Cover Note

Title: Diaspora Queens: Claims to Jewish Legitimacy in Esther and Aseneth

Abstract: Inherent in the [false] dichotomy of homeland and diaspora is a question of legitimacy. Whose claims on authority take precedences? Whose identities, status, or interpretations should be recognised as authentic? The questions, and potential answers, are nothing new. In this paper, we argue that the Second Temple Jewish sources Esther and Aseneth implement convergent rhetorical strategies to claim that a diasporan identity is equally valid as any homeland identity. More specifically, we argue that the particular, monarchical female embodiment of Esther and Aseneth produce similar effect in that they shift the "center" of belonging to the peripheries. To illustrate this point, we analyze shifting ethnic markers across the three sources. We argue that, over their respective narratives, the bodies of Esther and Aseneth are used to indicate their affiliation with different groups or geographic territories, and thus act as points of contact between communities and access to different types of power. We also consider the distinctive features in each, namely the status of Esther as a migrant, ethnic outsider to the hegemonic systems, and Aseneth's status as member of the local elite with connections to hegemonic systems. In all three stories, the female body and its association with monarchy and land is used to resolve the seeming contradiction between an outsider becoming an insider, both with regards to political systems and ethno-religious communities.

Note to the reader:

Dear Reader,

What you are about to read is the very beginning of a considerably larger comparison of engendered, embodied, Jewish identity and/in diasporic communities in *Esther* and *Aseneth*. This project will ultimately consider the use of feminine and masculine embodied gender in the creation of identity in both sources.

This document is an extremely rough draft, reflecting our preliminary thoughts and hinting at future trajectories. Due to the limitations of time, this paper lacks argumentative flow, clear connectivity between ideas, and footnote precision on a stylistic level; on the level of content, the paper needs a more extensive methodological framing and application, literary analysis, and historical contextualisation. It is also far longer than any OTSEM piece has a right to be—the result of two over-eager collaborators excited by their comparative project. In using current slang, we did the most. This paper is, believe it or not, still more skeleton than fleshed-out body. These still-developing ideas therefore sit on the pages clad in chaos, rather than springing forth fully formed, armed, and issuing war-cries. Thank you for your willingness to engage with us at this early stage—we know that this is an excellent moment in which to receive

feedback, but recognize that reading such ideas is challenging. **We encourage you to only read what you can, recognizing that *<u>your</u>* time and energy must be safeguarded**.

In this paper, we have focused on showing that the stories of Esther and Aseneth use the same literary *topoi* as rhetorical strategy for creating identity in diaspora. In these embodied metaphors and gendered social interactions, we see Esther and Aseneth's bodies used to legitimize Jewish identity, to complicate the categories of 'home' and 'away', and ultimately to redefine the latter category of 'away' as being the real 'home'. We are particularly keen for suggestions of secondary literature, theoretical concepts, and other big-picture critiques for this project. Are there other *topoi* to include? Is there a term for general ideas that are hermeneutically useful? Are we inadvertently walking towards pitfalls or traps that could be avoided? We are open to any such feedback that can be provided.

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Paper

> *"One of the questions that diasporic hermeneutics has forced us to face is, who are the authentic representatives, the ones who stayed behind at home or those who left to find new homes elsewhere?"*[1]
>
> *"Women are good to think with."*[2]

1. Introduction

Inherent in the [false] dichotomy of homeland and diaspora is a question of legitimacy. Whose claims on authority take precedences? Whose identities, status, or interpretations should be recognised as authentic? The questions, and potential answers, are nothing new. In this paper, we argue that the Second Temple Jewish sources *Esther* and *Aseneth* participate in this question of community identity by implementing convergent rhetorical strategies to claim that a diasporan identity is equally valid as any homeland identity.[3] More specifically, we argue that the particular, monarchical female embodiment of Esther and Aseneth produce a similar effect in that they shift the "center" of belonging to the peripheries. In other words, through these female bodies, each story redefines "home" or "center" to be Susa and Heliopolis, respectively, places previously considered to be "away" or "periphery". To illustrate this point, we analyze shifting identifying markers across the three sources. We argue that, over their respective narratives, the bodies of Esther and Aseneth are used to indicate their affiliation with different groups and/or geographic territories, and thus act as points of contact between communities and access to different types of power. We also consider the distinctive features in each, namely the status of Esther as a migrant, ethnic outsider to the hegemonic systems, and Aseneth's status as member of the local elite with connections to hegemonic systems. In all three stories, the multi-faceted female body and its association with monarchy and land is used to resolve the seeming contradiction between an outsider becoming an insider, both with regards to political systems and ethno-religious communities.

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[1] R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5.
[2] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity. Twentieth Anniversary Edition with a New Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 153, 155; based on the words of the French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Srauss)
[3] Throughout this paper, we distinguish between the source titles and characters by italicizing the former, i.e., *Esther* and *Aseneth* are the books, and Esther and Aseneth are the characters.

1.1. Methods and Aims

Before proceeding to our comparative analysis, it is necessary to articulate both the reasons for comparing these particular sources, and the methodological framework of diaspora literature in which we do this comparative study.

Found across traditions, *Esther* and *Aseneth* sit at the periphery of canonized biblical literature.[4] In content, these stories also share distinctive *topoi* like diaspora settings, marriage between people of different cultures and social standings, and ethno-religious conflict. Methodologically, recent scholarship has benefited from considering these two stories written during the Hellenistic/Second Temple Period as novellas/novels and through the lens of fanfiction, both independently and comparatively.[5]

From this considerable body of academic literature, three conclusions from earlier studies are of greatest pertinence to our analysis. First, as later products of ancient Jewish imaginations, both *Esther* and *Aseneth* are highly referential works, self-consciously drawing on the imagery, syntax, and vocabulary of a range of earlier sources.[6] This means that, regardless of location and language of origin,[7] these stories' authors were operating within the traditional, ancestral, and received narratives of ancient Judaism; and any positioning of persons or communities is within those long-standing debates over identity and inclusion/exclusion. Second, regardless of contemproary generic categorisation as novellas, novels, (fan) fiction, or fictional history, studies of late Second Temple Period Jewish literature demonstrate that these stories participated in the cross-culturally contemporary practice of rooting new stories in earlier traditions as a means of demonstrating the legitimacy of new ideas–especially when the communal identity of a group

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[4] This paper analyzes MT, OG, and LXX Esther, relying on Dionisio, *Synopsis of the Book of Esther*; and the critical edition of Greek *Aseneth*, per Fink. *Joseph und Aseneth.* We refer to this source as *Aseneth*, following Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*; Ahearne-Kroll. "Joseph and Aseneth and Jewish Identity in Greco-Roman Egypt."; and *Aseneth of Egypt*; Glass, "A Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes. Epiphany in Aseneth and Contemporary Greek Literature."

[5] Analysis as a novel and/or comparisons with novels: Honigman, "Novellas for Diverting Jewish Urban Businessmen or Channels of Priestly Knowledge." Johnson, "Novelistic Elements in Esther." Ahearne-Kroll, "Joseph and Aseneth and Jewish Identity"; Wills, *Ancient Jewish Novels*; Wills, "Jewish Novellas in a Greek and Roman Age: Fiction and Identity"; Wills, "The Biblical Short Story"; Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World*. Analysis as fan fiction: Elder, "Joseph and Aseneth"; Brownsmith, "'I Wrote My Way Out': Embodied Appropriation, Fan Fiction, and the Book of Esther"; Dalley, *Esther's Revenge at Susa*. While we recognise the existence of other scholarship on these sources as novels, we refuse to cite convicted felons.

[6] Cf., e.g., Delling, "Einwirkungen der Sprache der Septuaginta in 'Joseph Und Aseneth'"; Bons, "Psalter Terminology in Joseph and Aseneth"; Scialabba, "The Vocabulary of Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth and in the Acts of the Apostles." There is an interesting study of *Aseneth* as *Esther*-reception to be done, because the latter source is also reception of the Joseph material found in Genesis (**reference**).

[7] We follow consensus on dating and locating these two sources. The general consensus is that Esther was written in the Hellenistic period between 400-200 BCE, although there is a lot of disagreement involving where this was written. *Aseneth* was most likely redacted in Greek in the first century BCE in Ptolemaic Egypt. For a recent discussion, see the introduction in Ahearne-Kroll, *Aseneth of Egypt*.
For the sake of clarity, the adjective Greek refers exclusively to the language (e.g., Greek Esther, Jewish literature written in Greek). Those socio-economic praxes or individuals associated with Hellenism are referred to as Hellenic (e.g., Hellenic epic, Hellenic customs).

positioned on the periphery is at stake.[8] Such conclusions make it entirely possible for us to analyze how *Esther* and *Aseneth* combine earlier traditions in order (re)create Jewish identity in a next context. Finally, as stories which center women, Esther and Aseneth have been individually and comparatively interpreted as both proto-feminist figures and further proof of ancient misogyny.[9] Though such stories have an undoubtedly complex relation to the lived experiences of historical women, our project considers that, as a male-constructed category, women are good to think with.[10] This paper is thus a comparison of how these two stories use female bodies as a means of expressing other ideas, specifically, in this case, ideas relating to land, governance, (access to) power, community, and belonging. In doing so, this comparison demonstrates that similar rhetorical strategies were at play and that, like their beauty, the similarities between *Esther* and *Aseneth* are more than skin-deep.[11]

But if we are to consider *Esther* and *Aseneth* as examples of diaspora literature, we must also ask: What *is* diaspora literature? Is it a genre or style in and of itself, or simply a way to categorize books that are about living in places different from "homeland?"[12] *Esther* is often called a "diaspora novella" alongside, of course, *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Tobit*, *Daniel*, and *Judith*.[13] Michael Fox considers "diaspora story" in his comparative work with Esther, Daniel, and Tobit to be a "cohesive, meaningful category and does not merely label a miscellaneous group of stories that happen to be set in the diaspora."[14] Fox's argument is that each of these stories have different ways of managing "concepts of God, history, and the Jews' duty in crisis, but they all propose a similar perception of Jewish life in exile."[15] Although Fox, like the current article, is right in that there are similarities, there are also differences in regard to "perceptions of Jewish life in exile" in reading these books as diasporic; Zuzanna Olszewska, an expert in diaspora and literature, has gone as far as to say that what marks diasporic writing is most actually summed up in variety, a "plurality of vision…they have proved to be potent reservoirs of cultural knowledge, trenchant critique or simply documentation of experience."[16] Their diasporic setting is thus not necessarily the key to diaspora novellas as distinctive; diaspora should be understood as its own "epistemological category"[17]—it is embodied knowledge that specific folks have in specific

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[8] Wills, *Jewish Novels in the Ancient World*; Ahearne-Kroll, *Aseneth of Egypt*; Whitmarsh, *Dirty Love*; Najman, *Seconding Sinai*.
[9] Song, "Heartless Bimbo or Subversive Role Model?"; [**something**]
[10] Brown, *The Body and Society*, 153; 155.
[11] In this initial comparison, we are placing *Esther* and *Aseneth* side by side, but without any particular argument for influence on one by the other. Such a study would be fascinating in its complexity, with the possibility of influence on *Aseneth* from OG or LXX Esther, or the influence of any of those sources on the later edits to MT. Such a project is, however, far beyond the scope of this OTSEM paper.
[12] Tsaurayi Kudakwashe Mapfeka, *Esther in Diaspora: Toward an Alternative Interpretive Framework* (Brill, 2019), 2: "reference to diaspora in reading Esther often amounts to nothing more than a mere recognition of narrative location, which is clearly away from Eretz Israel."
[13] Else Holt, *Narrative and Other Readings in the Book of Esther* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 7.
[14] Michael Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 148.
[15] Ibid, 147.
[16] Zuzanna Olszewska, "Writing in Diaspora," *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies,* Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer eds. (London: Routledge, 2019), 91.
[17] Mapfeka, *Esther in Diaspora,* 2.

places. These are stories that then fill the gaps involving questions of survival and being in a myriad of ways that can be both disadvantaged and advantaged due to their embodiment in particular settings, that are in fact not their perceived or acknowledged "country of origin."[18]

Thus, while the aforementioned biblical tales as grouped together alongside other "court stories" have similar features, it may be of benefit for future purposes to consider how diaspora influences and creates stories to answer said questions in other narratives that need not have the same "genre." This work will demonstrate this in part by involving *Aseneth* as still yet embodying diaspora although she is technically at "home." How stories are *positioned* is vital to this enterprise, in that these characters and the authors who write them are "*positioned* in relation to homeland and host country, their cultures and politics, based on a plethora of factors including their gender, generation, age, class, race, political stances, and the nature of their literary formation."[19] Both *Esther* and *Aseneth* show, although fraught, a *positioning* that thus shifts notions of a central "home" into the peripheries of diaspora, that legitimate belonging to a people can still yet occur given their perceived dislocation. It is through these women's bodies, through story, that amidst dislocation authentic locations as Jews[20] are contested and created.[21]

Our comparison proceeds in three parts, which follow the sequences of events as narrated in the two stories. In each section, we introduce the *topos* under consideration, then analyze its significance in first *Esther*, then *Aseneth*, and finally summarize the overlapping or diverging each story's use of the different *topoi*.[22] These stories begin with specific markers ascribed to each character involving beauty, clothing, food/feasting, and even particular relations with male figures. But these initial markers shift, as kinship and family ties are sorted out in not only marriage, but also continued themes of clothes and food. Finally, these stories close with not

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[18] In some ways, this can happen simultaneously and be what is called a "contradictory location," as termed by Floya Anthias in *Translocational Belongings: Intersectional Dilemmas and Social Inequalities* (London: Routledge, 2021), 19.

[19] Ibid, 87.

[20] Throughout this study, we refer to these stories and their content as Jewish and to their characters as Jews. This decision is partially informed by the linguistic complexity of the sources under consideration. In MT Esther, the collective to which Esther and Mordechai belong is called *yehudi*; in OG and AT Esther, they are Ἰουδαῖος (*ioudaïos*) (e.g., AT and OG Es 2:5). Considering the reference to Mordechai's origins in and displacement from Jerusalem to Babylon (2:4-7), one could reasonably argue that he and (at least some of) their community should be called Judaeans. But the story does not tell us where Esther was born. To complicate matters, *Aseneth* uses yet other language: Ἑβραίων (*hebraïôn*, e.g., As. 1:4-5). An archaizing term, the use of *hebraïos* retroactively legitimizes the story through this vocabulary-based association with Genesis and the matriarchs (Glass, "Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes," pp.??). In order to emphasize the rhetorical and literary commonalities between Esther and *Aseneth*, we have thus chosen to use Jewish and Jews. Where the specific terms are pertinent to the argument, we include those references in analysis. Terminological discussions on the appropriateness or utility of ethnicizing language are ever current, and beyond the score of this analysis. We direct readers to… Ahearne-Kroll, Bacchi, Mason, the Ancient Jew Review forum, etc.

[21] "It is my contention that 'authenticity' is central to understanding diaspora - not in terms of whether a transnational population may be considered an 'authentic' diaspora or not, but rather *how individual and collective claims to diasporic status are authenticated.*" Marc Scully, "Making and 'Faking' A Diasporic Heritage," *Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies,* 97.

[22] These eclectic *topoi* arise from previous studies of these sources specifically and anthropological studies of religion more generally, in addition to our own conversations about these sources. They are intended to facilitate comparison, and do not represent a conclusive or all-encompassing list of narrative features.

feminine, but distinctly masculine-coded themes, as war and sexualized violence pervade all texts and end in triumphant male figures. In this, it is important to note that although these stories shift belonging and seem to be inclusive, there is such a thing as disempowering forms of belonging.[23] While similarities and differences will be discussed in full below, these can also be seen in Appendix 1.

2. Initial Characterizations of Esther and Aseneth

In the opening chapters of each story, the *topoi* of beauty, clothing, feasting, and behavior towards male authority figures illustrate the complexity of Aseneth and Esther's identities. Although there are significant differences between the women's respective characterization throughout their stories, these very themes are pieces by which the ancient authors contemplated ethnicity, exploring claims to belonging in said ethnicity, thus revealing these *topoi* as boundary markers in different spaces. Comparing these *topoi* reveals insecure attachments to ethnic identifications with Esther and, while secure, false attachments to ethnic identifications with Aseneth.

2.1. Topos: Beauty

We begin with the *topos* beauty, as the beautiful heroine is its own literary cliché. We limit this term to physical bodies of the characters, for dress and adornment play such explicitly important roles in *Esther* and *Aseneth* that we analyze clothing on its own.

The beauty of Esther in all renditions is uncontested and emphasized. When we meet Esther in chapter two, she is kin to the line of Mordecai, and thus, of Saul, Benjamin, and Israel more broadly. Although there does not seem to be any mention of privilege in the beginning of her story, in fact, with more of an emphasis on her vulnerability as an adopted orphan, she is literally of royal stock. In agreement with Itumeleng Mosala, it does very much seem as if "the discourse of *Esther* suppresses class issues;"[24] we are unaware if being related to royalty at this point generationally and in a foreign land would have made a difference, and it is unclear whether or not Mordecai works at the palace gate before or after Esther's displacement to the King's harem—or whether or not the job would have made a difference in regard to financial situation although located closer to the center. She is ethnically Jewish, however, she is told to hide her ethnicity as she is taken into the Persian King's harem (2:10). There is no real description of what makes her beautiful, although, she is "beautiful in form and pleasing to look at (2:7)," *if* she were to be considered a Persian beauty, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones notes that this

[23] Anthias, *Translocational Belongings*, 186.

[24] Itumeleng Mosala, "The Implications of the Text of Esther for African Woman's Struggle for Liberation in South Africa," *Semeia* 1992: 136. Given the focus on Haman's money in chapter three, and the theme of reversal throughout the story as Mordecai is set as the head of Haman's household in 8:2, this could allude to potential rags-to-riches as well, but that is pure conjecture. While current discussions do note that being high in class status could protect women from potential vulnerabilities, the text gives no indication that any girls/women (besides "ugly" ones) were spared in the edict that trafficked them in to the palace.

would be considered "voluptuous" in modern standards;[25] Esther is "thick." Here is a contradictory location, in that "pretty privilege" in this instance is the feature that necessitates her trafficking (2:3).[26] As to this identity marker as religiously Jewish, the Greek texts assure readers of her commitment to their deity, but it is either read as implicit or even unnecessary for the MT.

As fits the quasi-fairytale heroine, Aseneth's beauty surpasses that of all other women. Though an audience might anticipate a description including facial features (like hair or eye color), Aseneth's physical attractiveness is height, 'ripeness', and beauty (μεγάλη καὶ ὡραία καὶ καλὴ σφόδρα ὑπὲρ πάσαν παρθένον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. As. 1:4). This initial description also includes implicitly classist and explicitly ethnic language. Introduced as daughter of Pentephres, the wealthiest and most noble of Pharaoh's advisors (1:3), Aseneth is a *parthenos* (chaste girl) more beautiful than any other chaste girl in the land (1:4), implying status as an elite free woman–one of those for whom premarital chastity was socially the most protected. This comparison is also between Aseneth and the *parthenoi* of the land (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), that is to say Egypt. The very next verse amplifies Aseneth's classist beauty through an ethnic comparison (As. 1:5): "She was in no way like the Egyptian *parthenoi* but was in every way like the daughters of the Hebrews; she was tall like Sara, attractive like Rebekka, and beautiful like Rachel."[27] Aseneth is beautiful specifically because she is an elite *parthenos* who 'looks Jewish'.

The beauty of Esther and Aseneth shares its aristocratic or royal qualities, and, curiously, its 'otherness'. Because they 'look Jewish', neither Esther, nor Aseneth is like the local girls, although the value of this ethnic affiliation diverges between stories. Esther's ethnically different beauty needs to be hidden, whereas Aseneth's is lauded.

2.2. Topos: Clothing

Esther and *Aseneth* use different garments, jewelry, and cosmetics to enhance the heroines' physical qualities. In this section, we consider all adornment and items of clothing put on and taken off, and any modifications of these female bodies.

It has been argued that through the cosmetic treatments Esther undergoes in 2:9; 12, alongside the many other virgins in the harem, that they go from having diverse identities into one fit for "concubinage."[28] The AT, in juxtaposition, does not have portions on cosmetics and baths, nor does it have anything involving her hiding identity markers—although the King seems unaware of the connections to the genocidal edict and her body in chapter 7 of the AT. While the

[25] Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *Ancient Persia and the Book of Esther: Achaemenid Court Culture in the Hebrew Bible* (London: I.B. Tauris & Company, 2023), 102-104.
[26] This language is taken from Erika Dunbar, *Trafficking Hadassah: Collective Trauma, Cultural Memory, and Identity in the Book of Esther and in the African Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2021).
[27] Quotations of *Aseneth* are from Patricia D. Ahearne-Kroll, "Joseph and Aseneth." In *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*, edited by Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, 2525–89. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2013. Amendations are between square brackets.
[28] Anne-Marieke Wetter, "In Unexpected Places: Ritual and Religious Belonging in the Book of Esther," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36/3 (2012): 321-332. I also need to note here that concubinage often carries with it orientalist connotations that should not be anachronistically placed. As the project continues, as I do in other places, I will follow suit with Esther Brownsmith as she leaves the term *pilegesh* untranslated.

OG and MT may be said to emphasize her secret identity and even acknowledge the erasure of it through the royal rituals of washing away what was and putting on what is supposed to be, the AT maintains her Jewishness.[29] The OG and MT may thus make it seem as if she must be de-ethnicized in order to become royalty. As Mordecai approaches in sackcloth and ashes in chapter four (all texts), Esther's royal garments *still* signal some of the disparity and distinction between who identifies with whom.

Like Esther, Aseneth's clothing and costume changes are loaded with meaning.[30] The first description of her clothing emphasizes her social status as a feminine member of the Egyptian elite. Aseneth dresses to impress her father and mother (1:5) in clothing that displays her socio-economic capital through quality and quantity: a robe of fine violet linen woven with gold, a golden girdle, bracelets and anklets, golden trousers, and jewelry with precious stones, and a tiara and diadem (1:6). Aseneth's adornment emphasizes her ethnic belonging as the metals and stones are engraved with the names of the Egyptian gods and the faces of idols (1:6). The earlier complexity of Aseneth's identity, an Egyptian body which looks Jewish, is covered with a conspicuously luxurious display of Egyptian cult, financial power, and social status.[31]

Dress in these two stories hyper-feminizes our heroines. Its ethnicizing abilities connect the two women to the elite societies of Persia and Egypt and it physically displays wealth, but in doing so blurs the boundary between Esther and Aseneth as possessors of material goods and being possessed materials themselves.[32]

2.3. Topos: Feasting

One need look no further than Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's aphorism, "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are,"[33] to understand the anthropological significance of food. What

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[29] "However, for some identities today, such as Judaism, the signifiers thereof are mutable. Elements that may be read as Jewish, such as hair texture or style, head coverings, presence and style of facial hair, style of dress, religious accessories or jewelry, mannerisms, colloquialisms, and accent may be adjusted to change how one is read. Just because Esther *could* pass does not mean there were no outward signs of her Jewishness," Caryn Tamber-Rosenau, "Esther, Drag, and Agency: Gender, Ethnicity, Power, and Queer Time in the Book of Esther and its Jewish Interpretations," *Hebrew Studies* 63 (2022): footnote 37, 108.

[30] Cf. Meredith J. C. Warren, "A Robe like Lightning: Clothing Changes and Identification in Joseph and Aseneth," in *Dressing Judeans and Christians in Antiquity*, ed. K. Upson-Saia, Carly Daniel-Hughes, and Alicia J. Batten (London: Ashgate, 2014), 137–53.

[31] Scholars have argued that the description of Aseneth's garments and living quarters are reminiscent of the Jerusalem temple (e.g., Kraemer, "The Book of Aseneth," 866; Hartvigsen, *Aseneth's Transformation*, 94). While we agree with these analyses up to a certain extent, Glass argues that a comparison between Aseneth's clothes in 3:6 and the daughters of Zion's garments in Isa. 3:18-22 seems more apt, as both associate wealth with pride leading to social disgrace. Furthermore, the association of Aseneth's jewellery with graven images and the names of the Egyptian gods with the Jerusalem temple seem implausible. (Glass, "The Polisification of Aseneth," forthcoming [because I have not written it yet…])

[32] In narrating the contrasting responses to feminine beauty had by Ahasuerus and Mordechai in Esther, the son of Pharaoh and Joseph in Aseneth, and anonymous elite men in both stories, these novels reveal patriarchal anxieties inherent to men's possession and control of female bodies, sexuality, and reproduction, while simultaneously defining Jewish masculinity by a strength of will and moral rectitude which surpass all others. More remains to be said on this, because the frequent male-coding of war is undermined in both *Esther* and *Aseneth* by complicating the gender binary of wartime.

[33] Aphorism IV, *Physiologie du goût*.

one eats and with whom has long been a means of conveying insider/outsider status, and ancient literature participates in this.[34] The next *topos* under consideration is food and its consumption in *Esther* and *Aseneth*.

Esther is drowning in drink. Both of the main conflicts of the story involve drink of some kind, either in potentially creating said conflict, or to celebrate the beginning of a conflict. And yet, the story continues through food and drink, and even the resolution of the stories occurs through feasting that culminates in the creation of the Jewish festival of Purim. At the very beginning, however, it seems as if Esther is not part of any of the feasting until it becomes *her* feast (2:18); and it is at this point conversations involving feasting and the interconnection to ethnic and religious difference shift, but only in the Greek versions of *Esther*.

Food and its consumption in *Aseneth* have attracted considerable scholarly attention, as it appears throughout the story as a means of marking or shifting boundaries between insiders and outsiders.[35] As in *Esther*, *Aseneth* buttresses the plot of chapters 1-22 with symbolically significant banquet scenes. But much of the language in *Aseneth* in relation to food and feasting actually invites readers to imagine Aseneth's body as a fecund territory ready for (masculine/male) reaping and consuming.[36] The gendered imagery of embodied agriculture hints at Aseneth's eventual marriage with Joseph, but the first feast emphasizes its current impossibility. Even though Joseph arrives at "noon, the time of the midday meal" (ὅτι ὥρα μεσημβρίας ἐστὶ καὶ ἀρίστου , As. 3:2), and Pentephres orders his stewards to "prepare a great meal" (δεῖπνον μέγα, As. 3:4), Joseph does not share Pentephres' table. Joseph sits alone, instead, for he "routinely did not eat with Egyptians, because this was an abomination to [Joseph]." (As. 7:1)[37]

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[34] Cf. The introduction in Warren, *Food and Transformation*.

[35] The tripartite bread-cup-oil imagery conveys belonging in either the outside or inside group through genitive construction with negative nouns (bread of strangulation, cup of treachery, oil of destruction [As. 8:5; 21:14 [only bread and cup]]) or positive nouns (bread of your life, cup of your blessing [As.8:9]; bread of life, cup of immortality, blessed oil of incorruption [As. 15:5; 16:16; 19:5 [only bread and cup]]) Christoph Burchard, "The Importance of Joseph and Aseneth for the Study of the New Testament: A General Survey and a Fresh Look at the Lord's Supper," in *Gesammelte Studien Zu Joseph & Aseneth*, ed. Christoph Burchard (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 263–95; Randall D. Chesnutt, "Perceptions of Oil in Early Judaism and the Meal Formula in Joseph and Aseneth," *J. Study Pseudepigr.* 14.2 (2005): 113–32; Randall D. Chesnutt, "23. Joseph and Aseneth: Food as an Identity Marker," in *23. Joseph and Aseneth: Food as an Identity Marker* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 357–65; Angela Standhartinger, "Intersections of Gender, Status, Ethnos and Religion in Joseph and Aseneth," in *Early Jewish Writings*, ed. Eileen Schuller and Marie-Theresa Wacker, The Bible and Women 3.1 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 69–87; Standhartinger, "Intersections." With whom one eats is equally important in Aseneth. Joseph refuses to break bread with the Egyptians, the space between their tables acting as a physical boundary between cultures (As. 7:2-6). Angela Standhartinger, "Humour in Joseph and Aseneth," *J. Study Pseudepigr.* 23.4 (2015): 239–59. Consumption of earthly or heavenly food also divides God's elect from other members of Jacob's household, and Aseneth's ingestion of a honeycomb offered to her by an angel marks her association with the divine. Meredith J. C. Warren, *Food and Transformation in Ancient Mediterranean Literature*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series 14 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2019), ???

[36] On the connectivity of concepts pertaining to social and sensory intimacies (like food, eating, and sexual activities), cf. Warren, Food and Transformation, especially pp. 20– 22, 27, 31–33.

[37] This emphasis on Joseph makes his dining separately a sign of respectful hospitality, inverting Gen. 43:32 where the Egyptians refuse to eat with the Hebrews because it is an abomination to them (the Egyptians). Ahearn-Kroll, "Joseph and Aseneth," p. 2539.

Joseph's separateness is then reinforced and sexualized in his first sighting of and interaction with Aseneth. The thoughts and ideas Joseph expresses explicitly connect the boundaries placed on with whom one eats are then with the narrative's previous discourse of embodied ethnicity through an emphasis on appropriate or inappropriate use of mouths. First, Joseph notices Aseneth staring at him from another floor, and assumes that she will be sexually aggressive. His fear is based on previous experiences: "For all the wives and daughters of the notable men and satraps of all the land of Egypt (πᾶσαι αἱ γυναῖκες καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες τῶν μεγιστάνων καὶ τῶν σατραπῶν πάσης γῆς Αἰγύπτου) used to annoy him (desiring) to sleep with him" (As. 7:3).[38] Joseph's anxious thoughts use language reminiscent of the description of Aseneth's beauty (τῆς γῆς, As. 1:4; τῶν θυγατέρων τῶν Αἰγυπτίων, As. 1:5), and he thereby emphasizes Aseneth's status as a female member of the Egyptian elite. In seeing Aseneth as like the other elite Egyptian woman, Joseph imagines her as a stereotype of "the strange women" (γυναικὸς ἀλλοτρίας)–the sexualized, gendered and ethnic 'Other'–whom his father taught him to avoid (As. 7:5).[39]

A shift in perspective shifts the scene's emotions.[40] Pentephres is able to convince Joseph that Aseneth is no threat, and Joseph welcomes her acquaintance (As. 7:7-8:3). But the boundary is redrawn when Pentephres suggests that Aseneth kiss Joseph in welcome (As. 8:4). Returning to the familiar language of 'strange' or 'foreign', Joseph frames his rejection of Aseneth within the dichotomous binary of 'strange' (ἀλλότριος) and 'god-fearing' (θεοσεβής). What a person does with their mouth is central in distinguishing the god-fearing person from the strange: the god-fearer "praises the living God, eats bread of life, drinks (a) blessed cup of immortality"; whereas the 'strange person' "praises dead and dumb idols with her mouth and eats bread of strangulation from their table, drinks (a) cup of treachery from their drink offering" (As. 8:5). A god-fearing person will only kiss another member of "his tribe and kindred" (ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς συγγενείας αὐτοῦ, As. 8:6-7).[41] And while these stipulations are equally required for men

[38] This is an exaggerated allusion to Potiphar's wife (Gen 39). According to Tim Whitmarsh, this reference lies beneath Aseneth likes palimpsest. Tim Whitmarsh, "Joseph et Aséneth: érotisme et religion," in Les hommes et les dieux dans l'ancien roman: Actes du colloque des tours, 22-24 octobre 2009, ed. B. Pouderon and C. Bost-Pouderon (Lyon: Maison de l'orient et de la Méditerranée — Jean Pouilloux, 2012), 237–52. Angela Standhartinger considers this exaggeration to be part of the humour in Aseneth ("Humour in Joseph and Aseneth," pp. 243-247). "and when all the wives and daughters of Egyptian men looked at Joseph, they used to suffer horribly because of his beauty." (As. 7:3) ὅτι ἠνόχλουν αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἱ γυναῖκες καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες τῶν μεγιστάνων καὶ τῶν σατραπῶν πάσης γῆς Αἰγύπτου τοῦ κοιμηθῆναι μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ· καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ γυναῖκες καὶ θυγατέρες τῶν Αἰγυπτίων, ὡς ἑώρων τὸν Ἰωσήφ, κακῶς ἔπασχον ἐπὶ τῷ κάλλει αὐτοῦ.

[39] "<My> children, fervently guard yourselves against the strange woman, (from) associating with her. For association with her is destruction and ruin." (As. 7:5) (φυλάξασθε, τέκνα <μου>, ἰσχυρῶς ἀπὸ **γυναικὸς ἀλλοτρίας** τοῦ κοινωνῆσαι αὐτῇ, ἡ γὰρ κοινωνία αὐτῆς ἀπώλειά ἐστι καὶ διαφθορά)

[40] Whitmarsh, "Joseph et Aséneth," pp. ????

[41] We discuss As. 8:5-7 in gender-neutral terms to emphasise that these boundaries and social norms are important for persons of all genders in the narrative. Joseph's speech is, however, explicitly gendered/sexed: "It is not fitting for a god-fearing man who praises the living God with his mouth and eats blessed bread of life, drinks (a) blessed cup of immortality, and anoints himself with blessed oil of incorruption to kiss a strange woman who praises dead and dumb idols with her mouth and eats bread of strangulation from their table, drinks (a) cup of treachery from their drink offering, and anoints herself with oil of destruction. 6 But a god-fearing man will kiss his mother and his sister—(the daughter) of his mother—the sister from his tribe and kindred, and the woman with whom he shares a bed, all those who praise the living God with their mouths. 7 Likewise, it is not fitting for a god-fearing woman to

and women, the act of kissing is sexualised in that the examples Joseph discusses are between men and women, never between women or men (e.g., two sisters, or two male/masculine friends). In Aseneth, then, what food a person eats pre-determines with whom they can lock lips. Joseph may therefore collect Egyptian grain, but he will not 'eat Egyptian food'.

Food and feasting in *Esther* and *Aseneth* share a literary function in that they both create narrative context for gendered and ethnicizing discourses on propriety and morality, and these discourses drive the action in each story. The roles of the heroines in each story, however, is distinctly different at the beginning of each story, as Esther is absent from the initial banquets, whereas Aseneth's presence is centered.

2.4. Topos: Behavior Towards Male Authority Figures

It is now a commonplace to assert the patriarchal or kyriarchal nature of ancient cultures.[42] Considering the variations in such systems, and how women are depicted therein continues to provide new information about men thought about and with women, the female, and the feminine. To continue our study of Esther and Aseneth, we therefore turn to their comportment in relation to the men in their stories, analyzing their compliance and/or resistance to these figures and their explicit or implicit expectation of the heroines.

Although Esther is regarded as beautiful, what is most striking about her throughout all texts is how she "finds favor" with authority figures—and seems to obey them. This is the opposite of the former queen, Vashti/Astin, a beautiful and ethnically ambiguous figure herself, who does not obey the King, and thus, wrongs the King as well as worrying the elite men that she will inspire all women to rebel against their [male] authority figures (1:17-18). So while Esther and Aseneth are not similar (for the time being) in their behaviors at the beginning of their narratives, there is still a counterpart or similar female figure in the book(s) of Esther for Aseneth.

Attitude towards men generally and behaviors towards male authority figures in particular are an important means of showing Aseneth's reformed character. Aseneth's initial characterisation is distinctly unbecoming for an otherwise well-heeled socialite: she is boastful, arrogant, and disdainful towards all men (As. 2:1). The audience then watches this attitude in action, as Aseneth rejects her father's desire to marry her to Joseph and then, adding insult to patriarchal injury, proceeds to slander Joseph's name based on hearsay (As. 4:9-10). Aseneth's angry refusal to do as her father asks shames Pentephres (ᾐδέσθη, As. 4:12), as she

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kiss a strange man because this is an abomination before the Lord God." (As. 8:5-7) (οὐκ ἔστι προσῆκον ἀνδρὶ θεοσεβεῖ, ὃς εὐλογεῖ τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ τὸν θεὸν τὸν ζῶντα καὶ ἐσθίει ἄρτον εὐλογημένον ζωῆς καὶ πίνει ποτήριον (5) εὐλογημένον ἀθανασίας καὶ χρίεται χρίσματι εὐλογημέν<ῳ> ἀφθαρσίας, φιλῆσαι γυναῖκα ἀλλοτρίαν, ἥτις εὐλογεῖ τῷ στόματι αὐτῆς εἴδωλα νεκρὰ καὶ κωφὰ καὶ ἐσθίει ἐκ τῆς τραπέζης αὐτῶν ἄρτον ἀγχόνης καὶ πίνει ἐκ τῆς σπονδῆς αὐτῶν ποτήριον ἐνέδρας καὶ χρίεται χρίσματι ἀπωλείας. **(6)** ἀλλ' ἀνὴρ θεοσεβὴς φιλήσει τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν τὴν ἐκ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς συγγενείας αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα τὴν σύγκοιτον αὐτοῦ, αἵτινες εὐλογοῦσι τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν τὸν θεὸν τὸν ζῶντα. **(7)** ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ γυναικὶ θεοσεβεῖ οὐκ ἔστι προσῆκον φιλῆσαι ἄνδρα ἀλλότριον, διότι βδέλυγμά ἐστι τοῦτο ἐνώπιον κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ.)

[42] Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*; Meyers, "In the Household and Beyond"; "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?"

simultaneously disrespects her *kyrios*, and a man who is both Pentephres' guest (*xenos*) and an important official in Pharaoh's court.[43] As if this were not enough, Aseneth arrogantly presumes to marry the son of Pharaoh.[44] Aseneth's beauty is only skin deep.

Aseneth's diatribe continues the classicist, gendered, ethnic language that was used to characterise herself, in addition to incorporating new elements.[45] Aseneth describes Joseph as a sexually rapacious Canaanite shepherd's son with divinatory skills more suited to old women (As. 4:10); he is, in other words, insufficiently male, comes from the wrong socio-economic background, and behaves in ways that affirm his lack of proper class, ethnicity, and gender. This unflattering characterisation of Joseph is explicitly contrasted with the son of Pharaoh. Where Joseph is "the son of a shepherd from the land of Chanaan" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ποιμένος ἐκ γῆς Χαναὰν As. 4:10), the son of Pharaoh is "the firstborn son of Pharaoh the king," and he rules "the entire land of Egypt" (τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ βασιλέως Φαραὼ τῷ πρωτοτόκῳ, ὅτι αὐτός ἐστι βασιλεὺς πάσης τῆς γῆς Αἰγύπτου As. 4:11). Aseneth rhetorically indicates her self-identification with all things elite and Egyptian through the threefold, dichotomous rejection of Joseph in favour of the son of Pharaoh (son < firstborn son (ergo heir), shepherd < Pharaoh the king, Chanaan < Egypt).[46]

Much could be said about these differences as the two characters begin their stories. Esther is quite clearly disadvantaged in relation to these themes as a minoritized Jew in Achaemenid Persia, whereas Aseneth seems to be quite privileged and at "home." While there is much language involved regarding Aseneth as something to be consumed as well as a direct connection to body/land, it should be noted that there is no equivalent rhetoric play in Esther; the King takes what he presumes to be rightfully his, *her* body and even motherland is used and owned. She is regarded as one of many women's bodies and lands, placed into a proverbial melting pot that washes away distinctions. The differences between the two persist, as Esther is consistently called "pleasing" in relation to the many men and even non-binary Eunuch figures, and Aseneth abhors men. A further difference is in the heroines' respective abilities to express their own marital desires: Esther's feelings about marriage/sex with either Mordechai or the King are silenced in the MT, but Aseneth makes her desire to be further connected with the local monarchy clear. Yet, despite all else, both stories show the elevation of an already elite status in relation to both ethnic and royal power through marriage, for Esther is the issue of the royal line

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[43] 4:12 "When Pentephres heard these things, he was ashamed to speak any longer about Joseph to his daughter, Aseneth, because she responded to him boldly and with arrogance and anger." (καὶ ᾐδέσθη Πεντεφρῆς ἔτι λαλῆσαι τῇ θυγατρὶ αὐτοῦ Ἀσενὲθ περὶ Ἰωσήφ, διότι θρασέως καὶ μετὰ ἀλαζονείας καὶ ὀργῆς ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ.) On honour/shame cf. NAME; on the importance of hospitality, cf. NAME.

[44] As. 4:11 "No, but I shall be married to the firstborn son of the king because he is king of all the land of Egypt." οὐχί, ἀλλὰ γαμήσομαι τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ βασιλέως Φαραὼ τῷ πρωτοτόκῳ, ὅτι αὐτός ἐστι βασιλεὺς πάσης τῆς γῆς Αἰγύπτου.

[45] That is new to the story–these ideas were commonplace either Jewish literature or the ancient Mediterranean. Standhartinger probably talks about this? Did I in my diss?

