focuses on the divinatory function of dreams. While the majority of ancient thinkers considered that at least some dreams, or a type of dream, are of divine origin, or at least contain divine revelation in a direct form or through symbols, a few denied them any relevance to the transcendent and the divine, let alone any predictive value, among whom were Aristotle, Cicero and an early materialist and atomist Democritus (see Cicero, *Div.* 2.128, 131-34; Aristotle, *Div. somn.* 1.463a31-b11. Aristotle argues here that the fulfillment of a dream is a coincidence).

69. Scholarship also classifies them in three separate treatises, of which the first one is lost and the second and the third are numbered as *On Dreams 1* and 2, respectively.

70. There are suggestions that Philo’s tripartite division of dreams is rooted in the Stoic classification with the formal parallel in Posidonius’s dream classification (see P. Wendland, ‘Appendix to *De Somniis*’, I #1-2, in *Philo* [trans. F.H. Colson *et al.*; 10 vols.; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–1956], 5.593-94; A.H.M. Kessels, ‘Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification’, *Mnemosyne* 22 [1969], pp. 396-98 [596-97]; Dodson, ‘Philo’s *De somniis*’, p. 311) and in the Artemidorus/Macrobius dream theory with which it has a practical correlation (see Berchman, ‘Arcana Mundi’, pp. 132-37; Dodson, ‘Philo’s *De somniis*’, p. 311).

edge of things to come' (*Somn.* 1.1). These dreams are 'of the nature of plain oracles' (*Somn.* 2.3) in the sense that the soul becomes divinely possessed while delivering the message. Two of Jacob's dreams, one of the heavenly ladder (Gen. 28.10-22) at Bethel and the other of the striped flocks at Haran (Gen. 31.10-13), are examples of this category. To the third class belong the dreams of the Joseph story, in which human volition is present but becomes inspired to foretell the future. Any dream of a soul asleep is a part of this category of dreams (*Somn.* 2.1).

While the meaning of the first group of dreams is obvious and in no need of interpretation, the second group is enigmatic even though 'the riddle was not in very high degree concealed from the quick-sighted' (*Somn.* 2.3). The third, however, is of a 'deep and impenetrable nature' (*Somn.* 2.4), concealing the true message because of the mixture of the divine message with human volition. Being enigmatic, they require the skills of the science of dream interpretation (ἐδεήθησαν καὶ τῆς ὄνειροκριτικῆς ἐπιστήμης). And thus, these dreams were interpreted by the wise and the experts in the science of oneiromancy (ὄνειροι . . . διακρίνονται πρὸς σοφῶν τὴν λεχθεῖσαν τέχνην ἀνδρῶν, *Somn.* 2.4).⁷¹

c. Symbolic Dreams

A third of Philo's dream categories belongs to the genre RVE, which demand the participation of an interpreter with scientific expertise in the field of oneiromancy. Not only does it require scientific skills to decode the meaning of these kinds of dreams but the subject matter—which is not the transcendent and divine reality but the human soul—stays in the domain of scientific inquiry even by modern standards.⁷² It is the human soul that obscures the clarity of the visions. Following theories about dreams of his time, Philo holds that this soul for a moment appropriates the divine character of the dream and the interpretation of it provides a direct entry to the divine center. Thus, the interpreter is the one 'who unlocks the door to the divine'.⁷³ And this role is appropriate for a thinker and philosopher, such as

71. They demand 'a scientific skill in discerning the meaning of dreams. Accordingly, all the dreams of this sort . . . received their interpretation at the hands of men who were experts in the aforesaid science' (*Somn.* 2.4 [Colson, LCL]).

72. As noted before, Aristotle had the same attitude. Denying that dreams have a divine origin, he acknowledges that dreams need a skilled interpreter, an oneiromancer, who along with a lecanomancer and a hydromancer, is an expert in reading images reflected by the surface of the water (Aristotle, *Somn.* 464b5-16).

73. 'The divine character of the dream bestows on the soul who visions it a divine character. This, at least partially, explains Philo's profound interest in the divinatory character of dreams. These dreams . . . provide a chief means of access to the divine center. The one who unlocks the door to the divine becomes someone like Philo himself whose chief skill is that of interpretation' (Berchman, 'Arcana Mundi', p. 150).

Philo himself. The oneiromancer cannot be a dreamer as well. This requirement disqualifies Joseph from the start, if for no other reason than that he first dreamt two dreams. Moreover, these types of dreams are not a prerogative of the chosen few, either because of their moral purity or their access to divinity, but are the regular dreams of any human being.⁷⁴

Philo interprets the symbols in dreams allegorically and uncovers, as he claims, their real but hidden meaning (*Somn.* 1.2). Thus, in *De somniis* 2, he analyzes systematically all the dreams of the Joseph story, starting with Joseph's two youthful dreams and continuing with the dreams of the king's butler and the cook, and the dreams of Pharaoh, examining them in the same manner. He does not even bother to mention the distinction that it was Joseph who dreamt the first two dreams, and interpreted the rest of them.⁷⁵ Joseph is not a dream interpreter in this treatise. Moreover, Philo's interpretations of these dreams are very different than those of Joseph in the biblical account. Even in *De Josepho*, Philo undermines Joseph's skill as a dream interpreter just by the way he narrates the dream episodes. He makes them more detailed and longer than the biblical ones, rendering them more logical and with quite an obvious meaning, so much so, that the need of a professional interpreter seems superfluous.⁷⁶ Any wise person, capable of discernment, could understand their plain logic. And in the case of Joseph's

74. This is in contrast to Jacob's dreams of the second category, where the human mind moves in accordance with the mind of the universe and, thus, requires an exceptional human being as a communicator with the divine (*Somn.* 1.2).

75. Philo's style is nicely observed in the transition from Joseph's dreams to those of the butler and the cook, 'We have now, then, spoken with sufficient accuracy about the dreams of vain opinion. Now, the different species of gluttony are conversant about drinking and eating. . . . The matters relating to excessive drinking are referred to the chief butler, and those which belong to luxurious eating to the chief baker. Now these men are, with excessive propriety, recorded to have seen visions of dreams one night. . . . Now perhaps it may be proper first of all to examine the first dream. And it is as follows . . .' Philo now relates the dream and immediately starts with his own interpretation (*Somn.* 2.155-60).

76. Philo's narration makes transparent the butler's and the cook's enigmatic dreams in the Bible., 'Then the chief butler spoke first, and said, "I thought that a great vine grew up, having three roots, and one very vigorous trunk, and flourishing, and bearing bunches of grapes as if in the height of autumn, and when the grapes became dark and ripe I picked the bunches, and squeezed the grapes into the king's cup, in order to convey to my sovereign a sufficient quantity of unmixed wine" (*Jos.* 91). . . . "And I, too, fancied that I was carrying a basket, and that I was holding three baskets full of cakes upon my head. And the upper basket was full of all sorts of cakes which the king was accustomed to eat; and there were in it confections and delicacies of all kinds imaginable for the king's food: and the birds flew down and took them from off my head, and devoured them insatiably till they had eaten them all up; and none of the things which I had so skillfully prepared were left"' (*Jos.* 93).

dreams, it is his clever and shrewd brothers who decipher them (*Jos.* 7). They are neither philosophers nor professional oneirocritics nor prophets, according to Philo. However, according to Philo, these dreams also had hidden meanings that are neither revealed to Joseph nor are explained in the biblical narrative, but they do need to be explained by a trained interpreter.⁷⁷

We should not be surprised by Philo's treatment of Joseph in his role as an oneiromancer, because Joseph was not a philosopher, not one to reason regularly with God; rather, his highest level of divine access is in the form of a prophetic oracle. Thus, Joseph acts as a prophet when he interprets dreams. Dream interpretation could also be a prophetic act if it functions as revelation, which is subordinate to interpretation by reasoning. Joseph tells the royal cook that he will conceal nothing because those who want to interpret dreams are bound to speak the truth, since they prophesize and expand on divine words (*Jos.* 95).⁷⁸ The prophets are passive conductors of the divine message.⁷⁹ 'For a prophet does not utter anything whatever of his own, another Being suggesting to him all that he utters, while he is speaking under inspiration, being in ignorance that his own reasoning powers are departed' (*Spec. leg.* 4.49).⁸⁰