[46] And though Aseneth will come to recognise that Joseph is the firstborn son of God (e.g., 18:11; 21:2; 23:10), the inferiority of shepherds to kings, and of Chanaan to Egypt is never addressed—neither explicitly, nor implicitly. One could perhaps infer that to be a shepherd is to be equivalent to a king through the wide-spread metaphorical overlap of the two categories in ancient West-Asian and Hellenic literature (cf. Agamemnon as king of men and shepherd of his people, all the references to God as such), but such an argument is beyond the scope of this project. We return to the dichotomy of Chanaan and Egypt in the conclusion of this paper.

of ancient Yehud whose status is raised by her relationship with the powerful Persian King Ahaseurus, and Aseneth, daughter of priestly and aristocratic Pentephres, desires to further her status through the Son of Pharaoh. But this is not where these stories end.

2.5. Section Summary

Esther and Aseneth undergo considerable changes in their stories. But, taking stock of everything that has been discussed up to this point, several points must be underlined. First, both *Esther* and *Aseneth* use a female protagonist to explore power dynamics between minoritized Jewish groups and local governments. Second, these female bodies are ethnically and economically marked by their physical qualities and the ways they are dressed. Third, the willingness or ability of each heroine to work within the kyriarchal systems of her narrated world functions as a means of evaluating her moral qualities, and thus those of the community she represents.

The fourth and final point is one of distinction. Esther is a member of the minorized Jewish community in diaspora and Aseneth is a member of the hegemonic Egyptian community. The significance of change in their respective narratives, which is always connected to their symbolic role as representatives of the entire Jewish community, is therefore going to be about how their identities are shifted in order to become such a representative. In other words, how their identities are altered will be about shifting "back" to a her Jewish identity for Esther, but "forward" to a new Jewish identity for Aseneth. Let us proceed to the analysis of these transformations.

3. Making the 'Perfect' Women

The same means by which the authors of *Esther* and *Aseneth* conveyed ethnic attachments in each story's opening chapters, analyzed appear in the heroines' negotiations of identity as they are transformed to better convey proper ethnic attachments. In this section, we therefore analyze the same *topoi* as above, kinship relations and behaviors to male authorities, clothing, and food, but with a focus on how these are used to destabilize earlier displays of identity. Esther's insecure attachment to her Jewish ancestry is made strong; Aseneth's secure but misplaced attachments are somewhat detached from Egyptian and idolatrous worship and redirected into proper attachment to Jewish ethnic ties and religion.

3.1. Topos: Family/Kinship/Behavior

The motif of resistance/compliance distinguishes our two heroines, as Aseneth starts her story with behaviors more Vashti-like than Esther-like. But, ultimately, both stories will show that the heroine's submission to the male authority of social and kinship structures is not just preferable, but rewarded.

The only time it seems that Esther *does* resist Mordecai is in chapter four, and the moralizing of this behavior is hotly debated amongst scholars. Has she become fully Persian, the secret of her Jewishness now internalized, or even so comfortable that she does not want to fight

on behalf of her people? What may be helpful here is to remember that there is a mediator speaking between Esther and Mordecai in chapter four, Hatach. As Tamber-Rosenau reflects,

> "Will their messages back and forth be used to expose Esther as a Jew, paint the queen and Mordechai as disloyal, and reinforce Haman's case that the Jews must be killed? Perhaps Esther's protestations are not for Mordechai's benefit but for Hataḥ and anyone he might be telling about the messages. Maybe Esther knows she needs to be seen as properly obedient, so she cannot too readily agree to flout palace rules… Esther needs to pass as a loyal and subservient wife, even as she passes political messages back and forth."[47]

Esther's relationship to her people, although seemingly connected with a thin string, is much more complicated than a simple binary yes or no. Her very life is on the line. Through continued themes of clothes and food, made explicit in words in the Greek versions, Esther maintains connection to her people despite what has happened to her.

For Aseneth, the shift from Egyptian to Jew necessitates changes in her kinship connection and her behavior towards men. The author has this heroine connect the ideas of behavior and kinship herself in a series of soliloquies (chapters 11-13) in which Aseneth imagines the reactions of family, community, and divine beings to her desires to marry Joseph and worship his deity. Nathan Hays has demonstrated that Aseneth's prayers are structured so as to first distance the heroine from her biological family, before creating a rhetorical proximity with the God of Joseph and, ultimately, Joseph and his family.[48] Aseneth describes an imaginary rejection by her father, mother, and all of Egypt's elite society, which leaves her orphaned, destitute, and alone (e.g., As. 12:5, 12).[49] As Hays rightly points out, Aseneth is able to create a rhetorical proximity to God as father of the fatherless because of the imaginary distance with her father Pentephres and the ethno-religious society he represents as a priest.[50] Building on Hays' argument, we draw attention to how this (re)imagined kinship overlaps with behaviors, which are associated with class and ethnicity.

Aseneth's disavowal of biological family and earthly riches in favor of figurative kinship and heavenly wealth is interconnected with behaviors and their resulting attitudes. When she belonged to the Egyptian elite, Aseneth was a "*parthenos* and queen," and "pompous, arrogant, and thriving in [her] wealth" (As. 12:5). This self-characterization echoes the narrator's earlier words: "Aseneth used to disdain and despise every man, and she was boastful and arrogant before everyone." (As. 2:1) To be worthy of marriage to Joseph, Aseneth rejects these mental and material states, which she refers to as the "temporary and vanishing" gifts of her father Pentephres' inheritance (As. 12:15); instead desiring the "incorruptible and eternal" gifts of [God's] inheritance (As. 12:15), and creating a "humble state" from which to address God (As. 13:1). Aseneth's newfound humility before God is, moreover, portrayed as central to her desire for closeness with Joseph, as she subsequently begs God: "And you, O Lord, entrust me to him

[47] Tamber-Rosenau, "Esther, Drag, and Agency," 109-110.
[48] Hays, "Orphanhood and Parenthood in Joseph and Aseneth."
[49] Another fascinating link given Esther's orphan story, see appendix.
[50] Hays, "Orphanhood and Parenthood," 37.

as a servant and slave./ And I will make his bed, wash his feet, and serve him,/ and I will be a slave for him and I will serve him forever." (As. 13:15) Aseneth's fierce independence, which fueled her rejection of Joseph (As. 4:9-12) is now considered hubristic slander (As. 6:2-8; 12:4, 13; 21:19), to be replaced by servile humility.[51]

3.2. Topos: Clothing

Esther and Aseneth both use ritual self-abasement to remove all markers of identity associated with "foreign" ethnicity, elite status, and (to some degree) gender.[52] This ritual cleansing makes it possible for them to (re)become ethnically Jewish and thus to represent that community.

Although chapter four of all texts emphasize the differences between Mordecai (as well as all Jews in the Empire) and Esther via dress, in the Greek texts, Esther rectifies this difference. In re-connecting with her kin *and* her god, she flees to YHWH, and taking off her "garments of glory" and putting on "the garments of distress and mourning;" she undoes her bathing and covers herself with ashes and shit, and further covers even her seemingly natural beauty with her tangled hair (C:13). All that had been done in chapter two is undone—all that had connected her to a "white-washed" Persian essentialist ethnicity is resisted in adorning herself with the same plight and thus, clothing, as her people. However, in the MT, there is no mention of changing clothes; but a resistance still yet may be occurring (see next section).

Aseneth's attire is repeatedly used to demonstrate her identity, especially as a visual means of associating her with one group or another throughout the story.[53] The detailed costume changes in *Aseneth* act as narrative signposts along the heroine's transformation, starting with her

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[51] That Aseneth must fit herself into the feminine box of gendered social expectations is well documented–Cf, e.g., Kraemer, Standhartinger, Sheres, "Aseneth—From Priestess to Handmaid and Slave." And though such critics are warranted, there is a complexity to the representation of gender and ethnicity in *Aseneth* that undermines clear or simple statements about women's subordination to male characters, or the superiority of Jews over Egyptians . Joseph is positively marked by his meekness and submission to God, Pentephres the priest and the Pharaoh are kindly father-figures and benefactors who recognize the power of Joseph's God, Simeon and Benjamin are chastised for that impulsive anger and vengeful bloodlust, and the Son of Pharaoh is ultimately condemned for his violence, unchecked anger, and treason. Aseneth's rejection of arrogance, anger, and idolatry in favor of humility, submission, and the Most High God stands sharp contradistinction to her foil–the Son of Pharaoh (Inowlocki, "Le roman d'Aseneth: un roman féministe?" 115). The simple binaries of feminine/submissive and masculine/dominant, and Jew/good and Egyptian/bad is thus complicated by the depiction of positive and negative behavior by characters from all ethno-religious and gender groups, and by the overtly divine characteristic of numerous characters. On the use of gender to describe human-divine relationships in *Aseneth*, cf. Glass, "Daughter of Hebrews and Hellens," 143-145; and for a general discussion and consideration in Philo, cf. Conway, "Gender and Divine Relativity." Inowlocki also sees Joseph and the Son of Pharaoh as foils ("Le roman d'Aseneth: un roman feministe?"), although Glass thinks that Levi is a better foil than Joseph ("Daughter of Hebrews and Hellens," 223). There is no criticism of aristocracy or slavery in *Aseneth*. Standhartinger, "Intersections."; Charles, *The Silencing of Slaves in Early Jewish and Christian Texts*, 41-43.

[52] The donning of sackcloth and ashes, and the accompanying gestures of weeping, wailing, gnashing teeth, fasting, and speaking to gods or humans were not inherently gendered actions in antiquity. In uncovering her hair, Aseneth is associated with the 'neutral masculinity' of the initiate (Kraemer, W*hen Aseneth Met Joseph*, 197; Kraemer is discussing a later scene (As. 14:7), but the observation applies here, too.). One could make a similar argument about Esther's actions. On Aseneth's masculinity, see Glass, "Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes," 143-144.

[53] E.g., Warren, "A Robe like Lightning"; Hartvigsen, *Aseneth's Transformation*, 52-58; Hartvigsen, "The Complexity of Aseneth's Transformation."

overt associations with Egyptian wealth and worship in 3:6, and continuing with how she demonstrates her rejection thereof and then her divine acceptance into Joseph's household and Jacob's family.

Beginning with clothing as a distance marker, Aseneth shows her humility and suppliance through the use of quintessential objects and actions.[54] In doing so, she rejects her elite Egyptian perspective of insider/outsider status and all that these entail, and adopts Joseph's perspective (i.e., a Jewish perspective). After Joseph rejects her (As. 8:5-8), Aseneth proceeds to distance herself from everything that marked her as Egyptian, wealthy, well-connected, and, to some extent, female. She refuses companionship (As. 10:4-7), removes all items of dress previously donned (As. 10:10), and, along with her gold and silver idols, sacrificial offerings and ritual items, defenestrates the lot (As. 10:10-13). Having fetched her black, mourning tunic (As. 10:8-9), Aseneth girds herself in sackcloth, undoes her hair and covers it in ashes, and proceeds to weep and beat her breast (As. 10:14-15). It is in this dejected state that she speaks her soliloquies, and thus the extreme vulnerability of being a solitary orphan, without economic or social resources upon which to depend, is emphasized by how her current attire of sackcloth and ashes performs her humbled and pathetic state (As. 13:2-10). The emphasis is furthered through the juxtaposition of this current state with Aseneth's characterization of herself as previously being the "daughter of Pentephres the priest, the *parthenos* and queen, [who] was once pompous, arrogant, and thriving in [her] wealth more than all people (do)" (As. 12:5). Filthy, clothed in rough material, and alone in a room emptied of wealth, Aseneth has successfully removed all signs of class, ethnicity, and gender, and is now a blank slate, a mannequin to be dolled up in attire appropriate to her future status.

Aseneth's new wardrobe is selected for her by none other than a divine emissary. Arriving spontaneously in her room on the morning of the eight day (As. 14:1), this angelic being is called only the Anthropos (Ἄνθρωπος), and he is the spitting image of Joseph, except that his body bears the astral, meteorological, and metallurgic signs of divinity.[55] The Anthropos will confirm that Aseneth's words have been heard and accepted by the Most High God, inform her of her upcoming nuptials to Joseph, rename her City of Refuge (πολίς καταφυγῆς), and bestows upon her the obligation to act as refuge to all nations and peoples (ἔθνη πολλὰ καὶ … λαοὶ πολλοί) who seek out the Most High God (As. 15:7). But, before saying these things, he commands her: "Wash your face and your hands with spring water, and put on a new—untouched—and splendid linen robe, and gird your waist with the new, double girdle of your *parthenia*." (As. 14:12) Aseneth does as he says, and in this outfit she hears of her new role as City of Refuge, and even shares a meal with the Anthropos (more on this below). In the

[54] These items and behaviors have been associated with rituals classified as mourning, repentance, and initiation (cf., Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical*, 13-31). Ubiquitous to the ancient Mediterranean and West Asia

[55] "And Aseneth raised her head, and she looked, and behold, (there was) a man similar to Joseph in every way with the robe, crown, and royal staff, except that his face was like lightning, his eyes were like (the) radiance of (the) sun, the hairs of his head was like a flame of fire that is kindled (by a torch), and his hands and feet were like iron that is shining from a fire, <and> sparks were leaping off from both his hands and feet." (As. 14:9)

liminal space of divine encounter, Aseneth's first step in identity (re)formation involves high quality, but simple garments.

The Anthropos instructs Aseneth on how to dress a second time, and this outfit reintegrates overt signs of wealth. He says, "put on your wedding robe, the ancient and most important robe that has been stored in your room from the beginning. And put on all of your wedding jewelry and adorn yourself like a good bride, and go to meet Joseph." (As. 15:10) After the Anthropos departs, Aseneth follows his instructions, donning her "choice wedding robe (which was) like lightning in appearance," and "[girding] herself with a golden and royal girdle that was (made) of costly stones", and putting on golden bracelets, golden trousers, expensive jewelry with precious stones, a golden crown, a bridal veil, and taking up a scepter (As. 18:5-6). Whereas her earlier outfit drew attention to her Egyptian ethnicity, aristocratic status, and idolatry, Aseneth's costuming parallels of scepter, crown, and lighting now create a sartorial proximity between Aseneth, and both Joseph and the Anthropos, thus establishing her divine, Jewish, and (still Egyptian) aristocratic status.[56]

3.3. Topos: Food/Fasting

In seeking to (re)ethnicize themselves, Esther and Aseneth must change their relationship to food and its consumption. Unlike clothing, this body-focused action is intimately internal, and so conveys the physical depths of these alterations to identity.

Where the Greek texts emphasize a change in clothing *and* ritual fasting connected to their deity, the MT only has Esther call for a communal fast, and not in relation to a god of any kind. And yet, the lack of mention of a clothing change, while still calling for a fast may be still playing with concepts of reconnection with kin and plight with a "lucid" view of her situation. Wetter writes,

> "She remains in the women's quarters of the palace, but reasserts control of her body. And by submitting her body to the communal fast, she implicitly declares her physical context irrelevant. On the surface, she is still Queen of Persia, but resistance has begun."[57]

The MT explicitly acknowledges the reality of what it may mean to "play the game" in the royal court, which still means solidarity with one's people; while the Greek texts make it an absolute necessity to have a god's help. The fasting and prayer(s) in the Greek may find fruit in OG D:8, AT 5:7, where God changes the spirit of the king in Esther's favor. Just the King "seeing" Esther provides favor in MT 5:1. So whereas the Greek texts emphasize complete attachment to her people in clothing and food, the MT allows for a both/and, an embodiment of all borders and boundaries.

As aforementioned, it is also through food that Esther is able to lure and lull Haman to his fall. Although the Greek texts make a distinction that Esther does not eat with these foreigners

[56] Warren, "A Robe like Lightning"; Glass, "A Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes"; Hartvigsen, "The Complexity of Aseneth's Transformation."
[57] Wetter, "In Unexpected Places," 332.

(C:28), she still yet prepares food for them, not once, but twice. Given connotations of women and hospitality that depict them as often *not* acting subjects in these scenes, Esther's actions in inviting and hosting are fantastical. Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme's work on hospitality and gender do briefly mention Esther's "extraordinary" behaviors in these scenes in a footnote.[58] And yet, given her connections to Proverbs 9, she may be embodying *both* Lady Wisdom and Folly, as her "sumptuous" meal leads to Haman eating at death's table. Granted, Esther is also, like Rahab, a sexually compromised woman;[59] Haman's inclusion in these meals may add to the King's paranoia—Haman is not deposed due to his genocidal plots, but because he is seen violating Esther, the King's property, in *his* house (7:8). Ties, then, to sexuality and food are very much present, though implicit.

In *Aseneth* food plays a central role in Aseneth's transformation in chapters 8-18 and her subsequent integration in Joseph's household in chapters 19-21. During Aseneth's seven, solitary days spent in sackcloth and ashes, she eats no bread and drinks no water (e.g., As. 10:1; 12:17). Such fasting, in combination with the sackcloth, ashes, and isolation, are common ritual practices.[60] In Aseneth's case, fasting goes further, for one can infer that this week-long fast has allowed her body to expel any last trace of food or drink associated with idolatrous practice; her silenced and voiced words have purged her mind of erroneous thought and attitude. Just as putting on sackcloth and ashes made her body a canvas for reshaping identity through clothing, fasting and self-narrativizing her actions have completely emptied Aseneth's mind-body. She is ready to be refilled.

The refilling of Aseneth's mind-body comes in two forms: the Anthropos and Joseph.[61] The Anthropos affirms the efficacy of Aseneth's plea–God has heard her, and the Anthropos has personally written her name at the beginning of the book of the living (As. 15:4). But there is more. The verbal intercourse and divine honeycomb that the angel and woman share definitely associates Aseneth with the heavenly realm, resulting in her transformation into a divine being herself.[62] Having been previously emptied of her idolatrous foods and thoughts, Aseneth has now been refilled with the Anthropos' heavenly mysteries and divine honeycomb.

Once the Anthropos has departed (As. 17:7-10) and Aseneth has changed into her wedding ensemble, she is ready to meet Joseph for a second time. Joseph does not initially recognize this transfigured woman (As. 19:4-5), but once they have exchanged stories of the

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[58] Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, "Death at the Hand of a Woman: Hospitality and Gender in the Hebrew Bible," *Gender and Methodology in the Ancient Near East: Approaches from Assyriology and Beyond,* eds. Stephanie Lynn Budin, Megan Cifarelli, Agnès Garcia-Ventura, and Adelina Millet Albà (Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2018), footnote 30, 333. This may, however, have more to do with the fact that Greek norms of hospitality do shift in regard to gender.

[59] Another Queen who feeds people is Jezebel in 1 Kings 18:19, a dangerous foreign queen. Could it be similar connotations here?

[60] Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical*, **X-Y**.

[61] While the eroticism of the encounter between Aseneth and the Anthropos is widely acknowledged, Lipsett actually understands it to be a sexual one: *Desiring Conversion*, 210-212.

[62] Warren, *Food and Transformation*, **X-Y**. Warren argues that sartorial imagery connects Aseneth with the Anthropos, "A Robe like Lightning," to which Glass adds that Aseneth's body itself is transformed, "Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes," **X-Y**.

previous week's events, the kisses and shared meal denied in their initial encounter are now possible. They embrace and enter Pentephres' house together (As. 19:10-20:5). It is here, seated side-by-each at the table, that Aseneth's parents find their daughter and her bridegroom, and, together, Pentephres, his wife, Aseneth, and Joseph "they ate, drank, and enjoyed themselves" (As. 21:6)–the previous divide between Joseph and his Egyptian hosts seemingly forgotten.[63] The previous concern for sharing foods between Egyptians and Jews is indeed so forgotten that none other than the Pharaoh holds a banquet in honor of Joseph and Aseneth's wedding (As. 21:2-7) In terms that echo Esth. 2:18, the Pharaoh decrees, "Every person who does work during the seven days of the wedding celebration of Joseph and Aseneth will suffer death!" (As. 21:8).
It is here, then, in *Aseneth* 15-21 and *Esther* 4-8, that we find the heroines living, as many would call it, as hybrids.[64] Although Esther had been disconnected in some regard to her Jewish ancestry, she embodies and performs *both* Jewish and Persian markers in each of these *topoi*, even in the Greek versions, and transforms in the process; she is (re)connected to both. Although the Greek texts emphasize her Jewish ancestry over and even against her connections to Persia, it is much more ambiguous in the MT—especially in relation to YHWH and the absence of ethno-religious identification throughout. *Aseneth* 8-21 narrates the breaking down and reconfiguring of Aseneth:[65] She is transformed from an idolatrous, earthly, Egyptian, aristocratic woman, governed by extreme emotions and resistant to male authority; into a pious, heavenly, Jewish, aristocratic woman, who demonstrates appropriate emotions and responses to male authority.[66] For all that Aseneth has undeniably been transformed, the exact ethno-religious significance of this transformation remains ambiguous. As Angela Standhartinger and Kirsten Marie Hartvigsen observe, there are no explicitly ethnic descriptors of Aseneth after her encounter with the Anthropos or marriage.[67] While these women's bodies are shifting into what the authors desire them to be through kinship ties, behaviors toward men and even god(s), clothing, and food, it must be noted that it is through these *topoi* that attachments and detachments to ethnicity are transforming. Who are these women, really?

4. Shifting Focus: From Heroines to Heroes

Although the stories of *Esther* and *Aseneth* are coming to a close, the conflicts of their stories more broadly must still yet be resolved, as well as finally situating these women's place within them. They are both now "insiders," even while being embodied "outsiders;" however, their female-identified bodies still will need to be properly transformed to the ethnic group's standards

[63] Standhartinger "Intersections".
[64] It should be noted that Bhaba's approach has long been contested as it is a "response-oriented model of hybridity," in that the "hybrid" lacks agency; but if one were to use Gloria Anzaldua's work *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), there is much of a rejection of essentialism and purity tests in that the past is also hybrid, and the borderlands is a new creative space of being; see Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 59-60.
[65] For discussion of Aseneth's emotional 'breakdown', cf. Mirguet, "And Aseneth saw Joseph...".
[66] On Aseneth as an otherworldly or divine being, see Glass, "Aseneth's Epiphanies"; and "A Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes," 64-118.
[67] Standhartinger, "Intersections," **X-Y**; Hartvigsen "The Complexity of Aseneth's Transformation," **X-Y**.

involving gender and power in order to truly belong once the conflict has been resolved.[68] While the previously discussed *topoi* are still present in the passages we will now analyze, the narratives' shifting of gender and power are mainly reflected through the mass wartime deaths of nameless people, before the final "settling" in space and place that erases the women's entirely, a narrative move that places the women's bodies on bottom.

4.1. Topos: War and The Death of the Nameless Enemy

Both of these stories feature the wartime deaths of mass numbers of nameless people. These anonymous collectives further the ethnic and classist messages of these stories in clearly demonstrating assumptions about whose lives are expendable.

Esther nine outlines a day of defensive war in both Susa, the center, and in the peripheries of the King's other provinces, but also *another* day in Susa that follows the first, as something that Esther asks for when Ahaseurus inquires about her wishes (9:13).[69] Haman and his ten sons are killed in a reversal of her ancestor Saul's fate—offering a potential religious component to the MT story that is otherwise absent[70]—alongside 75,000 plus "enemies" of the Jews. And yet, given that *anyone* could participate in the genocide of the Jewish peoples because of the "enemy" Haman's decree sent out in *all* languages in 3:12-13, it may not have been that these were only Amalekites, but could include many other collectivities that decided to attack on 13 Adar.[71] The additional 300 men slaughtered on 14 Adar is an upsetting addition for many that seems to lack any sort of justification. Interestingly, many join in the fight on the side of the Jewish people out of "fear;" and with a *hapax legomena* in the MT, 8:17 creates great disagreement as to continued blurry boundaries of ethnicity on the battlegrounds.[72] Not only this, but given Esther's ask of a second day and the feasting of Purim that parallels the other feasts throughout, as well as the framing of the verb *ratsown* in relation to the heavy drinking of the palace in 1:18 and the description of the battle from the perspective of the Jews in 9:5, many scholars have questioned if, at this point, the attachment to and internalization of empire and hegemony (Persia) has become irresistible.

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[68] From Cynthia Enloe, *Twelve Feminist Lessons of War:* "In any patriarchy, if what a woman does is defined as just acting according to her 'natural' femininity, then that woman and her contribution can be minimized, trivialized, unrewarded, and swept under history's rug," 72.

[69] Based on a pattern that Fry notes in her forthcoming book *Esther Keeps the Score,* this could be Esther projecting what she thinks the King desires, not necessarily her own, a feature of the trauma response of fawning consistent with Esther's behavior throughout the book that has not been articulated yet in current discourses of Esther. This does not absolve her of the bloodshed that occurs after the request, but does add texture. Also, the only reason the war was necessary was due to the fact that the edict could not be undone, but written against.

[70] Not so much divine retribution, but a human correction of what has been seen as a stain in their lineage that affects their connection to the divine due to Saul's "mistakes" in 1 Samuel 15. See both Anne-Mareike Wetter, "How Jewish is Esther? Or: How is Esther Jewish? Tracing Ethnic and Religious Identity in a Diaspora Narrative," vol. 123, no. 4, 2011: 596-603 and Joshua Joel Spoelstra, "Surviving the Agagites: A Postcolonial Reading of Esther 8-9," *OTE* 28/1 (2015).

[71] Given that Haman is not always an Amalekite/Agagite as seen in Greek versions of *Esther*, his ethnic makeup changing, there is more to be said about the ambiguity.

[72] Jonathan Thambyrajah, "Siding with the Jews: *Mityehudim* in Esth. 8:17," *Vestus Testamentum* 73 (2023): 134.

Nameless collectives feature prominently among the dead in *Aseneth* as well, but there are two distinct differences: not all groups die in narrated time, and the groups are composed exclusively of men with military training. The wholesale slaughter of large troops further demonstrates the divine favoritism of the sons of Leah and Rachel by showcasing their military success in the face of impossible odds and, more importantly, that these deaths are always the will of God.[73] The sons of Leah and Rachel act only as the bloody instruments of divine judgment.[74]

Although the message of Levi is good, it fails to dissuade the Son of Pharaoh from his course of action, and fighting breaks out later in the story. Between As. 26:5 and 27:5, a total of 2,650 unnamed soldiers die. These men are presumably all from the Egyptian army, because the Son of Pharaoh sends 2,000 warriors to lie in wait for Aseneth (As. 24:19-20) and himself moves with a cohort of 50 cavalry-mounted archers (25:4), and Joseph has Aseneth protected by 50 forerunners and an entourage of 600 men (As. 24:16).[75] There are three fight-scenes. The first is the only fight one could consider even remotely plausible in the entire book. The 2,000 men lying in ambush slaughter Aseneth's 650 men (As. 26:5). But this 'realistic' fight only serves to set up the glorification of Leah sons, and Benjamin in the other fight scenes, as it means the odds are heavily skewed, being 333.33 to 1 against the sons of Leah, and 51 to 1 against Benjamin.[76] Nonetheless, "Reuben and Simeon, Levi and Judah, Issachar and Zebulun [...] fell upon [the soldiers] suddenly, and the six men cut them all down and killed 2,000 men." (As. 27:6), and Benjamin kills the Son of Pharaoh's 50 men and strikes a deadly wound to the Son of Pharaoh (27:1-3). Within Levi's established framework of divine retribution enacted by the hands of men, these quick and bloodless deaths of anonymous men reinforce the inherent classism of the story, estably in contrast to the nameless man who is *not* killed.

Most of the nameless characters in *Aseneth* are part of a group, even when acting independently.[77] Four male characters are both independent and anonymous: the Pharaoh, the Son of Pharaoh, the Anthropos, and Aseneth's "personal attendant". Of these four, only Aseneth's "personal attendant" is of the servant or enslaved class (As. 18:7, 11), and the

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[73] On military epiphany in *Aseneth*, cf. Glass, "A Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes," **X-Y**. Scholars have argued that this distinctive militarism of the sons of Jacob in *Aseneth* is best understood within the historical context of Judaean soldiers in the Ptolemaic army. Cf. Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth*, **X-Y**; Ahearne-Kroll, *Aseneth of Egypt*, **X-Y**.

[74] Glass challenges the readings of 'non-violence' and 'non-retaliation' that have been done of *Aseneth*, arguing that the story does not actually reject the ideas of bloody vengeance and violent retaliation, but rather shifts the responsibility to judge and incite such actions from humans to God. "A Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes," **X-Y**. This reading of *Aseneth* fits well within broader engagement with the Genesis 34 material of the period, as the main theme of such adaptations is revenge and retribution (Standhartinger, "Um zu sehen die Töchter des Landes," 171).

[75] The story's silence on the matter means that one can only assume that both Joseph and the Son of Pharaoh drew on the same garrisons; based on what ancient documents record of the mixed ethnic composition of Hellenistic armies, one could, furthermore, assume a great diversity of identities among this otherwise monolithic block of unidentified men. But these must remain at the level of supposition.

[76] While the story tells us that "Aseneth went away on her way, and Joseph went away to his distribution of grain" (As. 26:4), we do not hear of any attack on Joseph or his martial prowess.

[77] The *parthenos* who seeks to aid Aseneth, for example, is anonymous, but a part of a the group of seven *parthenoi*: "And the parthenos who was her close companion, and whom Aseneth loved more than all of the *parthenoi*, heard her groaning, and she hastened and roused the rest of the *parthenoi*." (As. 8:4)

Anthropos remains anonymous by choice (As. 15:12x).[78] The Pharaoh is a beneficent and magnanimous character throughout the story, but his son, the antagonist of chapters 22-29, must die. Unlike the deaths of the military collectives, the prince's death is explicitly placed within a political discourse entwined with kinship rhetoric. When the wounded Son of Pharaoh attempts to get up (As. 29:1), Benjamin grabs the prince's sword and moves to finish what he had started (As. 27:3; 29:2). But Levi intervenes, repeating the language of non-retaliation, adding that, "If he lives, [the Son of Pharaoh] will be our friend after this, and his father, Pharaoh, will be like our father." (As. 29:4). Already said to be like a father to Joseph,[79] Levi sees the advantages that would result from saving this man's life, unavailable through the lives of the unnamed soldiers. Indeed, Levi's words are confirmed when the Pharaoh responds to Levi's account of events by "[rising] from his throne and [paying] obeisance to Levi upon the ground and [blessing] him" (As. 29:9). *Aseneth* makes no bones about whose blood matters, and in *Esther,* everyone, even the King (2:21), is dispensable.

4.2. Topos: Erasure for (a) Male Figure(s)

The ultimate erasure of Esther and Aseneth occurs in each story's final scenes, but is already foreshadowed in the opening lines.

Albeit a brief mention in the AT that connects Esther to the vision at the beginning of the story, Mordecai gets the glory and fame—there is no Esther in chapter ten. Not only this, but what is the glory of the story if 10:1 mirrors Exodus 1:11?[80] Purim is remembered as the Feast of Mordecai in 2 Maccabees 15:26. While the ethnic conflict is seemingly resolved, and André La Coque says repeatedly that the women's conflict is also resolved,[81] there is no "vindication." After Esther is used due to her position, she is placed right back on the hierarchy where women properly belong. Her sacrifice, essential to the salvation of her people, becomes *essentializing* for diasporic women in relation to diasporic men. In regard to both this topos and the previous, Esther *not* depicted as a mother is fascinating. La Coque writes, however, "Esther's sexuality is narratively comprehended in its striving toward bringing death-and-life, both in concomitance and in succession. She is birthing anew her people."[82] If Esther is seen as a figure to emulate in other diasporic settings, she is in some ways, a mother. She protects and preserves her people.

And yet, this kind of gender relations is exactly what gives Esther and Aseneth the potential to make some claims to authenticity; Floya Anthias writes that "being regarded as a 'true' member of the group may be defined through conformity to gender stereotypes."[83]

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[78] Whether the attendant is enslaved is unclear. He is called τροφεύς. On the refusal of information as corrective to the neutralized power-dynamic between Aseneth and the Anthropos, cf. Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, **X-Y**; and Glass, "A Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes," **X-Y**.
of the *parthenoi*, heard her groaning, and she hastened and roused the rest of the *parthenoi*.
[79] By Joseph himself at 20:9, by the Son of Pharaoh at 24:14.
[80] Butting, "Esther," 248.
[81] Andrè LaCoque, *Esther Regina: A Bakhtinian Reading* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008) 64, 89. Given just the way Esther is described in this very book, I would not call the women liberated by any means.
[82] Ibid, 123.
[83] Floya Anthias, "Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity?" *Sociology* 32/3, August 1998: 572.

Although these women may not necessarily fit stereotypes *per se,*[84] they do fall in line as it pertains to relations. The lack of these women at the end of their stories, although their presence is absolutely necessary for the tales that bear their names, is exactly where they are supposed to be in regard to patriarchal expectations.[85] It is still men who are given the final word, the "authentic voice to represent their communities,"[86] even though these women's bodies are very clearly burdened with proving and demonstrating their belonging in juxtaposition, even "fortifying populations and peoples."[87]

The main message in these final chapters in *Aseneth* is one of non-violence or non-retaliation. This is what Levi counsels Simeon when he is angered by the Son of Pharaoh's flattery and attempted bribery (As. 23:9), what Aseneth says, again to Simeon, when intervening to save Dan and Gad (As. 28:10), and what Levi says to stay his younger brother's hand and prevent Benjamin from killing the injured Son of Pharaoh (As. 29:3).[88]

Aseneth's final act is to save Dan and Gad from their half-brothers' violence retribution (As. 28:9-14). She is unable to do this alone, however, and in stepping in to assist his sister-in-law, Levi eclipses the eponymous heroine. Levi understands in hearing Aseneth's words that his treacherous brothers are hiding in the nearby reeds. In support of Aseneth's statement, Levi takes and kisses Aseneth's hand (As. 28:15). Standing beside her, Levi's physical presence supports Aseneth's request and further shields his brothers, but is also shifts the narrative focus to him: Levi realizes Aseneth's intentions, Levi realizes that his brothers are hiding nearby, and Levi does not reveal this secret because Levi is afraid of his brothers' violence (As. 28:15-16). The reader thus barely notices when, in the next moment, it is Levi who stops Benjamin from killing the Son of Pharaoh in cold blood.[89] From there, the story progresses to the interaction between Levi and Pharaoh, which bridges to Pharaoh's death, and Joseph's ascension to regency over Egypt (As. 29:5-9). Having now provided her brother-in-law with access to the highest rule

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[84] See Esther Brownsmith, "Commanding the Queen: Agency and Gender Roles in the Book of Esther," *Religion and Gender* 14 (2024): 13-33.

[85] "The book does not end with Esther; her role ended when she supports Mordecai's initiative." Michael Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther,* 130. Itumeleng Mosala, "The Implications of the Text of Esther for African Women's Struggle for Liberation in South Africa:" "Esther struggles, but Mordecai reaps the fruit of the struggle," 136.

[86] Floya Anthias, "Transnational Mobilities, Migration Research and Intersectionality: Towards a Translocational Frame," *Nordic Journal of Migration* 2/2 (2012): 107.

[87] Maia Kotrosits, "The Ethnography of Gender: Reconsidering Gender as an Object of Study," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 7/1 (2023): 17. In which she discusses Mary as a figure in Judean diasporic cultural and colonial negotiations.

[88] As. 23:9: "Why are you furious with anger against this man? We are god-fearing men, and it is not fitting for us to repay evil for evil." As. 28:10: "I beg you, spare your brothers, and do not commit evil for evil against them because the Lord defended me from them and shattered their swords from their hands." As. 29:3 "By no means, brother, will you commit this act because we are god-fearing men, and it is not fitting for a god-fearing man to repay evil for evil, to trample underfoot a fallen man, or to press his enemy to death."

[89] This division of interventions between Aseneth and Levi makes sense within the story's constructions of insider/outsider: Aseneth as City of Refuge shelters Dan and Gad, as they have returned to God the Most High after recognizing their mistakes, whereas the Son of Pharaoh shows no remorse, nor asks for forgiveness. Cf. Portier-Young, "Sweet Mercy Metropolis," **X-Y**; Standhartinger, "Um zu sehen die Töchter des Landes," 114-117; Simkovich, *The Making of Jewish Universalism*, **X-Y**; Glass offers a nuanced reading, arguing that the City of Refuge is not as easily accessed as others have argued, "A Daughter of Hebrews and Hellenes," **X-Y**.

of earthly law in the land and assured her husband's right to interregnum power in Egypt, Aseneth disappears from the story.[90] *Aseneth* ends just as it begins, focusing on Joseph and his place in Egyptian society.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that the manipulation of the embodied, gendered, ethnicized, classist markers of identity serve as a powerful means of establishing the legitimacy of diasporan community in *Esther* and *Aseneth*. In these stories, women's bodies are used to establish and secure a communal group's survival as well as their access to power and their ability to wield it. And while *both* masculine-ly and feminine-ly gendered bodies are involved in *Esther* and *Aseneth*, it is unfortunate and also unsurprising that the female body is the one that undergoes the most change only to be "rewarded" with what the patriarchy deems "normal."[91] Even though these powerful women find ways to operate well within these restrictive spaces, and always in "feminine-coded" ways that undermine an essentialist binary,[92] as *characters* in a story they are *used* to solidify the "right" man in power, and then ushered into "proper" silence. *Esther* introduces a distinctly gendered conflict in chapters one and two, but the only conflict that is "resolved" is the ethnic conflict in chapter three. Similarly, albeit, differently, *Aseneth,* as embodying a sort-of Vashti/Astin herself at the beginning of her story, must be purged of her disdain in order to become an insider. Ironically, what is still a gender essentialism in these stories *does* demonstrate less of an ethnic essentialism in both. Similarly, as these women's bodies are placed in specific spaces, seemingly "away" from the "homeland" in both Susa and Heliopolis respectively, their stories effectively create new a/effective place attachments beyond the binary as well through feminine embodiment and secure ethnic attachments.[93] These women, although questioned about their legitimacy by both those in their stories and commentators alike,[94] demonstrate their place as fully authentic Jews—even amidst ambiguity and hybridity—which is still in part mitigated by their attachments to monarchy and a gendered performance of respect to male authority and glory that necessitates their erasure. Yet, these women change not only themselves, but remind ancient and modern audiences that what it means to be Jewish has always included heterogenous identities and multi-spatial attachments.

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[90] Standhartinger, *Das Frauenbild*, **X-Y**; Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, **X-Y**.
[91] Enloe, 121: "'Normal' is usually patriarchal."
[92] Enloe, 77: "As many women who have made extraordinary sacrifices to support armed liberationist insurgencies have testified, when a civil movement becomes an armed insurgency, it is likely to simultaneously become top-down in its structure, intolerant of internal dissent and masculinized in its culture, celebrating the combat fighter. This is what militarization fosters."
[93] This in particular is a point that deserves much more expansion, where this paper focused in particular on shifting ethnic attachments instead of demonstrating how they are tied to particular spaces. The notion of *translocational belongings* will be most helpful as we continue to move forward.
[94] The male characters in "diaspora novellas" do not seem to be questioned for their belonging. Shocking, we know.

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Appendix

Concept	Esther Greek (NETS)	Esther MT (NRSVUE)	Aseneth
Beauty	OG 2:7, 17 AT 2:7, 17	2:7, 17	1:4-6
Ethnic Ambiguity?	OG 2:10	2:10	1:5; *7:8*
Villainized women (Vashti/Aseneth)	1:15-18	1:15-18	2:1;4:9, 12
Outlandish descriptions of foreign places	OG 1:6-7 AT 1:6-7	1:6-7	2:1-12
Stories set somewhere between 'history' and 'myth'	*have an A chapter in the second year of the King OG 1:1-3; 3:13 AT 1:1; 3:7	1:1-3; 2:16 *No mention of Judah* *Purim!*	1:1-3
Feasting	OG 1:3; C28 AT 1:3; C27-8	Many Feasts in the Book, *no commentary on separation* 1:3; 5; 2:18; 5:4; 7:1; 8:17; 9:17-18	2:2-4; 7:1
Adornment/Bride	OG 2:17 AT 2:17	2:17	3:5-6; 4:1; 14:14-15; 15:9-10; 18:5-6
	I have not rejoiced since the day of my change C29	4:16	6:4-8
Distaste of foreign	OG C:26	*Says nothing*	7:2-6; 8:5-7

other	AT C:26		
fasting	OG 4:16 AT 4:16	4:16	10:10-17
With other virgins/enslaved girls	OG 4:16 AT 4:16	4:16	2:6
orphan?	OG 2:7 AT *not explicit*	2:7	Look upon my orphanhood (rhetorical orphanhood) 11:3-4, 11-16; 12:5, 13-14; 13:2
New clothes who dis	OG D:1-3 AT 5:1-3	5:1	15:9-10; 18:5-6, 11; 19:4-5
Woman is City	Conjecture!	Conjecture!	15:7
Marriage to foreigner	OG 2:7 - “and when her parents died, he trained her for himself [Mordecai] as a wife.” *As in, she was supposed to marry her own.* OG C:26 AT C:26	*No comment*	4:9-10; 7:2-6
Sex before marriage	OG 2:16 AT 2:14	2:15	21:1; 9 *Not in this!*
Banquet of marriage celebration	OG 2:18 AT 2:18	2:18	19:6-8; 20:1; 21:8
Antagonist!	OG A:17	2:6	2:7-9; 23:1-17

	AT A:17-18		
Battles!!!	OG 9:1-2; 13 AT 8:44, 46	9:1-2, 5, 13	26:5-8; 27:1-28:8
Women disappear for male authority!!!	OG - *No Esther in 10 or F* AT 8:54 - 'The little spring is Esther.'	*No Esther in 10*	Aseneth intercedes for brothers, Levi realises she is protecting them (28:15), and then no further mentions to Aseneth: Levi steps in with Benjamin and the son of Pharaoh (29:1-6), Pharaoh does obeisance to Levi, and then Joseph shows up, and the story ends.