Even the advice on suitable measures to take when encountering the consequences of the divine dream message that follow dream interpretation is a prophetic event. Joseph does not contemplate the message of night visions philosophically but hears 'the promptings (ὕπηχεῖν) of the divine voice', ὑπηχεῖ δέ μοι καὶ ἐκλαλεῖ τὸ θεῖον ὑποβάλλον, *Jos.* 110) that communicate the suggestions to him on what action to take to counter the approaching famine. Philo applies regularly the term ὑπηχεῖν for a voice that is heard only inwardly and not by outward senses. Often it marks the divine voice that speaks to the prophet (cf. *Somn.* 1.164; 2.2, 252; *Deus. imm.* 139).⁸¹

77. Philo himself takes the task in *Somn.* 2.

78. Philo does not use the word ὀνειροκριτικός here; thus Colson's translation, 'dream interpreters', is imprecise (*Jos.* 95). Instead, it says: those who interpret dreams, τοῖς ὀνείρων κριταῖς.

79. 'While the divine spirit has entered in and taken up its abode there, and is operating upon all the organization of his voice, and making it sound to the distinct manifestation of all the prophecies which he is delivering' (*Spec. leg.* 4.49).

80. Josephus applies this kind of prophetic inspiration on a gentile prophet, Balaam (see Chapter 2, on Josephus).

81. 'This [*prompter*] is as near as we can get to the meaning of ὑπήχει. But the word, which is frequently used by Philo, seems to carry with it the thought of a voice heard inwardly and not audible in the ordinary sense. Thus, it is sometimes coupled with ἔνδοθεν, and several times (e.g. *Mut. nom.* 139) applied to the divine voice that speaks to the prophet, to the memories or echoes of the lecturer's words that the student carries away with him (*Congr.* 67), and of the 'haunting' voice of enticing pleasure (*Poster. C.* 155)' (Appendix to *De somniis* 1.164 [Colson, LCL, p. 601]).

The prophet, acting as a conductor of divine communication, acts as a dream interpreter, not a dreamer. Revelation of the message does not require special intellectual skill from the mediator, and, thus, it is no surprise that the same person can function as a dreamer at another time. Thus, Joseph, who as a youth dreams and later in life interprets dreams, can be a prophet but not an oneiromancer. An agitated mind gets divinely inspired in sleep, so that it utters prophetic predictions about the future (*Somn.* 2.1). The prophetic ability is not exclusive; it may touch any human being such as Pharaoh. With regard to the prophetic inclination, he says about Joseph, 'My soul has a prophetic inkling that my dreams will not forever remain veiled in obscurity, for in this youth there are signs and indications of wisdom' (*Jos.* 106).

The nature of dreams and daily visions or human imagination generally is the same. Its basis is the human sensory organs. As the senses are deceiving and their impressions transitory, so are dreams ephemeral and perishable. When they contain an important divine message, the same message may be conveyed in two different dreams with the same meaning, as in the case of Pharaoh's dreams of cows and of wheat. Thus, Joseph says to the king of Egypt, 'Do not imagine that the two visions which have appeared to you are two different dreams; they are but one and the reduplication of them is not superfluous, but is intended to produce the conviction of a firmer belief' (*Jos.* 107).

When Joseph interprets visions in dreams, he is at his best a prophet and not a dream interpreter (ὄνειροκριτικός) or a diviner in the sense of this study. These abilities are reserved for those who can comprehend the message that is hidden beyond the plain meaning of the text. They are philosophers, like Philo himself, and their communication with the supernatural is above the prophetic one. Philo may have denied to Joseph the skills of a skilled oneiromancer because he breached the axiom of the profession: a dreamer and a dream interpreter cannot be the same person. However, he lets Joseph reach the level of a professional dream interpreter when he interprets the daily visions of the masses as an accomplished statesman.

On a level lower than prophecy, if not on the other side of the scale, Philo places μαντική (*Spec. leg.* 1.60; 4.50), which he understands as profane magic. Thus the translation: 'magical divination' is more appropriate, especially for the sense of this study.⁸² While both prophecy and μαντική articulate ingrained human longing to know the future, magical divination

82. I prefer the term 'magical divination' for Philo's use of μαντική (*Spec. leg.* 1.60; 4.50), because 'the art of divination' (the usual meaning of the Greek term [see *LSJ*]) in this study is regarded as a part of science, while for Philo it is rather commercial magic. See also Torrey Seland, 'Philo, Magic and Balaam: Neglected Aspects of Philo's Exposition of the Balaam Story', in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature*

consists of human fantasies of multitudes of conjectures about what is probable, because it is based on unstable and unnatural phenomena (*Spec. leg.* 1.61; 4.50), while the pronouncements of a prophet are not his/her own. Overwhelmed by the power of divine inspiration, a prophet is a channel for communication from God (*Spec. leg.* 4.49; cf. *Spec. leg.* 1.65).

Philo seemed to have been well acquainted with and struggled against various forms of magical divination because of their common presence in Hellenistic life in Jewish circles in Alexandria.⁸³ Although Philo never mentions lecanomancy, his treatment of other forms of fashionable divinatory practices implies that he considers it to be magical divination.⁸⁴

d. *Lecanomancy*

Lecanomancy, along with other popular methods of future forecasting, does not have a place in Philo's philosophy. Lecanomancers would fall into the same category as magical diviners (μαντικός), magicians and those dream interpreters who, instead of divine power, use tricks and artifice to deceive people by fabrications of human cunning (*Spec. leg.* 1.60, 63-64; *Vit. Mos.* 1.92-94; *Jos.* 125).⁸⁵ Thus, any allusion to the use of Joseph's cup in divination is omitted, but the function of this episode as a scene of communication with the divine presence is emphasized. In the same context, the symbolic importance of the cup as providing access to a higher state of the human mind is upheld, but with a slightly different content and still universally recognizable. The cup is the sign of fellowship, kind feelings, partnership and true friendship. The brothers are accused of theft,

You have now set the seal to all the accusations that have been brought against you; you have returned evil for good, . . . you have not only stolen and carried off the price of the corn, but you have committed even a greater offence than that, . . . you . . . *have stolen the most beautiful and most valuable drinking cup belonging to my master; the very cup in which he pledged you* (τὸ κάλλιστον καὶ τιμώτατον ἔκπωμα τοῦ δεσπότου ἐν ᾧ προῦπόσεις προῦπινεν ὑμῖν) (*Jos.* 212-13).

in Greco-Roman Context: Studies in Honor of David E. Aune (ed. John Fotopoulos; Supplements to Novum Testamentum, 122; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), pp. 333-46.

83. On Philo and magic, see Seland, 'Philo, Magic and Balaam', pp. 333-46.

84. 'Moses demands that one who is registered in the commonwealth of the laws should be perfect not in the lore, in which many are schooled, of divination and voices and plausible conjectures, but in his duties towards God' (*Spec. leg.* 1.63; cf. *Spec. leg.* 1.319).

85. Pharaoh's dream interpreters do not fall into this category because they are not called magicians, μάγοι, but σοφισταί, 'wise men', 'masters of one's craft', 'experts' (*Jos.* 103, 106).

Joseph used this same cup the previous night at the banquet in the exchange of toasts and good wishes with his brothers as a sign of kindness and bonding of ‘liberal and cultural temperaments’ (τοῖς ἐλευθέροις καὶ μὴ ἀμούσοις) (*Jos.* 206).⁸⁶

Philo, just as Josephus, made Joseph use his cup in pledging friendship and instigating human cultural, intellectual and emotional bonding. This notion is very close to Late Antiquity’s use of lecanomancy to reveal true human relations and to disclose hidden plots, and in its use as a beloved forensic tool for tracking down thieves.

According to Philo, the workmanship, material and value of the cup are irrelevant, if not even detrimental, to the function of the cup (ἐκπωμα). Elsewhere, Philo promotes the sufficiency of human hands as a drinking vessel. The hands are ‘nature’s cup, art’s very masterpiece’ (*Somn.* 2.60).

Still, if one were absolutely in need of something else, would not the ivy cup of the agricultural laborer be sufficient? And why should it be requisite to have recourse to the arts of other eminent artists? And what can be the use of providing a countless multitude of gold and silver goblets, it if be not for the gratification of boastful and vain-glorious arrogance, and of vain opinion raising itself to an undue height? (*Somn.* 2.61).

The content of the cup, namely, the wine, has a more prominent role in bonding people and uplifting the soul. Hence, in some people it can provoke a condition that ‘appears to resemble an untroubled calm in fine weather, or a waveless tranquility at sea, or a most peaceful and steady state of affairs in a city’ (*Somn.* 2.166).

The shape of the cup carries the highest symbolic value. It calls to mind the cosmogenic act, reproducing the universe that God created,

He (Moses) calls the world—the city of God—as having received the whole cup of the divine draught, ... and being gladdened thereby, so as to have derived from it an imperishable joy, of which it cannot be deprived for ever (*Somn.* 2.248).

Its purpose as a container is glorified allegorically:

86. Philo imposes the custom of his time of indulging in a variety of food and drink to present a contrast to Joseph’s banquet which was characterized ‘by continual cheerfulness, and by pledging one another in wine, and by good wishes, and by exhortations to eat what there was, which to persons of *gentleman-like and accomplished minds* was more pleasant than all the sumptuous dishes and liquors which men fond of eating and of epicurism provide for eating and drinking, which are in reality deserving of no serious care, but by which they do in truth display their little-mindedness with great pomp’ (*Jos.* 206).

And who can pour over the happy soul which (*offers*) its own reason as the most sacred cup, the holy goblets of true joy, except the cup-bearer of God, the master of the feast (*the word*) (*Somn.* 2.249a).

who is also none other than the draught which he pours—his own self free from all dilution, the delight, the sweetening, the exhilaration, the merriment, the ambrosian drug . . . whose medicine gives joy and gladness? (*Somn.* 2.249, trans. F.H. Colson in LCL).

The bowl is the likeness of the divine universe holding the soul of a sage that communicates with the transcendent divinity through the sacred cup. Although Philo seems to reject bowl divination as a form of magical divinations he embraces the theoretical principles of RVE that lie behind it. Thus, he abundantly uses the symbols of sacred wells and springs as the portals to higher intellectual spheres or access to divine power, but rejects their popular use in divination and future prediction, which constituted the popular practice (*Vit. Mos.* 1.264-67; *Spec. leg.* 1.60). According to this logic, cups would represent the mass use of hydromancy. No wonder that any mention of lecanomancy in connection with Joseph is absent from Philo's discourse. Basically, Philo draws from the pool of popular knowledge and beliefs about the sacredness of springs and wells and their connection with oracles and oaths. They pump the water from deep in the earth, out of the water layer that divides heaven, the divine realm, from the earth. This water barrier that encircles the earth appears elsewhere, as we have seen, as a curtain or a screen that separates the earth from the lights of heaven.⁸⁷ Philo elaborates about their special function by his use of allegory.

e. *Hydromancy*

Especially interesting is Philo's exposition on Hagar's encounter with the angel at the water spring (Gen. 16.7) in *De fuga et inventione* (*On Flight and Findings* 177-213). The fact that a theophany happened at a spring is of utmost importance. The word spring, πηγή, already contains the meaning that discloses access to the transcendent realm of human and divine soul. It stands for the human mind, reasoning capacity, education, divine wisdom and for 'the Creator and Father of the universe' (*Fug.* 177). As the waters of springs rain from below and water the fields, 'thus the dominant faculty in the soul waters, as from a spring, the face, which is the dominant part of the body, extending to the eyes the spirit of vision, that of hearing to the ears, to the nostrils that of smelling, that of tasting to the mouth, and that of touch to the whole surface' (*Fug.* 182).⁸⁸

87. See Chapter 4, on *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* and the ascent to heaven.

88. The same waters rain from above and below. In the great flood the cataracts of heaven were opened and fountains of the abyss unclosed (Gen. 7.11) (*Fug.* 192).

The water's nourishing character symbolizes the growing benefits of education. Philo tells us that

those who are still exercising themselves in the preliminary branches of instruction, as people thirsting for learning, settle themselves by the side of those sciences which are able to bedew and irrigate their souls. . . . And when they have come to the gates of virtue, the preliminary liberal sciences . . . they are said to pitch their tents, not by the palm-trees, but by the waters (*Fug.* 183–87).

Those who need no more instructions but 'carry off the prizes of perfect virtue are adorned with palm-leaves and with fillets' (*Fug.* 187).

But the most important allegory is that the spring is like divine wisdom, which communicates the sacred message and is therefore called 'judgment' or 'holy' (*Fug.* 196).

This is that divine wisdom from which all the particular sciences (κατὰ μέρος ἐπιστήμαι) are irrigated, and all the souls which love contemplation are filled with a love of what is most excellent; and to this fountain the sacred scripture most appropriately assigns a name, calling it 'judgment' and 'holy'. For says the historian, 'Having turned back, they came to the fountain of judgment; this is the fountain of Caddes' (Gen. 14.7), and the interpretation of the name Caddes is holy (*Fug.* 195–96).

The ultimate spring is God, the spring of life.⁸⁹ And the whole universe is nothing less than the rain that fell from God (*Fug.* 198). 'God is the most ancient of all fountains. And is not this very natural? For he it is who has irrigated the whole of this world. . . . But God is something more than life; he is, as he himself has said, the everlasting fountain of living' (*Fug.* 198).

Although he is opposed to fashionable forms of water and mirror divinations, Philo, nonetheless, uses the metaphor of reflections in the wells and springs as mirrors of 'the Author of that knowledge', that is, they provide direct access to the divine (*Fug.* 213).⁹⁰ That Lucian satirizes the same with his comical image of a mirror that reflects from the well the hidden truths of human relations who are spatially far removed indicates the popularity of this form of divination as a portal to the divine where space and time lose their dimensions, and justifies Philo's use of them as conventional metaphors.⁹¹

89. Philo cites Jer. 2.13: 'They have left me, the fountain of life, and they have digged for themselves cisterns already worn out, which will not be able to hold water'.

90. 'Nay, how couldst thou fail, thou soul, who in thy progress art dipping deep into the school-lore knowledge, to see reflected in thy training as in mirror the author of that knowledge?' (*Fug.* 213).

91. Satire is very useful from a historical point of view because it indicates the widespread phenomena that you can ridicule something and the audience would immediately understand the allusion without receiving all the details (Lucian, *Vera historia* A 26).

Philo's discussion of wells in a similar manner is well illustrated in *De somniis*, where he refers to the 'Well of the Oath' in the context of his second type of dreams, divinely sent dreams (1.6-24).⁹² The reach into the depths of the earth must have possessed the quality of a mystery. For Philo, the philosopher, wells are a symbol of knowledge (*Somn.* 1.6), 'for the nature of knowledge is to be very deep, not superficial; it does not display itself openly, but loves to hide itself in secrecy; it is discovered not easily but with difficulty and with much labor' (*Somn.* 1.6).

The difficulty in acquiring learning is compared to a search for water by digging a well. A waterless well is like the pursuit of knowledge by different branches of science, 'because the ends of science are not only hard to discover, but are even altogether undiscoverable' (*Somn.* 1.8). Wells represent a yearning for education, growing in understanding of hidden things, and a desire to apprehend things more accurately as human life passes. However, this disposition is not different from the one of those people who use mirrors and reflections from the water in wells. They also yearn for knowledge of hidden things and of those things beyond human understanding. The main distinction is in the subject matter. Usually, for those who exercise magical divination the questions are of a more personal nature. But both parties ultimately seek assurance and security for the future, either by understanding the general principles of the universe or through personal enterprises and successful human relations. This notion is foundation of Philo's discussion of the 'ath' in the phrase 'the Well of the Oath' (*Somn.* 1.12). Philo, however, will not stop here, but develops further the allegory of this well into the symbol of heaven. (*Somn.* 1.14-24).