UNVEILING IDENTITIES:

LANGUAGE, GENDER, AND POWER IN ACHAEMENID YEHUD

Overview

This research project delves into the formation of Yehudite identities in the Achaemenid Empire, particularly examining the roles of language and gender. The study focuses on biblical texts—Nehemiah 13:23-27 and Esther 1—to explore how these factors influenced identity during the post-exilic period. By integrating biblical textual analysis with interdisciplinary methods, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Yehudite identities and their intersection with imperial power structures.

Research Questions and Objectives

The project addresses three main research questions:

1. **Identity Diversity:** How diverse was Yehudite identity post-exile, and what factors—such as geography, social class, language, and gender—shaped this diversity?
2. **Language and Identity:** What role did the Hebrew language play in the formation of post-exilic identities?
3. **Language and Power:** How did language correlate with the assertion of masculine imperial power during the Achaemenid period?

The objectives are:

1. To elucidate the complexity and diversity of Yehudite identities.
2. To contribute to understanding the role of language in identity construction in ancient contexts.
3. To illuminate the intersection of language and gender in post-exilic Yehud.

Multiplicity and Fluidity of Identity

Echoing Jon Berquist's view on the fluidity of identity, this project examines the diverse and evolving nature of Yehudite identities under Achaemenid rule. The research highlights the concept of "hybrid identity," where individuals navigate multiple identities shaped by their experiences of colonialism

and diaspora. This study will analyse figures such as Nehemiah and Esther, considering their geographic and social contexts to understand the biases and diversity within Yehudite identity.

Language and Identity

The second focus of the research is on the relationship between language and identity. Building on Benedict Anderson's idea that language is crucial for nationalistic identity, the study investigates whether similar dynamics applied to ancient Yehudite identity. It challenges views like those of Seth Schwartz, who dismisses the Hebrew language's role in identity formation, by proposing that Hebrew was significant in shaping post-exilic identities. This includes exploring the shift from multilingualism to an Aramaic-dominant society and how Hebrew's role evolved under Achaemenid rule.

Language and Gender

This project pioneers the exploration of gendered aspects of language in biblical studies. Drawing from anthropological insights, it examines how gender expectations influenced language use and identity. The research will investigate:

1. **Female Language Expectations:** How women were expected to excel in language and serve as "Guardians of the Language," and its implications for biblical characters like foreign women in Nehemiah 13, whose sons are accused of the lack of linguistic proficiency.
2. **Masculine Power and Language:** The link between masculinity, imperialism, and language, particularly in the context of Esther 1, where language reinforces masculine imperial order.

Methodology

The research employs a multi-faceted methodology:

1. **Historical Criticism:** Analysing biblical texts through philological and historical lenses to understand their context and biases.
2. **Historical Research:** Utilizing scholarship on the Achaemenid Empire to contextualise the biblical texts and reveal linguistic and social dynamics.

3. **Interdisciplinary Approaches:** Integrating feminist, masculinity, postcolonial, and social linguistic studies to provide a comprehensive analysis of language, gender, and power dynamics.

'AND THEY DID NOT KNOW HOW TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF YEHUD' SOCIO-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS ON THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

Introduction

Background and Context of this Paper

This paper is part of my broader PhD project that explores post-exilic Yehudite identities under the Persian Empire period, with a specific focus on how language and gender influenced their identity formation. My research began with an analysis of Nehemiah 13:23-25, which states:

> Also, in those days, I saw Yehudite men who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, [and] Moab. And half of their sons spoke Ashdodite, and did not know how to speak Yehudite, but the language of various people. And I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of the men, pulled out their hairand I made them take an oath in the name of God that "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.[1]

This passage problematises (1) the marriage between foreign women and Yehudite men[2] and (2) their children's ability to speak Yehudite, making it a pertinent starting point for my thesis. Upon exegetical examination, I was struck by Nehemiah's aggressive measures against those in mixed marriages, which included severe physical punishment. This is often interpreted as Nehemiah's main focus being mixed

[1] All Hebrew quotations of the Bible will be taken from Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, electronic ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2003). All English translation will be my translation unless otherwise stated.

[2] I am aware that Nehemiah problematises the mixed marriages of Yehudite in general in 13:25. However, as demonstrated in what follows, I consider 13:25 as a later addition instead of the primary narrative. For a detailed discussion, see also Ingo Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. Oded. Lipschitz, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 95–124; Christophe Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', *Vetus Testamentum* 47, no. 2 (1997): 168–99.

marriages,[3] however, the textual structure suggests the following logical progression: mixed marriages led to a decrease in the linguistic proficiency of the children, which subsequently triggered Nehemiah's drastic physical measures. Specifically, Nehemiah's reaction appears to be more directly motivated by the linguistic issue rather than solely the fact of mixed marriages. This does not negate the problem Nehemiah saw in mixed marriages themselves, but rather, it highlights that his primary concern was the resultant decline in the children's ability to speak Yehudite. This text illustrates the linguistic shift occurring in post-exilic Yehud, where the erosion of Yehudite proficiency among children from mixed marriages was perceived as a significant threat to the community's identity.

Motivated by this observation, I explored the possibility of a broader linguistic shift in Yehud. This led me to consider Nehemiah chapter 8, which also emerged as a relevant text. My main argument of this paper is that if we examine Nehemiah's wrath in 13:23-25 through the premise that Yehud was experiencing a linguistic shift, Nehemiah's actions can be understood as an attempt to revitalise Yehudite. Additionally, his effort at revitalisation possibly includes his choice to write his Memoir in Hebrew instead of Aramaic, which was his first language and the Persian administrative language.

[3] Roland Boer, 'Nehemiah', in *Postcolonial Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. Hemchand Gossai (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 204; Yonina Dor, 'The Rite of Separation of the Foreign Wives in Ezra-Nehemiah', in *New Perspectives on Ezra-Nehemiah: History and Historiography, Text, Literature, and Interpretation*, ed. Isaac Kalimi (Winona Lake: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 173–88; David J. A. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther : Based on the Revised Standard Version*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1984), 245–47.

Key Terminology

Before delving further, it is important to define and explain the term "linguistic shift." A linguistic shift occurs when a particular language becomes endangered as it is gradually replaced by another language.[4] Nicolas Ostler points out that linguistic shift often occurs when "the other languages will have some property which makes them seem superior to the disfavored language, usually through association with some high prestige group, wealthier or more powerful, more trendy or more politically correct."[5] In the context of post-exilic Yehud, examining whether Yehudite experienced such a shift, influenced by Aramaic or other languages, provides critical insights into the cultural and political dynamics of the time.

Another key term to define is the "primary narrative." This paper argues that the passages in both chapters 8 and 13 of Nehemiah underwent multiple layers of editorial work. Therefore, when discussing their editorial history, the term "primary narrative" refers to the narrative closely aligned with the initial account before any editorial modifications were made.[6]

Chronology of Events in Nehemiah 8 and 13

As briefly explained above, my research evolved from an initial focus on chapter 13 to a comprehensive analysis that also includes chapter 8. However, the structure of this paper takes a different order to trace the linguistic shift in Yehud, which follows a chronological order presented in the Book of Ezra and Nehemiah.

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[4] Nicholas Ostler, 'Language Maintenance, Shift, and Endangerment', in *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. Rajend Mesthrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 315.
[5] Ostler, 316.
[6] Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 179.

Chapter 8 describes Ezra reading the Torah in front of the Yehudite assembly. Although the chapter's location in the text might suggest otherwise, it is often argued that it belongs to a different chronological section and was reorganised by a later editor who suggested that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries in Jerusalem.[7] According to the accounts in the Book of Ezra and Nehemiah, Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7), while Nehemiah came in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1). The reading of the Torah must have been crucial for restructuring the community, making it unlikely that Ezra would have delayed this significant event for more than a decade after his arrival.[8] Therefore, it is more reasonable to assume that Nehemiah 8 was originally situated between Ezra 8 and 9, chronologically taking place in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, specifically two months after Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem as he arrived in the fifth month and the reading occurred in the seventh month.[9]

On the other hand, chapter 13 is set towards the end of Nehemiah's governorship. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1) and returned to Babylon in the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, after his 12-year governorship (Nehemiah 13:6). The passage in chapter 13 describes events that took place after Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. Therefore, if we take the passage at face value, there is at least a 25-year gap between the events of chapter 8 and chapter 13.

[7] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 44–45, 285.
[8] Blenkinsopp, 45; Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther : Based on the Revised Standard Version*, 181.
[9] Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 45.

Structure of the Paper

This paper is structured into two primary chapters. The first chapter delves into Nehemiah 8, scrutinising the linguistic situation immediately following the return from exile. This analysis will shed light on the initial stages of any potential linguistic shift. The second chapter focuses on Nehemiah 13:23-27, illustrating the linguistic shift in Yehudite society that had advanced since the time of Ezra. The chapter argues that Nehemiah's wrath primarily stems from the fact that half of the children born in mixed marriages lacked proficiency in Yehudite, however, the later addition shifted the focus of the chapter to mixed marriages. An investigation into the editorial history of the text reveals that this linguistic shift had further progressed between the time the primary narrative was composed and the subsequent editorial work was conducted. Despite Nehemiah's efforts, Yehudite society ultimately gravitated towards an Aramaic-centric culture. The chapter also explores how later editors, who were raised and immersed in an Aramaic-centered Yehudite society, lacked awareness of this historical context. They misconstrued Nehemiah's frustration as being primarily about mixed marriages. As a result, these editors made modifications based on their social perspectives, shifting the focus of 13:23-27 from Nehemiah's concern about the children's ability to speak Yehudite to the issue of their parents' mixed marriages. An examination of chapters 8 and 13 in chronological order reveals that Yehudite society experienced a rapid linguistic shift. Nehemiah's actions in chapter 13 can be understood as an attempt to revitalise Yehudite.

1. Chapter 8:2-3, 7-8

The Book of Nehemiah serves as a crucial yet complex source for understanding the post-exilic period. While it offers valuable insights into the societal and cultural transformations of Yehud, it is essential to approach it with caution due to its layered editorial history and ideological constructions. The text is not a straightforward historical account but a product of multiple editorial phases, each reflecting the socio-historical positionality of its editors.

Nehemiah 8, which describes the public reading of the Torah by Ezra, plays a pivotal role in forming the post-exilic Yehudite identity. However, the perceived unity and consistency of this chapter remain contested among scholars. Scholars such as Wilhelm Rudolf and Hugh Williamson maintain that the chapter should be viewed as a coherent unit.[10] In contrast, other scholars point to signs of editorial activity within Nehemiah 8, including the repetition of events, different individuals performing identical actions, and chronological incongruence, which will be analysed in what follows.[11]

This paper posits that the primary narrative of Nehemiah 8 originates from the Ezra Memoir.[12] The Ezra Memoir is an antecedent source characterised by first-person narration and includes passages such as Ezra 7-8, Nehemiah 8, and Ezra 9-10.[13] Following the initial composition of the Ezra Memoir, the Chronicler is thought to have edited and expanded the text.[14] In this paper, Nehemiah 8:2-3 is argued to stem directly

[10] Wilhelm Rudolph, *Esra Und Nehemía Samt 3. Esra*, Handbuch Zum Alten Testament. Erste Reihe ; 20 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1949), 146; Hugh Godfrey Maturin Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, Word Biblical Commentary ; v. 16. (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1985), 280.
[11] Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 46; Juha. Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe : The Development of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 8*, Reprint 2012, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft ; Band 347 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2004).
[12] Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 45; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, xxxi, 280.
[13] Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, xxxi.
[14] Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 45–46; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, xxviii–xxxii; Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe : The Development of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 8*, 153.

from the Ezra Memoir.[15] In contrast, Nehemiah 8:7-8 is likely the result of later editing by the Chronicler.[16]

Nehemiah 8:2-3 describes Ezra reading the Torah to the assembly in Jerusalem. Attention should be focused on how the narrator portrays the assembly in verses 2 and 3, as highlighted in the table above. These verses can be translated in two ways, and each possibility will be examined in the following discussion.

		Translation 1*(wāw copulativum)*	Translation 2 (*wāw explicativum*)
v. 1	וַיֵּאָסְפוּ כָל־הָעָם כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד אֶל־הָרְחֹוב אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמָּיִם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְעֶזְרָא הַסֹּפֵר לְהָבִיא אֶת־סֵפֶר תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל:	And all the people gathered as one man at the square that is in front of Water Gate, and they said to Ezra, the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses that the Lord commanded to Israel.	*Same as the left*
v. 2	וַיָּבִיא עֶזְרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה לִפְנֵי הַקָּהָל מֵאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה וְכֹל מֵבִין לִשְׁמֹעַ בְּיוֹם אֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי:	And Ezra, the priest, brought the law in front of the assembly – men and women and all with understanding to hear – on the first day of the seventh month.	And Ezra, the priest, brought the law in front of the assembly – men and women of all who could hear with understanding – on the first day of the seventh month.
v. 3	וַיִּקְרָא־בוֹ לִפְנֵי הָרְחֹוב אֲשֶׁר | לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמַּיִם מִן־הָאוֹר עַד־מַחֲצִית הַיּוֹם נֶגֶד הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַמְּבִינִים וְאָזְנֵי כָל־הָעָם אֶל־סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה:	And he read from it [the book of the law] in front of the assembly that was in front of Water Gate from the sunrise to the midday in the presence of men and women and those who understand. The ears of all the people [were] to the book of the law.	And he read from it [the book of the law] in front of the assembly that was in front of Water Gate from the sunrise to the midday in the presence of men and women who understand. The ears of all the people [were] to the book of the law.

[15] Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', 102; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 280.
[16] Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', 102; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 45, 286–88; Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe : The Development of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 8*, 146–49.

The first interpretation treats the conjunction וְ as a *wāw copulativum*, which serves as connecting different parts.[17] The translation is outlined in the section of Translation 1 of the table above. It is intriguing that the narrator juxtaposes "all who could hear with understanding כָּל מֵבִין לִשְׁמֹעַ(v. 2)" or "those who understand הַמְּבִינִים(v. 3)" alongside men and women.[18] Some commentators suggest this refers to "children old enough to understand what was going on."[19] However, this interpretation raises the question of why the narrator did not use specific Hebrew terms, such as child יֶלֶד(Ezra 10:1) or little children טַף(Deuteronomy 31:12) if that was the intended meaning. While it is plausible that the third group could be distinguished from the men and women based on age, this should not be the sole factor. The third group should be distinguished not only by age but also by their ability to understand Yehudite. In this context, Ingo Kottsieper offers an interesting perspective, suggesting that it represents "a younger generation, out of which only some were able to follow the public recitation of the Hebrew Torah"[20] due to a decline in linguistic proficiency among children. In other words, the text implies that although the adults could understand Yehudite, the younger generation was divided into two groups: those who had the ability to comprehend Yehudite and participate in the public reading, and those who did not.

The second possibility for translation is to understand the conjunction וְ as *wāw explicativum*, where the element following the conjunction וְ provides further details to

[17] Wilhelm Gesenius and E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. A. E. Cowley, 2d English ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), §154.
[18] Clines also highlights the significance of women's presence during religious gatherings. (Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther : Based on the Revised Standard Version*, 183.)
[19] Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 287.
[20] Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', 102.

the preceding element.[21] This translation is provided in the table above. This interpretation suggests an intriguing possibility that there are two groups in Yehudite society, namely those "who could hear with understanding" and those without it. This scenario implies that the decline in Yehudite proficiency is occurring among the adult generation.

The key difference between the first and the second translation lies in their treatment of the linguistic shift. The first translation suggests that the decline in proficiency is limited to the younger generation, while the second translation indicates that this shift also affects the adult generation. I support the interpretation of וְ as *wāw copulativum* for two main reasons. First, *wāw explicativum* is a less common grammatical usage compared to *wāw copulativum*. Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar* only briefly mentions *wāw explicativum*, underscoring its relative rarity.[22] Second, considering the socio-linguistic context immediately following the return from exile, it is less plausible that the linguistic shift would have affected the adult generation. As will be discussed in the next section, which examines Nehemiah 13:23-27, the linguistic shift in Yehud began with the younger generation.

Having examined Nehemiah 8:2-3, I now turn to the analysis of Nehemiah 8:7-8.

v.7	וְיֵשׁוּעַ וּבָנִי וְשֵׁרֵבְיָה ׀ יָמִין עַקּוּב שַׁבְּתַי ׀ הוֹדִיָּה מַעֲשֵׂיָה קְלִיטָא עֲזַרְיָה יוֹזָבָד חָנָן פְּלָאיָה וְהַלְוִיִּם מְבִינִים אֶת־הָעָם לַתּוֹרָה וְהָעָם עַל־עָמְדָם׃	Joshua, Beni, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Perairah, and the Levites taught the law to the people, while people remained in their space.
v.8	וַיִּקְרְאוּ בַסֵּפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים מְפֹרָשׁ וְשׂוֹם שֶׂכֶל וַיָּבִינוּ בַּמִּקְרָא׃ ס	And they read from the book of the law of God with distinction, and they rendered the meaning, and they [people] understood the reading.

[21] Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe : The Development of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 8*, 147; Gesenius and Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, §154.
[22] Gesenius and Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, §154.

The depiction in Nehemiah 8:7 suggests that the Levites moved among the people to teach the Torah.[23] Verse 8 provides further intriguing testimony with the use of the term מְפֹרָשׁ, a pual passive masculine singular participle derived from the root פרשׁ, meaning "to make distinct" or "to divide."[24] The translation of this participle is worth exploring. For instance, in Ezra 4:18, the same participle derived from the same verb is used to denote "to translate." Additionally, the Midrash tradition identified this verse as the biblical origin of the scriptural targum.[25] Even if we translate the verb in the conventional sense, "to divide," it can still be interpreted in a compelling way. Williamson suggests that "it is probable, therefore, that after each section of the Law had been read (cf. v 8), the Levites moved from group to group among the people, making sure that all had understood what they had heard."[26] This interpretation aligns with the narrative depiction of the Levites actively engaging with the congregation to ensure comprehension of the Torah.

However, the description in Nehemiah 8:7-8 contrasts with that in 8:2. Nehemiah 8:2 implies that the reading was intended for those who already understood Yehudite. Conversely, the portrayal in Nehemiah 8:7-8 suggests varying levels of linguistic comprehension among the participants, which conflicts with the exclusive nature implied in Nehemiah 8:2.

[23] Eric H Cline, *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 185, https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780195342635.001.0001; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 290.
[24] Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 831.
[25] Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 288.
[26] Margaret Williams, *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans : A Diasporan Sourcebook* (London: London : Duckworth, 1998), 290.

As mentioned earlier, verses 7-8 are argued to be later additions by the Chronicler to emphasise the initiation and authority of the Levites.[27] If Nehemiah 8:8 is indeed a later addition, it may reflect a linguistic shift that occurred between the time the primary narrative was written and the period of the Chronicler's editorial work. Moreover, it suggests a shift towards a more inclusive attitude, indicating a growing tolerance for those who did not fully understand Hebrew. While those who did not understand Yehudite were excluded from the assembly in Nehemiah 8:2-3, verses 7-8 testify to the inclusion of those who had difficulty understanding Yehudite.

2. Chapter 13:23-27

This section will examine Nehemiah 13:23-27 with the objective of demonstrating that the linguistic shift in Yehudite society continued to evolve from the time of Ezra to Nehemiah. As explained in the Introduction section, the passage is set toward the end of Nehemiah's governorship, which occurs at least 25 years after Ezra's public reading of the Torah. Nehemiah is depicted as expressing concerns regarding mixed marriages between Yehudites and women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. Many commentaries have traditionally interpreted Nehemiah's objections as a stance against mixed marriages to prevent the impurity of foreign influences. However, I will challenge that interpretation by arguing that Nehemiah's primary concern was the declining proficiency in Yehudite among the children.

To support this argument, I will analyse the editorial history of the text, suggesting that the sections focusing on mixed marriages may have been added by a

[27] Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', 102; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 45, 286–88; Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe : The Development of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 8*, 146–49.

later editor. This later editor, who was likely raised in an Aramaic-dominated Yehudite society and thus unfamiliar with the linguistic challenges of the earlier period, misinterpreted Nehemiah's frustration as stemming solely from mixed marriages. Consequently, these later additions reflect a misunderstanding of the historical context and were made in response to this perceived issue.

Nehemiah 13:23-27, which will be examined in this chapter, is often considered to belong to the Nehemiah Memoir. The Memoir is characterised by first-person narration from the historical Nehemiah himself.[28] However, scholars differ in their proposals regarding the specific components of the Nehemiah Memoir.[29] Identifying the scope of texts stemming from the Nehemiah Memoir is beyond the focus of this chapter; for our purposes, it is sufficient to know that our focus text (Nehemiah 13:23-27) is part of the Memoir. Within this Memoir, a characteristic pattern emerges in the form of the "remember-formula." This formula takes a style of Nehemiah's self-narrating reports ending with "Remember me, O my God זָכְרָה־לִּי אֱלֹהַי," which recurs in verses 5:1-19, 13:4-14, 15-22, and 23-31.[30] Many scholars agree that the passages that include the formula can at least be identified as stemming from the Nehemiah Memoir.[31] Therefore, this chapter will develop the argument based on the premise that vv. 23-27, which is the focus of this chapter and is located in the "remember-formula," originates in the

[28] Loring W. Batten, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), 14–15; Jacob Martin Myers, *Ezra ; Nehemiah*, The Anchor Bible ; v. 14 (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1965), XLIX; Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 171; Mark A. Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, Interpretation. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992), 120–26; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, xxiv–xxviii.
[29] Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 120–26; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, xxvi.
[30] Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 120–26; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, xxvi. Pichon and Throntveit respectively refer to this formula as "Les passages *ryb*" and "Remembrance formula." For the detailed discussion, look at Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 172; Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 123.
[31] Batten, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 14–15; Myers, *Ezra ; Nehemiah*, XLIX; Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 171; Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 120–26; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, xxiv–xxviii.

Nehemiah Memoir. However, even if we surmise that vv. 23-27 stems from the Memoir, we cannot completely exclude the possibility that it underwent editing by a later hand.[32] The objective of this chapter is to reconstruct the primary narrative, which is a narrative closely aligned with Nehemiah's initial personal account and to reconstruct it.[33]

In the course of the examination in this section, I will divide vv. 23-27 into the following four sections.[34]

1. The report by Nehemiah		
v. 23	גַּם ׀ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם רָאֵיתִי אֶת־ הַיְהוּדִים הֹשִׁיבוּ נָשִׁים אַשְׁדֳּדִיּוֹת עַמֳּנִיּוֹת מוֹאֲבִיּוֹת:	*Also, in those days, I saw Yehudite men who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, [and] Moab.*[35]
v. 24	וּבְנֵיהֶם חֲצִי מְדַבֵּר אַשְׁדּוֹדִית וְאֵינָם מַכִּירִים לְדַבֵּר יְהוּדִית וְכִלְשׁוֹן עַם וָעָם:	*And half of their sons spoke Ashdodite, and did not know how to speak Yehudite, but the language of various people.*
2. The physical punishment		
v. 25a	וָאָרִיב עִמָּם וָאֲקַלְלֵם וָאַכֶּה מֵהֶם אֲנָשִׁים וָאֶמְרְטֵם	*And I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of the men, pulled out their hair*
3. The oath-making		
v. 25b	וָאַשְׁבִּיעֵם בֵּאלֹהִים אִם־תִּתְּנוּ בְנֹתֵיכֶם לִבְנֵיהֶם וְאִם־תִּשְׂאוּ מִבְּנֹתֵיהֶם לִבְנֵיכֶם וְלָכֶם:	*and I made them take an oath in the name of God that "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.*
4. The teaching based on the biblical text		
v. 26	הֲלוֹא עַל־אֵלֶּה חָטָא־שְׁלֹמֹה מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבַגּוֹיִם הָרַבִּים לֹא־הָיָה מֶלֶךְ כָּמֹהוּ וְאָהֻוב לֵאלֹהָיו הָיָה וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ אֱלֹהִים מֶלֶךְ עַל־כָּל־ יִשְׂרָאֵל גַּם־אוֹתוֹ הֶחֱטִיאוּ הַנָּשִׁים הַנָּכְרִיּוֹת:	*Did not Solomon, king of Israel sin on account of these women? Among the many nations, there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God appointed him as a king over all Israel. But foreign women caused even him to sin.*

[32] Myers, *Ezra ; Nehemiah*, XLIX; Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 177.
[33] Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 180.
[34] Pichon, 179.
[35] All Hebrew quotations of the Bible will be taken from Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, electronic ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2003). All English translation will be my translation unless otherwise stated.

v. 27	וְלָכֶם הֲנִשְׁמַע לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל־הָרָעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת לִמְעֹל בֵּאלֹהֵינוּ לְהוֹשִׁיב נָשִׁים נָכְרִיּוֹת׃	*Do we hear that you did all this great evil by acting unfaithfully to our God by marrying foreign women?'*

I argue that verses 23bβ, 24b, and 25b-27, which are highlighted in the table above, are inserted by a later hand, which shifted the focus of this story from the declining Yehudite proficiency of the children to the issue of mixed marriages.[36] In the following section, I will categorise the later insertions into two groups based on their topics. v. 23bβ and v. 24b address the issue of Ammonite and Moabite women, vv. 25b-27 is more of a teaching based on biblical passages. The first part of the following section will deal with vv. 25b-27, and the second part will deal with v. 23bβ and v. 24b.

2.1. The Insertion of 25b-27

This section argues that Nehemiah 3:25b-27 were likely later additions based on four literary indications. The first indication concerns the unnatural flow and lack of clarity in the sentence transition. The remaining three relate to intertextuality with Ezra 9-10.

The initial indication highlights the lack of flow and clarity between verses 25a and 25b, suggesting that verse 25b and its subsequent segment, verse 26, were likely inserted later.[37] The transition from physical punishment to oath-taking is incongruous. In verse 25a, Nehemiah contends with and curses "them," presumably referring to the men who entered into mixed marriages. However, he only pulls "some" of the men's hair, suggesting a possible change in the group of participants. Then, in verse 25b, Nehemiah states that he made "them" take an oath. This leaves the reader questioning

[36] Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 191, 194.
[37] Pichon, 180.

whether all the men who entered into mixed marriages participated in the oath-making or only a subset of them did.

3. The physical punishment		
v. 25a	וָאָרִ֤יב עִמָּם֙ וָאֲקַלְלֵ֔ם וָאַכֶּ֥ה מֵהֶ֖ם אֲנָשִׁ֑ים וָאֶמְרְטֵ֕ם	*And I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of the men, pulled out their hair*
4. The oath-making		
v. 25b	וָאַשְׁבִּיעֵ֣ם בֵּאלֹהִ֔ים אִם־תִּתְּנ֥וּ בְנֹתֵיכֶ֖ם לִבְנֵיהֶ֑ם וְאִם־תִּשְׂא֤וּ מִבְּנֹתֵיהֶם֙ לִבְנֵיכֶ֔ם וְלָכֶ֖ם׃	*and I made them take an oath in the name of God that "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.*

The next three indications focus on intertextual references to other biblical sources. Notably, Nehemiah 13:25b-27 extensively alludes to these sources. The oath in v. 25b is sourced from Deuteronomy 7:3,[38] and the teaching in v. 26 is from 1 Kings 11.[39] This characteristic suggests that Nehemiah 13:25b-27 does not originate in the Nehemiah Memoir, which typically lacks references to other biblical texts.[40] For example, Nehemiah 5:1-19, widely accepted as part of the Nehemiah Memoir, demonstrates this tendency. This passage addresses the issue of some Yehudites having to sell their sons and daughters into slavery to borrow money. To resolve such injustice, the Torah provides a relevant stipulation in Deuteronomy 15:1-18: "Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts."[41] However, Nehemiah 5 completely overlooks this law and makes no attempt to resolve the social injustice through the Deuteronomic law. Instead, it appeals to "יִרְאַ֥ת אֱלֹהֵ֖ינוּ the fear of our God" (Nehemiah 5:9) as the solution.

From this observation, we can identify that one of the characteristics of the Nehemiah

[38] Pichon, 180.
[39] Pichon, 188..
[40] Pichon, 176.
[41] Pichon, 176. The view is supported by Jacob L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity : The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers*, Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft ; Bd. 348 (Berlin ; Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 144.

Memoir is its lack of reference to other Biblical sources. When we examine Nehemiah 13:25b-26 with this characteristic in mind, it becomes clear that this section, which is abundant with references to other biblical texts, is not from the primary narrative of the historical Nehemiah but was likely added later by an editor.[42]

The wording in Nehemiah 13:25b mirrors Ezra 9:12, both referencing Deuteronomy 7:3 with unique alterations.[43] In Deuteronomy 7:3, the warning is directed at the second person singular (תִּתֵּן,תִּקַּח), while Nehemiah 13:25b and Ezra 9:12 employ the second person plural verb (תִּתְּנוּ,תִּשְּׂאוּ).[44] Ezra's influence is further evident in the rare use of נשׂא (to take) instead of לקח in reference to taking wives, paralleled in Ezra 9:12.[45] These two unique grammatical changes suggest that Nehemiah 13:25b was added by those who knew Ezra 9:12.

Deuteronomy 7:3	בִּתְּךָ֙ לֹא־תִתֵּ֣ן לִבְנֹ֔ו וּבִתֹּ֖ו לֹא־תִקַּ֣ח לִבְנֶ֑ךָ׃	*You shall not give your daughter to his son, and you shall not take his daughter for your son.*
Ezra 9:12	וְעַתָּ֗ה בְּנֹותֵיכֶם֙ אַל־תִּתְּנ֣וּ לִבְנֵיהֶ֔ם וּבְנֹתֵיהֶ֖ם אַל־תִּשְּׂא֣וּ לִבְנֵיכֶ֑ם	*You shall not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons.*
Nehemiah 13:25b	אִם־תִּתְּנ֣וּ בְנֹתֵיכֶ֗ם לִבְנֵיהֶם֙ וְאִם־תִּשְּׂא֣וּ מִבְּנֹתֵיהֶ֔ם לִבְנֵיכֶ֖ם וְלָכֶֽם׃	*You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.*

[42] Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 181–88. Pichon highlights a similarity between 13:25b-27 and Nehemiah 10:31, a passage often attributed to the final editor of the Book of Nehemiah. Pichon suggests that the editor of either 13:25b-27 attempted to align it with 10:31, or that same editor may have been responsible for the editing of 10:31 itself.

[43] Pichon, 181–88. Pichon highlights a similarity between 13:25b-27 and Nehemiah 10:31, a passage often attributed to the final editor of the Book of Nehemiah. Pichon suggests that the editor of either 13:25b-27 attempted to align it with 10:31, or that same editor may have been responsible for the editing of 10:31 itself.

[44] Pichon, 182–83.

[45] Pichon, 183. I would be cautious in using this argument to demonstrate 13:25b as an addition. In 13:23, which Pichon identifies as originating from the primitive narrative, we encounter a similar unconventional verb choice, where "ישׁב" is employed to denote "to marry." This usage is exclusive to Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 13 within the context of mixed meages. However, Pichon does not elaborate on this similarity.

The analysis of the textual alignment between Nehemiah 13:25b and Ezra 9:12 leads to two potential assumptions regarding the insertion of Nehemiah 13:25b-27. The first assumption is that the historical Nehemiah was aware of Ezra 9-10 and intentionally imitated his work. Howeveer, Nehemiah does not mention Ezra at all in his Memoir,[46] and this omission strongly indicates that the historical Nehemiah was likely unaware of the text of Ezra 9-10.This leads to the second assumption, which consequently suggests, the close textual resemblance between Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13:25b-27 is a later addition by an editor who was familiar with Ezra 9-10, who was ultimately responsible for this textual alignment.

As a fourth piece of evidence, the meaning of מעל (to act unfaithfully) in Nehemiah 13:27 is distinctive and found only in Ezra 9-10, indicating its probable addition by the same editor who inserted verses 25b-26.[47] Originally, מעל connoted depriving someone of their entitlements, initially applied to interpersonal unfaithfulness such as marital infidelity (Numbers 5:11-31) or financial deceit (Leviticus 5:21).[48] Over time, it evolved to denote unfaithfulness towards God.[49] Unique instances of this usage in the context of mixed marriages are found only in Ezra 9:2, 4; 10:2, 6, 10 and Nehemiah 13:27, reflecting a Deuteronomistic notion that views Israelites as a holy people עַם קָדוֹשׁ (Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9).[50]

[46] Hannah K. Harrington, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2022), 28–29.
[47] Helmer Ringgren, 'מעל', in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Scott (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1990); Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 187.
[48] Ringgren, 'מעל'.
[49] Ringgren.
[50] Ringgren; Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 187.

v. 27	וְלָכֶם הֲנִשְׁמַע לַעֲשׂוֹת אֵת כָּל־הָרָעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת לִמְעֹל בֵּאלֹהֵינוּ לְהוֹשִׁיב נָשִׁים נָכְרִיּוֹת:	*Do we hear that you did all this great evil by acting unfaithfully to our God by marrying foreign women?'*

In conclusion, a textual analysis reveals that Nehemiah 13:25b-27 demonstrates an unnatural flow and incorporates a high degree of familiarity with biblical texts, along with technical vocabulary absent in other sections of the Nehemiah Memoir. This suggests that verses 25-27 are likely later additions and not original to the primary narrative.

2.2. The Insertion of Ammonite and Moabite Women

3. The report by Nehemiah		
v. 23	גַּם	בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם רָאִיתִי אֶת־ הַיְהוּדִים הֹשִׁיבוּ נָשִׁים אַשְׁדֳּדִיּוֹת עַמֳּנִיּוֹת מוֹאֲבִיּוֹת:	*Also, in those days, I saw Yehudite men who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, [and] Moab.*[51]
v. 24	וּבְנֵיהֶם חֲצִי מְדַבֵּר אַשְׁדּוֹדִית וְאֵינָם מַכִּירִים לְדַבֵּר יְהוּדִית וְכִלְשׁוֹן עַם וָעָם:		*And half of their sons spoke Ashdodite, and did not know how to speak Yehudite, but the language of various people.*

The majority of studies concur that "עַמֳּנִיּוֹת מוֹאֲבִיּוֹת [women of] Ammon, [and] Moab" in v. 23 and "וְכִלְשׁוֹן עַם וָעָם but the language of various people" in v.24 are glosses.[52] The main arguments supporting this perspective are twofold. First, focusing

[51] All Hebrew quotations of the Bible will be taken from Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, electronic ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2003). All English translation will be the original translation unless otherwise stated.
[52] Batten, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 299; Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 362; Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther : Based on the Revised Standard Version*, 246; Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', 97; Myers, *Ezra ; Nehemiah*, 216; Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe : The Development of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 8*, 214, 218–19; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 393, 397; Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 178; Daniel A. Machiela and Robert Jones, 'Was There a Revival of Hebrew during the Hasmonean Period?: A Reassessment of the Evidence', *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 12, no. 2 (2 June 2021): 231.

on v.23, "עַמֳּנִיּוֹת Ammonite" and "מוֹאֲבִיּוֹת Moabite" lack the grammatical conjugation to be connected to the preceding elements, resulting in awkward grammar.[53] Second, a comparative examination of different manuscripts further supports this view. The LXX does not include "וּכִלְשׁוֹן עַם וָעָם the language of various people" in v.24. As the LXX still keeps "[women of] Ammon, [and] Moab," it may not be the completely solid evidence to support the argument in this section.[54] However, it still demonstrates that there are textual variations relating the reference to Ammonite and Moabite women.

If these are the additions, one might question the reason for the addition. I hypothesise that the author's motivation might lie in establishing consistency with Deuteronomy 23:3-4, which explicitly forbids intermarriage between Ammonites and Moabites.[55] This suggests that the editor of v. 23 was concerned with maintaining cohesion across biblical texts. It is plausible that this editor is the same as those who revised verses 25b-27. As argued in the previous section, the editor of vv. 25b-27 similarly shows a keen interest in maintaining coherence with other biblical sources.

If we summarise the discussion up to this point, the primary narrative can be outlined as follows: "In those days, I observed Judahite men who had married women from Ashdod, and half of their sons spoke Ashdodite, and did not know how to speak Yehudite." If 'Ammon and Moab' is a gloss, then the original text referred to Ashdod alone. One possible counterargument to this view is that the author would have had no reason to single Ashdod out like this. In what follows, I refute this counterargument,

[53] Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 362; Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 188; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 397.
[54] Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 362; Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther : Based on the Revised Standard Version*, 246; Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', 97; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 393.
[55] Wright, *Rebuilding Identity : The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers*, 245; Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe : The Development of Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 8*, 219; Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 397; Pichon, 'La Prohibition Des Mariages Mixtes Par Néhémie (XIII 23-31)', 188, 190.

suggesting that the text makes sense if referring to Ashdod alone, given its historical background.

Unfortunately, scholars have not found enough epigraphic evidence to reach a consensus on what Ashdodite was like, but it is still worth exploring the various viewpoints. Hugh Williamson and Edward Ullendorf argue that Ashdodite was quite a different language from Hebrew. Williamson provides a summary of several studies that have suggested that Ashdodite was a non-Semitic language, which is linguistically more distanced from Hebrew, particularly in comparison with other Canaanite dialects, such as Ammonite or Moabite.[56] Ullendorf's argument aligns with the summary of scholarship provided by Williamson. Moreover, he claims that Ashdodite represented "some barbarous and unintelligible tongue," drawing a parallel with the English expression "it's Greek/double Dutch to me."[57] If we adopt the argument proposed above, it will provide strong support for the hypothesis that Nehemiah's anger stems from children's linguistic limitations. In other words, he was indignant as the language, which was alien to Hebrew, gained popularity in the Yehudite society. However, their argument is not based on any archaeological or epigraphic evidence, which makes it less convincing.

Another scholarly view on this is to see it as Aramaic or a variation of the Aramaic dialect. Gene Schramm proposes the possibility that Ashdodite might have meant Aramaic.[58] Similarly, Kottsieper suggests that it was an Aramaic dialect.[59]

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[56] Williamson, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, 398; Joseph Naveh and Jonas C. Greenfield, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period', in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 1: Introduction: The Persian Period*, ed. Louis Finkelstein and W. D. Davies, vol. 1, The Cambridge History of Judaism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 115.
[57] Edward Ullendorff, 'C'est de L'hébreu Pour Moi!', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 13, no. 1 (1 March 1968): 133.
[58] Gene M. Schramm, 'Language: Hebrew', in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday: Yale University Press, 1992), 206.
[59] Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', 100.

Amongst them, Moche Dothan's argument based on an examination of archaeological sources seems the most sensible. He reports that a small ostracon dated to the mid-5th century B.C.E. was found in Ashdod with Aramaic cursive script.[60] He thus suggests the possibility that this script can be identified as Ashdodite, an Aramaic dialect spoken by the Philistines.

This paper supports Dothan's argument; however, supporting his argument leads us to another question. If Ashdodite was one of the Aramaic dialects, speaking it should not have influenced the overall linguistic abilities of the children, as they would have been brought up in an environment where Aramaic, a closely related language, was also spoken. Similarly, the members of the Yehudite community would not have had much difficulty communicating with children who spoke Ashdodite because Aramaic was already widely spoken in Yehud. This is supported by the fact that more Aramaic epigraphic materials have been found in Palestine from the Persian period than Hebrew ones.[61] Considering all these linguistic situations, it seems out of place for Nehemiah to specifically mention Ashdodite in the context of expressing his concern over the declining Hebrew skills among the young generation. Here, I suggest revisiting and partially employing Ullendorf's argument. I still reject his argument that Ashdodite was a non-Semitic language, significantly different from Hebrew and Aramaic, as he fails to provide any epigraphic evidence. However, I find his claim that Nehemiah specifically singles out Ashdodite to represent vernacular dialects with a negative implication, labelling it as 'barbaric and unintelligible,'[62] worth exploring. I suggest the possibility

[60] Moshe Dothan, 'Ashdod (Place)', in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday: Yale University Press, 1992), 481.
[61] Naveh and Greenfield, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period', 122.
[62] Ullendorff, 'C'est de L'hébreu Pour Moi!', 133.

that the presence of the Ashdodite language and its cultural influence bothered Nehemiah, as he perceived Ashdod as a rival to his community.

Ashdod is a Philistine city on the Mediterranean coast.[63] Its prosperity hit its highest point from the 11th to 10th century B.C.E., but the excavation that took place between 1962 and 70 revealed that the city experienced a revival during the Persian time.[64] The remains of a large building have been discovered, and they seem to have served as an administrative centre for the Persian governor. It is possible to assume that the city was the hub of the Persian imperial regional governorship. Furthermore, the city is located on the coast, which likely made it a crucial trading gate for the area. Considering these archaeological discoveries and geographical advantages, it is reasonable to assume that Ashdod thrived under the Persian Empire. Given its economic prosperity, it is not difficult to understand Nehemiah's rivalry towards the neighbouring city, Ashdod and its cultural influence.

Moreover, it might be worth considering Nehemiah's social location. Indeed, individuals who returned from exile, such as Nehemiah, were particularly likely to speak Aramaic as their first language, making it easy for them to understand Ashdodite if it were one of the Aramaic dialects.[65] However, the movement of people during the exile period led to encounters with various local Aramaic dialects, resulting in a diverse linguistic fusion in Palestine. [66] In such a scenario, it's possible that individuals like Nehemiah, who didn't grow up in the region, might have found it difficult to fully comprehend Ashdodite. More importantly, I suggest considering the influence of social class in this situation. Nehemiah, who was a Persian-appointed governor and others

[63] Dothan, 'Ashdod (Place)'.
[64] Dothan.
[65] Naveh and Greenfield, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period', 119; Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', 100.
[66] Naveh and Greenfield, 'Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period', 119.

from upper social strata, might not have been familiar with such local vernacular languages.

The analysis of the textual editorial history up to this point identifies Nehemiah's primary narrative as follows: "In those days, I saw Yehudite men who had married women of Ashdod. Half of their sons spoke Ashdodite and did not know how to speak Yehudite. I contended with them, cursed them, struck some of the men, and pulled out their hair." The later addition of verses 23bβ, 24b, and 25b-27 shifted the focus from the declining Yehudite proficiency of the children to the issue of mixed marriages. This raises the question of why the editor made such a modification.

Considering the previous analysis, which revealed that Yehudite society was experiencing a linguistic shift, we can infer the editor's intention. The later editors were likely raised and immersed in an Aramaic-centered Yehudite society and lacked awareness of this historical context. For them, Nehemiah's primary narrative might have seemed incomprehensible, as not understanding Yehudite could have become more common compared to Nehemiah's time, and societal tolerance might have increased.[67] They misconstrued Nehemiah's frustration as being primarily about mixed marriages. As a result, these editors made modifications based on their social perspectives, shifting the focus of 13:23-27 from Nehemiah's concern about the children's ability to speak Yehudite to the issue of their parents' mixed marriages.

[67] Kottsieper, '"And They Did Not Care to Speak Yehudit": On Linguistic Change in Judah during the Late Persian Era', 103.

3. Nehemiah's Intention

In the previous sections, I demonstrated that post-exilic Yehud experienced a rapid linguistic shift. This chapter will interpret Nehemiah's drastic actions in light of this socio-linguistic change.

When a language faces the threat of extinction, the primary measures to address this are "documentation and revitalization."[68] Documentation involves creating and preserving permanent records of the language's output. [69] On the other hand, Revitalisation is "more fundamental, and as such harder to achieve, since it needs to find means to arrest and reverse the decline of language tradition, forming a new basis for its vitality into the future."[70]

Nehemiah's use of physical violence can be seen as part of his attempt to revitalise Yehudite. As previously noted, the revitalisation of a language generally necessitates a comprehensive societal effort to conserve it. However, given the numerous conflicts recorded in the Book of Nehemiah, it is possible that Nehemiah lacked the resources or connections to initiate such an extensive project. Consequently, he may have resorted to physical violence against those he perceived as contributing to the problem.

Furthermore, the Book of Nehemiah itself might be viewed as Nehemiah's attempt to preserve the Yehudite language through documentation. It is noteworthy that Nehemiah wrote his memoir in Hebrew, rather than in Aramaic, which was presumably his first language and the administrative language of the Persian Empire. By choosing to write in Hebrew, Nehemiah may have been striving to preserve the

[68] Ostler, 'Language Maintenance, Shift, and Endangerment', 329.
[69] Ostler, 329.
[70] Ostler, 329.

language of Yehud. Over the two sections, I have demonstrated that the post-exilic Yehud experienced the rapid linguistic shift. In this chapter, I will interpret Nehemiah's drastic action in light of this socio-linguistic change.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this paper lies in uncovering a critical linguistic shift in post-exilic Yehud that reveals the complexities of Nehemiah's actions and motivations.

Our investigation began with Nehemiah 8, examining the language environment right after the return from exile. This investigation aims to clarify the early signs of any possible linguistic changes. The second chapter analyses Nehemiah 13:23-25, where the aggressive measures taken by Nehemiah were initially perceived as a reaction to the phenomenon of intermarriage. However, a closer examination of the text, coupled with an understanding of the broader linguistic context, suggests that Nehemiah's primary concern was the erosion of Yehudite language proficiency among the children of these marriages.The paper argues that later editorial revisions by a later hand shifted the text's focus from the socio-linguistic issue to mixed marriages. Additionally, the chapter proposes that the editor, immersed in an Aramaic-centric Yehudite society, lacked awareness of the historical context of Nehemiah 13:23-27. As a result, these editors altered the focus of the text from concerns about the children's ability to speak Yehudite to issues surrounding their parents' mixed marriages, reflecting their own social biases.

In light of these findings, it becomes evident that Nehemiah's efforts to revitalise Yehudite were rooted in a profound concern for the survival of Yehudite language and, by extension, Yehudite identity. The linguistic shift towards Aramaic, coupled with the editorial revisions, illustrates the dynamic and evolving nature of Yehudite society. This

paper underscores the importance of considering both linguistic and sociopolitical factors in understanding identity formation in post-exilic Yehud. Nehemiah's actions, driven by a complex interplay of linguistic and cultural pressures, offer valuable insights into the challenges faced by communities striving to maintain their distinctiveness in the face of external influences.

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Research Question

(How) do the literary features and the canonical and cultural contexts of the Song of Songs indicate that the Song is inherently designed to be read reflectively, namely deep consideration of the phenomenon of passionate longing and God's connection to it?

Key terms

Reflective genre: a text designed to prompt rumination, expose complexities, and raise questions, rather than provide answers.

Passionate longing: an intoxicating and powerful attractional force.

Aims

1. To carry out a close reading of the Song and analyse if and how the poetics prompt reflection on passionate longing and God's connection to it.
2. To challenge the basis for non-reflective readings and provide an alternative interpretation for the whole book.
3. To place the Song in close connection with Ecclesiastes and Job, as a group of texts which prompt reflection on human experience.
4. To compare how passionate longing is depicted across the Hebrew Bible, and to evaluate the extent to which the canonical context supports a reflective reading.
5. To compare the Song's theme of passionate longing and its reflective function with ancient West Asian love poetry, to evaluate the extent to which the AWA context supports a reflective reading.

Outline

The introduction will pick up on the three core issues: the Song's theological significance, the Song as poetry, and the Song as Wisdom Literature.

Part one will involve a literary analysis of the Song and propose a reflective reading of the Song. This section will first analyse the depiction of love which will include a focus on the lexeme אהב (love). The term "passionate longing" will be proposed to delineate the specific type of love on display in the Song, as opposed to covenantal marriage or nuptial

commitment. Then I will focus on three connected poetic strategies - first, the way the Song creates an immersive and emotive experience for the reader, second, the way the text is ambiguous and open, and third, additional techniques the Song employs to prompt audience reflection. The final stage of the literary analysis will be to pull those three elements together to consider the holistic reading, or listening, experience of the Song and the potential justification for a reflective reading approach.

Part two will consider a reflective reading of the Song from the perspective of Wisdom Literature. It will begin by looking at the reflection genre within Wisdom Literature and to what extent scholars have identified reflection in Job and Qohelet. Then the poetic features of the Song which stimulate reflection will be compared with the texts of Job and Qohelet. From the findings it may be possible to argue for the reflective function to be considered prototypical of Wisdom Literature.

Part three will consider a reflective reading of the Song from the perspective of the early audience's cultural context. This will involve analysing two different source domains – the Hebrew Bible and ancient West Asian love poetry, with considerably more attention given to the AWA context. Although the ancient audience did not have the canon as we know it, some of the texts would have existed in some form, at the least in an oral capacity. A selection of key texts will be examined to provide a picture of how passionate longing was presented from a Yahweh religion/worship perspective which will then be compared to the Song. It is anticipated that the Song will jar with the overwhelming negative presentation of passionate longing in the canon, prompting audience reflection. On the other hand AWA love poetry is remarkably similar to the Song and can provide a window into both the theme of passionate longing and the style of love poetry outside of Yahweh religion/worship. I will examine a few specific texts to establish how the presentation of passionate longing in AWA compares to the Song and the extent to which AWA love poems have a reflective function. I anticipate that the Song not only has distinctive poetic features which promote reflection, but that the Song could be intentionally playing with standard motifs as it seeks to prompt reflection.

The conclusion will summarise the arguments for a reflective reading of the Song and the arguments against current theological readings before finally considering to what extent this ancient love poem can still function as a work of reflective literature for a modern audience and the implications of this.

*The underlined section is where the content of my OTSEM paper fits into the overall thesis.

Stylistics and the Song of Songs

1 Affect and meaning in the Song of Songs: embodied cognition

This paper looks at the relationship between affect and meaning making in the Song of Songs. My aim is to demonstrate that the affective nature of the Song of Songs is central to how we make sense of the text through the process of embodied cognition. I will map out the two strands of recent scholarship looking at emotion in the Song to set the scene of the current landscape before arguing that the affective nature of the text needs to move from being an intriguing side-feature to central to the overall meaning of the Song. In this latter part of the paper I will explain how cognitive linguistics and stylistics can help in the endeavour of connecting affect with meaning in embodied cognition. Finally, I will demonstrate how embodied cognition works in practice.

The two strands of scholarship on the Song of Songs which focus on readerly affect differ in several ways, as will be become later, but the key difference is the stage of affect, or emotion, that they focus on. The larger, and more current group, which includes scholars such as Annette Schellenberg and Melanie Peetz looks at immediate emotions linked to specific aspects of the text, whereas feminist scholars, most notably Fiona Black have looked at the overall and longer-lasting emotional effect of the Song on readers.

Before going any further it is important to acknowledge that discourse on emotions is challenging due to the lack of agreement on many of the key terms. Therefore, I will provide a brief description on some of the terms relevant to this paper. I understand an emotion to be a conscious and identifiable felt sensations which can be fleeting or last for hour and are generally quite intense. The word emotion is often used interchangeably with feelings, but feelings are generally less conscious and harder to identify than emotions. Affect is a broad umbrella term which refers to any sort of affect that a text has on an audience. This can be in the body, the emotions, the mind, it can be conscious and unconscious. Affect can span from

the personal to the political, it can be fleeting or long lasting, instantaneous or develop over time. Affect therefore includes emotions, feelings, moods but is also much more than that.[1]

There is one further thing to do before exploring the existing scholarship on emotion and the Song, and that is to provide an orientation to the Song. Instead of providing a summary of the text and a description of how the text affects readers, I have included below two excerpts which will allow you (the reader of this paper) to have a first-hand experience of the affective nature of the Song.

2:8-17 'The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely. Catch us the foxes, the little foxes, that ruin the vineyards— for our vineyards are in blossom. My beloved is mine and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on the cleft mountains'.

4:9-12 'You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How sweet is your love, my sister, my

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[1] My description of affect is similar to how Fiona Black and Koosed's define affect theory: 'Affect theory is a critically informed analysis of emotions and bodily sensations, one that resists any neatly bifurcated analysis of emotions as either interior states or as social-political conditions'. I think the resistance to an agreed methodology of analysis is in large part due to the broad nature of affect. What affect theorists, at least in biblical studies, share is a strong conviction of the importance of affective experience for the personal and the political. Fiona C. Black and Jennifer L. Koosed, eds., *Reading with Feeling: Affect Theory and the Bible* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 1.

bride! how much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! Your lips distil nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon. A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed.'

I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on your reading of those short excerpts and to consider if, or how you were affected by the text.

1.1.1 Scholarship strand one: the overall and longer-lasting emotional effect

It was feminist scholars in the late 90's, early 2000's who were among the first to draw attention to how the Song had a strong emotive pull on its readers. They noticed that there was a collective emotive response. Carole Fontaine captured it in these words, 'lured by its language, its assumptions of immediacy, its presumption of the female voice, we seem to lose our own…we do not simply read the Song; we are changed by it, coaxed and cozened'.[2] Alicia Ostriker described her personal experience of the first time she read the Song, 'the unutterably sweet words seemed to come not from outside but from within myself, as if my most intimate truth were projected onto the screen of the page'. [3] Feminist scholars were perhaps the most vocal about their emotional experience but as Cheryl Exum pointed out they were not alone. She writes 'the poetry of the Song is seductive. One reason that criticism of the Song, feminist or otherwise, has been so respectful is that its commentators are emotionally and intellectually captivated by the language of this "masterpiece of pure poetry"'.[4]

Fiona Black went further than pointing out this widespread phenomenon and investigated why this was happening. She identified three overarching textual features as being

[2] Carole Fontaine, 'The Voice of the Turtle Dove: Now It's MY Song of Songs', in *The Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), 183.
[3] Alicia Ostriker, 'A Holy of Holies: The Song of Songs as Countertext', in *The Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), 37.
[4] Cheryl Exum, 'Ten Things Every Feminsit Should Know About the Song of Songs', in *The Song of Songs: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), 34.

responsible for the Song's effect, calling them 'the Song's amatory arsenal'. They are its veiled eroticism, the continual theme of searching and its use of obscure imagery.[5]

However, Black did not seek to incorporate the affect of the text into its meaning instead she viewed the emotional pull of the Song on the reader as a problem. Her primary interest was interpreting the wasfs, the head-toe descriptions scattered across the Song, and she felt their interpretation had been comprised by love-blind readers who liberally applied what she termed, 'a hermeneutic of compliment', a technical term for rose-tinted glasses. [6]

Although scholars often noted that these descriptions were strange and bizarre Black argued that all apprehensions were smoothed over by the controlling effect of reader's hermeneutic of compliment. Interestingly Black acknowledged that she too loved the book, but still she sought to take a more objective and critical stance, arguing that the wasfs were grotesque, not beautiful.

The view that readerly pleasure was a problem for critical scholarship gained traction. Although off course it was not a new idea but part of a long history of prizing emotionally detached reason. Several scholars followed Black in eschewing the emotional pull of the text: Christopher Meredith in his monograph on the Song challenged the widely accepted romanticised view of the garden imagery and sought, in his own words, 'to resist the text's own amorous advances, and keep a level head' (29).[7] While others in their efforts to not be love-blind are exploring some of the shadows in the Songs. [8] They are asking questions about race, gender, power and sexuality, and are looking more closely at texts like **1:5** 'I am black but beautiful'; **1:6** 'My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards'; **5:7** 'making their rounds in the city the sentinels found me; they beat me, they wounded me, they took away my mantle, those sentinels of the walls'.

Yet, despite Black initially pushing against an emotionally affected reading of the Song of Songs she has become one of the voices within biblical studies for affect theory, recently co-

[5] Fiona Black, *The Artifice of Love: Grotesque Bodies and the Song of Songs* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 213.
[6] Black, 35.
[7] Christopher Meredith, *Journeys in the Songscape: Space and the Song of Songs* (UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press Limited, 2017), 29.
[8] See Stefan Fisher and Gavin Fernades, eds., *The Song of Songs Afresh: Perspectives on a Biblical Love Poem* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2019); Elaine T. James and Simeon B. Chavel, eds., *Reading the Song of Songs in a #MeToo Era* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2023).

editing a book with Jennifer Koosed titled *Reading with Feeling: Affect Theory and the Bible* (2019).[9] A growing number of scholars are applying affect theory to biblical texts but as yet there have been no distinct affect-critical studies on the Song although Black's work could be considered a forerunner. Affect theorists in biblical studies are typically not concerned with *how* a text creates an affective response, but rather *what* kinds of affective responses a text elicits. Thus, affect theory is a theoretical perspective which has value in illuminating the affect of a text on a reader, but it is not suitable for text centred biblical hermeneutics as it does not closely connect affect to the text or to a texts overall meaning. However, the other more major and more current strand of emotion scholarship on the Song which I briefly introduced at the start, is interested in the how.

1.1.2 Scholarship strand two: the specific and immediate emotional effect

Annette Schellenberg, Melaine Peetz, Sarah Zhang, Todd Linafelt and Robert Miller are all interested in the textual presence of emotion, and they draw out how the same emotion encoded in the text is evoked in the reader.[10] This group of scholars all share a similar approach and of first importance is balancing the text-reader dynamic seeking to put equal weight on the text and the reader. They associate themselves with a range of different theories. For Peetz, it is the psychology of emotions; for Schellenberg is it anthropology of performance; for Zhang and Miller it is the philosophy of aesthetics; and for Linafelt it is literary criticism. Despite resting on a range of theories their methodological approach is remarkable similar. They identify a range of textual features and draw out their emotional affect. The textual features typically fall within what could be described as micro analysis and include things such as independent personal pronouns, repetition, phonetic arrangement, syntax, sensory language, metaphor, imagery, structure, and specific terminology for emotions. The only real difference between the scholars in terms of their methodology is whether they structure the analysis by starting with a particular section of

[9] Black and Koosed, *Reading with Feeling*.

[10] Annette Schellenberg, 'Senses, Sensuality, and Sensory Imagination: On the Role of the Senses in the Song of Songs', in *Sounding Sensory Profiles in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Annette Schellenberg and Thomas Krüger (Sounding Sensory Profiles in Antiquity, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 199–216; Melanie Peetz, '"Esst, Freunde, Trinkt, Berauscht Euch an Der Liebe!" Zur Literarischen Gestaltung Und Vermittlung Der Emotionen Im Hohelied', in *The Song of Songs in Its Context: Words for Love, Love for Words*, ed. Pierre Van Hecke (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2020), 147–92; Sarah Zhang, 'How Is a Love Poem (Song 4:1–7) Like the Beloved? The Importance of Emotion in Reading Biblical Poetry', in *Biblical Poetry and the Art of Close Reading*, ed. J. Blake Couey and Elaine T. James (Cambridge: University Press, 2018), 131–46.

the Song and carry out a close analysis, drawing out features as the go, or start with an identified list of textual features and provide examples of them through close analysis.

Not only is their methodology similar but so are their findings. They all focus on the emotion of love and the observe how it is evident in the text and aroused in the reader. As Schellenberg writes, the 'references to sensory experiences…has the power to trigger the sensory imagination of its recipients so that they can feel the excitement of the protagonists and be affected by it'.[11] And Peetz describes how 'the text ignites appetite, desire and excitement, thus generating greater participation in the emotions expressed in the text'.[12] Cheryl Exum, in her 2005 commentary on the Song, claimed that the Song's 'genius' was in the way that it showed us love through lover's eyes and lover's words. The findings from these studies would add, or perhaps even challenge that claim, and point to the Songs genius as the way the text encodes and evokes the feeling of being in love.[13]

1.3 Affect is integral to meaning

The two strands of scholarship have made a significant contribution by shining a light on readerly affect, which, once you see it, is an obvious and ubiquitous aspect of the Song. Black approached as an intriguing controlling phenomenon, while Peetz and others see affect as an element which adds richness and aesthetic value (Peetz, Zhang) but arguably their work has exposed the importance and integral nature of affect, as well as the complexity of affect and the difficulty of analysing it. The work to-date has nibbled around the edge of the question of how readerly affect shapes and stopped short of realising the full impact of affect on meaning making. I am not the first to notice this - Cheryl Exum in a 2020 article on recent trends of research in the Song of Songs made the comment that 'relatively little attention has been given to broader questions of poetics, meaning and effect' and she went on to suggest that scholars need to ask '*how* (not *what*) does the Song mean?'.[14]

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[11] Schellenberg, 'Senses, Sensuality, and Sensory Imagination', 212.
[12] Zhang, 'How Is a Love Poem (Song 4:1–7) Like the Beloved?', 143; Peetz, 'Eat, Friends, Drink, Enjoy Yourself in Love!', 165.
[13] Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs: A Commentary* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 1.
[14] Cherlyl J. Exum, 'Whither Song of Songs Research? A Personal View of Present Trends and New Directions', in *The Song of Songs in Its Context: Words for Love, Love for Words*, ed. Pierre Van Hecke (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2020), 28–29.

The subject of affect (when understood as a broad umbrella term) has also been the subject of much attention across biblical studies and there have been several recent volumes published on this theme. For example, Yael Avrahami and Nicole Tilford have produced monographs on the meaning of senses in the Hebrew Bible using historical-textual criticism.[15] Maia Kotrosits, a New Testament scholar who applies affect theory, has recently given an overview of affect theory across biblical studies.[16] Scott Spencer's edited book, *Mixed Feelings and Vexed Passions: Exploring Emotions in Biblical Literature,* captures the growing interest in this area and gives a flavour of the wide scope of work taking place.[17] As does another edited book, *Selected Avenues to Emotion-Oriented Interpretations of Ancient Religious Texts: Review and Outlook*.[18]

What is notable across these numerous studies is that although affect is being analysed from a range of angles there are few (if any) who are seeking to understand affect from a hermeneutical perspective. That is, the question of how affect effects the meaning making process, settled meaning of a text and the potential purpose of a text. This question is one which could be asked across all biblical texts but perhaps it is but right that the question be first asked of the Song of the Songs – a highly emotive text which can be interpreted in several contrastive ways. Could the affective nature of the text hold the key? Nor is this question about the connection between affect and meaning only relevant for biblical texts, but as the large discourse taking place across many disciplines shows affect is integral to all human processing of language, written and spoken, and therefore the connection between affect and meaning affects all areas of life.[19] It is to this broad discussion we will now turn so

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[15] Yael Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture: Sensory Perception in the Hebrew Bible.* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012); Nicole L. Tilford, *Sensing World, Sensing Wisdom: The Cognitive Foundation of Biblical Metaphors* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017).

[16] Maia Kotrosits, 'How Things Feel: Biblical Studies, Affect Theory, and the (Im)Personal', *Brill Research Perspectives in Biblical Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–53.

[17] F. Scott Spencer, *Mixed Feelings and Vexed Passions: Exploring Emotions in Biblical Literature* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017).

[18] Ute E Eisen, Heidrun E Mader, and Melanie Peetz, eds., *Selected Avenues to Emotion-Oriented Interpretations of Ancient Religious Texts: Review and Outlook* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2024).

[19] For example the connection between affect and meaning us being analysed in relation to classroom education methods and business management styles. See Qing Archer Zhang, 'Beyond Situational Meaning: From Dewey's Aesthetic Experience to Sensuous Abstraction for Deep Learning', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 2023, 1–11; Alina Bas, Marta Sinclair, and Viktor Dörfler, 'Sensing: The Elephant in the Room of Management Learning', *Management Learning* 54, no. 4 (1 September 2023): 489–510.

as to appreciate the general connection of affect and meaning before looking at the specifics of the Song.

1.3 Embodied cognition

For a long time the reading process was understood as an abstract decoding of information - as though the reader matched the words on the page with words in their mind by accessing an internal encyclopaedia and grammatical dictionary, or if not word matching then concept matching. However, the reading process is now understood quite differently. The great divide between emotion and reason, which was built on the foundation of a spirit-flesh and mind-body divide, has been eroded by cognitive scientists who have been investigating how we make meaning. The ability to understand a string of words is now understood to involve a complex integration of our perceptual, sensory, motor, emotional and linguistic systems, all of which are formed through personal experiences within a particular cultural and social context. The term embodied cognition is used by cognitive linguistics to capture this mind-body synchronism. In sum, reading is not an abstract linear process and that is because language is not an abstract linear system. Affect is integral to embodied cognition.

This new understanding of language has been researched and written about by a number of cognitive scientists and linguists, but the ones I will refer to most often are Benjamin Bergen, author of *Louder Than Words* (2012), and Peter Stockwell, author of *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (2019, second edition).[20] As they have contributed to several recent handbooks on semantics and linguistics, thus indicating that they are leading experts in the field, and they are specifically concerned with the relationship between affect and meaning.[21]

1.4 Stylistics and the process of embodied cognition

[20] Peter Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2019); Benjamin K. Bergen, *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).
[21] Benjamin Bergen, 'Embodiment', in *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Ewa Dabrowska and Dagmar Divjak (De Gruyter Mouton, 2015), 10–30; Benjamin Bergen, 'Embodiment, Simulation and Meaning', in *The Routledge Handbook of Semantics* (UK: Routledge, 2015), 142–57; Peter Stockwell, 'Poetics', in *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Ewa Dabrowska and Dagmar Divjak (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 432–52; Chloe Harrison and Peter Stockwell, 'Cognitive Poetics', in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. John Taylor and Jeannette Littlemore (Bloomsbury Publishing UK, 2014), 218–33.

My goal is to apply this new understanding of language, and embodied cognition in particular, to the Song to ascertain how the affective, that is embodied, nature of the Song shapes the reading process and the overall meaning that the reader settles on. The methodological approach I will draw on to apply the theory of embodied cognition is stylistics, as it is a methodology which is underpinned by this particular theory, and it is specifically geared towards analysing textual meaning. It is I believe important to make it clear that although I am employing the theory of embodied cognition and stylistics, I do not consider myself to be imposing an artificial or anachronistic framework on the Song, but rather using the most up-to-date language theories and literary methods to analyse an integral aspect of the Song of Songs. An aspect which has been shaping how readers make sense of the Song but whose influence has not been accounted, or analysed, for its hermeneutical contribution.

Stylistics also goes by the name of cognitive poetics, the term used by Peter Stockwell in the title of his recent book, but for simplicity I will refer to it as stylistics, not only to save on the repetition of the word cognitive but, to help distinguish the method of analysing embodied cognition from the underlying theory. Stylistics straddles literature and language and the objective of stylistic analysis is a critical appreciation of the dynamic text-reader relationship. Stylisticians look at textual features and assess the way they effect the meaning making process and overall settled understanding. The two overarching and interconnected macrostructural linguistic features which they consider central to meaning making are viewpoint and text world, and the reason they are the central to meaning making is because together they create embodied simulation, which is the process by which 'we understand language by simulating in our minds what it would be like to experience the things that the language describes'.[22]

First viewpoint. Alison Gibbons and Sara Whiteley, authors of *Contemporary Stylistics: Language, Cognition, Interpretation* (2018), write that 'language is context bound' and 'encodes a position'.[23] That is to say, all texts, all words in fact, are subjective as they are expressed from a particular viewpoint. The technical term used within the field of stylistics

[22] Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 13.
[23] Alison Gibbons and Sara Whiteley, *Contemporary Stylistics: Language, Cognition, Interpretation* (UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 9.

to refer to the positionality of language is deixis, and the movement between different positional viewpoints are known as deictic shifts, and the viewpoint in focus is the dietic centre. To understand language a reader, or listener, must project themselves into the speaker's mind, be that a character in a book or a person in front of them, and then interpret their language from their perspective. This is most obvious in the case of words such as 'I', 'you', 'here'. Projecting into a speaker's mind is called mind-modelling and the fact that we do this all the time without conscious awareness shows how adept humans are at inhabiting other viewpoints. Gibbons and Whiteley refer to this skill as the 'interpretative capacities to cognitively relocate'.[24]

The Song of Songs is entirely composed of direct speech which means that the audience projects themselves into the mind of the characters to understand their language. At no point does the author of the text make themselves known, nor is there a narrator, instead the audience experiences the text from a first-person perspective. This decision by the author or editor to always make the deictic centre one of the characters of the Song has a significant impact on the way the audience engages with the text. At no point does the audience take up the viewpoint of dispassionate or omniscient observer, which is what a narrator's voice could offer. Instead, without an external guide or appraiser the audience is drawn closer to the text and given more freedom to make up its own opinion about the Song.

Second, the text world. The experience of being absorbed by a book is one is familiar to many. That sense of being transported to another world - of picturing a world and the people and places in it and finding yourself laughing out loud; feeling apprehensive; disliking a character; crying at a tender moment – and being unable to put the book down followed by a sense of wanting more when it is finished. Stylistics uses the phrase text-world as a technical term but it is surely a concept familiar to many.

The world that the reader conceptualises is cued by details in the text but filled in with things from their mind. In this way conceptualisation is both bottom up and top-down. The knowledge drawn on in top-down processing is sometimes referred to as schematics. This

[24] Gibbons and Whiteley, 163.

combination of text and mind means that what readers picture in their minds will vary considerably depending on each individual's culture, personal experience, time period etc. But if readers share a similar background or culture, they may create fairly similar text-words, especially as the world the reader or listener constructs is built along the lines of the real world due to the widely accepted principle of minimum departure. For example, characters will not be able to fly unless that is made explicit in the text, or if in the culture of the reader beautiful women are curvy then the imagined woman will have curves.

1.5 A demonstration of the text-reader dynamic

As already mentioned the two macrostructure features, viewpoint and text world, are closely interconnected in the meaning making process in the way they facilitate embodied simulation. Embodied simulation provides a new take on the debate about authors purpose and reader-response, by highlighting the interconnectedness of the text and the reader. It also helps explain why people arrive at different interpretations – the space between text and reader creates a range of meaning potential. Yet, although there is an degree of openness the craftmanship of the text, the selection and ordering of the linguistic parts, constrains and prompts the reader. The text-reader dynamic is a delicate one.

The audience as it reads or hears the words finds themselves immersed in the text, experiencing the text world from the position of the lovers. In the audience's minds eye, they are the one uttering the words and moving through the text world, looking, touching, smelling, tasting everything from the standpoint of the lovers. This creates a very personal reading of the Song and is arguably one of the reasons why readers feel strongly about their interpretation.

At the start of this paper two excerpts where given to provide you with the opportunity to experience the affective nature of the text, and with the anticipation that you would unconsciously use embodied simulation to understand the text. You might want to return to that text to remember what the reading experience was like. However, to demonstrate how embodied simulation works in practice, and the way the text constrains and prompts and yet leaves a degree of openness, I will provide analysis of one verse in the Song but before reading the analysis take a moment to consider the sentence for yourself.

‘who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?’. (8:5)

The question in the text prompts the reader to visualise two lovers, a woman leaning on a man as they travel through a wilderness. But while readers share the foregrounded details of two lovers coming up from a wilderness the embodied simulations will be more coloured and filled in. Think about the image in your mind and any sensations you might feel - do you imagine them coming towards you? Can you see their faces, or is it a side view? Is her arm interlinked with his, or is she is leaning against his body? The text only says they are coming up from the wilderness, so did you picture them walking, perhaps a slow lovers meander, or are they in a carriage sitting side by side and moving quickly? What about their appearance - what clothing did you visualise? What about the setting - was it a hot dry flat desert, or are there trees, hills and free roaming animals? They way those details were coloured and filled in will have been shaped by the readers personal and social experiences, including their understanding of the wider text of the Song of Songs, and any knowledge of the ancient culture the Song is set in.

We will continue and look at the remainder of the verse:

‘who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labour with you; there she who bore you was in labour’.

First, notice the viewpoint of the whole verse. The audience projects themselves into the mind of the woman, seeing the world from her perspective. But this raises the question is this verse all spoken by one person, and if it is then who is the woman in the wilderness? And connected to this, is the man under the tree the beloved one who was being leaned upon in the wilderness?

The latter part of the verse adds in a whole new set of images, and they include two different time periods in the past and are about two emotive events which both took place below the same tree - the woman awakening the man, and his mother being in labour with him. These events which took place under the tree both carry intense connotations, an intensity which is exacerbated by their juxtaposition. Readers or listeners may find as they take these words in that it creates a potentially palpable, sensory-somatic (visceral)

response in them. How do you feel, or what are you thinking about as you read the words, ‘under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labour with you’.

Now consider the wilderness and then the mention of a tree. Do you think the tree that is being referred to part of the wilderness scene or is it part of a new scene. A reader might readjust their mental image if their view of the wilderness had no trees, or perhaps they will add one solitary tree to their wilderness scene. Or the reader might keep the wilderness bare and consider the tree to be part of a new setting and view Song 8:5 as containing two, in fact three, fragmented scenes: the couple moving across the wilderness, the woman awakening the man, the man’s mother giving birth to him.

While a reader may stop to consider the range of possible interpretations in this one verse, it is more than likely that the readers mind will unconsciously create and adapt the embodied simulations and come to an overall settled meaning without realising the relative ambiguity and openness the text allows. This demonstration only considered one verse and yet this process is what takes place continuously as readers and hearers experience the Song, constantly responding and reconfiguring the text-world, and building up an overall sense and meaning.

1.6 Next steps

Having linked to affect to embodied cognition and explained the process of meaning making with the help stylistics, the next step is to analyse larger portions of the Song of Songs to understand the readers experience. What is the larger text-world like? What kind of viewpoints do the characters offer? What effect do the deictic shifts have on the audience? How open and ambiguous is the text? After building a picture of the reader’s reading experience – a deep plunge into the sensual and intoxicating world of infatuated lovers. I hope to argue the reason for this highly immerse and emotive experience is prompt readers to ask deep questions of themselves and their world about passionate longings. Are they controllable? Are they good? What should we do with them? Are they from the Lord? The purpose of this questioning is to prompt reflection - to raise discussion on the subject of passionate longings, to stimulate questions and ultimately to expose the limits of human understanding and a seeking for answers.

1.7 Conclusion

To return to where this paper started and the two strands of scholarship on emotion, embodied cognition can explain why the emotions in the text are evoked in the readers and it can also help explain why many readers fall in love with the Song – because it is a world they had a large role in shaping through their imagination. But, as I mentioned earlier this does not address Exum's pertinent question of '*how* (not *what*) does the Song mean?'. It is not enough to use embodied cognition to explain affective responses. It needs to be applied to the meaning making process and the overall meaning and purpose of the Song.

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Additional general bibliography

Isaiah (11:2–3a) and the Spirit in Early Jewish and Christian Reception

Doctoral student: Simon Johansson, Åbo Akademi University
Head supervisor: Prof. Antti Laato, Åbo Akademi University
Title of paper (OTSEM 2024): "The Reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a and the 'Sevenfold Spirit' in Early Judaism"

My doctoral research is about perceptions of the divine spirit (spirit of God/YHWH, holy spirit, etc.) in the reception history of the Book of Isaiah in early Jewish and Christian contexts. This research is part of a larger project: *Isaiah between Judeo-Christian Borderlines,* which is financed by the Polin Institute and the Academy of Finland, and focuses on the relationship between the early Christian interpretation of the Book of Isaiah and the reception history of the same in early Judaism; the working hypothesis is that the early Christian interpretations are rooted in and developments of Jewish interpretations, and the starting point is Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, in which texts from the Book of Isaiah play an important role.

The basic idea in my project is to follow and study the reception – use and interpretation – of "*rûaḥ*-texts" from the Book of Isaiah up until the late second century CE/very early third century CE, study the relationship between different interpretations (Jewish and Christian), and how the interpretations of these texts interplay with the perceptions of the divine spirit surrounding them. One aim of the research is to contribute to increased knowledge and new perspectives on the way in which the Hebrew Bible and Jewish interpretations play an important role in the formation of early Christian pneumatological thought. In early Christian, pre-Nicene, writings, especially during the second century, when the "doctrine of the spirit" still is fluid, different perceptions of the divine spirit are expressed and developed in a "polemical dialogue" with Jewish interpretations. Even though the polemical tone is sometimes very strong, the Christian interpretations depend to a large extent upon Jewish ones (so, e.g., in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue*).

In the process of this project, much research has come to be focused on Isa 11:2–3a and its reception; this is one of the most quoted or alluded to passage from the Book of Isaiah in patristic writings (only surpassed by Isa 61:1), and central for understanding the early Christian concept of the "sevenfold spirit." Interestingly, this passage has been interpreted as both relating to *charismatic gifts/powers*, and to *personified* and/or *angelomorphic* perceptions of the divine spirit. The following case studies are/will be part of the project:

- The Jewish Background to Early Christian Pneumatology/Perceptions of the Spirit, and the Jewish Reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a in the Second Temple Period;
- The Angelomorphic "Lady-Spirit of Wisdom" in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (as part of the Jewish background) [**forthcoming article**];
- The Reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a and the "Seven Spirits of God" in the Book of Revelation [**forthcoming article**];
- The Reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a and Perceptions of the Divine Spirit in Three Second Century CE Christian Writers: Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Tertullian [**forthcoming article**].

The present paper, "The Reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a and the 'Sevenfold Spirit' in Early Judaism," belongs naturally to the first of these points and is more like a survey of this reception than a finished analysis with a clear thesis.

The Reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a and the “Sevenfold Spirit” in Early Judaism

SIMON JOHANSSON

Abstract

In its own context, Isa 11:2–3a is concerned with the empowerment of a future Davidic king, by the spirit of YHWH, with the royal qualities necessary to rule as YHWH wants, in righteous judgment and peace. Later, in the early Christian sources of the second century CE, this text is mostly referenced in Christological discourses, and the different attributes of the spirit are often interpreted as charismatic gifts/powers; furthermore, it is connected to personified and/or “angelomorphic” perceptions of the divine spirit. This paper focuses on the Jewish background to these Christian interpretations. It consists of a survey of quotations and allusions to Isa 11:2–3a in early Jewish sources, and is part of the research for a doctoral dissertation about the reception of Isa 11:2–3a in early Jewish and Christian contexts. It explores how Isa 11:2–3a has been translated, used and interpreted; especially in relation to pneumatology and perceptions of the Divine spirit. The relevant sources include the *Wisdom of Solomon*; *Ben Sira*; *Sus* (from the Old Greek text of the Book of Daniel); the *Psalms of Solomon*; *1 Enoch*; different Qumran-writings; and the Isaiah Targum.

Keywords: Isaiah 11; Reception History; Early Judaism; Pneumatology; Angelology.

Preface for the OTSEM 2024-conference

Dear reader(s) of this paper,

This paper is part of the background research for my doctoral dissertation on the reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a in early Jewish and early Christian writings. As such, it is written more as a survey or “exploration” than a finished analysis.

All constructive criticism and suggestions on how to further strengthen, ameliorate and develop this research paper are most welcome. I will, however, especially appreciate discussions relating to the following questions/points:

1. Is there any important sources or research that I seem unaware of?
2. Clarifications regarding methodology.

Thank you very much!



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2024-07-23

The Reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a and the "Sevenfold Spirit" in Early Judaism

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1. Introduction

When studying the early Jewish and Christian reception of texts about the Divine spirit in the Book of Isaiah and how they relate to the development(s) of pneumatology, Isaiah 11:2–3a emerges as one of the most important passages. The Book of Isaiah as a whole is one of the most quoted books in both early Judaism and early Christianity,[1] and in the Hebrew Bible, it is second only to the Book of Ezekiel when counting the number of occurrences of the word רוח (breath, wind, spirit).[2] In Isaiah 11:2–3a (MT), רוח is used four times;[3] and in the Greek translation (LXX) of the same verses, πνεῦμα occurs five times. There is evidence to suggest that the first ten verses of this chapter (i.e., 11:1–10), together with Genesis 49:9–11 and Numbers 24:17 (possibly also 2 Samuel 7:10–14), was part of a "core group of *testimonia*" in Jewish, pre-Christian, expectations of a royal, Davidic messiah; and, subsequently, that these texts were applied in early Christianity to Jesus.[4] It is also clear that Isaiah 11:2–3a, with its strong concentration of "spirit-language", was used in pneumatological (and sometimes angel-ological) discourse, and that the Greek translation was crucial for the development of the early Christian tradition of the "sevenfold spirit."