Philo's ideas about cups, springs and wells as symbols of transcendent divine realms and sacred wisdom are based on the common understanding of cosmology of his time. This does not differ much from biblical cosmology of water, which encircles the earth and separates it from the lights of heaven as a screen or a curtain (Gen. 1.7-8). However, Philo's cosmology does not support a special function of water either as a barrier or as a portal to the incorporeal world of ideas, that is, the higher world of divine and ideal forms. He bases his allegory on conventional symbols and metaphors that can be widely understood and accepted.⁹³

The corporeal world consists of four elements: earth, water, air and fire. Water and earth occupy the mid-position in the universe and are suspended

92. The connection of springs and wells with the divine presence, oracles and oaths is well attested in the Bible (Jer. 2.13; Gen. 16.7; 28.10).

93. That may be the reason for some apparent inconsistencies in Philo's works. Inconsistencies are part of the image of Philo as a philosopher for those scholars who primarily search for a unifying principle in it (e.g. John Dillon, Harry Wolfson), and thus try to find a coherent system of teaching in his works.

in the air (*Vit. Mos.* 2.101, 120). Water encircles the earth and fills the great hollows of the earth (*Abr.* 42–43). Philo follows the Platonic notion of the ideal incorporeal world of ideas and forms that is created before the corporeal world or the world of senses (*Op. mund.* 29, 34).⁹⁴ This visible world is modeled on the incorporeal world and consists of bodies that are shadows, images or copies of the more real incorporeal world.⁹⁵ The main distinction between these two worlds is that incorporeal things are perceived only by intellect while the corporeal level is the world of senses. The former opens up to philosophy; the latter to specialized research.

f. Revelation by Visual Effects and Philo's Cosmology

1. *Light*. Because light is the most essential part of RVE, or it plays a major role in Philo's philosophy, I will locate it very briefly within this Philonic symbolism and cosmology. Light is the most perfect creation of both the incorporeal and corporeal worlds. It symbolizes God in the form of divine light, divine wisdom in the light of intellect, the perfect beauty, the heavens, the reason, the purest form, 'Pure rays of wisdom shine forth in the soul' (*Deus imm.* 3). Philo also explains the ontology of light. The incorporeal light is 'considered worthy of the pre-eminence'.

Because it is surpassingly beautiful: for that which is perceptible only by intellect is as far more brilliant and splendid than that which is seen, as I conceive, the sun is than darkness, or day than night, or the intellect than any other of the outward senses by which men judge . . . or the eyes than any other part of the body. And *the invisible divine reason*, perceptible only by intellect, he calls *the image of God*. And *the image of this image is that light, perceptible only by the intellect, which is the image of the divine reason*, which has explained its generation (*Op. mund.* 30–31).

The most frequent manifestations of the divine presence in the corporeal world are in the forms of light. Hence, God adds light to a small fire in the human soul (*Jos.* 124). In the lowest levels of the corporeal world, light is dependent on flame. Fire in the physical world is nourishment for light (*Aet. mund.* 92). The most elaborate of these appearances is in God's theophany to Moses in the burning bush using special light effects (*Vit. Mos.* 1.65–66). Philo appears here to draw on the popular contemporary association of a natural connection of light effects with the water of fountains, wells and springs.

94. 'In the first place therefore, from the model of the world, perceptible only by intellect, the Creator made an incorporeal heaven, and an invisible earth' (*Op. mund.* 29). 'The incorporeal world then was already completed, having its seat in the Divine Reason; and the world, perceptible by the external senses, was made on the model of it' (*Op. mund.* 36).

95. These bodies are not necessarily physical.

This bush was on a sudden set in a blaze without any one applying any fire to it, and being entirely enveloped from the root to the topmost branch by the abundant flame, *as though it had proceeded from some fountain showering fire over it*, it nevertheless remained whole without being consumed, like some impassible essence, and not as if it were itself the natural fuel for fire, but rather as if it were taking the fire for its own fuel (*Vit. Mos.* 1.65).

And here is the description of the divine presence in the bush,

And in the middle of the flame there was seen a certain very beautiful form, not resembling any visible thing, a most Godlike image, emitting a light more brilliant than fire, which any one might have imagined to be the image of the living God. But let it be called an angel, because *it merely related the events which were about to happen in a silence more distinct than any voice by reason of the marvellous sight* which was thus exhibited. (*Vit. Mos.* 1.66)

There are two more things that Philo mentions here that are important for RVE. First, appearance is superior to speech, for example, sight is superior to hearing. And, second, the divine message is a future prediction. Thus, Philo's descriptions of the burning bush episode contain all the elements of any RVE: light, water, access to the divine realm and future prediction.

In corporeal cosmology, light is the essence of the stars, the planets and the sun. These 'lights' are created out of incorporeal intellectual light in order to serve several purposes, among which are to give light and to serve as heralds of future events.⁹⁶ The visible world is circumscribed within the outermost sphere of the fixed stars. The heaven of the inner circles consists of the seven lighted orbits of the planets: Saturn, Jupiter and Mars, the sun in middle orbit, Mercury, Venus and the moon at the innermost zone.⁹⁷ These zones above the moon are pure light, without any mixture of darkness. The light is pure in heaven, and only below the moon does it mix with darkness in the form of air (*Abr.* 205); this lower layer consists of four elements: fire, air, water and earth (*Rer. div. her.* 152–53). Philo's cosmology nicely fits into the idea of the progressive stages of the heavens in Hellenistic ascension accounts and also of the seven heavens of *merkabah* mysticism.⁹⁸

96. 'But the Creator having a regard to that idea of light perceptible only by the intellect, . . . created those stars which are perceptible by the external senses. . . . One of the reasons for his so doing was that they might give light; another was that they might be signs' (*Aet. mund.* 55–58)

97. *Cher.* 23; *Rer. div. her.* 225, 233; *Spec. leg.* 3.189.

98. Even the very popular Hellenistic image of the sun god riding his chariot finds its place in Philo's discussion of heavenly spheres (*Cher.* 24). See also the image of God as 'charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work' (*Abr.* 70): 'But the other of the cherubim is the inner sphere which is contained within that previously mentioned, which God originally divided in two parts, and created seven orbits, bearing a certain definite proportion to one another, and he adapted each of the

Philo is indebted to the intellectual and cultural context of his time not only for his use of RVE phenomena and practices in his rhetoric, but also his comprehension of the nature of the world depends on local traditions such as the understanding of a geocentric universe (*Conf. ling.* 5; *Vit. Mos.* 1.212). There are two hemispheres located above and below the earth; the sun journeys twelve hours over and twelve hours under the earth. This image reminds us of the Egyptian description of the sun's daily voyage described in *Amduat*. Philo also incorporates the twelve signs of the zodiac into this heavenly arrangement (*Spec. leg.* 1.86-7; *Leg. all.* 1.2).

2. *Sight*. Senses are human faculties through which the visible world is perceived. They are inferior to ideas, which are the more authentic realities behind the visible world of sense perception. Senses have a fivefold division: sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. For Philo, the most noble and preeminent sense is that of sight, because sight is the source of 'learning, contemplation, and philosophy' (*Spec. leg.* 3.192) and is closely associated with the soul (*Abr.* 150-53; *Op. mund.* 53, 120; *Fug.* 208; *Vit. Mos.* 1.124).⁹⁹ The soul is fashioned after the image of the divine (*Spec. leg.* 1.81); it is immortal, and after death it separates from the body and returns to God (*Abr.* 258). Sight is a mirror-like reflection of the soul.

And, in short, we may say that the sight has been created to be an exact image of the soul, which is thus beautifully represented by it through the perfection of the Creator's skill, the eyes showing a visible representation of it, as in a mirror, since the soul has no visible nature in itself (*Abr.* 153).

Again, reflections and mirrors, the crucial elements of RVE, are a part of Philo's rhetoric. Hearing also linked to philosophy is inferior to sight, 'inasmuch as that [which] is slow and more effeminate, may be classed in the second rank' (*Abr.* 150, 160).¹⁰⁰

planets to one of these; and then, having placed each of these stars in its proper orbit, like a driver in a chariot' (*Cher.* 23-24). This cosmology is the basis of the Neoplatonic universe which will take hold in the tradition of Judaism, Christianity and also later on of Islam.

99. 'This greatest of blessings to mortal man, his disposition . . . to learning, and contemplation, and philosophy, is bestowed upon him by the faculty of sight. And this faculty seems to me to deserve this pre-eminence, since it is more nearly related to the soul than any one of the other outward senses' (*Spec. leg.* 3.191-92).

100. 'But there are two of these outward senses which have something philosophical and preeminent in them, namely, sight and hearing. But the ears are in some degree more slow and more effeminate than the eyes, since the latter go with promptness and courage to what is to be seen, and do not wait until the objects themselves are in motion, but go forward to meet them, and desire to move themselves so as to face them. But the sense of hearing inasmuch as that is slow and more effeminate, may be classed in the second rank' (*Abr.* 150-52).

Up in the heavens there are stars, sun, planets and the moon as the givers of light. On the other end are eyes,

Now it would take a long time to enumerate all the necessities which the eyes supply to, and all the services which they perform for the human race. . . . It is the heaven which has showered philosophy upon us, it is the human mind which has received and which contains it, but it is sight which has entertained and been its host; for that is the faculty which was the first to see the level roads through the air (*Spec. leg.* 3.185).

We should not forget that Philo is in agreement with the teachings of ancient optics that the eyes are also emitters of light, and not only its receptors.

As, therefore, the sun extends his rays from heaven to the boundaries of the earth . . . and so be received with welcome, when meeting that kindred and friendly light which is situated in the eyes of man; for the meeting of these two lights in the same place, coming from an opposite direction, and the reception of the one by the other, is what causes that comprehension which we arrive at by our faculty of sight: but what mortal could possibly receive in this manner the knowledge, and wisdom, and prudence, and justice, and all the other virtues of God, in an unalloyed state? The whole heaven, the whole world, could not do so (*Deus imm.* 79).

In conclusion, Philo accepts the principles of RVE in theory and practice, but he fiercely rejects the magical divination and the popular application of hydromantic methods to communicate the divine and control the future.

4. Hellenistic Science

a. Hellenistic Holistic Science—Philosophy

The Hellenistic science defined by this study, Philo calls philosophy. Philosophy (φιλοσοφία) itself is the pursuit of wisdom (*Congr.* 79, 144), a search to know all reality accurately, which is, in fact, the goal of Hellenistic holistic scientific investigation.¹⁰¹ For Philo, it is the highest intellectual activity of a human being. ‘And philosophy is the fountain of all blessings, of all things which are really good’ (*Spec. leg.* 3.187). The main method of

101. This idea is mentioned three times in *Somn.* 2.27, 170, 244, and once in *Jos.*, where Philo makes Joseph into a teacher of philosophy while confined in Egyptian prison: ‘Accordingly they no longer thought fit to call the place a prison, but a house of correction: . . . they were now admonished with the language and doctrines of philosophy, and also by the life and conduct of their teacher, which was more effective than any discourse in the world’ (*Jos.* 86–87). But, certainly, the overwhelming role of Joseph is not that of a philosopher but a politician. The prophetic role on occasion which is subordinated to the one of a philosopher is more suited for Joseph, according to Philo.

scientific inquiry of antiquity comes from the eyes observing the workings of nature and heaven.

Now in what way it is that the sight may be said to have entertained philosophy as its host we must now proceed to explain. Having looked up to heaven it beheld the sun, and the moon, and the planets, and the fixed stars. . . . And having looked round and surveyed the things in the earth, and in the sea, and in the air, with great diligence displayed all the things in each of these elements to the mind (*Spec. leg.* 3.187-88).

For Philo, light is the backbone, the carrier, or the door of human ability to reach or taste the highest realm of intellectual perfection, namely, the divine. And from the sense of sight and light basic human scientific curiosity emerges and philosophy rises.

Light is . . . the cause of many other good things to men, and particularly of the greatest, namely philosophy. For the sight being sent upwards by light and beholding the nature of the stars and their harmonious movement, and the well-ordered revolutions of the fixed stars, and of the planets . . . causes an ineffable joy and delight to the soul. . . . Then, as is usually the case, it examines with increased curiosity what is the substance of these things which are visible; and whether they have an existence without having been created, or whether they received their origin by creation, and what is the character of their movement, and what the causes are by which everything is regulated. And it is from inquiries into these things that philosophy has arisen, than which no more perfect good has entered into human life (*Op. mund.* 53-54).

Superior scientific inquiry leads to future predictions in plain language: the correct reading of the signs of heavenly bodies enables humans to plan and execute their actions, which is a main purpose of science today.¹⁰²

And they [stars] have been created, . . . not only that they might send light upon the earth, but also *that they might display signs of future events*. For either by their risings, or their settings, or their eclipses, or again by their appearances and occultations, or by the other variations observable in their motions, men oftentimes conjecture what is about to happen, the productiveness or unproductiveness of the crops, the birth or loss of their cattle, fine weather or cloudy weather (*Op. mund.* 58).

The study of the heavenly bodies began with the very act of their creation, which was also the creation of time. The investigation of the stars would regulate relations between heaven and humans, between the supernatural and individuals, disclosing the universal and individual future, and between nature and humanity. The study of heavenly bodies taught people to count and predict time, giving birth to the calendar.

102. Philo cites Gen. 1.14, in support of this theory: 'The stars were made for signs' (*Op. mund.* 59).

And before now some men have conjecturally predicted disturbances and commotions of the earth from the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and innumerable other events which have turned out most exactly true: so that it is a most veracious saying that 'the stars were created to act as signs' (*Op. mund.* 58–59).

We have seen that the statesman's job includes the prediction of the future. By discerning human behavior and beliefs it is possible to legislate rules that would regulate relations between humans. The scientific method is the same: observation of phenomena and interpretation. 'The statesman as well as the philosopher should approach the science of the interpretation of dreams' and apply its methodology in their intellectual pursuits.

By studying heavenly bodies using Chaldean scientific method, Abraham came to the conclusion of the existence of one God (*Abr.* 71). The difference between a devoted scholar like Abraham, who is on the right path to achieve communication with the divine or access to the transcendental realm, and polytheistic scientists like the Chaldeans is that the former rationally relies on reason, while the latter refuse the application of reasoning and rely exclusively on the sensory perceptions. This can lead them 'to imagine that the world itself was God'.¹⁰³ Philo categorizes the Chaldean type of study into a branch of science—astronomy (*Congr.* 50; *Abr.* 69). But in the case of Abraham,

The mind deserves to be loved because it has not submitted to be for ever deceived and to abide permanently with the essences perceptible by the outward senses, thinking the visible world the greatest and first of gods, . . . it has beheld another nature . . . which is appreciable only by the intellect (*Abr.* 88).

Senses can be deceiving and lead practitioners astray from scientific professions, such as astronomers and politicians, as well as ordinary people, by turning the waking life into a dream (*Jos.* 142).¹⁰⁴ Philo juxtaposes a philosopher or a practitioner of the scientific inquiry with those who practice only

103. 'They magnified the visible essence by the powers which numbers and the analogies of numbers contain, taking no account of the invisible essence appreciable only by the intellect. But while they were busied in investigating the arrangement existing . . . they were led to imagine that the world itself was God, in their impious philosophy comparing the creature to the Creator' (*Abr.* 69).