In the original context of this text, the focus lies on the empowerment of a future Davidic king with the royal qualities necessary to rule as YHWH wants: in righteous judgement and peace. The spirit of YHWH, functioning as an extension of YHWH's own being and executing his will as he's relating to "human beings, nature, and […] the nation,"[5] is the source of the king's virtues, and keeps the king in "constant subjection to God in the fear of Yahweh,"[6] who is the true king of Israel. In the early Christian writings of the second century CE, however, Isaiah 11:2–3a is often interpreted in *charismatic* ways, and is being connected to *personified* and/or *angelomorphic* perceptions of the Divine spirit.[7]

In this paper, I survey and explore the translation, use and interpretation of Isaiah 11:2–3a in

[1] John F. A. Sawyer, *Isaiah Through the Centuries* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 2–3.
[2] *Rûaḥ* is used 51 times in the Book of Isaiah and 52 times in the Book of Ezekiel. At least 18 times in the Book of Isaiah, *rûaḥ* refers to the Divine spirit (Isa 11:2; 30:1; 32:15; 34:16; 40:7, 13; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:19, 21; 61:1; 63:10, 11, 14; possibly also 4:4; 11:4, 15; 27:8; 28:6; 30:28).
[3] There are only two places in the Hebrew Bible where *rûaḥ* occurs as much as four times in the same verse: Isa 11:2 and Ezek 37:9.
[4] Martin C. Albl, *"And Scripture Cannot Be Broken": The Form and Function of the Early Christian* Testimonia *Collections* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 58, 208, 212, 215.
[5] Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah*, JSOTSup 271 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 29.
[6] Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, 38.
[7] [In a forthcoming article, I explore how Isaiah 11:2–3a has been used and interpreted in three second century CE Christian writers, namely Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyon, and Tertullian.]

early Jewish sources of the Second Temple Era, as part of the background to later early Christian use and interpretation of this text – especially in relationship to developments in pneumatology and perceptions of the Divine spirit.[8] First, we will look at the *Septuagint* and the translation of Isaiah 11:2–3a into Greek, before going through quotations and allusions to this text in Jewish sources from the Second Temple Era.

2. The *Septuagint*

It is quite clear that the Greek translation (LXX) of Isa 11:2–3a, with seven attributes connected to the spirit of God instead of six (as in the MT), is important in the development of a "seven spirit"- or "sevenfold spirit"-tradition, which seems to be quite established within Christianity in the first centuries CE.[9] The seven attributes of the spirit are simultaneously interpreted as an expression of the fullness of the Spirit *and* as charismatic gifts/powers of the Spirit. Aphrahat, even when having quoted Isaiah 11:2–3a closer to the Hebrew text, with six attributes, still says that these are the "seven operations" of the Spirit (see *Dem* 1:9).[10]

There could be a connection to the number seven even in the MT-text, if counting רוח יהוה in v. 2a as one of the "spirits" or attributes; also in 11:15, רוחו is mentioned, together with שבעה נחלים ("seven streams"). But with the Greek versions, the sevenfold pattern becomes unequivocal. The יראת יהוה in the end of v. 2 becomes καὶ εὐσεβείας, and a seventh attribute is added via (1) the integration of v. 3a, where יראת יהוה becomes φόβου θεοῦ, and (2) the translation of והריחו as derived from רוח instead of ריח,[11] thus translating into ἐμπλήσει αὐτὸν πνεῦμα. See the table below.

Isa 11:2–3a (MT BHS)	*Isa 11:2–3a (LXX Göttingen)*[12]
ונחה עליו	καὶ ἀναπαύσεται ἐπ᾽αὐτὸν
רוח יהוה	πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ,
רוח חכמה ובינה	πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ συνέσεως,
רוח עצה וגבורה	πνεῦμα βουλῆς καὶ ἰσχύος,
רוח דעת ויראת יהוה	πνεῦμα γνώσεως καὶ εὐσεβείας·
והריחו ביראת יהוה	ἐμπλήσει αὐτὸν πνεῦμα φόβου θεοῦ

[8] This paper is part of the background research for my doctoral dissertation on the reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a in early Jewish and early Christian writings. As such, it is written more as a survey or "exploration" than a finished analysis.

[9] See e.g., Justin Martyr (*Dial* 39:2; 87:2, 4), Irenaeus of Lyon (*Dem* 9–10), Tertullian (*Adv Jud* 9:26; *Adv Marc* III 17:3–5; *Adv Marc* V 8:4, 8; 17:5), Aphrahat (*Dem* 1:9). [In a forthcoming article, I explore and discuss the "Seven Spirits of God" in the Book of Revelation (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6) and the connections between these seven spirits and Isaiah 11:2–3a (LXX).]

[10] Bogdan G. Bucur, "Exegesis of Isaiah 11.2 in Aphrahat the Persian Sage," *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality: Volume 2: Exegetical Studies*, ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 188–190.

[11] Arie Shifman, "'A Scent' of the Spirit: Exegesis of an Enigmatic Verse (Isaiah 11:3)," *JBL* 131/2 (2012), 242.

[12] There are some textual variants of this text in the Greek translations, such as κυριος instead of θεος, and repetition of φοβου in v. 2b–3a. According to Chrysostom and minuscule 710, both Aquila and Theodotion (in the second century CE) uses φοβου instead of εὐσεβείας in v. 2b, and renders v. 3a as οσφρανει αυτον εν φοβω κυριου, thus following the Hebrew text (MT) more closely.

Two things regarding the relationship between the Greek translations and perceptions of the divine spirit, and πνεῦμα in general, should be noted:

First, πνεῦμα is by far the most common word in the LXX to translate רוח (277 times),[13] and its semantic range makes it "a remarkably appropriate term".[14] However, neither the Greek term nor the hermeneutical possibilities of the biblical texts remain unchanged by this translation. The meaning of πνεῦμα – precisely through its use in biblical Greek and due to Jewish/Christian influence – is developed in new, "non-Greek"[15] directions: from the strong connection to nature and physical character it had in the Hellenistic world,[16] to "the very different, suprasensual, supraterrestial and in part personal character and content which πνεῦμα has in Judaism and Christianity",[17] where it can denote *both* the transcendent, personal and unique Spirit of God, *and* "supernatural spirits and intermediaries, whether good or evil".[18]

Second, there are "angelomorphic tendencies" related to πνεῦμα in the LXX. John R. Levison has successfully demonstrated the existence of angelic – or *angelomorphic* – perceptions of the divine spirit in early Judaism, starting already in the Hebrew Bible. The translation-choices of the LXX in many cases only make these perceptions stronger: "there are indeed several instances in which LXX-translations provide intimations that the spirit continued to be interpreted as an angelic being in the Greco-Roman period."[19]

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[13] F. Baumgärtel, "Spirit in Judaism," *TDNT* 6, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 367. This count includes Da. Θ and Sir.

[14] Matthew Edwards, *Pneuma and Realized Eschatology in the Book of Wisdom* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 110.

[15] H. Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα in the Greek World," *TDNT* 6, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 339.

[16] Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα in the Greek World," 339; Edwards, *Pneuma and Realized*, 108.

[17] Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα in the Greek World," 338. This said about the concept of a πνεῦμα ἅγιον, coined by "biblical Gk." and earlier not found in "secular Gk."

[18] Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα in the Greek World," 339. Because of its "distinctive history" in Greek philosophy, so Matthew Edwards argues, "new conceptual possibilities arise": spirit can be understood as *either* "transcendent and incorporeal" or "immanent and material" – not left undefined in this regard as in the Hebrew Bible (Edwards, *Pneuma and Realized*, 111).

[19] John R. Levison, "The Angelic Spirit in Early Judaism," *SBL Seminar Papers* 34 (1995), 474. A few examples can be given from Levison's paper: "To trouble" (פעם), "naturally" translated by ταράσσω (and is so in Gen 41:8; Ps 76:4; Dan 2:1), is in LXX-Judg 13:24f instead translated by "to accompany" (συνπορεύομαι; *Codex Vaticanus* has συνεκπορεύομαι); "Such a translation indicates the presence of the belief in the Greco-Roman era that a spirit of God could be present by accompanying rather than possessing someone" (p. 474–475); regarding Isa 63:14: instead of livestock going down (as in MT), the LXX connects the "going down" with the spirit: the spirit descends; and, the spirit is not *rûaḥ YHWH* but *pneuma para kyriou*: *para* "often signals an independent" *rûaḥ*; "Taken together these elements suggest that the LXX translator understood Isa 63:14 to refer to a spirit which descended from Yahweh in order to lead the people of Israel to Canaan" (p. 476); in Mic 3:8 (MT) the prophet is filled with power, the spirit of YHWH, justice and might; in the LXX-translation, however, the prophet is filled by power, justice and strength, but not by the spirit: here the translator describes the spirit as "the means or person by which the prophet is filled with power and justice" (p. 488–478); Judith 16:14c changes Ps 104:30a (LXX Ps 103:30a) from *God* sending his spirit to the *spirit* being the subject of the verb (to build): the spirit "is no longer a vehicle through which the creation is built but the subject which builds" (p. 479).

3. Quotes and Allusions to Isaiah 11:2–3a in Early Jewish Sources

The following quotes and allusions to Isaiah 11:2–3a have been selected using Armin Lange's and Matthias Weigold's *Biblical Quotations and Allusions in Second Temple Jewish Literature*.[20]

3.1. Ben Sira

For the author of *Ben Sira*, wisdom is mainly to be found through studying the *torah* (e.g. Sir 1:26; 6:37); nevertheless, in 39:6–7, concerning the scribe that has devoted himself to the study of God's law, prophecies and proverbs (38:34–39:3) and prayer (39:5, 6), wisdom can be given by God through the infilling of the πνεύματι συνέσεως, which will lead to speaking "words of wisdom" (ῥήματα σοφίας), thanksgiving, and divine guidance in counsel (βουλή) and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη).

The use of βουλή – together with πνεῦμα, σοφία and σύνεσις – indicates an allusion to Isa 11:2, but the use of ἐπιστήμη together with the same words could also point to Ex 31:3. It is safe to say that Sir 39:6–7 could be alluding to both of these texts (see the table below), or that Ex 31:3 lies behind both Sir 39:6–7 and Isa 11:2.

Ex 31:3 (MT + LXX)	*Sir 39:6–7*	*Isa 11:2 (MT + LXX)*
רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים πνεῦμα θεῖον	πνεῦμα σύνεσις	רוּחַ יְהוָה πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ
חָכְמָה σοφία		חָכְמָה σοφία
תְּבוּנָה σύνεσις	σοφία	בִּינָה σύνεσις
	βουλή	עֵצָה βουλή
דַּעַת ἐπιστήμη	ἐπιστήμη	דַּעַת γνῶσις

Whereas in Ex 31, the spirit of God is equipping *craftsmen* for practical work, and in Isa 11 the future messianic *king* is to be empowered to rule justly, in Sir 39, the spirit of understanding from the Lord is imbuing the *scribe of the torah* with wisdom and knowledge, in a context where practical work is viewed as something for "simple people" and very different from the activities of the scribes. The lowest level of "sapiential achievement" is for people working with their hands (even though their work is considered very important; 38:25–33); the next level is for the student of the law (38:24; 38:34–39:5), but the "the highest level of wisdom is

[20] Armin Lange and Matthias Weigold, *Biblical Quotations and Allusions in Second Temple Jewish Literature*, Journal of ancient Judaism Supplements 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011). Some of the references given are yet to be studied and thus not part of this paper (e.g. 1QH[a] VI 36; 4Q444; ALD 3:6; *T. Benj.* 8:2; *T. Levi* 18:7).

reserved for the sage who receives the Spirit of understanding"[21] (39:6–11). This finds a parallel – although very different from *Ben Sirach* – in Philo, who seems to think that the highest form of knowledge is "attained through an experience of Spirit-inspired prophetic ecstasy."[22]

3.2. Wisdom of Solomon

The author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* brings together three different traditions from the Hebrew Bible – the divine "spirit of wisdom," the personified Lady Wisdom, and the Angel of the Lord – and lets them converge in one figure. This "Lady-Spirit of Wisdom" is a πνεῦμα reminiscent of the Stoic world-soul, and Philo's all-penetrating Divine Logos, but is clearly both personified and "angelomorphized." She is as the same time the divine spirit and the angelic presence that led the Israelites out of Egypt and through the desert.[23]

3.3. Susanna (Book of Daniel in the Greek Text)

The "spirit of understanding" is mentioned in the Old Greek (OG) version of the Book of Daniel, in the story about Susanna (v. 45), before alterations in *kaige*-Theodotion. In Swete's LXX-edition, we read that ὁ ἄγγελος – earlier in the same verse called ἄγγελος κυρίου – gave, as commanded, πνεῦμα συνέσεως to the young Daniel. In *kaige*-Theodotion, however, there is no mention at all of an angel; instead we read: ἐξήγειρεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον παιδαρίου νεωτέρου, ᾧ ὄνομα Δανιηλ.[24] God is now the subject, and the "spirit of understanding" given to Daniel has become nothing else than his own (human) "holy spirit" being stirred up. A tradition in which angels functioned as mediators, transmitting "spirits" from God to man (cf. *Herm* 43:9), has thus been replaced with something much less exciting.

3.4. Qumran Writings

In the following survey, we will look at four Qumran texts that quote or allude to Isa 11:2–3a, namely 1QS 4:3; 1QS^{b} (28^{b}) 5:21–27; 4Q161 frag. 8: 10:11–16; and 4Q213^{a} frag. 1: 13–18.[25] When studying the use of רוח, and even רוח קודש, in the writings of Qumran, one must be careful to keep two things in mind: first, that these writings are not always homogenous in

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[21] Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke—Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 1994), 64; Menzies here follows J.A. Davies, *Wisdom and Spirit: An Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1.18–3.20 against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Tradition in the Greco-Roman Period* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984), 16–21.
[22] Menzies, *Empowered*, 60. Philo of Alexandria seems to think that there are three types of knowledge: (1) Knowledge received through the senses (observation); (2) Knowledge attained through philosophical reflection; (3) "Pure" knowledge, given through Spirit-inspired prophetic ecstasy. See also: Davies, *Wisdom and Spirit,* 52; B.A. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians: A Study in the Theology of the Corinthian Opponents of Paul and its Relation to Gnosticism*, SBLDS 12 (Missoula: SBL, 1973), 45.
[23] This is the conclusion I reach in a forthcoming article about the spirit in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and since I have already studied the reception of Isaiah 11:2–3a in that article, no more room will be given to it here.
[24] So in Rahlfs' LXX-edition.
[25] A few more Qumran texts are yet to be examined.

their uses of these terms or in their respective pneumatological perspectives:[26] secondly, that the terms can be employed for different things even in the same writings.

> In the writings of Qumran… the designations, holy spirit or spirit of holiness, describe equally God's spirit (e.g. 1QS 8:16; 1QH 7:6; 9:32), angelic spirits (e.g. 1QH 8:12; 4QS1 40, 24, 5), and the human spirit (CD 5:11–12; 7:3–4).[27]

3.4.1. 1QS 4:3

In 1QS 4:3, we read about a spirit who "engenders humility, patience, abundant compassion, perpetual goodness, insight [שכל], understanding [בינה], and mighty wisdom [חכמת גבורה]."

This text is part of the "two spirit"-section of 1QS 3–4, and it has been much debated among scholars whether the two spirits – the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood (1QS 3:18–19) – should be considered angelic beings influencing humans, or human dispositions.[28] Most scholars nowadays, however, lean toward the view that the two spirits in 1QS 3–4 are "tendencies or propensities which are implanted in every man's heart."[29] Nevertheless, I do not think that the two spirits can be fully equated with purely human impulses, and that it better fits the logic of the reasoning in 1QS 3–4 to see them as "influences" on the human

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[26] Menzies, e.g., writes: "The contrast between the רוח קודש of 1QS 3–4 and that of 1QH becomes clear when it is recognized that in 1QH the term is never simply רוח קודש, but always רוח קודשך (your [God's] Holy Spirit). Furthermore, it should also be noted that 1QS 4.20-22 represents the only eschatological use of רוח in all of the Qumran literature. On the basis of my rejection of Foerster's parallels, my examination of 1QS 3.6-8 and 4.20-22, and the considerations cited above, I conclude that the spirit of truth in 1QS 3–4 is not to be equated with the Holy Spirit of 1QH, the Spirit of God." (Menzies, *Empowered*, 76.) "The pneumatological perspective of 1QH is, however, decidedly different from that of 1QS, where the two spirits, in a manner analogous to the rabbinic good and evil יצר, appear as impulses placed within every individual at creation. The hymns of 1QH may represent a later stage in the community's reflection on the Spirit. They declare that the gift of the Spirit is the source of sapiential achievement at every level. For this reason, reception of the gift of the Spirit is necessary for one to know God and live within the community of salvation." (Menzies, *Empowered*, 82.)

[27] Levison, "The Angelic Spirit," 486.

[28] Iranian influence has been suggested by K. G. Kuhn and A. Dupont-Sommer due to similarities between 1QS and the Gathas of Zarathustra (two fundamental spirits, the good and the bad), in attempts to identify the two spirits with cosmic/angelic/demonic entities. P. Wernberg-Møller argued instead for the two spirits being human dispositions, as a precursor to the rabbinic concept of the two יצרים. A Sekki modified Wernberg-Møller's position, and argued that three different interpretations of רוח co-exist: (1) Use of the feminine gender signals reference to human dispositions; (2) Use of the masculine gender signals reference to good and evil spirits/entities filling the cosmos; (3) The terms "spirit of holiness" and "spirit of truth" is an awaited eschatological reality. Since references to angelic beings in the Qumran literature with relative consistency occurs in the masculine gender, the two spirits in 1QS should be interpreted as human dispositions and not identified with the two angels of truth/light and darkness in 3:20–25 (Levison's conclusion from Sekki's argument). (Survey of scholarly discussion taken from: Levison, "The Angelic Spirit," 480–486.) J. H. Charlesworth, however, notes that 1QS 3:18 do *not* talk about the placement of two spirits *within* human beings, but the allotment of two spirits *for* human beings to follow (וישם לו שתי רוחות להתהל בם); James H. Charlesworth, "A Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1QS III, 13–IV,26, and the 'Dualism' Contained in the Fouth Gospel", *NTS* 15 (1968), 396. In the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, references to two spirits are made, and in this text they are unambiguously angelic beings and not human dispositions. (Levison, "The Angelic Spirit," 484–485.)

[29] Treves, M., "The Two Spirits of the Rule of the Community," *RevQ* 3 (1961), 449. Both Levison and Menzies also come to this conclusion, although Levison ends his discussion on an uncertain note, lending credibility to both possibilities (Levison, "The Angelic Spirit," 486).

heart, connected with the angelic beings of light and darkness (but not angelic beings themselves). The different agents in 1QS 3–4 are in my view best categorized as follows:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">God/the God of Israel (1QS 3:6, 15, 24),
and His holy spirit (1QS 3:7; 4:21; cf. Ez 36:25–27)</td></tr>
<tr><td>The Prince of Light/Angel of His Truth
(1QS 3:20, 24)</td><td>The Angel of Darkness (with his “diabolical rule”)
= a satanic figure (1QS 3:20–21, 23)</td></tr>
<tr><td>The spirit of truth/light
(1QS 3:18–19, 25; 4:23)

It’s effect on the human heart = enlighten the mind, making paths straight/righteous, humility, patience, compassion, goodness, insight, understanding, wisdom, knowledge, zeal for God’s laws, holy thoughts, steadfastness, hatred of impurity, discernment… etc. (1QS 4:2–8)</td><td>The spirit of falsehood/darkness/perversity
(1QS 3:18–19, 25; 4:9, 23)

It’s effect on the human heart = greed, neglect of righteous deeds, wickedness, lying, pride, haughtiness, cruel deceit, fraud, hypocrisy, lack of self-control, foolishness, zeal for arrogance, abominable deeds, whorish desire, lechery, reviling tongue, hardness of heart… etc. (1QS 4:9–12)[30]</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Human beings (choosing which spirit they will follow)</td></tr>
</table>

Assuming this interpretation, 1QS 4:3, with its allusions to Isa 11:2, describes the virtues and effects of the *created* (1QS 3:25) spirit of truth/light. No doubt, however, the attributes of this spirit reflects the attributes of the Divine holy spirit. The Divine holy spirit is the only spirit which can atone for a man’s evil ways and iniquities (1QS 3:6–7), being sprinkled (נזה) by God, like “purifying waters,” on the upright (1QS 4:21, a clear reference to Ezek 36:25–27).[31]

3.4.2. 1QS^{b} (28^{b}) 5:21–27

In one section of the *Rule of Blessings*, namely 1QS^{b} (28^{b}) 5:21–27, where the messianic “Prince” (the Davidic messiah) is given a benediction, parts of Isaiah 11 are being quoted, in the following order (with some commentary in between): 11:4a, 4b, 2b, 5 (11:2b is thus squeezed in between 11:4 and 11:5). The first part of Isaiah 11:2 is missing in the quote, but the rest of it follows it with only a few deviations (see 1QS^{b} 5:25 in the table below). The benediction is written like a prayer: “May He [i.e., God] give [you [i.e., the messiah] ‘the spirit of coun]sel and may eternal might [rest upon you], the spirit of knowledge and the fear of God’” (1QS^{b} 5:25).

[30] Cf. 1QS 4:2–12 with Gal 5:18–23.

[31] Here (in 1QS 4:21), however, the “holy spirit” seems to be equated with the “spirit of truth”, so it’s a little bit unclear whether it’s the same (clearly) divine “holy spirit” as in 1QS 3:7. I take it to be the case that even 1QS 4:21 speaks of the divine holy spirit, for the following reasons: (1) The clear connections between 3:7 and 4:21 in terms of the/a holy spirit atoning and cleansing the chosen people and the reference to Ez 36:25–27; (2) The “holy spirit” and “spirit of truth” in 4:21 do not necessarily be equated with each other ontologically, even though they here share the same function; alternatively, the “spirit of truth” here is the “holy spirit” but not the “spirit of truth” in other instances, since the Angels and spirits in 1QS 3–4 that are on different “levels” still can share the same attributes (e.g. the Angel of Light and the spirit of light).

3.4.3. 4Q161

In 4Q161, which is a commentary on Isaiah 10:20–11:5, Isaiah 11:1–5 is quoted in frag. 8: 10:11–16 and then commented upon. The table below shows the quotations in 1QS[b] (dealt with above) and 4Q161, compared to the text in 1QIsa[a], which is identical to the consonantal MT-text. As can be seen, the (reconstructed) quotation in 4Q161 is almost identical to the 1QIsa[a]/MT-text.

1QS[b] 5:25	*4Q161 frag. 8 10:11b–13*	*1QIsa[a] 10:20–21 (=MT 11:2–3a)*
יתן[לכה	ונח]ה עלו	ונחה עליו
	ר[וח] [יהוה	רוח יהוה
	רוח חכמ]ה ובינה	רוח חכמה ובינה
רוח עצ]ה	רוח עצ[ה	רוח עצה
וגבורת עולם	וגבורה]	וגבורה
רוח דעת	רוח דע[ת]	רוח דעת
ויראת אל	[ויראת יהוה	ויראת יהוה
	והריחו ביראת] יהוה	והריחו ביראת יהוה

Turning to the commentary, the author of 4Q161 states that this oracle refers to "[the Branch of] David, who will appear in the las[t days…]," and that "God will support him with [a spirit of] strength […]" (10:17, 18).[32] It is emphasized that this Davidic messiah is indeed very powerful: he's given a "glorious throne" and will "rule over all the G[enti]les, even Magog [and his army… all] the peoples his sword will control" (10:19, 20b–21a). But in the comment on Isaiah 11:3, instead of the messiah getting his insight and discernment in judgment from the spirit of YHWH, and therefore judge not by ear nor by eye, it's claimed that this means that the messiah will be advised by the Zadokite priests: "as they instruct him, so shall he rule, and at their command [he shall render decisions; and always] one of the prominent priests shall go out with him…" (10:22–24a). The spirit's role is, thus, in practice, reduced and partly replaced with the priesthood.

3.4.4. 4Q213[a]

4Q213[a] is a narrative text, featuring Levi, and written in Aramaic. In frag. 1:12b–18 we find an allusion to Isa 11:2 as part of a prayer:

> Remove [from me, O Lord, the immoral spirit,] rid me of wicked [thoughts] and unchastity. [Reveal to me, Lord, the holy spirit; counsel and] wisdom and knowledge and strength [כמה ומנדע וגבורה]ת…] [grant me so I can do what pleases You and] find favor with You, [praising Your words with me, O Lord, doing] what is proper and right in Your eyes. Let no demonic adversary have power over me, [making me wander from Your path. Have mercy] on me, O Lord, and draw me near… (4Q213[a] frag. 1: 12b–18a).

[32] Translation and reconstruction from Wise, Michael O., Martin G. Abegg, Jr. and Edward M. Cook (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New English Translation*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, rev. 2005; Accordance Software.

Here the "holy spirit" stands opposed to the "immoral spirit" and the "demonic" adversaries that Levi prays to be rid and protected from, just as the virtues connected with the holy spirit – counsel, wisdom, knowledge, and strength to do what pleases God – are opposites to wicked thoughts, unchastity, and wandering away from God.

3.5. The *Psalms of Solomon*

In the *Psalms of Solomon*, there are two passages with allusions to different parts of Isa 11:1–5 and mentions of "spirit"; both of them occur in the explicitly "messianic" psalms (17–18).[33]

3.5.1. Psalms of Solomon 17

The historical setting of Psalms of Solomon 17 is "not long after the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey,"[34] who by most commentators are considered to be the "foreigner" in v. 7, 13. The second half of the psalm, beginning with v. 21, is a prayer for God to raise up the messianic king, the "son of David" (remarkably enough called χριστὸς κύριος in v. 32), and a description of his rule; it is in this section we find the allusions to Isaiah 11. The messianic king will not rely on "cavalry and archers" and be merciful to the nations (v. 33–34), but he will "strike the earth with the word of his mouth" (v. 35; cf. Isa 11:4), and "he will not weaken during his reign, [relying] upon his God," because ὁ θεὸς κατειργάσατο αὐτὸν δυνατὸν ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ σοφὸν ἐν βουλῇ συνέσεως μετὰ ἰσχύος καὶ δικαιοσύνης (v. 37). Later, it is also stated that he will be strong ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ (v. 40). Thus, we see that both many words and themes are allusions to Isaiah 11. Here, however, the πνεῦμα [ἅγιον] is connected directly only to God making the king strong/mighty (δυνατός), as the sentence is structured in the following way:

God makes him:	a) strong/mighty	in/by [a] holy spirit	
	b) wise	in/by "intelligent counsel"	with strength and righteousness

Moreover, ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ can be read in two ways: instrumentally, as "by/with [the/a] holy spirit"; or as "in [his] holy spirit," with πνεῦμα ἅγιον denoting the human disposition of the messianic king. The connection to Isaiah 11 would make the instrumental reading preferable. The similarities between the Psalms of Solomon and Qumran writings, however, that has been pointed out by many scholars (some even suggesting Qumran as the locale for the writing of the Psalms of Solomon),[35] makes this conclusion weaker. In the writings of Qumran,

[33] The Psalms of Solomon are extant in both a Greek and a Syriac version, and there are twelve Greek manuscripts. There's been a consensus about a Hebrew *Vorlage*, but this has recently been challenged by both Eberhard Bons and Jan Joosten; Eberhard Bons and Patrick Pouchelle, "Introduction," *The Psalms of Solomon: Language, History, Theology*, ed. Eberhard Bons and Patrick Pouchelle (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 4. In this analysis, I use Robert B. Wright's critical edition of the Greek text; Robert B. Wright, *The Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

[34] H.E. Ryle and M.R. James, *ΨΑΛΜΟΙ ΣΟΛΟΜΩΝΤΟΣ Psalms of the Pharisees, commonly called the Psalms of Solomon: The Text Newly Revised from All the Mss.* (Cambridge University Press, 1891), 127.

[35] Wright, *Psalms of Solomon*, 9.

the term רוח קודש (or similar terms) can often denote the human spirit, see e.g. CD 5:11 where it is said that they "corrupted their holy spirit."

3.5.2. Psalms of Solomon 18

In Psalms of Solomon 18:7–8, the second allusion to the beginning of Isaiah 11 is found. The psalmist talks in positive terms about the discipline of Israel by the "Lord's messiah," and the "fear of God" is a repeated theme (v. 7, 8, 9, 11). Verse 7 reads: ὑπὸ *ῥάβδον* παιδείας χριστοῦ κυρίοῦ ἐν *φόβῳ θεοῦ* αὐτοῦ· ἐν *σοφίᾳ πνεύματος* καὶ *δικαιοσύνης* καὶ *ἰσχύος* (words in italics are keywords also found in LXX-Isa 11:1–5). The allusion seems clear enough, but the role of "spirit" is not as emphasized as is Isaiah 11, and it is – as in Psalms of Solomon 17:37 – not so clear whether ἐν σοφίᾳ πνεύματος should be read as "in the spirit's wisdom," "in the spirit of wisdom,"[36] or "in wisdom of spirit."

3.6. *1 Enoch* (The Book of Parables)

1 Enoch seldom speaks of the spirit of God, and some of the possible references are ambiguous. The two most relevant texts for this study are both found in the *Book of Parables* (*1 En* chs. 37–71),[37] namely *1 Enoch* 49:3 and 61:11.

3.6.1. 1 Enoch 49:3

1 Enoch 49:3 contains "an almost verbatim quotation of the Davidic oracle in Isa 11:2."[38] Here follows English translations of *1 Enoch* 49:3–4 and Isaiah 11:2, side by side:

1 Enoch 49:3–4[39]		*Isa 11:2*
49:3	And in him [the Chosen One] dwell	The spirit of YHWH will rest upon him
	the spirit of wisdom and the spirit of insight,	the spirit of wisdom and understanding
	and the spirit of instruction and of might,	the spirit of counsel and might
	and the spirit of those who have fallen asleep in righteousness.	the spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH.
49:4	And he will judge the things that are secret, and a lying word none will be able to speak in his presence; for he is the Chosen One in the presence of the Lord of Spirits according to his good pleasure.	[cf. Isa 11:3b–4: "He shall not judge by what his eyes see…" etc.]

[36] So translated in Ryle and James, *ΨΑΛΜΟΙ ΣΟΛΟΜΩΝΤΟΣ*, 151.

[37] The *Book of Parables* is probably the latest part of *1 Enoch*, and only extant in Ge'ez. George W.E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37–82*, Hermeneia, ed. Klaus Baltzer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 3, 4.

[38] Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2,* 178.

[39] English translation from Nickelsburg, George W. E. and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation*, Fortress Press, 2012.

God is repeatedly called the "Lord of Spirits" in the *Book of Parables* (a total of a 102 times); and the "Chosen One" is referring to the Messiah (also called the "Anointed One," the "Righteous One," and the "Son of Man"), who is anointed with the spirit (49:3; 62:2). Spirit(s) are seldom the means by which revelation is received in *1 Enoch*; more often, like in apocalyptic texts in general, revelation is given via angelic messengers.[40] Here, though, perhaps due to the connection to Isaiah 11, "spirit" is the means by which wisdom, insight, understanding and might is given. As seen in the table above, *1 Enoch* 49:3 follows Isaiah 11:2 quite closely in the first three parts of the verse, but then deviates in the last stanza, and this is, according to Nickelsburg and VanderKam, "presumably because the author does not consider the knowledge and, especially, the fear of YHWH, ascribed to the human king, to be appropriate to this heavenly figure."[41]

Like in the Psalms of Solomon 17–18, the Messiah is equipped to rule as king, and it is less clear – than in Isaiah 11:1ff. – what exactly is meant by "spirit." This is further complicated by the reference to the spirit (in the singular) of the righteous who have fallen asleep (dwelling together with the other "spirits" in the Messiah). One possible interpretation regarding this could be that the righteous who have fallen asleep are thought of as being partakers of the same spirit as the Messiah; another interpretation is that the Messiah is the one who gathers together the spirits of the righteous (the ones that have hoped for the salvation he will bring).[42]

In the *Book of Parables* as a whole, "spirit" often refers to the human spirit or the whole person (e.g. 41:8; 67:8; 71:1, 5, 6, 11), but is also used to denote a human disposition (e.g. 56:5), evil spirits/demons (69:12), and weather phenomena (60:16–20; 69:22). Possible references to the spirit of God, apart from 49:3, are found in: 62:2, where the "spirit of righteousness" is poured out on the Messiah; 68:2, although the "power of the spirit," here being experienced by the angel Michael, probably refers to his emotional state;[43] and 61:11, to which we now turn.

3.6.2. 1 Enoch 61:11

I Enoch 61:11 does not quote Isaiah 11:2(–3a), but contains a clear allusion. The whole host of heaven, including several ranks of angelic beings and the Chosen One himself, is said to give praise the Lord of Spirits *in* a sevenfold spirit – or *with* seven spiritual virtues.

> And all the host of the heavens will cry out and all the holy ones in the heights, and the host of the Lord–the Cherubin, the Seraphin, and the Ophannin, and all the angels of power and all the angels of the dominions, and the Chosen One and the other host who are on the dry land and over the water on that day. And they will raise one voice, and they will bless and glorify and exalt with the spirit of faithfulness and with the spirit of wisdom, and with (a

[40] Russel, D. S., *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London: CM Press, 1964, 160; Menzies, *Empowered*, 65–66.
[41] Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 178.
[42] Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 178.
[43] Menzies, *Empowered*, 65.

> spirit of) long suffering and with the spirit of mercy, and with the spirit of judgment and peace and with the spirit of goodness. And they will all say with one voice, "Blessed (is he), and blessed be the name of the Lord of Spirits forever and ever." (*1 En* 61:10–11).

Only the "spirit of wisdom" matches the "spirits" (attributes) in Isaiah 11:2–3a, but the fact that there are seven of them indicates a connection to Isaiah 11 (LXX). The "spirits" mentioned, cannot, first of all, be angelic beings, since the angelic beings mentioned in the immediate context partake in the worship described as taking place *with* (or *in*)[44] these "spirits." Neither do they refer to human spirits. The most probable interpretation is that they are referring to the different attributes of the Divine spirit and/or the state/attitude in which the angelic worship is taking place.[45]

3.7. The *Isaiah Targum*

Technically, the *Isaiah Targum* (T^J) does not belong to Jewish sources from the Second Temple Era; this targum contain many layers of interpretative stages, but it is relatively safe to assume that parts of it goes back to the Tannaitic period (before 220 CE), although precisely what parts is harder to know.[46] However, this text has some features in it that make it interesting for the discussion about the relationship between Jewish and Christian interpretations of the Book of Isaiah. In the following quote, words in italics are words that deviate from the MT-text:

> And a *king* shall come forth from the *sons* of Jesse, and *the Messiah* shall *be exalted* from *the sons of* his *sons*. And *a* spirit *before* the LORD shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and might, a spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And the LORD shall *bring him near to* his fear. And he shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, and he shall not reprove by the hearing of his ears; but in *truth* he will judge the poor, and reprove with *faithfulness* for the needy of the *people*; and he shall strike *the*

[44] If the translator into Ge'ez wanted to indicate that the "spirits" were angelic beings, he would have used *mesla* ("together with") instead of *ba* (in, with). The Ge'ez preposition *ba* is equivalent to the Hebrew בְּ.

[45] "As they sing God's praise, they express the seven virtues that live in them and that are characteristics of the deity. Perhaps this also implies that they are qualities of the righteous person." (Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 252.) Also, it is easy to see a similarity between this sevenfold list of spirits and the ninefold "fruit of the Spirit" mentioned by Paul in Gal 5:22–23; six of the seven "spirits" here mentioned (all but "wisdom") could, with some generosity of interpretation, be equated with six of the nine "fruits" in Gal 5.

[46] "At both the Tannaitic and Amoraic phases, current interpretations of Isaiah were obviously gathered together, and ordered into the paraphrase which we know as the Targum. But it is impossible to know whether a complete Targum was produced at the Tannaitic phase, and reworked at the Amoraic phase, or whether both phases were partial affairs, and only formed a coherent whole when they were brought together. The latter alternative is perhaps the more probable, in that much if the material in the Targum coheres with the general theological orientation of the document, but is not easily assigned to either of the two levels […]. During the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods, it would appear, rabbis developed an interpretative translation of Isaiah. Successive generations took up the work of earlier interpreters until the coherent Targum we can now read emerged. Individual passages, in their coherence with Rabbinica, intertestamental literature, and the New Testament, and in their allusions to historical circumstances, may be datable to a considerable extent. But taken as a whole, the Targum better represents an interpretative ethos than a single historical period." Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible, vol. 11 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987), xxiv–xxv.

> *sinners of* the land with the *command* of his mouth, and with *the speaking* of his lips the wicked shall *die*. (T^J Isa 11:1–4)[47]

First, the words "shoot" (חטר) and "branch" (נצר) are replaced with the more explicit "king" and "messiah," indicating that the messiah will indeed be a king; it is also emphasized more strongly than in the MT that this messiah will kill sinners (v. 4), be surrounded by righteous people (not just himself being girded with righteousness; v. 5), and bring peace to the land by the subjection of the nations (v. 6, 10).

Second, even though רוח is indefinite in the MT, it is still clear that the reference is to the spirit of YHWH; here, however, the indefiniteness is made explicit by the addition of "before" in the phrase: "a spirit *before* the LORD." This is no longer the spirit of YHWH, an extension of YHWH's own being, but a separate entity. Both of these features could be explained by a willingness to distance the text from Christian interpretations.

4. General Conclusions

This survey of quotes and allusions to Isaiah 11:2–3a in (mainly) Second Temple Jewish sources has led to the following conclusions. See also the *appendix* for a useful summary of the findings of this study.

Isaiah 11 is a *messianic* text, and continues to be used and interpreted as such in many of the surveyed sources; the messiah – or the heavenly "Chosen One" (in *1 Enoch*) – will be endowed with counsel, might, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and the fear of the Lord, by *the* spirit of – or *a* spirit *from* – God ($1QS^b$ (28^b) 5:25; 4Q161 frag. 8: 10:11–18; *Pss Sol* 17:37; 18:7–8; *1 En* 49:3; T^J Isa 11:1–2). These texts are also the ones in this study that have most clearly quoted Isaiah 11:2 or a significant part of it, instead of only alluding to it or focusing on only one of the attributes. In $4Q213^a$ frag. 1:14, it is instead Levi who prays for counsel, wisdom, knowledge and strength by the holy spirit; and in Ben Sira 39:6–7, the spirit of understanding can be given to the diligent scribe/student of the Torah, resulting in him speaking words of wisdom, divine counsel and knowledge. In the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the benevolent spirit of wisdom (*Wisd* 1:6; 7:7, 23), identified with the personified Lady Wisdom and the angelic presence that led the Israelites out of Egypt and through the desert, is given to anyone who seeks her and is righteous (*Wisd* 6:12–17). In *1 Enoch* 61:11, the whole angelic host in heaven – and the Chosen One – are praising God in seven "spirits" (including the "spirit of wisdom").

The spirit, or spirits, in question is/are identified with the spirit of God/YHWH, i.e. the Divine spirit, in at least three of these sources (LXX Isa 11:2–3a; *Wisd*; 4Q161), and probably also in *Sir* 39:6–7; $1QS^b$ 5:25; $4Q213^a$; *Pss Sol* 17:37; 18:7–8. In 1QS 3–4, however, the spirit of truth/light is a created spirit, connected to the Angel/Prince of Truth/Light, who's influence on the human heart reflects the Divine attributes (and the attributes of the Divine holy spirit). The effects of this spirit are many (1QS 4:2–8), but when described in 1QS 4:3, seven virtues are

[47] Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum.* This translation is based on the British Museum manuscript 2211.

mentioned; among them, three have connections to Isaiah 11:2: insight, *understanding*, and *mighty wisdom* (words in italics also found in MT Isa 11:2). In *1 Enoch* 61:11, the seven "spirits" are not entities but rather "spiritual virtues" in which the angelic host worship God, and in T^J Isa 11:2, the spirit is distanced from the Lord and said to be a spirit "before the Lord," which could signal that this spirit is thought of as an angelic being. In the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the spirit of wisdom is described in personified and angelomorphic ways, but is still identified with the Divine spirit/the spirit of God. It is hard to know if the "spirit of understanding" in *Sus* 45 (OG) is the Divine spirit or not, but this text reflects a tradition in which spirits – perhaps even the Divine spirit – are given to people via angelic messengers, in this case the angel of the Lord.

Some of the texts where Isaiah 11:2 is quoted has six attributes connected to the spirit (4Q161; T^J Isa 11:2) just like the MT-text, while others seem to follow a tradition in which the number seven has become significant (even if not in other ways dependent on a Greek text variant), e.g. 1QS 4:3; *1 En* 61:11. In many text, however, the number of attributes does not seem to be significant (e.g. *Sir* 39:6–7; $1QS^b$ 5:25; $4Q213^a$; *Pss Sol* 17:37; 18:7–8; *1 En* 49:3).