104. Women in particular are prone to their allure, 'For in human beings the mind occupies the rank of the man, and the sensations that of the woman' (*Op. mund.* 165). In the context of Genesis 3, discussing original sin, Philo writes, 'But its juggleries and deceits pleasure does not venture to bring directly to the man, but first offers them to the woman, and by her means to the man; acting in a very natural and sagacious manner. For in human beings the mind occupies the rank of the man, and the sensations that of the woman. And pleasure joins itself to and associates itself with the sensations first of all,

a specific scientific field. Thus, he opts for a holistic approach to learning, the main characteristic of Hellenistic science in general.

b. *Particularization of Hellenistic Science*

Philo addresses the question of the particularization of sciences, indicating that it existed as a problematic reality in his time. Hence, Philo compares those scientists who specialize in a certain field such as astronomy and meteorology to Chaldeans. Those who rejected the artificial division in their reasoning discovered God, a holistic principle; Philo calls them sages, or wise men and compares them to Abraham. (*Abr.* 82–84).

Now to the meteorologist nothing at all seems greater than the universe, and he credits it with the causation of what comes into being. But the wise man with more discerning eyes sees something more perfect perceived by mind, something which rules and governs, the master and pilot of all else (*Abr.* 84).

We have already seen that Philo also touches upon the nature of the pursuit of specialized knowledge, using a symbol of digging a well without finding water in it.

This is why the diggers of this well say they found no water in it (Gen. 26.32), inasmuch as the ends pursued in the different branches of knowledge prove to be not only hard to reach, but absolutely beyond finding. That is why one man is a better scholar or geometrician than another, because no limit can be set to the extensions and enlargements of his subject in all directions (*Somn.* 1.8–9).¹⁰⁵

Occasionally, Philo opts for a negative attitude toward science as a study of the universe. He regards what we call natural sciences as an artificial, human made system, inferior to divinely created nature.¹⁰⁶ Those who learn from nature learn directly from God and learn quickly; ‘they have nature alone for a coadjutor, without having any need of methods, or arts, or sciences’ (*Fug.* 168), which are taught by humans and require a long time. Again Philo uses the metaphor of a fountain of God’s living water, contrasting the holistic approach to scientific knowledge to the shallow cisterns

and then by their means cajoles also the mind, which is the dominant part’ (*Op. mund.* 165–66).

105. ‘For there is always more that is left behind than what comes to be learnt; and what is left watches for and catches the learner, so that even he who fancies that he has comprehended and mastered the very extremities of knowledge would be considered but half perfect by another person who was his judge, and if he were before the tribunal of truth would appear to be only beginning knowledge’ (*Somn.* 1.9–11).

106. Philo does not use a specific word for science in his sense of philosophy but employs the same word, ἐπιστήμη, for it as for science as a specific branch.

with no water source of their own, like scientists blinded by their own limited scope of concentration (*Fug.* 195–201).¹⁰⁷ What fills the pitcher at the fountain is

That divine wisdom from which all the particular sciences are irrigated, and all the souls which love contemplation are filled with a love of what is most excellent; and to this fountain the sacred scripture most appropriately assigns name, calling it ‘judgment’ and ‘holy’ (*Fug.* 195–96).

But the specialists are

insane persons that they are, . . . having preferred their own actions to the heavenly and celestial things. . . . Then they dig, not as the wise men Abraham and Isaac did, making wells, but cisterns, which have no good nutritious stream belonging to and proceeding from themselves, but requiring an influx from without, which must proceed from instruction. While the teachers are always pouring into the ears of their disciples all kinds of doctrines and speculations of science altogether, admonishing them to retain them in their minds, and to preserve them when faithfully committed to memory. But now they are but worn-out cisterns, that is to say, all the channels of the ill-educated soul are broken and leaky, not being able to hold and to preserve the influx of those streams which are able to profit (*Fug.* 199–201).

The main difference between the philosopher Abraham and the statesman Joseph is the difference between a Hellenistic, holistic scientist and a scientist of a branch of knowledge that does not enjoy continuous access to the transcendent and divine. Thus, Joseph is not a philosopher or a Hellenistic scientist but a politician, a specialist in a specific field of expertise. As a dream interpreter, he functions as a prophet or as an occasional, passive tool of God’s volition.

Philo’s polemic about the compartmentalization of different fields of knowledge is in contrast to the holistic approach of philosophy, which clarifies Hellenistic science as purposely holistic. The comprehensive approach to intellectual inquiry was neither accidental nor historically conditioned. Its main methodology was careful observation and rational interpretation. Consequently, sight played the most important role of all human senses in this intellectual enterprise. The main goal of science was to predict the future. For Philo, Joseph is an example of how a statesman could accomplish this aim in his corresponding science.

5. Revelation by Visual Effects in Philo

1. Theoretical scientific principles behind the phenomena are acknowledged in full.

107. As we have seen above, the image is same as in Jer. 2.13.

2. RVE in practice is rejected as used in the deception of masses for commercial purposes.
3. Interpretation of RVE involves prediction of the future and advice on suitable actions.
4. That there is no distinction between dreams and daily visions is a frequently repeated motif.

CONCLUSION

1. *Revelation by Visual Effects through Hellenistic Eyes*

A careful reading of the works of Josephus and Philo, the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, and relevant rabbinic midrashim, *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Jubilees*, and *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* exposes much material on RVE.

Philo discusses the theoretical basis of RVE, the function and ontology of light and its relation to the supernatural and the perfect. Moreover, he explains philosophically the cosmology behind RVE phenomena. The importance of light as a symbol of the divine renders the sense of vision into the noblest and most perfect of all the senses in communicating with transcendence. Vision is the basis for scientific inquiry and philosophical contemplation, that is, for holistic Hellenistic science. Although Philo categorically rejects any form of popular divination, among which are lecanomancy, catoptromancy and any form of hydromancy, as well as mercantile oneiromancy, he builds his allegories on the popular notion of the sacredness of springs, wells, mirrored reflections and the symbol of a cup as the holder of the universe. *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* provides the theoretical basis for these visual phenomena based on Hellenistic cosmologies of light and water.

All the sources hold that the same methodology of close observation and interpretation of phenomena is applied to RVE phenomena and to Hellenistic science. The Hellenistic scientist is Philo's philosopher. Philosophy, or Hellenistic science, has a holistic approach to phenomena that differs from compartmentalization in individual sciences that was a fact of life in Philo's world. According to Josephus, the holistic dimension of Hellenistic science is demonstrated in its gradual accumulation of human insights. It is also practical wisdom. Focusing mainly on human relations and valuing the impact of popular divination, Josephus is interested in the social setting of RVE phenomena. He provides the data on the ritual context and on the professional development of cultic personnel.

Josephus points out several issues important for RVE:

1. Dreams and visions are interchangeable, which implies that they belong to the same category.

2. Symbolic dreams belong to the same divinatory modes as hydromancy, necromancy and lychnomancy.
3. It is necessary that an interpretive stage be followed by an advisory stage in RVE.
4. In references to the cultic setting of RVE, Josephus points out the overt presence of virgin boys in the ritual.
5. Josephus hints at what the education of the RVE practitioner could have been like and gives a description of the office of *hierogrammateus*, who is a holistic Hellenistic scientist for Josephus.

Dreams and dream interpretations constitute an important theme in both Philo's and Josephus's work. A dream interpreter par excellence is a Hellenistic scientist, namely, a philosopher in Philo's terms, or a *hierogrammateus* for Josephus; both Philo and Josephus see themselves in this role. Philo demonstrates the blurring of boundaries between daily visions and dreams in the common worldview of the ancient Mediterranean world, and he elaborates at length on this subject. Symbolic images in dreams are the same as daily fantasies and the works of human imagination in the waking state. None of the sources disagrees on this point.

The works of *belles lettres* support and enhance the basic RVE structure drawn from Josephus, adding several new dimensions to it. The texts of the Levitical tradition divide clearly between message dreams as products of the sense of hearing and symbolic dreams created by the sense of vision, classifying the latter with other RVE phenomena. The *Ethiopic Story of Joseph*, supported by rabbinic midrashim in the same tradition, fills in the details of performative lecanomancy, while *Joseph and Aseneth* elaborates on the imagery of the ritual. The former introduces the system of verification to the interpreter's credibility. Oneiromancers are validated either by the fulfillment of their predictions of the near future, or by the dream interpreter having a familiarity with the main contents of a dream before it is told.