Appendix:

	Attributes/"spirits:"	Nature of "spirits:"	Given to:
Isa 11:2 (MT)	wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of YHWH (6)	The spirit of YHWH	Branch of Jesse (royal messiah)
Isa 11:2–3a (LXX)	wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, piety, fear of God (7)	The spirit of God	Blossom of Jesse (royal messiah)
Ben Sira 39:6–7	understanding (→leading to words of wisdom, thanksgiving, divine counsel, knowledge)	Given by God	The scribe/student of the Torah
Wisd	wisdom	Divine spirit of wisdom = Lady Wisdom, with angelomorphic traits	The one who seeks wisdom, is righteous
Sus 45 (OG)	understanding	A spirit given by the Angel of the Lord	Daniel
1QS 4:3	gives humility, patience, compassion, goodness, insight, understanding, mighty wisdom (7)	The spirit of truth/light, created by God – reflecting the Divine holy spirit's attributes	The person who follows the spirit of truth/light
1QS^{b} 5:25	counsel, might, knowledge, fear of God (4)		Prince (Davidic messiah)
4Q161	wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of YHWH (6)	The spirit of YHWH	Branch of David (royal messiah
4Q213^{a}	(gives) counsel, wisdom, knowledge, strength (4)	The/a holy spirit	Levi (priest)
Pss Sol 17:37 (40)	strength; wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, righteousness; (fear of God)	By the/a holy spirit	Son of David (royal messiah)
Pss Sol 18:7–8	fear of God; (spirit of) wisdom, righteousness, strength	[probably same as above]	The Lord's anointed (christ)
1 En 49:3	wisdom, insight, instruction, might, (spirit of) those fallen asleep in righteousness (5)		The Chosen One (heavenly messiah)
1 En 61:11	faithfulness, wisdom, long-suffering, mercy, judgment, peace, goodness (7)	Spiritual virtues	The angelic host (including the Chosen One)
T^{J} Isa 11:2	wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of the Lord (6)	A spirit before the Lord	A king from Jesse, the Messiah

Project Summary, Sara Järlemyr

The military hero has been, and still is, a masculine ideal. The strong, courageous hero is found also in the Biblical corpus, especially in the heroic portrayals of the historical books where the tales of successful military men, some of them kings, mirrors one of the prevailing masculine ideals. These ideals are displayed in texts from the entire ANE-area. Vulnerability, however, has little to do with the ideal man. Still, it seems that vulnerability, in its different shapes and forms, is a textual companion of the warrior hero in the prophetic texts.

In my Phd-project, with the working title *Worthless Men: Vulnerable Warriors in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond,* I look at the how the prophets, mainly Isaiah and Jeremiah, often portray their military men as vulnerable. This vulnerability can be depicted as cowardice, weakness, pain, fear, they are compared to women in general, and remarkably to women giving birth.

My study is firmly rooted in the historical and socio-cultural context of the time when the texts are generally thought to be situated. I will deal with the history of motifs and ideas and how they can be found both in ancient Israel and in the surrounding cultures, generally summarized as the ANE, including the NA empire and Mesopotamian literature. I will also include perspectives from the wider periphery, but they can all be said to have a connection to the HB in one way or another. The comparative aspect of this study can therefore sometimes be argued to have had a direct impact upon the texts but more often there will be a question of the vaguer term “inspiration.”

I use theories about hegemonic masculinity to look at the different ideals present and especially what values and norms are connected to the context of warfare. The first part of my project is focused on the warrior heroes of the HB (the *gibbôr*/*gibbôrim*) and how they are portrayed both in the historical books and the prophetic corpus. I continue with an overview of how military masculinity is portrayed in text from outside the HB.

In chapter 5, where the submitted text belongs, the vulnerable warriors of the prophetic corpus are in focus. A large part of this chapter is dedicated to the warriors giving birth which is introduced in short in the text. In fact, all of the motifs presented in the text will be expanded and analyzed in more detail to fit into my dissertation. The theory of the *grotesque* will be used in this chapter as a tool to better understand the function of the vulnerability in the texts, but to what extent is yet to be decided.

I also use the grotesque perspective to talk about the change in masculine ideals from the military masculinity of the monarchy which is no longer applicable after the ultimate military failure that was the exile. In the creative confusion of the exile the prophetic texts apply grotesque imagery to portray

mighty men as weak and vulnerable, and even giving birth. Textually, after the exile, we can see a peaceful masculine ideal as an alternative to the military one: the scribal masculinity.

Introduction

This paper is a conference edition of a reasoning which is part of a longer and more detailed chapter in my dissertation. My dissertation is focused on the portrayal of vulnerable warriors and how they fit into the system of the hegemonic masculinity. The working title for the project is: *Worthless Men: Vulnerable warriors in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*. As the title suggests my interest goes beyond the texts that are presented here, but the main corpus of vulnerable warriors in the HB are found in the prophetic oracles, especially Jeremiah and Isaiah, hence this focus.

The grotesque as a concept will be introduced in a theory-chapter at the beginning where some of the background and definitions from this paper will also be included. In the analysis-chapter more texts and themes are included. Questions regarding historical context, genre and the military masculinity as hegemonic masculinity have all been considered in chapters before the text submitted here.

Although my project is well on the way, the grotesque is a quite recent addition and I have not yet decided to what extent it will influence my dissertation. Therefore, all feedback regarding this theory is more than welcome.

Points for discussion:

Does the grotesque as a concept add something to the analysis of the texts?

Are there any theoretical considerations/problems not included?

Does the section about paradigm crises at the end need to be expanded in order to understand my point?

Grotesque Imagery in the Prophetic Texts: Vulnerability as a Subversive Message

One way to describe the shift in how the military masculinity is portrayed in the heroic poetry of the historic books is by using the aesthetic and literary category known as *grotesque*. The word *grotesque* holds a slightly different definition in everyday speech than what the concept applied to literature and/or art entails. Often *grotesque* is used to describe something disgusting or excessive, while this can also be considered *grotesque* according to the concepts definition it is also something that is *other* and transgressive, it can be a rhetoric vehicle to change norms and ideals. It can be applied both to an individual body/object or to a social body. The grotesque body is open and changeable, but it is also incapable of fulfilling the ideals of the perfect body: bleeding, broken, inadequate, and vulnerable. It is often ambiguous and/or transgressive in some way:

> The grotesque is one of the most obvious forms art may take to pierce the wall of familiarity, to stab us up from the drowse of the accustomed, to make us aware of the perilous paradoxicality of life.[1]

Later in this paper we will see how this concept works applied to the prophetic texts, but first we will briefly look at the background of the concept and how it can be defined.

Background and definition

In the 15th century CE Italian excavations, located near Rome and Pompeii, revealed *grottoes*[2] with murals depicting humans, animals, and vegetation intertwined with no clear boundaries in between them. The murals became known as *la grottesca*,[3] and this marks the beginning of the aesthetic category *grotesque.* Some years later Kayser and Bachtin, and others, implemented ideas of the grotesque on literature and since then the concept has become an interdisciplinary food for thought.[4] Bachtin's idea of the carnival, of which the grotesque is one aspect, is grounded in the collective chaos of the carnivalesque medieval scenery of the French author Rabelais. Kayser moves from the *grottos* into our own time and is focused on the individual psyche and the grotesque aspects of specific places, such as a mental asylum, a theater and the dream realm. Both speak of a world standing on its head.[5] Some years after Bachtin and Kayser, Harpham joined the conversation, and it is his definitions which will form the basis of my understanding of the concept. He admits that the grotesque evades definition,

[1] Poet Laureate Robert Penn Warren quoted in: Adams and Yates 1997, xi.
[2] The grottoes were thought to be dug for Diana and the nymphs during antiquity but were in fact roman villas and baths. But, because of this mistake the murals were called grotesque. Kuryluk 1987, 12.
[3] Coming from or belonging to the cave.
[4] For a historical overview of the grotesque see: Sigurdsson 2006 and Harpham 1976 and 2006 .
[5] Kurulyk 1987, 2–3. See also Bachtin 1965 and Kayser 1963.

that it is a concept "almost as fluid as that of beauty."[6] His addition to the conversation involves the grotesque as an ever-changing cultural phenomenon. The murals from antiquity are not, by any means, what we today would deem as grotesque, just as, to name a more famous example Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was considered grotesque when it was first published, but as the concept of grotesque has evolved with, in this case, western culture, the grotesque has evolved to involve features unimaginable to both Shelley and the artists in the *grottos*. The definition of the grotesque is only good for one era—even one man—at a time, says Harpham.[7] Some scholars prefer to see the grotesque as an "anti-world" in relation to Western culture and as a relatively recent phenomenon.[8] However, I avow that if we see the grotesque as an ever-changing cultural phenomenon, then the concept of mixing, of creating unthinkable, astonishing, or repulsing motifs is as ancient as time. Look at Ishtar for example, her entire being is *grotesque,* she is a transgressor and in that a mixture of male and female, violence and fertility, life and death, terrifying and lovable, etc. In the poetic words of Yates: "It is on the border in the desert; it is in the bramble of wilderness beyond the place where we live; it is in the cave of our world, our mind, our soul where it calls us to confront the human condition."[9] Although, to say something about what is considered grotesque in a certain place at a certain time, we must know something about that society's dominant paradigms:

> The meaning of the grotesque is constituted by the norm which it contradicts: the order it destroys, the values it upsets, the authority and morality it derides, the religion it ridicules, the harmony it breaks up, the heaven it brings down to earth, the position of classes, races, and sexes it reverse, the beauty and goodness it questions. The word "grotesque" makes sense only if one knows what the "norm" represents—in art and in life.[10]

[6] Harpham 1976, 461.
[7] Harpham 1976, 461.
[8] This is argued by Kuryluk who also coins the term *anti-world* in this context, see the quote below. Her argument is based on the grotesque as a reaction to majority culture. Although she acknowledges that the distorting procedures can be found in the earliest history of humanity, she finds that the distance in time may result in anachronistic conclusions of what was considered upsetting or ridiculous (or grotesque). She emphasizes the qualities of European caves in her definition and argues that Harpham goes back too far in history. However, this Eurocentric bias is hardly necessary. Although, she is right in her basic assumption that we must be careful not to project values or norms of our time onto distant cultures, I think we have sufficient grounds to argue out of the material of the Hebrew Bible and its surrounding cultures, at the very least on a textual level. To cover every aspect of ancient societies is impossible, but that problem remains even when studying 20th century Europe. Kayser, on the other hand, argues that the grotesque is especially prevalent in the Romanticism and modernistic eras, he views the grotesque as something entirely negative. Bachtin argues for an archaic and antique idea of the grotesque, which is related to the carnivalesque joy. Bachtin 2007, 55. Kuryluk 1987, 4.
[9] Adam and Yates 1997, 68.
[10] Kuryluk 1987, 11.

Yates organizes Harpham's argument into three major premises, the first being how the grotesque is perceived and how it evades our standard categories of identification.[11] To avoid arbitrariness when defining the grotesque, the most important factor is the effect it has on its reader, listener, or spectator. Consequently, to make it measurable, the responses, according to Harpham, should be laughter, astonishment, and either disgust or horror.[12] The laughter, he continues, can be an involuntary response to a situation which cannot be handled in any other way. A way of making the nightmare more bearable. Usually, either the comic or the terrible predominates the grotesque, depending on which, evoking different reactions.[13] There is a problem in studying ancient texts and being too dependent on the reactions of the audience, however, we can still infer some things from texts about what was considered provocative, startling, or comical because we do know something about norms and values in a cultural context we can also see when values are upset.

Bachtin claims a major difference between the romantic and the medieval grotesque where the romantic takes every-day occurrences which are distorted into the terrifying and strange, it loses its regenerative tendencies and generally the world is seen as filled with horror. In the medieval grotesque, on the other hand, the horror is ridiculous, the terrifying is defeated by laughter. The reason for this is the medieval connection to bodies, and bodily needs, as opposed to the romantic era which is more spiritual and abstract. So, the material-physical aspect of life; eating, drinking, copulating, bodily functions, giving birth etc. are all ways of materializing and incorporating humans in the world in the medieval context.[14] Among those extremes, if not in its entirety (because this changed somewhat with Hellenistic influence), most of the historical and prophetic books of the HB are more biased towards material-physical aspects of life, rather than abstract spirituality. And especially so the prophetic texts which are preoccupied with bodies a lot of the time. Indeed, all of the older Semitic languages are physically oriented, which for example shows itself in the abundant metaphors which are connected to the body and its functions.

However, in literature, grotesque elements are mostly incorporated into larger non-grotesque structures, not seldom as a tool to express confusion, chaos, insanity, loss of perspective, social collapse, or disintegration. Ewa Kuryluk expands on the definition to include:

> […] the anti-worlds of femininity as opposed to a world controlled by men; the anti-world of childhood as contradicted by the world governed by adults; the anti-world of the hidden, forbidden, apocryphal and heretical as different from the universe of the established and sanctioned, canonical and orthodox, the anti-world of

[11] Adam and Yates, 1997. 30.
[12] Harpham 1976, 463.
[13] Harpham 1976, 464.
[14] Bachtin 1965, 47-48.

> Satan, hell, paganism, and damnation as distinct from the world of Jesus, heaven, Christianity and salvation; the anti-world of sin, flesh, and death as divided from the cosmos of virtue, spirit, and eternal life; the anti-world of darkness and corruption, down below and to the left, as distinct from the world of light, purity, high up to the right; the anti-world of apocalypse, war, and disintegration as contrary to the world of peace, order, and togetherness.[15]

Grotesque imagery can illustrate a world where the rules of order have collapsed, therefore, the concept is the strongest, or most used, in eras of crisis or of upheaval—in times when old beliefs are crumbling.[16] And this leads us into Harpham's second major premise, that the grotesque occupies a gap or an interval.[17] The grotesque is born out of a paradigm crisis where an old paradigm is discredited but not yet replaced by a new paradigm.[18] The space in-between can be defined as grotesque, the creative moment between two hegemonies, a moment of confusion.[19] Eventually, he says, we find the proper place for the new thing and recognize it. We have undergone this process many times, he continues, "in learning to call mouse-birds bats, horse-men centaurs, and woman-bosses chairpersons."[20] Until we do so, though, we are stuck trying to decipher and decode. But, unlike Kayser,[21] for example, Harpham sees the possibility of positive consequences in life stemming from the grotesque confusion. Perhaps he would also agree that there is a necessity of the grotesque and its transformative qualities to move forward.

His third major premise is that of paradox.[22] The grotesque is something which is beyond language, Harpham argues, it challenges the ways in which we organize our world and the hierarchies we use to implement those ideas. The grotesque does not respect the properties of high and low while at the same time it's often preoccupied with those categories, the interpretations of the grotesque object/image/experience stand in relation of high to low; human to subhuman, divine to human, normative to abnormal.[23] One way of illustrating this is that things that normally should be kept apart are fused together.[24] Harpham argues: "if the grotesque can be compared to anything, it is to

[15] Kuryluk 1987, 3.
[16] Harpham 1976, 466.
[17] Adam and Yates, 1997. 31.
[18] Harpham builds upon the paradigm theory of Thomas Kuhn. Harpham 2006, 20–21. Grotesque distortions as harbingers of cultural renewal is also suggested by Kayser, 1963.
[19] Sigurdsson 2006, 492–493. Harpham 2006, 20–21.
[20] Harpham 2006. 19.
[21] To be fair, Kayser also incorporates the idea of the grotesque as liberation *from* something, but not in a transformative way, rather as an obstacle to overcome and then return to the previous state. Adam and Yates 1997, 60.
[22] Adam and Yates 1997, 32.
[23] Harpham 2006, 13 and 17.
[24] Harpham 2006, 13.

paradox."[25] Another way in which the high and low are rhetorically used in the grotesque is connecting body-parts considered low to someone of high status, i.e. exposing someone, or suggesting that they go to the toilet, or that they are giving birth etc.

To sum up what we have learnt so far; I have chosen an approach towards the grotesque as a timeless concept which in different ways distorts and degrades majority culture throughout history, but it is still recognizable as *grotesque*. The grotesque is, among other things, a rhetoric tool which often seeks to evoke either laughter or horror (or both) in its audience. I also see the grotesque as transgressive in accordance with Harpham's second premise that it works well in times of crises where old norms and values are discarded and not yet replaced. The grotesque holds the possibility of a new different order, another way of living one's life. The paradoxical aspect, which is his third premise, we will have reason to return to. In relation to paradox, we can see how important the physical aspect of the grotesque is and how this is used as an instrument in order to dismantle the military masculinity ideal.

In this chapter we will encounter the grotesque in different shapes and forms: in warriors giving birth, being naked, hiding, drunk, terrified, sick, or in pain. The prophets make their strongest men act *grotesquely* in the vacuum where the old masculine paradigm is discarded and before the new is on the rise. But before we elaborate on that, we will look at the texts which will form the basis for my argument of a paradigm crises.

Grote(xt)sqeuries

For this paper I have chosen some illustrative texts as an overview of what will be part of a larger and more detailed analysis in my dissertation. There are, to be fair, loads of grotesque texts in the Hebrew Bible. And why not, these almost anarchic small sections in the bigger, often more wholesome narratives, bring colour to the texts. As in the quote in the beginning of this paper says, the grotesque stabs us up from the drowse of the accustomed. Within literature, the grotesque is a rhetoric tool which is common to different genres and eras. But it's not just that, it's also a vehicle for change, something that undermines the dominant paradigm in a given society. And this aspect, I will argue, is especially true of the prophetic *grotesqueries,* as the prophetic texts often are insurgent by nature and balance on the line between urging and disruptive. The texts concerned with military masculinity are neither grotesque like a scary movie; in a gory, bloody, nightmarish way, nor are they overtly comical or overly sexual, not to us anyway.[26] They represent a chaotic time, or at the very least a time of disorder, and as such the norms and values are also disordered and this is what I wish to illustrate with the collection of texts below. For this study, masculinity is at the forefront, therefore the main object of

[25] Harpham 2006, 23.
[26] The marriage metaphors of Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezechiel are certainly overtly sexual, although, they are not concerned with military masculinity and will therefore not be included here.

contradiction in the texts below is military masculinity often mentioned in the texts as a *gibbôr* (military heroes).

Hiding

A prime example of a dismantling of the dominant paradigm is found in Jer 51:30. Phrased as a hattrick in failing to live up to the ideal: the warriors are hiding, passive, and feminized. They are made both vulnerable and grotesque, acting like women, as they stay in their strongholds whilst under attack.

> The warriors of Babylon have given up fighting,
> they remain in their strongholds,
> their strength has failed,
> they have become women;
> her buildings are set on fire,
> her bars are broken. (Jer 51:30)

This is the most obvious example of how the vulnerable warrior is portrayed. The first two lines indicates passivity, the third line says they have become weak, the fourth line compare them to women and the last lines ensures her defeat. This is said about a foreign army, the Babylonians are compared to women. Just the aspect of hiding is not how the ideal warrior should act, Isaiah continues on the same theme:

> 1b. What is wrong with you that you go up, all of you, to the rooftops,
> 2. inhabitants of a city in tumult, full of clamor,
> of a town in uproar?
> Your slain were not slain by the sword,
> they did not perish in battle;
> 3. Your leaders have fled, one and all,
> withdrawn out of range of the bow;
> your strongest warriors
> have fled far away. (Isa 22:1b–3)[27]

Staying on the rooftops and fleeing are two ways of illustrating vulnerability in the context of war, but the image of mighty men hiding or running can also be interpreted as comical. The objective is that they expose themselves to being slain in flight rather than the more honorable way of dying in battle. later in verse 8 Judah is said to be left "naked and defenseless".[28] Blenkinsopp argues that there is a

[27] I use Blenkinsopp's translation. Blenkinsopp 2000, 331.
[28] Blenkinsopp 2000, 331.

misplaced rejoicing that Yahweh objects to (supported later on by v. 13), even though they survived the attack, this was not achieved with courage and valor, rather they were hiding and fleeing from battle, waging war in a way that does not befit the people of Yahweh.[29] We could say that within the theory build of Bachtin this text contains both the *carnivalesque* and the *grotesque*, the celebrations being part of the former..

Making the powerful men into women adds an aspect of status loss, the high being linked to the low (feminine). This is one way of dismantling the powerful military man by comparing them to incapable women. This is a popular shaming trope both in the HB and in the ANE material. In this form as part of an oracle, it is aimed at the enemy army, like in the Jeremiah text quoted first (also seen in Isa 19:16, Jer 50:37 and the Nahum text below). But the Isaiah text (22:1b–3) is in regard to the people of Judah. Notably, there is a difference to be made between trash talking the enemy and shaming the own and the more overtly feminizing slur is, within the prophetic texts, exclusive to shaming the other. However, the prophets feminizing the own is no rarity considering the daughter Zion, the marriage metaphors, them giving birth, etc.

Drunk

Continuing on the same theme as Jeremiah and Isaiah above, Nah 3:11ff., besides hiding, also adds the aspect of drunkenness:

> 11. You also will be drunken,
> you will go into hiding;
> you will seek a refuge from the enemy.
> 12. All your fortresses are like fig trees with first-ripe figs—
> if shaken they fall into the mouth of the eater.
> 13. Look at your troops they are women in your midst.
> The gates of your land are wide open to your foes;
> fire has devoured the bars of your gates. (Nah 3:11–13)

Being drunk with all it entails is not just a huge disadvantage when you are under attack, it also brings the ideal male down in the gutter. Drunkenness not seldom exhibits as grotesque as it affects the body and mind in different ways. The drunk is not fit to lead (Jer 51:56–57), or to fight. In Isa 19:14 they are like drunkards, confused and staggering around in their own vomit. The drunk priests and prophets are confused and cannot give proper judgement in Isa 28:7–8. Also in Isaiah, the drunkards are too busy drinking and partying to notice the exile:

> 11. Ah, you who rise early in the morning
> in pursuit of strong drink,

[29] Blenkinsopp 2000, 333.

who linger in the evening
to be inflamed by wine,
12. whose feasts consists of lyre and harp,
tambourine and flute and wine,
but who do not regard the deeds of the Lord,
or see the work of his hands!
13. Therefore my people go into exile without knowledge;
their nobles are dying of hunger,
and their multitude is parched with thirst.
14. Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
and opened its mouth beyond measure;
the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude go down,
her throng and all who exult in her.
15. People are bowed down, everyone is brought low,
and the eyes of the haughty are humbled. (Isa 5:11–15)

Here exile is compared to Sheol, to death, the netherworld. And for Isaiah, unlike for example Amos and Hosea who continuously juxtapose alternatives of death and exile, exile means death and lack of knowledge.[30] The imagery suggests a society built on Sheol, sinking and at the same time being alienated by Yahweh. Imagining Sheol's mouth, which is so vast it cannot even be measured, and the elite of Jerusalem being devoured by it is grotesque in many ways.[31] It also overtly illustrates the paradox where the high of status are "brought low." It is because of their grotesque drinking that Sheol opened its grotesque mouth to swallow them. In Bachtin's theory the drinking is also carnivalesque, but can quickly turn into the grotesque, balancing in between is also the aspect of nakedness to which we shall now turn.

Naked

Nakedness in biblical texts can serve different purposes, one of them is found already in the beginning of the HB where Adam and Eve initially are carefree and carry their nakedness without any shame. Interestingly, this changes as they violate the divine prohibition connected to the fruit. A lot of the time nakedness signals vulnerability. In Job we read that we enter this world naked, and we will leave this world the same way (Job 1:21). Nakedness is, in Landy's words, is "the sign of raw humanity, stripped of all significance."[32]

[30] Landy 2010, 242.
[31] Cf. Num 16:31 where the Korah family is swallowed by the mouth of Sheol.
[32] Landy 2010, 255.

Shame is another aspect which is used in the context of military endeavors, for example when David's men's buttocks are exposed by ripping their clothing in 2 Sam 10:1–5. David himself acts inappropriately when he dances in the procession when the ark is returned, he exposes himself and Michal says that he exposed himself just like a "vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself" (2 Sam 6:20). Yahweh continuously threatens to expose his people revealing their private parts, mainly in the context of him as the jealous and angry spouse of Zion.[33] Isaiah mentions the naked among the oppressed, hungry and the homeless poor, all of them need the help of others in Isa 58:6–7.[34] The enforced nakedness, or as in the case below, the vulnerable nakedness is an example of the grotesque. This is illustrated by the prophet Isaiah when he walks naked and barefoot for three years in order to illustrate the coming shame of Egypt and Ethiopia.[35] Isaiah's symbolic action would not serve its purpose unless it disrupts or transgresses the customs of the ancient Near East (here also including Ethiopia). Landy argues that it is a "dramatic self-marginalization, an alienation from social norms that renders him exposed to shame and incomprehension."[36] He claims that the prophet puts himself into metaphorical exile by placing himself as the other. In the text below, Yahweh's judgment is the context for the nakedness, just as we can see in Deut 28:48, but here coupled with other important masculine strengths which are inverted into weakness:

> 14. Flight shall perish from the swift,
> and the strong shall not retain their strength,
> nor shall the mighty save their lives;
> 15. those who handle the bow shall not stand,
> and those who are swift of foot shall not save themselves,
> nor shall those who ride horses save their lives;
> 16. and those who are stout of heart among the mighty
> shall flee away naked in that day, says Yahweh. (Amos 2:14–16)

Those normally stout and mighty are fleeing naked, in the Book of Amos, this adds an extra layer of vulnerability and grotesque imagery to the fleeing warriors. This is part of one of his oracles against the nations but here aimed at Israel (2:6–16). Once again, the mightiest men running away, and this time being naked, is both comical and it also indicates the level of fear they felt in proportion to their response. Yahweh's judgement can also cause reactions comparable to a woman in labor, another aspect of vulnerability related to nakedness, which we shall see in the texts below.

Childbirth

[33] See for example: Jer 13:26–27, Isa 3:16–17, Isa 47:1–3, Nah 3:5.
[34] Also Job 22:6.
[35] Isa 20:1–6.
[36] Landy 2010, 254–255.

A recurring grotesque imagery of the prophetic texts is comparing the mighty men to a woman in labor. This is both transgressive regarding gender, but childbirth can also be a gory experience, especially as the texts almost exclusively focus on the painful part of labor and barley mentions the hopefully joyous result. Blood, pain, a change in breathing, screaming, anguish, terror, and feeble hands are all part of what is usually in focus.

> Thus says Yahweh:
> See, a people is coming from the land of the north,
> A great nation is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth.
> They grasp the bow and the javelin,
> They are cruel and have no mercy,
> Their sound is like the roaring sea;
> They ride on horses,
> Equipped like a warrior (*ʾîš milḥāmâ*) for battle,
> Against you, O daughter Zion!
> "We have heard the news of them,
> Our hands fall helpless (*rph*);
> Anguish (*ṣārâ*) has taken hold of us,
> Pain (*ḥîl*) as of a woman in labor.
> Do not go out into the field,
> or walk on the road;
> for the enemy has a sword,
> terror is on every side."
> (Jer 6:22–25)

As already mentioned above, the feminizing of Judah/Jerusalem is more often connected to daughter Zion or the marriage metaphors, and in this case daughter Zion is paired with childbirth imagery. The scene is set almost like an epic film which has its parallels in other war-scenes describing Israel's fate when judgement is upon them. Carvalho makes an apt observation regarding another text where Yahweh himself is portrayed as the warrior which she describes as "a big time wrestler entering the arena"[37] (Zeph 1:7–18), and the imagery has some aspects in common. Their sound is described, above like the roaring sea, in Zeph 1:14 the sound is bitter. In the build up to the battle the opposing army's strength is emphasized while Judah's reaction is being vulnerable. But the build up bears almost carnevalesque tendencies which, once again, result in grotesque transgressiveness of men acting like women. Interestingly when Yahweh himself is in labor in Isa 42:13–14 it is not a vulnerable response

[37] Carvalho 2010, 138.

to an ominous threat. Rather, it is the liberating aspect of giving birth like no human mother has ever done. Without pain, it is only the sounds and breathing which is connected to labor. Yahweh rouses, shouts and shows himself mighty (42:13) and surpasses humans by being the most successful warrior, the most masculine man and the most successful mother.[38]

In a more peaceful context Isaiah describes his reaction to bad news comparing his reaction to a woman in labor:

> 3. Therefore my loins are filled with anguish (*ḥyl*);
> pangs (*ṣîr*) have seized me,
> like the pangs (*ṣîr*) of a woman in labor;
> I am bowed down so I cannot hear,
> I am dismayed so I cannot see.
> 4. My mind reels, horror (*plṣ*) has appalled me;
> the twilight I longed for
> has been turned for me into trembling (*ḥrd*). (Isa 21:3–4)

Bachtin, in reference to a joke where childbirth-imagery is used, claims that the elevated act of speaking (which is a reference to the joke) is dethroned and degraded by using the bodily imagery of giving birth. And that there is a hierarchy within the body where the head, where we think/speak, is replaced by the lower parts of the body.[39] Above I mentioned Isaiah walking around naked, here the prophet compares himself to a woman in labor. The authors/editors of Isaiah are no strangers to applying the grotesque to the prophet. This works well within the larger narrative where the military masculinity is replaced by a more peaceful ideal by use of the grotesque. Noteworthy is also the fact that when Yahweh is giving birth it is only by sound, no other bodily functions which could connect the infallible deity with the lower regions of the human body. Speaking of highs and lows, my last example is one of status reversal.

Status Reversal

As we have seen the grotesque can also be turning the world on its head. Here we shall see dystopic vision of a crumbling world order from Isaiah 3:1–12:

> 1. For now the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts,
> is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah
> support and staff—all support of bread,
> and all support of water—
> 2 warrior and soldier, judge and prophet,

[38] This argument is also found in Graybill 2017.
[39] Bachtin 1965, 287–288.

diviner and elder,
3 captain of fifty and dignitary,
counselor and skillful magician
and expert enchanter.
4 And I will make boys their princes,
and babes shall rule over them.
5 The people will be oppressed,
everyone by another
and everyone by a neighbor;
the youth will be insolent to the elder,
and the base to the honorable.

The text continues painting the dystopic picture by suggesting that the people appoint leaders but that they are unwilling to accept the positions. While the leaders they get mislead them:

12 My people—children are their oppressors,
and women rule over them.[40]
O my people, your leaders mislead you,
and confuse the course of your paths.

While the imagery is quite dystopic it brings to mind the quote by Kuryluk above where both childhood and femininity are mentioned as anti-worlds opposed to adulthood and masculinity. We also have the perspective of, status wise, the lowest replacing the high when leaders are deported roles are reversed. This is an aspect of the grotesque where there is no blood or gore, but rather the grotesque lies in the transgressive aspect. The text depicts a time of in-between, a crisis which leads to absurdities because of social and moral chaos. The same chapter in Isaiah continues to describe the daughters of Zion who have become so proud that they will be exposed, both their head and their private parts, by Yahweh (Isa 3:17). Her jewelry will be taken from her, her nice clothes and her well groomed hair will be removed (vv.18–24). Yahweh is acting out the role of the victor in war and how female prisoners are usually treated.[41] This is also a reversal of high to low, but this is aimed at the women of Jerusalem. The section ends with a scene which depicts the grotesque consequences of war where seven women are said to want to marry one man. The grotesque does not lie in a marriage involving eight people, as this could very well happen among the very wealthy. Rather, the grotesqueness is that there is a shortage of men, presumably many have fallen in war, and therefore the

[40] The translation of this verse brings at least two quite different options, Blenkinsopp prefers “oppressors” and “usurers” instead of “children” and “women.” I prefer the translation rendered above, from NRSV, and see it as a callback to v.4. Blenkinsopp 2000, 197.
[41] Blenkinsopp 2000, 201.

women are forced to support themselves and foregoing the norm that the men should provide for their wives, because they want to avoid the social stigma of being unmarried and childless.[42] Once again the disruptive imagery, depicting social chaos, is also grotesque.

Here I have introduced the concept of the grotesque and applied it to some prophetic texts which all show aspects of the grotesque, moving on there are still many to be explored, but for now, let us take a look at how the grotesque can sometimes work as a subversive force.

The paradigm crises

I mentioned above, following Harpham, that the grotesque works in a gap or an interval when old discourses are discarded. Discourses, in this case discourses of masculinity and cultural ideals, never represent *reality* as a whole, if there even is an essence to the concept. But they do tell us something about norms, ideals, preferences, and such. Societal and cultural ideals are not constants, but neither do they change overnight.[43] In this study I argue that we can spot the change in ideals in texts and carefully map out some of the values that they seek to maintain or create. I seek to encircle certain mental constructs susceptible to change.

During the exile, the heroic ideal of the historic books is first and foremost an expression of nostalgia. It is an idealization of a pre-monarchic and early monarchic past when men behaved like "real men". Or it is an effort to contain the military masculinity in the past by depicting heroes in a legendary light.[44] The prophets are themselves not warriors, but rather, they represent another kind of masculinity, which is less macho than the military ideal. During, and after the exile, there is a relative masculinity attested by both Boer (2013) and DiPalma (2019), called "scribal masculinity." Boer argues that the prophets and scribes merged into one potent figure and within the texts he is the most powerful figure, he is the director who decides the roles of the different characters—even in the case of Yahweh.[45] The scribes are removed from the direct military and political activity, and in that way they are marginalized. Meanwhile, however, they are also in power as they are in charge of preserving and writing history.[46] DiPalma argues for a scribal masculinity from the perspective of the Book of Daniel, usually thought to be written in Persian times.[47] A contributing factor when the new masculinities started to grow was the fall of the monarchy. The monarchic society was a society with a

[42] Blenkinsopp 2000, 202.
[43] This has also been argued by Foucault, among others, he argues that "human nature" is changeable depending on how humans apprehend themselves in relation to their cultural context. Perkins 1995, 4.
[44] Murphy argues similarly that we can spot historical and political changes in the HB texts and that also includes expectations for gendered performance. She argues out of the Gideon story that the strong warrior is part of the older layers, and the more careful and scared Gideon is a later revision from the exile or later, when Yahweh's absence was a theological issue. Murphy 2019, esp. p. 61.
[45] Boer 2013, 229.
[46] Boer 2013, 229–230.
[47] DiPalma 2019, 230.

strong military presence.[48] It is hard to uphold the hierarchies of the monarchy when displaced in another setting. However, when hierarchies crumble they are soon replaced by others and who were to gain from this change in ideal? Well, probably the ones who are holding the pens.[49] .

Even though the prophetic texts are not homogenous, and they discuss different historical events depending on the context in which they were written/edited, they do have some things in common. Genre, for one, the poetic oracles with their scathing criticism of those in power. Whether the reaction is sparked by the Assyrians invading Israel, Judah escaping the invasion of the Assyrians, or the Babylonian exile, the political crises affect also the socio-cultural aspects of society. However, in the prophetic texts connected to the exile the paradigm crises and the grotesque rhetoric strategy becomes visible. Why then does the exile have such a great impact on the literature? Landy expands on the subject:

> One can look at it from an historical and ideological point of view: a state and dynasty, chosen and protected by the unique deity of the universe, on which rests responsibility for peace, justice, and meaning in the world, is suddenly destroyed, together with its cultural and sacred heritage, by the very same deity in the guise of the Assyrian or Babylonian conqueror.[50]

Mentioned in the title is the subversive function of the grotesque, but to clarify, this is not a given consequence. Rather, within the vacuum of uncertainty the transgressive grotesque works, knowingly or unknowingly, to move the borders of the allowed or the preferred. This does not have to be an aim of the authors/editors. The exile is a good example of how it can work because the literature is finding its way in trying to explain why the catastrophe happened both theologically and culturally. And this experience of being politically and theologically lost allows for a new way of looking at, in this case, masculinity. In this way, depicting the mighty warrior as vulnerable, causes norms and values to slowly shift and in time allows for a more peaceful masculinity to be part of the ideal.

When the catastrophe that is the exile enters the literature, one of the the reigning hegemonic masculinities have unambiguous proof of their inability as military men. They have failed, they lost their land, their identity, and they are worthless military men. What better time than at the bottom to change the ideal masculinity. Other nations can flaunt their macho ways, but they live differently. Not only because they are by default losers, deportees, living in the winner’s culture. But maybe, the prophet’s message is, by allowing the grotesque to enter the narrative, a message of subversion. The

[48] DiPalma 2019, 243.
[49] In later Jewish tradition the scribal masculinity coincides with the ideal of the Torah studying Jewish man, this theme is explored by Daniel Boyarin. in Boyarin 1997.
[50] Landy 2010, 246.

vulnerable warriors of Israel are, in the hands of the authors/editors, insurgent in their terrified and passive ways.

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Summary: Exploring the Phenomenon of Power in Biblical Narratives

OTSEM 2024

My paper presents the various theological perspectives, their methods and mutual connections, informing my explorations of the phenomenon of power. The paper also includes a short summary of a reading of the books of Esther and Job.

Experiences of power, that is, experiences of being affected by other people's actions as well as experiences of being able to make an active difference in the world, seem to be fundamental to human existence. As evidenced by biblical narratives, Christian reflections, and systematic considerations throughout history. Experiences of power seem to be part of what Hannah Arendt would call the human condition. My PhD approaches this experienced phenomenon of power through the emic prism of Christian narratives including biblical narratives, historic case studies, and systematic reflections in the explorations. As the PhD project is still in its upstarting phase, the paper focuses on the chosen methods and approach rather than the understanding of power.

The presented PhD project has the following working title reflecting the scope of the project:

The phenomenon of power encountered in biblical narratives and historic case studies illuminated by Hannah Arendt's concepts and phenomenological reflections.

The three interrelated perspectives on the phenomenon of power – exegesis, historical case studies, systematic analyses – have been broken down into the following four research questions:

1. How is power presented and understood in selected Biblical narratives (the OT books of *Esther* and *Job* and the NT book of *Acts)*?
2. How has power been dealt with in selected case studies from Christian reception history (the reflections of Athanasius and Eusebius during the Constantinian shift, and the contemporary case of the black church in the USA)?
3. How can the presented historic case studies inform our reading of the selected Biblical narratives? And vice versa, how can the characteristics of power found in the Biblical narratives inform our understanding of power in the historic case studies?

4. How can the phenomenological reflections and concepts found in the writings of Hannah Arendt inform and illuminate the findings from questions 1-3?

The paper presents each of the involved research questions, the methods involved and their mutual connections.

Approaching the phenomenon of power from a narrative point of view is fundamentally informed by Hannah Arendt's epistemological understandings. Arendt stresses the importance of allowing text and experience to go hand in hand. Concepts of understanding need to be unfolded in narratives to ensure this important connection is maintained. This epistemological understanding has fundamentally informed my choice of method and approach. In addition to this methodological contribution, Arendt's analyses of power will be explored to search for concepts and reflections that can bridge biblical narratives with modern and postmodern experiences.

OT studies constitute an important cornerstone of my PhD project and the cross-disciplinary explorations of my PhD have therefore been started with a study of the OT books of *Esther* and *Job*. A short summary of this study is also included in the paper. Having reached the first milestone of my PhD project, identifying (preliminary) understandings of power and wisdom in the narratives of *Esther* and *Job,* I ask the following question: How can these OT findings inform my upcoming explorations of *Acts* and historic cases, and how can these explorations together with Arendt's phenomenological reflections enlighten my understanding of the OT books of *Esther* and *Job*? What are the advantages and disadvantages of exploring theological understandings across various disciplines?

Annette Hjort Knudsen, PhD fellow, University of Copenhagen

Exploring the Phenomenon of Power in Biblical Narratives

OTSEM 2024

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Research Questions
3. Research question 1: Exploring biblical narratives
4. Preliminary findings from reading the books of *Esther* and *Job*
5. Research question 2: Historic case studies
6. Research question 3: Complementary findings
7. Research question 4: Systematic studies – Hannah Arendt's epistemological understandings
8. Research question 4: Systematic studies – Hannah Arendt's analyses of power
9. Exegesis re-visited
10. Conclusion

Preface:

My paper presents the various theological perspectives of my PhD projects, their methods and mutual connections. The paper also includes a short summary of a reading of the books of Esther and Job.

As my PhD project includes various theological perspectives and is still in the upstarting phase, I would like to discuss the potentials of working across theological disciplines. What is potentially gained from this approach? And what are the possible pitfalls of exploring the question of power from various theological perspectives? I will present my method and approach to an audience of systematic theologians in September. At OTSEM 2024 I would particularly like to hear comments and suggestions from an OT perspective. Can OT narratives inform broader theological questions, as my PhD projects attempts to let them do? If so, how? If not, how should we engage with OT narratives? Are they primarily of historic interest or can OT readings contribute to modern day understandings of human challenges?

1. Introduction

My paper reflects on the methods and approach to my PhD project. As appears from the title, my project attempts to identify and explore the phenomenon of power seen through the prism of

biblical narratives. The project does not approach the phenomenon of power with a predefined conception. The notion of "power" to be explored could be minimally defined as "the ability to act with an impact". That is, the experience of being affected by other people's actions as well as the experience of being able to make an active difference in the world. This experienced phenomenon of power has been explored from various philosophical, sociological, legal and other perspectives arriving at concepts of power that make sense to their field of inquiry. I will not employ any of these concepts but will explore the phenomenon through the emic prism of the Christian narratives. The project does not attempt to define the concept of "power" as such but will explore (specific, possible) Christian understandings of the phenomenon. The following working title reflects the scope of the project:

The phenomenon of power encountered in biblical narratives and historic case studies illuminated by Hannah Arendt's concepts and phenomenological reflections.

As indicated, the project includes both exegetical, historical, and systematic perspectives. Since the phenomenon of power is explored within a Christian horizon, the biblical understanding and exegetical potentials remain at the heart of the project. The PhD-project is, therefore, hosted by the Department of Biblical Exegesis at the University of Copenhagen where it is supervised by Jill Middlemas.

OT studies constitute an important cornerstone of my PhD project and the cross-disciplinary explorations of my PhD have therefore been started with a study of the OT books of *Esther* and *Job*. This initial part of my PhD has reached an important milestone as preliminary findings will be presented at ISBL 2024 in Amsterdam. Apart from presenting the overall research questions, methods and approach of my PhD project, the preliminary OT findings and their relevance to the studies ahead will also be considered.

2. Research questions

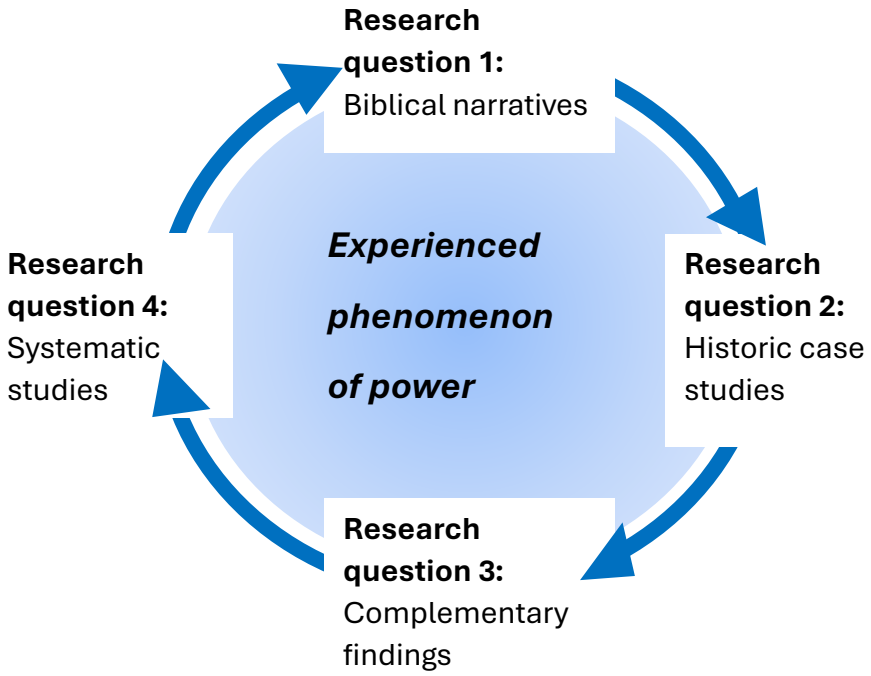
The various perspectives of the PhD project (exegesis, historic case studies, and systematic analyses) have been broken down into four research questions:

1. How is power presented and understood in selected biblical narratives (the OT books of *Esther* and *Job* and the NT book of *Acts)*?
2. How has power been dealt with in selected case studies from Christian reception history (the reflections of Athanasius and Eusebius during the Constantinian shift, and the contemporary case of the black church in the USA)?

3. How can the presented historic case studies inform our reading of the selected biblical narratives? And vice versa, how can the characteristics of power found in the biblical narratives inform our understanding of power in the historic case studies?

4. How can the phenomenological reflections and concepts found in the writings of Hannah Arendt inform and illuminate the findings from questions 1-3?

As appears from the listed research questions, my approach to the phenomenon of power involves several steps. First, I will study the phenomenon of power as it is encountered in biblical narratives (question 1) Second, the exegetical findings will be hermeneutically informed (question 3) by case studies from Christian reception history (question 2) and, third, these findings will be systematically illuminated by the phenomenological reflections and concepts found in the writings of Hannah Arendt (question 4). Finally, I will re-visit the biblical narratives to investigate how the narrative, historic, and systematic explorations can inform the exegetical interpretations. The exploration, in that sense, is circular as it starts and ends by examining the biblical narratives as the foundations of Christian understandings of the experience of power.[1] The figure below attempts to show the connections and dependencies of the research questions involved.



Figur1: Exploring the phenomenon of power through the emic prism of Christian narratives

[1] This, of course, is also inspired by the Protestant notion of *Sola Scriptura* as source and evidence when arguing for Christian understandings of the world.

In what follows, I will go through each of the involved research questions, the methods involved, and their mutual connections.

3. Research Question 1: Exploring biblical narratives

Exegesis is my starting point. I have chosen to look at the OT books of *Esther* and *Job* and the NT book of *Acts* - for the following reasons:

The OT books of Esther and Job

Initially, two aspects of the books of *Esther* and *Job* caught my attention. First, the books of *Esther* and *Job* stand side by side in the OT of the *Vulgate* bible translated into Latin by Jerome in the late 4th century and used in contemporary western churches. This canonical ordering of the two books distinguishes the *Vulgate* from both the *Septuagint* and the *Hebrew Bible* where the books of *Esther* and *Job* are not presented side by side. Re-ordering the two books thus appears to be a deliberate editorial decision on the part of first-generation editors of the *Vulgate* canon, possibly Jerome himself[2]. During the reception history of the *Vulgate*, however, subdivisions have been added to the OT books categorizing them - in accordance with their interpreted meaning - as books of "law", "history", "wisdom", and "prophecy". In this process the books of *Esther* and *Job* have been pulled apart as *Esther* is categorized as the last book in the historic section whereas *Job* is seen as the first of the wisdom books. The possible narrative and theological intentions of placing the two books side by side are therefore easily overlooked[3]. My reading explores the 4th century intention and reads the books together. Doing this the books are reunited as *Esther* joins *Job* in the wisdom section of the OT.

The second point that caught my attention was the apparent inverted symmetry of the two stories. The narrative of *Esther* presents us with an orphaned girl, with no influence on her life and circumstances, who becomes a powerful queen ruling the world. The narrative of Job presents us with the exact opposite story. The "wealthiest man in the East" (Job 1:3), in apparent control of

[2] While the oldest known complete collection of the *Vulgate* is from the 8th century, Jerome discussed not only questions of translations but also the appropriate order of reading the books as evidenced by his letter 107 to Laeta.

[3] Katharine Dell makes a similar point for the relations between Job and Jeremiah when pointing out that "the classification of one text as "prophecy" and another as "wisdom" has hindered a close study of the relationship between the two texts". Dell, "'Cursed be the day I was born: Job and Jeremiah Revisited", 107. The books of Esther and Job have both been studied from various inter-textual perspectives. See Dell og Kynes, *Reading Job Intertextually*; Firth og Melton, *Reading Esther Intertextually*. The books of *Esther* and *Job*, however, are not mutually studied inter-textually in either.

his life and circumstances, is stripped of all means of action. The Esther narrative moves from powerless dependency (2:7) to powerful ruler (7:2, 9:12; 9:32) whereas the Job narrative moves from powerful independency (1:3) to powerless inability to act (42:6) – as sketched in the figure below.

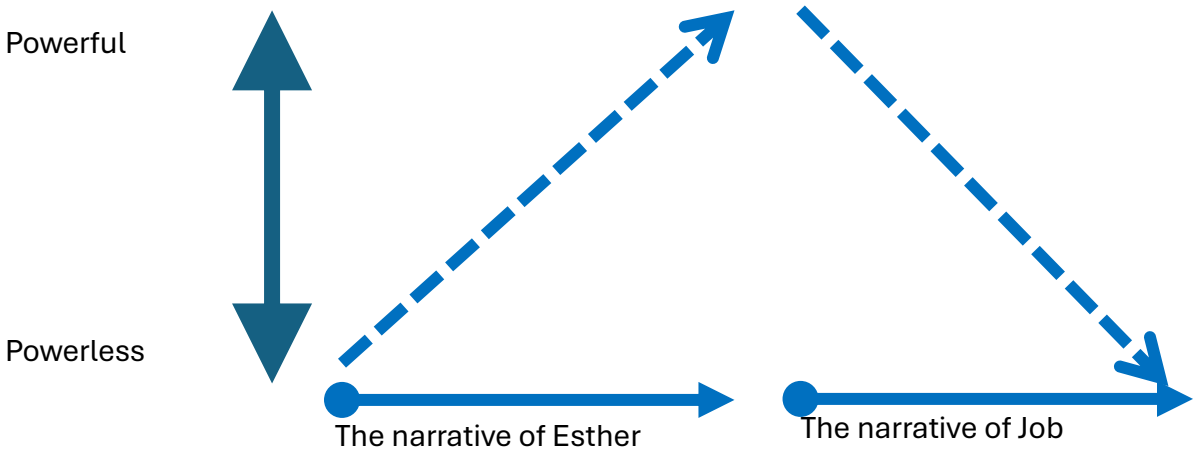


Figure 2: Contrasting narrative movements of empowerment and disempowerment

However – and this is what makes a comparative reading relevant and interesting - both Esther and Job are found to be pleasing to God. God states this explicitly in the case of Job (42:7-8) and Esther's success in saving her people from destruction makes a similar point. Reading these contrasting tales together, therefore, prompts the following question: What is the understanding of power and wisdom inherent in these seemingly contrasting tales of empowerment (Esther) and disempowerment (Job)? A preliminary answer to this question is presented in section 4 of the present paper.

The NT book of Acts

Likewise in the Book of *Acts*. The narrative presents us with an abundance of more or less powerful agents acting in many ways. But not all actions seem to be equally efficient. Some of them are of no consequences whatsoever – even if the agent is high ranking and seemingly powerful. Other actions have great consequences – even if the agent is not on the surface of the story described as powerful or influential. This prompts the question: What is the narrative of power inherent in the complex narrative of agents, actions, and consequences in *Acts*?

Method

I will explore all three biblical narratives as exactly that: narratives. This approach is uncontroversial in the case of Job since no one would consider a deliberation between God and Satan to be a report of a historic event. Approaching the books of *Esther* and *Acts* as non-historic narratives that should be approached from the same narrative perspective as Job is more controversial, as these books, as we have seen, have often been read as "historic" books.

As demonstrated by a number of recent studies[4], however, the books of *Esther* and *Job* share many formal similarities that enables us to place the narratives in the same postexilic context. The audiences of both books are presumed to know the Hebrew scriptures well enabling them to understand both the obvious and hidden references to it throughout the narratives. Traits of "folklore" have been identified in both narratives and they both include instances of comedy and parody. This similarity in genre, time, and audience is important as it allows for a shared narrative approach and supports the claim that the two books should be read together as two complementary pieces of the same tale of wisdom.

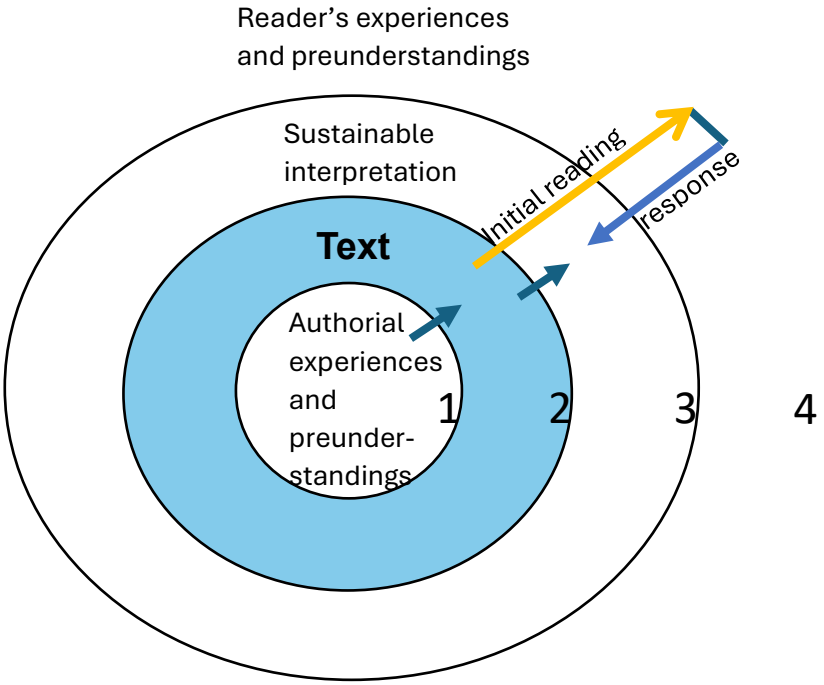
Likewise, whatever historic events might also be reflected in the narrative of *Acts*, the literary qualities of the book are so apparent that it makes sense to analyze it as a narrative communicating its message and meaning through literary means. I will study both the OT and NT narratives employing mainstream narrative structuralist tools looking for patterns, agencies, similarities, contrasts, parallels etc.

Making sense of the narrative

Following Hannah Arendt – see section 7 of this paper - narratives are seen as *accounts of lived experiences*. Not in a straightforward, reporting, or "historic" way but interpreting - providing meaning to - experiences. Following Arendt, exploring narratives is looking for the meaning of the experiences it reflects. I will get back to this important understanding of the narrative when discussing Hannah Arendt's epistemological contributions to my project (section 7). This interpreted meaning is, however, as already demonstrated by the questions arising out of my initial reading of *Ester, Job,* and *Acts*, constituted both on the side of the author and the reader.

[4] Greenstein, "Parody as a Challenge to Tradition: The Use of Deuteronomy 32 in the Book of Job"; Hayes, "Responses to Suffering and Evil: Lamentation and Wisdom Literature"; Niditch, *A Prelude to Bblical Folklore: Underdogs and Tricksters*.

The narrative reflects an experience on the part of the author and subsequent editors of a given text. As a reader I cannot, of course, experience other people's experiences. I only have my own. I must, therefore, necessarily draw on my own experiences of the world when attempting to make sense of any given narrative. I therefore – as we have already seen - approach the narrative with a reader response. In casu, the question of power. In that sense, interpretation involves a dynamic between experiences: those of the author/editor and those of the reader. They meet in the text – as sketched below in what I call the hermeneutical onion – with many layers of sense-making:



Figur 3: Making sense of the narrative

The author turns the experiences he or she wants to convey (level1) into a narrative (level 2). The reader reads the text (yellow arrow) and interprets the narrative (level 3) by mirroring his or her own experiences (level 4) in the provided narrative (level 2). As stated by Gale A. Yee

> "The text that he [the author] proffers is his "reading" of the social world he inhabits ... through his "reading" of his social world he attempts to create or produce that world ... later readers utilize the ancient text/reading in the production of their own "readings" of their particular world".[5]

[5] Yee, "The Author/Text/Reader and Power: Suggestions for the Critical Framework for Biblical Studies", 118.

The meaning of the text (a sustainable or substantiated interpretation – level 3) is, so to speak, sandwiched between these two phenomenologically constituted and experienced worlds on level 1 and 4 embracing it. The interpretation of the text in that sense depends on the reader's response to it. I cannot, however, pose just any arbitrary question to the text. As an obvious example, it would not make sense to approach the book of *Acts* with a question of how to grow potatoes. There is nothing in the text that prompts that question. The reader's initial reading (yellow arrow) confronted with his or her life experiences prompts the question that is then incorporate in the reader's textually informed interpretation.

In my PhD project the question of power is, clearly, my reader response (level 4) to the selected biblical narratives. It is, however, important to maintain that a sustainable interpretation (level 3) must be substantiated by the text itself (level 2) to be justified to other readers. The same goes for any assumptions regarding the authorial or editorial intent and preunderstandings (level 1). The relevance of these assumptions must be justified within the text to be accessible to more than just one private reading**.** This brings us back to level 2 as the unifying focus point of these entangled hermeneutic relations sketched in figure 2.

Textual evidence is thus crucial and my exegetical studies of the biblical narratives will apply straightforward structural narrative tools when analyzing the selected biblical narratives.

4. Preliminary findings: Power and wisdom in the books of *Esther* and *Job*

As I start my PhD project with OT explorations this part of the project is most advanced and preliminary conclusions will be presented at ISBL2024. Before presenting the method and approach to my second research question, I will therefore provide a short overview of the preliminary findings of my study of *Esther* and *Job*.

As stated already in section 3, both *Esther* and *Job* are read as books of wisdom. The concept of "wisdom literature" is, however, as Jennie Grillo puts it, "a scholarly construction"[6] and as such its relevance has been questioned.[7] However, as also noted by Grillo, the concept is also "a

[6] Grillo, "The Wisdom Literature", 182.

[7] Will Kynes also stresses that the current distinction between groups of books is not found in ancient Bible interpretations, as "they never exclusively group Proverbs, Job, an Ecclesiastes together or associate them with a distinct conception of wisdom. Instead, they group different texts together for different reasons. This makes these earlier groupings not merely quantitatively but also qualitatively different than the modern Wisdom category." Kynes, "Wisdom and Wisdom Literature", 4. See also Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature": The Birth, Death, and Intertextual Reintegration of a Biblical Corpus*; and Kynes, "Weisheit and Job". Mark Sneed is making a similar point when referring to Gerhard von Rad for the insight that "the term 'wisdom literature' is a scholarly invention or construct" von Rad is therefore "approaching the subject

scholarly discovery … [as] the books thus gathered together share a pool of family resemblance".[8] It is in this latter capacity that the concept of "wisdom books" is maintained in the explorations of the books of *Esther* and *Job*.

Whereas categorizing the Book of *Esther* as wisdom is very much disputed,[9] the status of *Job* as wisdom literature has never been questioned. As noted by Christian Frevel "It seems likely that the author(s) of Job 24 knew Ps 104 and its settled conviction of the creational wisdom".[10] Wisdom belongs to God and is imbedded in God's creation. The wise order of the world is the intended creational order - the order that God approves of and judges as good (Gen 1:10, 12,18, 21, 25, 31). The notion of wisdom that will be explored in the books of *Esther* and *Job* can, therefore, be defined as *the ability to live and act in accordance with the purpose and intent of God's creation*. The explorations of wisdom and power in the two books uses this understanding of wisdom found in *Job* to explore the understanding of wisdom found in both *Esther* and *Job*. Likewise, the understanding of power found in *Esther* is used to explore the understanding of power in both *Esther* and *Job*. Comparing the narratives the following contrasts have been identified:

	The Book of Esther	***The Book of Job***
1	A woman with no ressources ends up managing all the power in the world.	"The wealthiest man in the East" (Job 1:3) ends up with no means of action.
2	Humans act - God does not.	God acts – humans do not.
3	God is absent.	God is directly involved.
4	Approaches her calling with attentive humility.	Approaches his challenge with protest and lament.
5	Esther succeeds – she realizes the practical implications of wisdom.	Job fails – he never understands the reasons for his misery.
6	Esther surrenders herself to action and prevails (14:12-15).	Job surrenders himself to inaction and gives up (42:6).
7	Acting with wisdom is possible.	Knowing wisdom is impossible.
8	Practical wisdom is required.	Theoretical wisdom is dismissed.

first of all in a more general way and with fewer presuppositions". Sneed, "Gerhard von Rad and the Notion of a Wisdom Tradition", 237–38.

[8] Grillo, "The Wisdom Literature", 182.

[9] Bachmann, "Unterhaltung mit Tiefgang. Das Esterbch (Teil 1)"; Millar, "Reading Esther with Proverbs: Complexifying Character, Theme, and Ideology"; White, "Esther: A Feminine Model for Jewish Diaspora".

[10] Frevel, "Telling the Secrets of Wisdom: The Use of Psalm 104 in the Book of Job", 161.

As noted initially, the stories of Esther and Job seem like inverted mirror pictures. They start out in opposite circumstances and end up in opposite places. Esther moving from powerless to powerful while Job moves in the oppositive direction. Every statement in *Esther* seems to be countered in *Job* – and vice versa. Yet, they are both found pleasing to God. That is, they are both presented as acting in accordance with wisdom. Nevertheless, the notion of wisdom and power found in *Esther* is - at a first glance - squarely contradicted by *Job* – and vice versa.

Read in isolation, the book of *Esther* could be seen as a tale of the greatness of human powers: If you are courageous and apply yourself to the task you can accomplish anything. That could be the moral of the story of Esther who applies herself and surmounts challenges and dangers with an impressive ease and efficiency.

Read in conjunction with the book of *Job*, however, this understanding of *Esther* is contradicted and needs to be reconsidered. Presented with a man who is both courageous and resourceful, but who can, nevertheless, not accomplish anything when sickness and misfortune hits him, makes it impossible to maintain the first, obvious interpretation of *Esther*.

Likewise, read in isolation the book of *Job* could be seen as a tale of human helplessness: As we have no understanding of God's creational wisdom all we can do is to sit passively and wait for God's gracious support and re-creation of life. This obvious interpretation, however, is contradicted by the tale of *Esther* who overcomes her precarious situation with her own courageous actions.

Despite the many contrasting features, there are also important similarities between the two stories. Most importantly, Job shares Esther's clear presence of mind. He shares her practical wisdom when dismissing the judgement of his counselors as false. His counselors show the same blind trust in orthodox rules as Mordecai – misjudging the situation in both cases. With disastrous results.

Reading the two books together reveals understandings of wisdom and power that is much harder to detect if the books of *Esther* and *Job* are read apart. Despite the contrasting tales, the stories of *Esther* and *Job,* read in conjunction, seem to agree on the following understanding of power and wisdom:

Power is understood as **a *sheer force of action*** that is ***a constant, unavoidable menace.*** In *Esther* the figure of Ahasuerus represents this both threatening and life-ensuring force. In *Job* it is presented in the figures of Behemoth and Leviathan. These narrative figures demonstrate that power needs to be bound and controlled by the wisdom of God (cosmic powers) as well as human engagement with the wisdom of God (worldly powers).

Wisdom is understood as **a *practical option of engagement*** that is **equally ubiquitous.** Mordecai's central question "who knows?" (4:14) is not answered in neither *Esther* nor *Job* as wisdom is not a question of applying inflexible, understandable rules. Wisdom can be accessed only in practical terms with attentive presence of mind trusting in God and the truth of his creation as it presents itself at any given place and time. Wisdom is a never-ending active engagement rather than a skill to be owned, controlled, and applied.

Keeping these (preliminary) findings and understandings of power and wisdom in the OT books of *Esther* and *Job* in mind I will explore the same notions in the NT book of *Acts*, before moving on to research question 2.

5. Research question 2: Historic case studies

The selected historic case studies provide experiential perspectives to the biblical narratives. I have chosen to study the case of the Constantinian turn and the black church in the US - for the following reasons:

The Constantinian turn

The case of the Constantinian turn has been selected for two reasons. First, the Constantinian turn presents a clear case of Christian worldviews engaging and clashing with worldly powers. During the 4th century Christianity turned from being the suppressed religion of a minority to being not only tolerated but embraced by imperial power. A pressing theological challenge of the time was therefore: Should the church embrace the potentials of power presented to it by the emperor? or was this power to be seen as a threat to Christian integrity? Now that worldly powers had changed their view on Christianity, should Christianity change its view on worldly powers? Reflecting on the theological implications of engaging the church with worldly powers, two bishops, Eusebius of Caesarea (265 – 339) and Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 298 – 373), provided theologically distinct, yet very different answers to this question. Their reflections provide valuable insight to the 4th century understanding of worldly powers and how Christians should go about engaging with them.

Second, the *Vulgate* was established during the 4th century. That is, at the time of the Constantinian turn. The *Vulgate* places the books of *Esther* and *Job* side by side in the OT. This re-ordering of the books, as we have already seen, distinguishes it from both the *Septuagint* and the *Hebrew Bible*. Since the *Vulgate* is translated and edited during the 4th century it makes sense to ask whether the political issues of 4th century Christianity – the questions arising from the Constantinian turn dealt with by Eusebius and Athanasius – might have influenced the editors of the *Vulgate* and their decision to place the books side by side? Are the Christian experiences and dilemmas of engaging with imperial powers in the 4th century reflected in the notions of power and wisdom found in the books of *Esther* and *Job* when read together – as the *Vulgate* ordering of the books seems to invite us to do?

The black church in the US

Attempting to understand the Christian narrative of power in more contemporary terms, I turn to a contemporary example of theological reflections on power. Frank Thomas, a preacher in the church tradition of Martin Luther King, reflects on what he calls ”dangerous preaching” in contemporary USA. Thomas' theological reflections reach far beyond the experiences of only one church and the case of the black church can therefore serve as an “exemplum” in the Jeromian sense of the term.[11] The narratives of the black church are contemporary narratives of coping with power, and the fact that this community does so from a specific Christian point of view make the theological reflections highly relevant to the present study. [12]

Method

I will explore the issues of the Constantinian turn by studying bishop Eusebius' portrait of the emperor in *Vita Constantini*, and his church history *Historia Ecclesiastica*. His views and reflections will be compared to the reflections of bishop Athanasius dealing with the same issues

[11] Skemp, “Learning by Example: ‘Exempla’ in Jerome’s Translations and Revisions of Biblical Books”.
[12] Being myself a white woman, I have been asked, why I choose the struggle against white supremacy readings of the Bible rather than struggles against patriarchal readings of the Bible as my contemporary example of engaging with power. There are more reasons for this. First, Frank Thomas presents arguments and reflections that are highly relevant to the questions I ask in my project. Second, overemphasizing the apparent “sameness” (gender, colour etc.), there is a risk of overlooking much more fundamental differences. Whatever “sameness” can be identified; everyone’s experiences remain uniquely their own. Therefore, just as you do not need to be a woman or an orphan to identify with Esther’s precariousness and understand her courage, you do not need to be neither a man nor destitute to understand the sufferings of Job, and you do not need to be a Jew, a Greek, a Roman citizen, or a first-generation apostle to understand the challenges of *Acts*. Likewise, you do not need to be black (as I am not) to make sense of the challenges of the black communities in the US of today.

of power in his portrait of a dessert monk, *Vita Antonii,* and his writings against the arians *Historia Arianorum*. This part of the project builds on a previous article (in Danish)[13].

The current issues of the black church will be studied mainly through the writings of the American theologian Frank A. Thomas who has written a trilogy on what he calls the "dangerous sermon".[14] In all three volumes, Thomas reflects on his experiences as a preacher within the black church in the USA and how to handle both the threatening powers from white supremacy interpretations of scripture and the powers he himself holds as a preacher. Thomas emphasizes that neither he as a preacher nor anyone else is exclusively the sufferer of other people's power. We also exercise our own. This sheds an interesting contemporary perspective on the questions of power explored in the PhD project.

6. Research question 3: Complementary findings

The texts explored in questions 1 and 2 reflect experiences of power spanning from postexilic diaspora (*Esther* and *Job*) to the Roman empire (*Acts* and the case of the Constantinian turn) and modern days USA (the case of the black church). Question 3 attempts to identify a possible common understanding of the phenomenon of power encountered during these very different times and experiences. This exploration asks the following question: How can the findings from the historic case studies inform our reading of the selected biblical narratives? And vice versa, how can the characteristics of power found in the biblical narratives inform our understanding of power in the historic case studies?

Having identified the crucial issues at stake during the power struggles and theological reflections of the Constantinian turn, I will ask the following question: If placing the books of *Esther* and *Job* side by side in the *Vulgate* is an invitation to read them together (as I do in my exegetical studies) – might this editorial decision have been informed by pressing issues of power at the time of translating and editing this canon? Likewise, my question following the case study of the black church in the USA will then be: how can Thomas' everyday practical experiences as presented in his theological reflections contribute to contemporary understandings of the challenges of engaging with worldly powers? Are these challenges and understandings reflected in the explored biblical narratives?

[13] Knudsen, "Kristus, Kirke og Kejser i Eusebius' og Athanasius' politiske teologi".
[14] Thomas, *How to Preach a Dangerous Sermon*; Thomas, *Surviving a Dangerous Sermon*; Thomas, *The God of the Dangerous Sermon*.

Method

Question 3 draws on the findings of questions 1 and 2 to identify similarities and differences in the experiences of power they reflect. Identifying consistencies and discrepancies between the experiences of power identified in questions 1 and 2, question 3 builds the bridge to the systematic approach in the fourth and last part of the PhD project.

7. Research question 4: Systematic studies. Hannah Arendt's epistemological understandings

Hannah Arendt's phenomenological understandings as well as her specific analyses of the political powers of her own time will be used as methodological and conceptual tools for exploring the exegetical findings and historic case studies. As we have already seen, Arendt's understanding of the revealing powers of the "narrative" have informed my approach to the phenomenon of power. This way, Arendt provides me with systematic arguments for a narrative approach to exploring an emic Christian understanding of the phenomenon of power. Arendt, thus, is inspirational both at the outset – guiding my approach and methods – and at a later stage when I attempt to conceptualize the phenomenon of power encountered in Christian narratives. In what follows, I will present Arendt's epistemological understandings that are fundamentally guiding my interdisciplinary approach. Arendt's contribution to understanding the phenomenon of power is presented in the following section 8.

Approaching power as a "phenomenon" rather than a "concept" or "notion" I am already following closely in the footsteps of Hannah Arendt. Referring to power as a phenomenon is to refer to it as *experienced reality* rather than a *conceptual construct* (see figure 1). And this important distinction in Arendt's epistemological understandings points the explorations of my PhD in the direction of narratives – biblical as well as historic – when attempting to understand the phenomenon of power encountered in both.

As mentioned already in section 3, it is the underlying methodological assumption of my PhD project that any text points to an experience of the world. In Arendt's view the textual concept should never be allowed to part from the experience it wants to explain. Text and experience must go hand in hand to truly make sense. If the concept and its underlying experience part, the evils of totalitarianism can run their course eliminating everything not in accordance with the conceptually preconceived idea. As evidenced by Arendt's analyses of totalitarianism.[15] Allowing experience to inform our thinking is therefore of fundamental importance to Arendt. Approaching

[15] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

power as a phenomenon means approaching it not as a well-defined concept, but as *experienced reality* as evidenced – in the present case - in biblical narratives and historic case studies. The concepts we use to understand the world we live in must be unfolded by narratives that provide access to the experiences they mean to reflect. Arendt, therefore, was a great fan of Karen Blixen[16] – exactly because Blixen had, according to Arendt, understood this deep truth of the narrative.

Defreezing concepts with narratives

Arendt provides us with many helpful concepts. As an example, her concepts of ”labour”, ”work”, and ”action” help us distinguish between different modes of human activity.[17] And she stresses the notions of ”nativity” and ”beginnings” as important concepts to understand the human condition, as she calls it. All these concepts make us see the previously obscure more clearly. But to Arendt, the concept is only a step on the way. Not the end of the road. Arendt turns her attention back to the experienced phenomenon, that was the starting point of the concept.

The French philosopher, Jean-Luc Marion, who does not refer to Arendt but is, obviously, influenced by her way of thinking, phrases these phenomenological points beautifully when describing how an experienced “event” and our conceptual understanding of that event will never completely merge. According to Marion, an event

> ”imposes itself as an actuality without cause, autonomous, spontaneous, fully realized of itself and always in advance of any knowledge we might later glean from it. … it remains for us an enigma … but comes about and passes. … In the case of the event, comprehension always arrives late, but above all comprehension itself constitutes this delay, producing it and provoking it”. [18]

What ”comes about and passes” as an uncomprehended flow of impressions, is turned into an event with a beginning and an end, only in retrospect. When comprehension tries to grasp it, define it, understand it. As Hannah Arendt puts it when she describes the human action of thinking there is a ”gap … the path paved by thinking, the small inconspicuous track of non-time beaten by the activity of thought”.[19] Thinking stops the uncomprehended flow of impressions,

[16] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*.
[17] Arendt, *The Human Condition*.
[18] Marion, *Negative Certainties*, 159.
[19] Arendt, “Thinking”, 210.

inserting a ”small inconspicuous track of non-time”, a gap, allowing us to reflect on and grasp our own experiences.

The narrative approach of my PhD project thus follows the lead of Hannah Arendt who maintains that any concept is “a frozen thought which thinking must unfreeze”.[20] The stale and dead must become alive and active again for its meaning to be revealed. And this is exactly what happens when the meaning of a concept is unfolded by a narrative. As Arendt writes in her essay on Karen Blixen “The story reveals the meaning of what otherwise would remain an unbearable sequence of sheer happenings.”[21] In that sense the story serves the same purpose as the concept. But it does it in a different way. Narratives have duration – they reflect a flow in time and space. As such they are seen as *accounts of lived experiences* as opposed to concepts or ideas that are considered *frozen thoughts*. Unfreezing the concept, you must tell the narrative of the event it wants to reflect.[22] Quoting Arendt,[23] experiencing reality is experiencing an *“Ereignis, aus dem eine Geschichte werden kann oder ein Geschick”*.[24] In the words of her biographer, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl “Words carry the record of past perceptions. And these perceptions provide meaning to the text at hand.” Arendt was ”dedicated to a certain kind of concreteness … she traced … concepts back to the concrete historical … experiences which gave rise to those concepts”. [25]

This brings us back to the project at hand. We do not know what experiences gave rise to the biblical narratives. We only have the narratives. Attempting to ”trace them back to the concrete historical … experiences which gave rise” to those narratives is probably not possible at all. But we have the narrative. We can engage actively with it. We can engage our own experiences with the narrative reflections to arrive at sustainable interpretations that make sense to ourselves and others in our own place and time in the world. That insight is Arendt’s fundamental methodological contribution to the present project.[26]

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[20] Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations: a Lecture”, 431.
[21] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 104.
[22] Proverbs can be said to be somewhere between the frozen concept and the unfolded narrative. Raymond C Van Leeuwen calls them “narratives in a nutshell”. Van Leeuwen, “Weisheit in the Intellectual Context of Its Day”, 34.
[23] Arendt, *Denken ohne Geländer - Texte und Briefe*, 201.
[24] ”Event from which a story can emerge or a destiny.“ (translated by ChatGPT)
[25] Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World*, 318.
[26] Anne W Stewart makes a similar point when stressing that “we have to intuit the assumptions behind these texts, keeping in mind that they give us limited access to the world of the authors. But … we can examine the language, vocabulary, metaphors, and images to draw conclusions about the concept of imaginative activity in the biblical world” Stewart, “The Poetry of Wisdom and Imagination”, 195.

8. Research question 4: Systematic studies. Hannah Arendt's analyses of power

Arendt's concepts and reflections, however, are significant not only to the methodology of my PhD. They also contribute substantially to understanding the experienced phenomenon of power. How to approach and engage with it, whenever, wherever, and however it is encountered. This question, as we have already seen, is at the center of attention in Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism[27] and it is also fundamental in her narratives on Eichmann[28] and Angello Guiseppe Roncalli (Pope John XXIII).[29] To Arendt, the narratives of Eichmann and Roncalli present two opposing examples of engaging with the powers of the world. One to be avoided (Eichmann) and one to be embraced (Roncalli). Arendt's understandings of the pitfalls and possibilities of engagements with power will also be included in the PhD project where they will provide helpful concepts and analyses informing the exegetical and historic findings. In this systematic part of the project, I will explore if and how Arendt can contribute to identifying a Christian narrative of power. Can Arendt's concepts and reflections help us build the bridge needed for understanding the biblical notions of power in modern and post-modern terms?

Method

Hannah Arendt reflects on the strategies of the black civil rights movement in her essay *Reflections on Little Rock*.[30] This will be the starting point of exploring Arendt's understandings of human engagements with worldly powers. Arendt's case studies of Eichmann[31] and Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli[32] will also be included in the exploration of Arendt's understanding of the possibilities of action when dealing with oppressive powers in the world. This part of the PhD project builds on the findings in my master's thesis on *Faith – its active and passive constituents in the world in light of Hannah Arendt's phenomenological analyses*. Arendt's writings included in my master's thesis are also included in the PhD project supplemented by her political writings.

In my master's thesis, I explored Arendt's notion of "Gottesvertrauen"[33] and her phenomenological understanding of God as "revelation as a given reality", [34] whose manifestations in the world can only be experienced in "the fleeting moment of the deed itself"[35] requiring the courage

[27] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.
[28] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem - a report on the banality of evil*.
[29] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*.
[30] Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock".
[31] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem - a report on the banality of evil*.
[32] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*.
[33] Arendt, *Denken ohne Geländer - Texte und Briefe*, 236.
[34] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 615.
[35] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 75.

to ”meet the phenomena, so to speak, head-on, without any preconceived system”[36]. The systematic explorations will study Arendt’s political reflections on human judgment of and engagement with worldly powers in light of these theological understandings.

9. Exegesis re-visited

Finally, with the illuminations from Hannah Arendt and the perspectives of the historic cases I will re-visit the selected biblical narratives. How can these narratives and their understanding of power be interpreted in light of the explored systematic and historic perspectives?

10. Conclusion

Experiences of power, that is, experiences of being affected by other people’s actions as well as experiences of being able to make an active difference in the world, seem to be fundamental to human existence. As evidenced in biblical narratives and historic case studies as well as in systematic considerations throughout history. Experiences of power seem to be part of what Arendt would call the human condition. In my PhD project this phenomenon of power will be explored from various theological perspectives (exegetical, historic, and systematic). My PhD explores the experienced phenomenon of power through the emic prism of Christian narratives. That is, through readings of biblical texts as well as Christian reflections on historic challenges. This narrative approach to exploring the phenomenon of power is fundamentally informed by Hannah Arendt’s epistemological understandings. In addition to this methodological contribution, Arendt’s analyses of power are explored to search for concepts and reflections that can bridge biblical narratives with modern and postmodern experiences.

Having reached the first milestone of my PhD project, identifying (preliminary) understandings of power and wisdom in the narratives of *Esther* and *Job,* the following question remains: How can these OT findings inform my exploration of *Acts* and historic cases, and how can these explorations together with Arendt’s phenomenological reflections enlighten my understanding of the OT books of *Esther* and *Job*?

[36] Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World*, 452–53.

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Project summary:

The Literary Growth and Composition of Zion Theology within Psalms 46-48

(working title)

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In my dissertation project, I undertake linguistic, literary-critical and motif-historical examination of Psalms 46-48. This is done in order to determine whether and how the texts themselves and their composition as a small collection have undergone literary growth and made literary references to each other. In this regard, particular attention is paid to the different motifs that are specific to each of the psalms. One of the key objectives of my study is to examine the manner in which motifs evolved and were continuously reinterpreted in the context of this literary composition. The aim of this project is to develop a redaction critical model that elucidates the manner in which the triptych of Psalms 46-48 was collocated and reworked to create a distinct theological composition. It seems reasonable to posit that once independent pieces of literature were collected and arranged together and that these texts underwent a profound and intricate reworking, resulting in the triptych of Psalms 46-48. Consequently, each psalm must be understood in its own right, while also taking into account its position within the context of the triptych. The focal point of my analysis is to consider the texts as a unified whole, rather than as three separate entities.

The research interest of the dissertation is to show a) within a smaller collection how psalter composition or at least psalm group growth might have taken place and b) how theology was produced through the deliberate composition of texts with literary references, in the example of Psalm 46-48 it is the productive shaping of Zion theology within the texts and in their references to each other.

In order to uncover these literary references, the dissertation first examines the three psalms individually in terms of language, literary criticism and motif history. The aim is to reveal literary growth and content-related peculiarities and commonalities in each case. In a further step, the literary relationships of the three psalms to each other will be examined. This will then culminate in a redaction-historical description of the growth of the collection. The aim here is to show how Zion theology is constructed, modelled and modified through the composition and redaction of the texts. A brief outlook on the embedding in the first Korah collection then concludes the analysis. Methodologically, the work is based on the historical-critical methodological steps, with a special focus on literary criticism, tradition criticism and redactional criticism.

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The Linguistic Characteristics and the Literary Growth of Psalm 47

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Focal points of discussion

- Is my content analysis convincing? Have I overlooked any links or breaks in the content that are crucial for the literary-critical stratification?
- Can you follow my literary-critical stratification?
- Is my interpretation of the addition of verse 9 and its original connection to Psalm 46 convincing?

1. Introduction

This paper presents an excerpt from my dissertation on Psalms 46-48. Following consultation with my respondent, Prof. Dr Corinna Körting, I have taken the new OTSEM guidelines into account and am submitting a German-language excerpt from my thesis. The excerpt comprises a portion of my analysis of Psalm 47, with a particular emphasis on the text's content. This paper represents a work in progress and, as such, some literary references still require incorporation into the text. Nevertheless, it provides a comprehensive overview of my research on Psalm 47. In my paper, I will provide a brief overview of my dissertation project and the context in which this extract is to be categorised. This will be followed by the German extract. At the end of this paper, there will be a concise summary in English, accompanied by a preliminary conclusion regarding the analysis presented.

In my dissertation project, I undertake linguistic, literary-critical and motif-historical examination of Psalms 46-48. This is done in order to determine whether and how the texts themselves and their composition as a small collection have undergone literary growth and made literary references to each other. In this regard, particular attention is paid to the different motifs that are specific to each of the psalms. One of the key objectives of my study is to examine the manner in which motifs evolved and were continuously reinterpreted in the context of this literary composition. The aim of this project is to develop a redaction critical model that elucidates the manner in which the triptych of Psalms 46-48 was collocated and reworked to create a distinct theological composition. It seems reasonable to posit that once independent

pieces of literature were collected and arranged together and that these texts underwent a profound and intricate reworking, resulting in the triptych of Psalms 46-48. Consequently, each psalm must be understood in its own right, while also taking into account its position within the context of the triptych. The focal point of my analysis is to consider the texts as a unified whole, rather than as three separate entities.