Visual effects produced either by energy emitted from an eye, such as miracle workers (*Joseph and Aseneth*), or by radiation of a human agent, or by appearance, or by ritualistic performance, range from the shining beauty of an individual (*Joseph and Aseneth*, *Ethiopic Joseph*), to the fearful gaze (*Ethiopic Joseph*), and to radiant righteousness (*Test. XII Patr.*).

All the sources that espouse RVE phenomena as a major way to access the divine agree that their specialists must be of an exceptional character. It may be moral integrity (Josephus, rabbinic midrashim, Philo), nobility (*Ethiopic Joseph*), ritual purity (*Joseph and Aseneth*, Josephus), sainthood or ascetic discipline (Philo, *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*).

To conclude, the common features of all these visual omens are that they produce divinely sent images that have hidden meanings and need to

be interpreted by a specialist. The messages foretell the future, reveal the workings of the universe and the secrets of human relations. The interpreter follows the interpretation with advice on the best course of action in the light of the newly acquired knowledge. Sometimes they suggest a particular action that can change the results of predictions or alter the state of human relations. These specialists needed to be trained in the science of vision, which, being an integral part of holistic Hellenistic science, made them into Hellenistic scientists.

Conclusion and Beyond

That the postbiblical literature in the Joseph tradition emerged and flourished is due largely to the identification of the biblical Joseph with the popular image of a Hellenistic scientist. The forms of Joseph's access to the divine, as reported in the biblical Joseph story, could be linked to his profession. The basis for this occasion was that an important function of a Hellenistic scientist was as a scientist of vision, whose main occupation was the interpretation of revelations by visual effects. Their manifestations are symbolic images of divine origin that carry a heavenly message that needs to be decoded by a professional, that is, the ancient scientist of vision. The common scholarly terms for this line of work are dream interpreter, lecanomancer, hydromancer, catoptromancer or lychnomancer. The revelations by visual effects appear in two main forms: the first form is the reflected or refracted lights from the surface of a liquid or from a source of light, such as a lamp or a human eye or from the surface of a mirror. The second form is daytime or night-time apparitions, which are not perceived as distinctive entities by the ancients, especially in Hellenistic times. The powerful emissions of energy from the human eye that can perform miracles or do harm, such as the notorious evil eye, are closely related phenomena on the edges of RVE experiences.

Revelations were considered to be portals to the transcendent, the divine, esoteric gnosis and the supernatural. The constituent factors of RVE are as follows:

1. Images are perceived by the human sense of vision. This perception in scientific concepts of antiquity meant the reception, emission or transmission of light.
2. These apparitions must have a symbolic value: their meaning was not clear.
3. Interpretation by a professional is required.
4. They had predictive or revelatory dimensions.
5. The interpretation is followed by interpretive advice on ways to encounter the predicted situation or revealed knowledge.

This RVE was a widespread and publicly acknowledged method of communication with the divine and the source of learning the mysteries of the world and the secrets of human relations. Its theory is based on some common features of ancient cosmologies and on the principles of the Hellenistic science of vision. RVE consists of daily visions and dreams as well as reflections from the surface of sacred springs, wells and cups. The discovery of the divine mysteries and the secrets of the world through observation of the liquid surface of cups, that is, lecanomancy, became common by Hellenistic times, popularizing hydromancy. This bowl divination is supposedly Joseph's practice of divination, as suggested in Gen. 44.5, 15.

The interpreters of RVE are perceived by their Hellenistic contemporaries as scientists. This office needed exhaustive schooling. Additional cultic personnel of RVE would include virgin boys who served as mediums or otherwise as helpers in the ritual. Given the extensive education for the future practitioners of RVE, these virgin boys may represent a stage of apprenticeship in their schooling. The image of the biblical Joseph would fit very well into this setting.

2. *A New Literary Category: Revelation by Visual Effects*

There is an attempt in modern literary criticism to break down the artificial genre classifications of different kinds of literature. The pioneers were Northrop Frye, followed by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog, who, in order to rectify the suspicious application of modern literary theory to ancient documents, offered typological schemes based on a theory of the history of narrative, trying to relate all forms of narrative throughout the ages.¹ Structuralism continued in the same direction, linking literary critics with anthropologists, historians and psychologists. This process led to the creation of multidisciplinary theories of narrative that blurred the established barriers between fiction and non-fiction. The relation between characters and real people became a greatly disputed issue among the schools.² Today some agreement has been reached in acknowledging the complexity of the relations among plot, people and literary characters. It is mostly accepted that though characters and people live in different worlds, the lit-

1. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957); Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog, *The Nature of Narrative* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

2. The main dispute was among the 'mimetic' tradition of literary scholarship (characters were imitations of real people), which draws its roots from Plato and Aristotle, and structuralists, mainly with the New Criticism school, which denied any connection between the real world and literature, which should be read solely according to its own structure.

erary world of characters is not isolated from the real world; it is rather indebted to it mainly by being based on reality with which the audience can recognize and identify.

On the side of biblical criticism, Hermann Gunkel tried to establish genre typology specific to this biblical literature, 'its *natural* forms', based on the social setting of the time of its creation.³ He developed an influential interpretative biblical method: form criticism. In the process, genre studies also went through a literary and structural phase. The idea of genre as merely a stylistic device set in the informational vacuum is now generally rejected, because, as H.R. Jauss states, 'There is no act of verbal communication that is not related to a general, socially or situationally conditioned norm or convention'.⁴ In the writings of philosophy, history or science, in paintings and everyday communication, genre generates effects of reality, authority and truth, taking the role of mediator between the text and a social situation to which it creates a response.⁵

Today it is common to speak about a dynamic concept of genre that encompasses both historical and intergeneric dynamics.⁶ Categories and modes are formed by historical process and have developmental relations. The relation of the genre to its social and historical context make its role central in literary change.⁷ Genre seen *macrotextually* means that the nature of genre is characterized as external, non-literary, and socio-psychological.⁸ It is basically a more complex stage of Gunkel's cultural settings. The hermeneutical circle moved away from the author, focusing more on the relationship between texts and readers. The question moved from the bare

3. The idea of natural forms based on empirically existing genres developed at the very beginning of its definition in Plato and in Aristotle's *Poetics*, parallel with an attempt to systematize them on the grounds of their differentiations (John Frow, *Genre* [The New Critical Idiom; London: Routledge, 2005], p. 58). However, immediately behind Gunkel's enterprise was probably the nineteenth century's influential 'poetics', with its theory of three natural forms as the result of its urge to systematic inclusiveness (Frow, *Genre*, p. 68).

4. H.R. Jauss, 'Theory of Genres in Medieval Literature', in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (trans. Tomothy Bahti; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 79.

5. Frow, *Genre*, p. 14.

6. The recent definitions of genre tend to be very inclusive. Hence, John Frow in 2005 offered the following possible meaning of genre: 'Genre . . . is a set of conventional and highly organized constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning' (Frow, *Genre*, p. 10).

7. Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Models* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 149.

8. Brian Paltridge, *Genre, Frames and Writing in Research Settings* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), pp. 47-48; Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, pp. 150-53.

naturalness of the genre to its pragmatic dimension where users and readers play a major role.⁹ The above-described dynamic concept of genre is the one that was adopted in this work.

The existence of a genre presupposes a set of conventions. These conventions are the carriers of its interpretation. The information is not explicit but is delivered through the use of a genre. Thus, the function of a particular literary form is to convey meaning. In order to understand it we need to establish cultural norms that a literary expression takes for granted. It also works the other way round: revealing certain cultural conventions enables us to establish a literary category that is based on them.

The disclosure of cultural norms encircling the concepts of light, vision, water and epistemology commonly held in Hellenistic times prompted me to establish a new literary pattern: *revelation by the visual effects*, which reflects naturally literary and cultural contexts of the ancient Mediterranean world. Symbolic dreams and visions do not belong in the wider category of dreams but to the form of visual effects that demanded an interpretation.

Scientific, cosmological and popular understanding of these visual manifestations in antiquity requires that they should be regarded as a group of phenomena distinct from direct dreams that need no interpretation, and that are received mainly by senses other than sight, mostly by hearing. Thus, I suggest that the scholarly established division of dreams as symbolic or direct matches no reality in the ancient world and should be abandoned. Instead, symbolic dreams and daily apparitions should be considered as belonging to the same literary category with the other forms of visual effects that are symbolic and require an interpretation. Their kinship to other visual phenomena, such as emission of energy through the human eyes, is greater than to the message dreams. Previous scholarship failed to relate them because it regarded the latter visual effects as deception and magic and classified them as miracle working. All of these visual effects are based on the same basic scientific concepts of vision, light and ancient cosmology.

The example of Joseph as a lecanomancer and dream interpreter, that is, as a Hellenistic scientist par excellence, is testimony that RVE should be recognized as an independent entity whereby symbolic dreams are considered as phenomena similar to lecanomancy and hydromancy. The academic genre of dreams does not correspond to the reality of the ancient worldview and understanding. The so-called message or direct dreams or daily visions should be regarded as separate categories from the RVE.

9. Frow, *Genre*, p. 102.

3. Joseph Tradition

The postbiblical literature that celebrates the patriarch Joseph as its hero made him into the chosen brother through whom the divine secrets and mysteries of the world were transmitted to subsequent Hebrew and Jewish generations. Of all twelve brothers it is Joseph who is the carrier of the intellectual property through his ability to discern the secrets of his fellow human beings, to know the laws of the cosmos, to predict future and access the divine sphere. This image fits well into the figure of a Hellenistic scientist. As Joseph used cup divination and dreams as his professional tools, he is identified as a contemporary scientist of vision and his method as that of RVE.

How could postbiblical literature justify the elevation of patriarch Joseph into the elected brother out of the twelve sons of Jacob to carry on and transmit the religious, cultural and intellectual tradition of the Bible and the Jews? Postbiblical texts rooted in Hellenistic culture managed to add greatly to the popularization of Joseph by identifying his divinatory practices and dream interpretations with the professional activities of the Hellenistic scientist. Familiarity with the office of a Hellenistic scientist could turn the Hebrew Bible's prohibitions of divination, in the case of allusions to Joseph's divinatory pursuit (Gen. 44.5, 15), into the widely accepted mode of access to divine and transcendental knowledge. At the same time, dream interpretation was the generally acknowledged means of communication with the supernatural and the unknown throughout the ancient world, including the theologies of the Hebrew Bible, and thus, did not constitute a problem. The literature in the Joseph tradition emerged and flourished among the generations brought up and educated in the biblical tradition by relating the image of Joseph to the figure of the Hellenistic scientist.

The texts that selected Joseph as the transporter of intellectual, religious and cultural values in the chain of transmission from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob to Moses belong to the Joseph tradition. We saw how Josephus's works, the *Ethiopic Story of Joseph* and several rabbinic midrashim belong to the mainstream of this tradition, while Philo appears as a kind of an antipode, forming an anti-Joseph tradition. The diverse responses of the Levitical tradition are contrasted to the Joseph tradition. Firmly rooted in the Hellenistic context, these texts represent only the beginning of the long line of reception literature in Joseph tradition that developed under the auspices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The texts bearing the Joseph tradition need to provide biblical justification for the selection of Joseph as the recipient of this kind of divine revelation. The texts of the Hebrew Bible prior to the third century BCE did not mention Joseph's biographical details and did not understand Joseph as a sage or prophet to whom God revealed divine secrets. Hellenistic writings

had to come up with the passages in the Genesis story that could support Joseph's selection as the receiver of esoteric knowledge. Joseph's dreams, dream interpretations and his divinatory practice (Gen. 44.15) with his cup (Gen. 44.5) could serve well as portals to transcendental reality, because they belong to the same phenomena. And, indeed, all these activities were the organic part of the basic procedures of a Hellenistic scientist of vision. It is through dreams and liquid divination, notwithstanding any contradiction between these two phenomena, that a Hellenistic scientist would induce RVE leading to discoveries of the mysteries of the world.

An examination of the Hellenistic texts both in Joseph and Levitical tradition display some recurrent features that allow me to identify them as the characteristics of the Joseph tradition or the conservative Levitical tradition. Liberal Levitical tradition tends to share many of the same features as the Joseph tradition. Thus, the texts of Joseph tradition are cosmopolitan and appreciative of foreigners and others. Tolerant of multilayered cultural and societal assets, they embrace the co-existence of diverse groups and ideologies. They value natural, human and societal complexity, and acknowledge multiculturalism. At the same time, they adopt scientific inquiry and the use of human senses and reason in accessing universal truth and divine knowledge. The role of sight in communicating with the deity is favored.

This broad approach to the supernatural realm with a special emphasis on the contributions of the sense of vision is also a main feature of the liberal Levitical tradition. My division of liberal and conservative traditions is based on the extent of their acceptance of the RVE. The liberal Levitical tradition does not necessarily display the level of tolerance of multiculturalism, and the hearty acceptance of foreigners and others, as does the Joseph tradition.

The conservative Levitical tradition ignores the scientific endeavors regarding human senses in general as misleading in accessing the divine. Although occasionally it allows auditory divine communication, the knowledge obtained by the sense of vision is almost always deceptive. Any acceptable information about God comes through the written word. This tradition promotes a single ideology, the unification of human values and intellectual expression and intolerance of the foreign and the other.

The concurrence of these features with possible convictions in certain Hellenistic Jewish circles is striking, making the identification of the mindset that nourished these traditions possible. Jews were one of the minority cultures in the predominantly Greek, Hellenistic empires. Along with the other ethnic groups with whom they shared the same ruling culture, they tried to define their identity. The two extreme solutions are expressed through Joseph tradition on the one hand and through conservative Levitical tradition on the other. One tries to live a fully integrated life in the surrounding dominant culture without losing one's identity. It used Joseph as

an example of how it is possible for Jews not only to survive but to succeed fully in a foreign dominant culture and maintain a Jewish identity. They should attempt to incorporate the best from Hellenistic culture, contributing to it the best of their own, just like Joseph did.

The opposite reaction was to enclose Jews in their own ethnic circles and keep them pure from any outside, foreign influence. Anything that is conceived as non-Jewish was a danger that would destroy their ethnic identity. It is only logical that it interpreted the commandment against making images (Exod. 20.4) as the main distinction of what it means to be a Jew in opposition to the Hellenistic admiration and love of sculpture. Along these lines, RVE is rejected vehemently. We should try to find among these mindsets those that nourished conservative Levitical tradition.¹⁰ Levi's identification with Jewish priestly authority was a feature unique to Jewish theology; it set Jews firmly apart from the rest of the multicultural world around them. The liberal Levitical tradition represents another perspective in-between these two opposing positions; it testifies to a rich diversity of Jewish convictions and traditions in Hellenistic times.¹¹ To this diversity can be added well-rooted opinions of anti-Joseph tradition with their ambiguous stance toward Joseph, such as on which Philo draws. Nuances exist also in some more nationalistic and conservative strands of Joseph traditions well attested principally in many rabbinic midrashim.

In conclusion, the popularity of Joseph and the explosion of literature about him were largely due to the fact that there existed a strong belief among Hellenistic Jews that the creative integration into Hellenistic culture could be beneficial to their growth and identity as Jews.

10. The examination of possible relations of these convictions with those of Sadducees or Maccabees-Hasmoneans on one hand, and Essenes on the other lies outside the scope of this inquiry, but it would be an interesting pursuit.

11. If the Levitical *hakamim* of Palestine 'who criticized the Hasmoneans and the ruling class for oppressing the people, violating the Torah and profaning the cult' have something to do with this mindset, it would be a possible direction of further research (Anders Hultgard, 'The Ideal "Levite", the Davidic Messiah and the Saviour Priest in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs', in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms* [ed. John J. Collins and George W.E. Nickelsburg; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980], p. 94).

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Chapter 3

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Chapter 4

Undermining Joseph's Patriarchal Role

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