The following German section is an extract of the chapter on Psalm 47. In my dissertation, the literary-critical analysis is preceded by a comprehensive section on the textual criticism and linguistic specifics of Psalm 47. The subsequent section will present form-critical and motif-historical reflections on the psalm, which will be based on the aforementioned literary-critical analysis. The structure of the analysis of Psalm 47 is replicated in the analysis of Psalms 46 and 48. These individual analyses of the Psalms will then form the basis for the compositional and redaction-historical considerations about the collection of Psalms 46-48 as a whole, as previously mentioned.

2. Sprachliche Beobachtungen

Ps 47 ist ein zehn Verse umfassender Text. Vers 1 ist für die sprachlichen Beobachtungen des Textes jedoch zunächst nicht zu beachten, da es sich bei diesem Vers um die Überschrift des Psalms handelt, die Auskunft über die kompositorischen Zusammenhänge des Psalters gibt. Somit wird für die Analyse der sprachlichen Besonderheiten das Korpus der Verse 2-10 betrachtet. In diesen Versen sind zwei PK-Formen, vier AK-Formen, ein Partizip und sieben Imperative (davon fünfmal der gleiche Imperativ זמרו in den Versen 7-8) zu finden. Diese Imperative eröffnen jeweils die Verse 2 und 7.[1] Vers 3 ist eine reine Nominalsatzkonstruktion,[2] Vers 8 beginnt mit einem durch die Präposition כי eingeleiteten Nominalsatz (eine ähnliche Formulierung wie in Vers 3). Die Verse 4 und 6 sind beide syntaktisch ähnlich gestaltet, da der zweite Versteil im appositionellen und synonymen Parallelismus zum ersten gestaltet ist. Anders als in Psalm 46 lässt sich für Psalm 47 keine Teilung des Textes aus sich selbst heraus durch einen Kehrvers oder ähnlichem erkennen, sodass zunächst der Text als Ganzes zu betrachten ist.[3]

[1] Vgl. Gerstenberger, Psalms Part I, S. 196; Schaper, Psalm 47 und sein »Sitz im Leben«, S. 263.
[2] Vgl. Schaper, Psalm 47 und sein »Sitz im Leben«, S. 263.
[3] Einige Forschungspositionen untergliedern den Text aus formalen Gründen in zwei oder mehr Abschnitte, vgl. Böhler, Psalmen 1-50 (HThKAT), S. 853; Briggs/Briggs, Critical and Exegetical Commentary (ICC), S. 397; Delitzsch, Psalmen, S. 348; De Wette, Commentar über die Psalmen, S.279; Gerstenberger; Psalms Part I, S. 196; Goldingay, Psalms 42-89, S. 110; Hitzig, Psalmen, historisch-kritisch untersucht, S. 260; Hupfeld, Psalmen, S. 644; Jeremias, Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen, S. 51; Körting, Israel und die Völker im Lobpreis, S. 310f.; Schaper, Psalm 47 und sein »Sitz im Leben«, S. 264; Seybold, Psalmen (HAT 1/15), S. 192; Sibinga, Some Observations, S. 474 (wobei Sibinga seine Unterteilung auf das Zählen von Wörtern und die Untergliederung in

Abgesehen von den Versen 5 und 8 sind alle anderen Verse in einer Bikolon-Struktur aufgebaut. Es werden die Gottesnamen und -bezeichnungen אלהים, עליון, יהוה und אלהי אברהם verwendet. Weitere Charakterisierungen der Gottheit sind מלך כל הארץ und מלך גדול על כל הארץ. Als thematische Wortfelder sind die Bereiche „Jubel der Völker über die Gottheit“ und „die Erhabenheit der Gottheit“ auszumachen. Zunächst soll der Aufbau des Textes beschrieben werden, in einem weiteren Schritt werden Auffälligkeiten vermerkt, aus denen dann erste Schlossfolgerungen über den Aufbau und die Genese des Textes abgeleitet werden.

An dieser Stelle erfolgt eine versweise sprachliche Untersuchung, die auf insgesamt 17 Seiten alle semantischen und syntaktischen Besonderheiten untersucht. Aus Platzgründen wird dieser Schritt übersprungen. Der Auszug aus der Dissertation setzt wieder bei der Zusammenfassung der syntaktischen und sprachlichen Ergebnisse im Allgemeinen ein:

Für Psalm 47 besonders auffällig ist die unterschiedliche Terminologie für Völker: עמים, אומים und גוים. Neben der Verwendung unterschiedlicher Lexeme ist die Perspektive auf die Rolle der Völker zudem wechselnd. Dies korreliert jedoch nicht mit dem Gebrauch unterschiedlicher Lexeme. Darüber hinaus stellen die Perspektivwechsel ohne vorherige Einleitung oder Hinführung im Text ein besonderes sprachliches Merkmal für Psalm 47 dar. Die Wurzeln עלה und מלך haben für den Text von Psalm 47 eine besondere Schlüsselfunktion.[4] Vers 10 ist aufgrund seiner abweichenden Länge auffällig. Darüber hinaus zeigen die Verse 5 und 8 keine Parallelismus-Struktur, wie sie in den Versen 2-4, 6-7 und 9 zu finden ist. Die Verse 3, 8 und 10b beginnen jeweils mit כי, was auf eine ergänzende, erläuternde oder gliedernde Funktion hindeuten kann.

Der Psalm beginnt in Vers 2 mit einem zusammengesetzten Nominalsatz, dessen Verbalstruktur aus Imperativen besteht. Vers 3, eingeleitet durch die Konjunktion כי, schließt konsekutiv an

konzentrische System basiert, was aufgrund der großen Hypothetik dieses Ansatzes als Herangehensweise für die Gliederung von Texten zu vernachlässigen ist – allzumal, wenn ein Textwachstum nicht ausgeschlossen werden kann); Spieckermann, Psalmen 1-49 (ATD), S. 456; Weber, Werkbuch Psalmen, S. 217; Zenger in Hossfeld/Zenger, Psalmen 1-50 (NEB), S. 289.

Briggs/Briggs nehmen die kleinschrittigste Teilung vor und untergliedern die 10 Verse von Psalm 47 in fünf Strophen, was jedoch für die Analyse der Zusammenhänge nicht zielführend ist. Die anderen angegebenen Ausleger teilen den Psalm in zwei Teile, wobei die Teilung durchaus an unterschiedlichen Stellen vorgenommen wird. Zenger beispielsweise teilt Psalm 47 in „zwei gleich lange Strophen von je zehn Zeilen (je fünf Bikola)“, ebd. Er sieht eine Unterteilung des Psalms in die zwei Abschnitte durch eine Stichwortrahmung, die er in den Versen 2 und 6 findet. Wird der Psalm auf rein formaler Ebene betrachtet, so ist festzustellen, dass sich die von Zenger proklamierte Bikola-Struktur streng genommen nicht finden lässt. Zudem weist Vers 10 durch seine auffällige Länge eine Besonderheit in dem Psalm auf. Ergo ist zunächst nicht von einer Unterteilung des Textes auszugehen, sodass Psalm 47 in der vorliegenden Arbeit in seiner Gesamtheit betrachtet wird.

[4] Vgl. Schaper, Psalm 47 und sein »Sitz im Leben«, S. 263, der ebenfalls זמר als bedeutende Verbwurzel für Psalm 47 anführt.

Vers 2 an und ist syntaktisch ein Nominalsatz. Die Verse 4 und 5 sind Verbalsätze mit PK-Formen und bilden einen erzählenden Passus innerhalb des Psalms. Zudem beinhalten sie einen Perspektivwechsel hin zu einer zuvor nicht genannten Wir-Gruppe. Vers 6 ist ebenfalls ein Verbalsatz, allerdings mit einer AK-Form beginnend. Das Subjekt bleibt zwar gleich, jedoch ändert sich durch die Verwendung der AK-Form die Aussagesemantik des Verses. Vers 7 beinhaltet die meisten Imperative in Psalm 47. Zudem wechseln durch die Verwendung dieser Imperative Subjekt und Sprechperspektive des Psalms. Vers 8 schließt durch die Konjunktion כי und die Verwendung eines Imperativs an Vers 7 an. Vers 9 ändert die Perspektive des Psalms durch seine Syntax (Nominalsatz und zusammengesetzter Nominalsatz) und die Verwendung einer AK-Form erneut und ähnelt damit syntaktisch eher Vers 6. Vers 10a ist ein zusammengesetzter Nominalsatz, Vers 10b beginnt ebenfalls mit der Konjunktion כי. Wie bereits erwähnt, ist dieser Vers aufgrund seiner Länge und der Komplexität seiner Syntax auffällig für den gesamten Text von Psalm 47. [5]

Klare Wortfelder, die innerhalb einzelner Sektionen von Psalm 47 auszumachen wären, sind im Text nicht zu erkennen. Ein Wortfeld, welches sich in allen Versen finden lässt, ist die Thematik der „Erhabenheit“ rund um die Wurzel עלה. Ein weiteres Wortfeld ist die Thematik des Jubels in den Versen 2 und 7-8.

3. Inhaltliche Beobachtungen

Zunächst soll der inhaltliche Aufbau und seine Entwicklung innerhalb des Psalms betrachtet werden. Ziel ist es, den Psalm in seiner jetzigen Gestalt zu verstehen. Dabei sollen auch mögliche Weiterentwicklungen von Motiven und Brüche gekennzeichnet werden. Basierend auf diesen und den sprachlichen Beobachtungen wird dann eine literarkritische Schichtung vorgenommen. Auch für diese Betrachtung sei zunächst Vers 1 unbeachtet. Dieser wird jedoch in den Überlegungen der Psalmen- und Psalterkomposition, insbesondere des Triptychons der Psalmen 46-48, von Relevanz sein.

[5] Jeremias interpretiert die Syntax von Psalm 47 folgendermaßen: „Die entscheidende Erkenntnis zur Deutung dieses Psalms scheint mir darin zu liegen, daß der auffällige Wechsel von Nominal- und Verbalsätzen in der Aussagestruktur traditionsgeschichtlich dem Wechsel zwischen mythischen und geschichtlichen Themen entspricht. Auch in Ps 47 werden mythische Themen behutsam nominal ausgedrückt, dagegen geschichtliche […] kräftig verbal. Die Verquickung von mythischer und geschichtlicher Thematik macht das eigentliche Anliegen und den besonderen Reiz von Ps 47 aus […]“, idem, Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen, S. 50.
Es ist in der sprachlichen Analyse deutlich geworden, dass Psalm 47 sowohl mythologisches, als auch historisierendes Vokabular benutzt und der Psalm zwischen den beiden Polen Mythos und Geschichte interagiert. Inwieweit sich die Beobachtung Jeremias inhaltlich verifizieren lässt, soll im Folgenden überprüft werden.

3.1. Psalm 47 synchron gelesen

Anders als Psalm 46 lässt sich in Psalm 47 keine kohärente Entwicklung erkennen, die den Psalm syntaktisch-strukturell oder semantisch-thematisch in einzelne Aspekte untergliedert. So ist der Text als Gesamtkonstruktion zu betrachten. Nichtsdestotrotz wird das Ziel dieser Untersuchung die Erstellung eines inhaltlichen Aufbauschemas sein. Inhaltlich geht es im gesamten Psalm um die Erhabenheit und das Königtum Gottes über die Welt und die Völker.[6] Dabei werden unterschiedliche Nuancen dieser Erhabenheit beleuchtet, die teilweise gut zueinander passen und aufeinander aufbauen, teilweise auch im Widerspruch zueinanderstehen. Auf diese Aspekte wird im Folgenden der Analyse ein besonderer Fokus gelegt.

Psalm 47 beginnt in Vers 2 mit einem Lobaufruf an alle Völker (כל העמים), dass sie Gott (אלהים) preisen sollen. Mit der Einleitung durch כל beginnt der Psalm mit einer universalen Perspektive.[7] Vers 3 begründet diesen Aufruf zum Lob damit, indem Hoheitstitel für Gott, der nun als יהוה bezeichnet wird, genannt werden. JHWH wird als Höchster (עליון), als furchterregend (נורא) und als großer König über die ganze Welt (מלך גדול על כל הארץ) bezeichnet. Diese Charakterisierungen und Funktionen Gottes sollen für die in Vers 2 angesprochenen Völker Anlass des Lobes sein.

Mit den Versen 4 und 5 zieht ein logischer Bruch in den Psalm ein.[8] Widersprüchlich zu dem Lobaufruf an alle Völker wird aus der exklusiven Perspektive einer zuvor nicht bekannten Wir-Gruppe erzählt, dass eine nicht näher genannte 3. m. Sg. dieser Wir-Gruppe die Völker unterworfen und die Gruppe mit einem besonderen Erbteil bedacht hat.[9] Diese Passage ähnelt sehr einem idealisierten – und eben nicht tatsächlichem – Geschichtsblick, der sich mit der

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[6] Vgl. Gerstenberger, Psalms Part I, S. 197.

[7] Vgl. Böhler, Psalmen 1-50 (HThKAT), S. 854. Böhler merkt an, dass kein anderer Psalm mit כל beginnt, was Psalm 47 besonders auszeichnet.

[8] Vgl. Zenger in Hossfeld/Zenger, Psalmen 1-50 (NEB), S. 289: „Als ursprünglicher Teil des Hymnus, den »die Völker« singen sollen, ist [4-5] schlechterdings nicht vorstellbar".

[9] Anders wird der Zusammenhang der Verse 2-3 und 4-5 von Oeming interpretiert, vgl. idem/Vette, Buch der Psalmen. Psalm 42-89 (NSK.AT 13,2), S. 42. Ihm zufolge sind die in Vers 2 angesprochenen Völker eine Gruppe von in Jerusalem Anwesenden, die nach Jes 2//Mi 4 im Zuge der Völkerwallfahrt nach Jerusalem gekommen sind. Diese in Jerusalem weilenden Völkern sieht Oeming hinter der Wir-Perspektive, die in den Versen 4-5 bekennen, dass JHWH ihnen andere Völker untertan gemacht und ihnen ihren Erbteil gegeben hat. Diese Interpretation harmonisiert zwar die unterschiedlichen Völkerperspektiven von Psalm 47 miteinander und glättet dadurch jegliche Brüche – sie wird allerdings der theologischen Auseinandersetzung des Textes und des Exklusivitätsanspruches, der hinter der Chiffre Jakob steht, nicht gerecht.
Körting deutet die Verse 2 und 4 nicht per se widersprüchlich zueinander, vgl. eadem, Israel und die Völker im Lobpreis, S. 311. Körting deutet das Verhältnis der Verse 2 und 4 folgendermaßen: „Die Macht des Gottes Israels hebt die Macht der Völker auf und unterwirft diese dem kleinen Israel. Israel ist durch die Völker nicht mehr bedroht", ebd. Ihrer Interpretation nach ist das Vokabular von Vers 4 zwar militärisch, aber nicht feindselig. Das theologische Wechselspiel des Textes zwischen den beiden Erzvätern Jakob und Abraham, welches in der vorliegenden Analyse Anlass zur Annahme von unterschiedlichen Wachstumsstufen gibt, entfaltet sie eine Seite später: „Jakob steht für das erwählte Israel, Abraham für die Hinwendung Gottes zu den Völkern.", a.a.O., S. 312. Auch Körting sieht hinter Vers 5 einen Exklusivitätsanspruch durch die Erwähnung des Landes als alleinigen Erbteils Israels, vgl. a.a.O., S. 311.

eigenen Identität als Gruppe oder Volk und dem Verhältnis der eigenen Gruppe im Vergleich zu den umliegenden Völkern auseinandersetzt.[10] Somit ist die Wahl der PK-Formen als Ausdruck einer zugleich zukünftigen Hoffnung, die aber als historisches Ereignis stilisiert wird, gut zu erklären. Es ist davon auszugehen, dass mit der 3. m. Sg., die das handelnde Subjekt der Verse 4 und 5 ist, JHWH aus Vers 3 gemeint sein muss.

Vers 6 kehrt in seiner Sprechperspektive wieder zum Duktus der Verse 2 und 3 zurück, indem weiter Gottes Erhabenheit beschrieben wird.[11] Vers 6 erklärt, dass Gott aufgestiegen ist unter lauten Geräuschen, die sonst eher aus siegreichen Kriegsterminologien bekannt sind. Wohin Gott aufgestiegen ist, bleibt jedoch unklar. Vers 7 stimmt wieder einen Lobaufruf an, diesmal soll Gott besungen werden (זמר). Unklar sind die Adressaten des Imperativs, da sowohl ein Aufruf an die Völker aus Vers 2 als auch ein Aufruf an die Wir-Gruppe der Verse 4-5 denkbar ist. Der Vers parallelisiert אלהים und מלך, womit er terminologisch an Vers 3 anschließt. Vers 8 nennt dann, ähnlich zu Vers 3 und nach Vers 7 etwas redundant anmutend, eine Begründung für den Lobgesang, eingeleitet durch die Konjunktion כי. Vers 8 liest sich zu Beginn wie eine gekürzte Wiederholung von Vers 3 in Kombination mit einer Wiederholung aus Vers 7.

Auch Vers 9a thematisiert die Königsherrschaft Gottes, diesmal jedoch nicht über die Welt wie in den Versen 3 und 8, sondern über die Völker (על גיום). Gott wird in Vers 9 nicht als König bezeichnet, sondern die Aktion des Herrschens steht nach masoretischer Lesart im Fokus des Verses. Diese Titulatur mit מלך als Verbwurzel wird in Vers 9 neu eingeführt und wirkt verglichen zu der allumfassenden Beschreibung על כל הארץ etwas eingeschränkter in ihrer Wirkmächtigkeit. Vers 9b führt das Bild des thronenden Gottes neu ein. Dies passt thematisch zur Königstitulatur, allerdings wurde bisher eine Lokalisierung der Regentschaft in Psalm 47 nicht erwähnt. Der Psalm konzentriert sich in den Versen 2-3 und 6-8 auf das Königssein im Sinne der Erhabenheit über die Welt (besonders Vers 6), es werden allerdings keinerlei Königsinsignien oder Lokalisierungen der Herrschaft vorgenommen. Damit bricht Vers 9 inhaltlich etwas mit den vorangegangenen Bildern.

Vers 10 führt einen neuen Aspekt und neue Akteure in den Text ein. Die handelnden Personen des Verses sind die נדיבי עמים, also die Führungselite der Völker. Offen bleibt bei einer synchronen Betrachtung, ob die Völker der Verse 2, 4, 9 und 10 die gleichen Gruppen meint oder jeweils eine andere Völkerperspektive eingenommen wird. Ein weiteres Volk wird in Vers 10a genannt: das Volk des Gottes Abraham. Zu ebenjenem Volk schließen sich die Führungseliten der Völker zusammen. Dadurch wird auf theologischer Ebene die Verheißung

[10] Vgl. Böhler, Psalmen 1-50 (HThKAT), S. 856; Delitzsch, Psalmen, S. 349; Gerstenberger, Psalms Part I, S. 197.
[11] Vgl. Böhler, Psalmen 1-50 (HThKAT), S. 856.

an Abraham aus Gen 12 als erfüllt angedeutet.[12] Vers 10b begründet eingeleitet durch die Konjunktion כי diesen Zusammenschluss mit einem militärisch anmutenden Bild, in dem alle Schilde der Erde für Gott sind. Diese Formulierung löst das Bild einer militärischen Streitfront aus, die für Gott kämpfen wird. Den Abschluss des Verses und damit des gesamten Psalms 47 bildet die Aussage der Erhabenheit Gottes, die sich als Kerngedanke durch alle Verse des Psalms hindurchzieht. Die Bilder des großen abrahamitischen Volkes, welches aus den Führungseliten der Völker entsteht, der Streitmacht der ganzen Erde für Gott und der großen Erhabenheit Gottes haben eine heilsperspektivische Nuance, mit der Psalm 47 in einer Offenheit und Zukunftshoffnung abschließt.

Auf diesen sprachlichen und inhaltlichen Beobachtungen aufbauend ist folgende Gliederung für Psalm 47 anzunehmen:

V. 1	Psalmenüberschrift
V. 2-3	Lobaufruf an die Völker mit Lobbegründung (Erhabenheit und Königsherrschaft Gottes über die Welt)
V. 4-5	Abgrenzung von den Völkern, Erhabenheit der Wir-Gruppe
V. 6-8	Fortsetzung der Lobbegründung (Erhabenheit und Königsherrschaft Gottes über die Welt) mit erneutem Lobaufruf
V. 9	Gottes Königsherrschaft über die Völker, thronend
V. 10	Heilsperspektivische Abschlussgedanken des Psalms: • die Versammlung der Führungselite der Völker als „Volk des Gottes Abrahams“ • für Gott sind alle Streitmächte der Erde • Gottes Erhabenheit

3.2. Psalm 47 diachron gelesen: Literarkritische Überlegungen

Wie die sprachliche Analyse und die synchrone Inhaltsuntersuchung gezeigt haben, ist Psalm 47 kein sich in einzelnen Abschnitten entwickelnder Text, sondern die Verse kursieren um die Thematik der Erhabenheit und des Königtums Gottes, die sich insbesondere in der Textperspektive auf die Völker zeigt. Dabei beleuchtet Psalm 47 einige Facetten dieser Erhabenheit, die sich teilweise ergänzen, teilweise wiederholen und teilweise widersprechen.

[12] Vgl. Böhler, Psalmen 1-50 (HThKAT), S. 859; Goldingay, Psalms 42-89, S. 118, Spieckermann, Psalmen 1-49 (ATD), S. 458; Weiser, Psalmen, (ATD), S. 255; Zucker, Restructuring Psalm 47, S. 170.

Die bereits skizzierten Beobachtungen geben Rückschluss auf ein mögliches literarisches Wachstum des Psalms.[13] Dieses literarische Wachstum kann im Zuge einer sich verändernden Theologie oder des Prozesses der Psalmensammlung und der Psalterkomposition geschehen sein. Im Folgenden wird anhand der sprachlichen und literarischen Beobachtungen eine literarkritische Gliederung entworfen, die aufzeigt, inwieweit unterschiedliche theologische Vorstellungen in dem Text zu finden sind.

Die synchron-inhaltliche Analyse hat ergeben, dass zwischen dem Lobaufruf an die Völker in den Versen 2-3 und dem Exklusivitätsanspruch der Verse 4-5 ein Bruch besteht: einerseits sollen die Völker Gott loben (V. 2), andererseits hat er die Völker der Wir-Gruppe unterworfen (V. 4). Es ist schwer vorstellbar, dass ein Lobaufruf an die Völker ausgeht, wenn diese gleichzeitig einer Gruppe unterworfen sind. Die Perspektive der Unterwerfung passt ebenfalls nicht zu Vers 10, der über die Versammlung der Führungseliten der Völker als Volk des Gottes Abrahams spricht. Diese Versammlung der נדיבי עמים steht im starken Kontrast zum Unterwerfungsmotiv in Vers 4.[14]

Die Verse 6-7 hingegen schließen inhaltlich und sprachlich gut an die Verse 2-3 an. Während Vers 2 den Psalm mit der Lobaufforderung an die Völker eröffnet und Vers 3, eingeleitet durch die Konjunktion כי, den Inhalt des Lobes – JHWHs Erhabenheit und seine Königsherrschaft über die Erde – verkündet, führt Vers 6 die Thematik der Königsherrschaft Gottes fort. Dieser Vers skizziert den Aufstieg Gottes, woraufhin Vers 7 zum Lobgesang auffordert, was einen Rahmen mit der Lobaufforderung in Vers 2 bildet. Die Verse 2-3.6-7 haben als Einheit somit folgendes Aufbauschema:[15]

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[13] Es gibt jedoch auch Forschungspositionen, die von einer literarischen Einheitlichkeit des Textes ausgehen, vgl. Böhler, Psalmen 1-50 (HThKAT), S. 854; Craigie, Psalms 1-50 (WBC 19), S. 347; Deissler, Psalmen 42-89, S. 25; Oeming/Vette, Buch der Psalmen. Psalm 42-89 (NSK.AT 13,2), S. 41; Schaper, Psalm 47 und sein »Sitz im Leben«, S. 263; Steiner, Gott stieg hinauf, S. 164. Allerdings zeigen die sprachlichen und inhaltlichen Beobachtungen, dass mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit aufgrund von Widersprüchen und terminologischen Unterschieden von einem Textwachstum in Psalm 47 ausgegangen werden kann.

[14] Dieser Widerspruch wird von Spieckermann sehr pointiert zusammengefasst: „Eine spätere Hand hat durch den Nachtrag V. 4 klären wollen, dass Jhwh die von ihm selbst unterworfenen Völker als Erbbesitz für die Seinen bestimmt hat. Diese Aussage fügt sich in den inhaltlichen Duktus des Psalms nicht gut ein. Sie widerspricht der vorhergehenden Einladung der Völker zum Gotteslob, und sie steht völlig gegen ihre Auszeichnung als Volk des Gottes Abrahams. Man kann sich gut vorstellen, dass diesem Redaktor die ungeteilte Hochschätzung der Völker zu weit gegangen ist. Deshalb verschafft er durch V. 4 den an den Völkern Leidenden auch in diesem Psalm Gehör.“, vgl. idem, Psalmen 1-49 (ATD), S. 456.

[15] Gerstenberger arbeitet einen älteren Kern des Textes heraus, sieht diesen jedoch in den Versen 2-3 und 7-8, vgl. ders., Psalms Part I, S. 197. Dies macht er an formalen Beobachtungen fest, da ihm zufolge das ursprüngliche Aufbauschema der vier Verse aus der Wiederholung eines Lobaufrufs mit inhaltlicher Themenangabe im Folgevers besteht. Eine erste Erweiterung hat dieser ursprüngliche Kern durch die Ergänzung von Vers 9 erfahren, der die Aussage aus Vers 8 weiterausführen will; dann durch die Ergänzung von Vers 6, der nach Gerstenberger ebenfalls zur Entfaltung von Vers 3 angefügt wurde. Die Verse 4-5 sind ihm zufolge die nächste Erweiterung des Psalms, die sich formal (Sprechperspektive und Konjugationsklasse) und inhaltlich sehr von den anderen Versen unterscheiden. Zuletzt ist nach Gerstenberger Vers 10 als Erzählung eines Prozessionsvorgangs hinzugekommen, die er mit der Zionswallfahrt erklärt und gleichsetzt. Vers 10 nimmt ihm zufolge die lobenden Charakteristiken der Verse 2 und 7 wieder auf und führt den Psalm somit zu einem Ende.

V. 2 Lobaufforderung an die Völker

V. 3 Lobbegründung mit der Erhabenheit und Königsherrschaft Gottes

V. 6 Aufstieg Gottes unter Jubel und Hörnerklang

V. 7 Aufforderung zum Lobgesang an Gott, über den König

Auch sprachlich und syntaktisch harmonieren diese Verse gut miteinander. Vers 2 und 7 haben Imperative der m. Pl. als Verbalformen, während die Verse 3 und 6 als Nominalsätze gedeutet werden können, liest man עלה in Vers 6 als Partizip und nicht als AK-Form. Vers 2 und Vers 6 teilen ein ähnliches Vokabular der Jubelrufe, Vers 3 und Vers 6 verbindet das Erhabenheitsmotiv mit der Wurzel עלה. Vers 7 bündelt die Parallelisierung von Gottheit und מלך in Vers 3 mit gleichzeitiger Wiederaufnahme lobauffordernder Imperative, wie sie in Vers 2 bereits begegnet sind. Dadurch bietet Vers 7 inhaltlich eine kurze Zusammenfassung der Aussage, dass JHWH König der ganzen Welt ist und bildet durch die Imperative zugleich einen Rahmen mit Vers 2 um die beiden Nominalsätze der Lobbegründung in den Versen 3 und 6.

Die Verse 4 und 5 hingegen unterbrechen diese in sich geschlossene Einheit nicht nur thematisch, sondern auch sprachlich und syntaktisch. Zudem liegt der Fokus nicht mehr auf dem Lob der Völker an Gott, der in seiner Erhabenheit dargestellt wird. Vielmehr handeln diese Verse von der Erhabenheit der Wir-Gruppe, die sich als besonders unter allen Völkern hervortut. Im Zuge der Eintragung der Wir-Perspektive wird aus dem Besingen der Erhabenheit und des Königtums JHWHs ein Lied für eine Gruppe, die sich der Besonderheit ihrer Gottesbeziehung versichert.[16] Zugleich sind die Verse 4 und 5 abhängig von Vers 3, da dort יהוה als Subjekt genannt wird, der in Vers 4 als Subjekt für die PK-Formen der 3. m. Sg. vorausgesetzt wird. Durch die Ähnlichkeiten im Aufbau und ihren Unterschieden zu den umliegenden Versen ist davon auszugehen, dass die Verse 4 und 5 in den bestehenden

Nach Körting sind die Verse 4-5 und 10 spätere Nachträge zum Kern von Psalm 47. Ihr zufolge bilden gerade die Verse, die sich mit der Rolle der Völkerperspektive und dem Verhältnis von der Wir-Gruppe, die sie als Israel identifiziert, und den in Vers 2 angesprochenen Völkern auseinandersetzen, die Ergänzungen zu einem Psalm, der sich ursprünglich und vor allem mit der Königsherrschaft JHWHs und seiner Thronbesteigung auseinandersetzt, vgl. eadem, JHWH besteigt seinen Thron, S. 248. Dieser Beobachtung der thematischen Schwerpunktverschiebung wird auch in der vorliegenden Arbeit gefolgt.

Kratz bestimmt einen älteren Kern des Psalms in den Versen 2-3.6.7.8a.9b, den er als inszeniertes Inthronisationsritual betrachtet, vgl. idem, Reste hebräischen Heidentums, S. 170. Die Verse 4-5 sieht Kratz als Implementierung der Nationalgeschichte in diesen Mythos vom Königtum Gottes an, vgl. a.a.O., S. 171. Weitere Zusätze, neben der Überschrift, sind für ihn die Verse 8b.9a und 10, die unterschiedliche Modifikationen der Vorstellung vom göttlichen Königtum aufweisen. Bis auf ein paar Abweichungen ist diese Schichtung mit ihren literarkritischen Begründungen der Schichtung der vorliegenden Arbeit am nächsten.

Zenger sieht zwar auch einen älteren Kern mit Ergänzungen in Psalm 47, hat jedoch eine andere Abtrennung und Definition dieses älteren Kerns, vgl. ders. in Hossfeld/Zenger, Psalmen 1-50 (NEB), S. 289. Für ihn besteht die Grundschicht des Psalms in den Versen 2-3a.6 und 7-8a.9. Für eine Begründung der Zweiteilung der Grundschicht zieht Zenger eine Parallele zum Aufbau von Psalm 93. Als Erweiterungen aus einer Hand sieht er die Verse 3b-5 und 8b.10, die nachträglich zu der Grundschicht hinzugefügt wurden.

[16] Vgl. Gerstenberger, Psalms Part I, S. 197.

ursprünglichen Textbestand der Verse 2-3 und 6-7 eingetragen wurden. Anknüpfungspunkt für diese Positionierung könnten die Titel JHWHs in Vers 3 sein, in denen er als Furchterregender, Höchster und großer König über die ganze Welt bezeichnet wird.[17] Diese Charakterisierung kann als Anlass für den Eintrag der Wohltaten an der Wir-Gruppe bei gleichzeitiger Unterwerfung der Völker gedient haben, wobei vermutlich die Bezeichnung נורא der ausschlaggebende Kontext war. Der Königsmythos des ursprünglichen Psalms wird durch den Nationalmythos eines vermeintlich geschichtlichen Blicks auf Gottes Handeln an der Wir-Gruppe ergänzt.[18]

Vers 8 liest sich wie eine verkürzte Wiederaufnahme von Vers 3 durch die einleitende Partikel כי und die Bezeichnung von אלהים als מלך כל הארץ.[19] Zudem nimmt der Imperativ זמרו die Sprechperspektive aus Vers 7 wieder auf. Während Vers 7 im ursprünglichen Textbestand gut einen Abschluss bilden kann, wirkt der Nachtrag von Vers 8 redundant. Einerseits könnte dieser Vers als zusammenfassende Wiederholung des Textkomplexes der Verse 2-3.6-7 gelesen werden. Andererseits könnte seine Funktion auch in der eines Brückenverses liegen, um den vorangegangenen Textkomplex mit den folgenden Versen zu verbinden.[20] Als solch ein Brückenvers fasst Vers 8 das Kernthema der Verse 2-3.6-7 zusammen (מלך כל הארץ אלהים) und leitet durch זמרו משכיל zum Folgevers über.

Vers 9 passt auf dem ersten Blick gut zur Thematik der Verse 2-3.6-7. Auch sprachlich durch die Verwendung der AK-Form, des Lexems מלך und der Erwähnung der Völker ist eine Nähe zu dem vorhergehenden Textkomplex zu erkennen. Allerdings wechselt die Terminologie für die Völker (גוים), statt des Substantivs מלך wird מלך als Verbwurzel verwendet und die Perspektive des Thronens (ישב) als statischer Zustand steht in einem Kontrast zu der Perspektive des Hinaufsteigens (עלה) als Verb der Bewegung. Anders als die Verse 4-5 steht Vers 9 jedoch in keiner Abhängigkeit zu dem vorangegangenen Kontext. Das Subjekt אלהים wird im ersten Kolon genannt, die Syntax und die thematische Entfaltung bedürfen keinem Kontext, um in sich stimmig zu sein. Ähnlich der Aufstiegssymbolik aus Vers 6 trägt auch Vers 9 mythologische Motive, diesmal jedoch die des thronenden Gottes. Vers 9 ist damit ein Solitär im Textgeflecht von Psalm 47. Erst ein Blick in seinen weiteren literarischen Kontext, insbesondere auf Psalm 46 und dort die Verse 2-7, gibt Aufschluss über die literarische

[17] Die Beobachtung der inhaltlichen Nähe von Vers 4 zum Titel JHWHs als נורא in Vers 3 macht auch Baethgen, Psalmen übersetzt, S. 136.
[18] Vgl. Kratz, Reste hebräischen Heidentums, S. 171.
[19] Vgl. Spieckermann, Psalmen 1-49 (ATD), S. 457.
[20] Kratz sieht Vers 8b.9a als Wiederaufnahme und Präzisierung, vgl. idem, Reste hebräischen Heidentums, S. 171. Durch die Deutung von Vers 9 als ursprünglich zu Psalm 46 zugehörig ist jedoch eine Deutung von Vers 8 als Wiederaufnahme und Überleitung in dem vorliegenden literarkritischen Modell wahrscheinlicher.

Einbindung des Verses in den größeren Komplex der Psalmen 46-48. Wir Kratz sehr treffend in seinem Aufsatz „Reste hebräischen Heidentums am Beispiel der Psalmen“ bemerkt, fehlt für eine Adaption der Baalstradition auf JHWH in oder vor Vers 9 „[d]as Motiv des Chaoskampfes […], stattdessen begegnet in V. 9a die Herrschaft über die Völker (על גוים), die aber nicht etwa das auch im ugaritischen Baal-Epos mitgedachte politische Pendant zur Herrschaft über die Mächte der Natur darstellt, sondern den Vorstellungshorizont und die Terminologie des Mythos übersteigt.“[21] Wenn jedoch davon auszugehen ist, dass Vers 9 ursprünglich in direkter literarischer Nähe zu Ps 46,2-7 stand, so fehlt dem Vers diese Komponente nicht. Nichtsdestotrotz geht durch das literarische Wachstum über die jetzigen Psalmengrenzen hinweg eine Modifizierung des Mythos einher. Dieses Wachstum wird jedoch genauer unter Kapitel V behandelt, weshalb hier nur auf die Bedeutung der Betrachtung von Ps 47,9 im Kontext von Ps 46,2-7 verwiesen werden kann.

Ebenso könnte Vers 10 als für sich stehender Einzelvers in Psalm 47 gelesen werden.[22] Vers 10 führt eine neue Thematik in Psalm 47 ein: die Versammlung der Führungseliten der Völker als Volk des Gottes Abrahams.[23] Syntaktisch hebt sich der Vers durch seine Länge und seinen Stil deutlich von den anderen Versen ab. Dennoch führt Vers 10 einige Gedanken der vorherigen Verse weiter. Das Lob der Völker aus Vers 2 kann als Ausgangspunkt für die Idee der Versammlung gesehen werden. Die Erwähnung von Jakob in Vers 4 könnte in einer Verbindung zur Erwähnung Abrahams in Vers 10 stehen.[24] Abraham als Vater vieler Völker wird Jakob als Chiffre für das Volk Israel entgegengesetzt und bildet somit eine Alternativfolie zum exklusiven Verständnis der Verse 4 und 5.[25] Die kriegerische Terminologie aus den Versen 4 und 6 wird in Vers 10b fortgesetzt im Bild der Schilde der Erde für Gott. Nicht zuletzt fasst מאד נעלה am Ende von Vers 10 den Erhabenheits- und Aufstiegsgedanken aus Psalm 47 noch einmal zusammen. Somit ist davon auszugehen, dass obwohl Vers 10 ein neues Bild, eine neue Perspektive, neue Akteure und ein neues Volksverständnis in Psalm 47 einführt, dieser Vers auf die vorangegangenen Verse reagiert und sie in einen heilsperspektivischen Ausblick am

[21] Kratz, Reste hebräischen Heidentums, S. 170.
[22] Vgl. Gerstenberger, Psalms Part I, S. 197f.
[23] Diese Versammlung wird in der Forschung manchmal als eine festliche Prozession oder Zionswallfahrt gedeutet, vgl. Deissler, Psalmen 42-89, S. 27; Gerstenberger, Psalms Part I, S. 198; Zenger in Hossfeld/Zenger, Psalmen 1-50 (NEB), S. 293. Von dieser Interpretation ist jedoch zunächst abzusehen, da der Vers selbst keinen dezidierten Anlass zu solch einer Vermutung gibt – immerhin taucht der Begriff ציון in Psalm 47 auch nicht auf, sodass diese zionstheologische Deutung von Vers 10 nur durch seinen Kontext der Psalmen 46 und 48 auf den Text appliziert werden kann.
[24] Vgl. Böhler, Psalmen 1-50 (HThKAT), S. 859; Seybold, Psalmen (HAT 1/15), S. 194; Zucker, Restructuring Psalm 47, S. 170.
[25] Vgl. Hitzig, Psalmen, historisch-kritisch untersucht, S. 262. Auch Duhm sieht den Widerspruch zwischen Vers 4 und Vers 10, kann diesen aber aufgrund seiner rein synchronen Betrachtung des Textes nicht als literarisches Wachstum und damit sich widersprechenden Aussagen deuten, vgl. idem, Psalmen erklärt, S. 134. So auch Goldingay, Psalms 42-89, S. 118.

Ende des Psalms integriert.[26] Diese Heilsperspektive wird für das Verständnis des Triptychons der Psalmen 46-48 von großer Bedeutung sein.

All diesen Beobachtungen folgend kann als literarkritisch Gliederung folgende Schichtung identifiziert werden:

1 למנצח לבני קרח מזמור

2 כל העמים תקעו כף הריעו לאלהים בקול רנה

3 כי יהוה עליון נורא מלך גדול על כל הארץ

4 ידבר עמים תחתינו ולאמים תחת רגלינו

5 יבחר לנו את נחלתנו את גאון יעקב אשר אהב סלה

6 עלה אלהים בתרועה יהוה בקול שופר

7 זמרו אלהים זמרו זמרו למלכנו זמרו

8 כי מלך כל הארץ אלהים זמרו משכיל

9 מלך אלהים על גוים אלהים ישב על־כסא קדשו

10 נדיבי עמים נאספו עם אלהי אברהם כי לאלהים מגני ארץ מאד נעלה

Die Verse 2-3.6-7 bilden die Grundschicht des Psalms. Ergänzt und dadurch geteilt wurden sie durch die Verse 4 und 5. Vers 9 bildet eine eigene Schicht dahingehend, dass er nicht auf den Grundbestand des Psalms aufbaut, zugleich jedoch nicht mit dem Grundbestand harmoniert. Vers 8 fungiert entsprechend als Brückenvers zwischen dem Textkomplex der Verse 2-7 und Vers 9. Vers 10 ist vermutlich die letzte Ergänzung des Psalms, da dieser Vers die Thematik der vorangegangenen Verse bündelt und zugleich einen heilsperspektivischen Ausblick gibt, der durchaus auch in Bezug zu Psalm 48 gelesen werden kann. Auch die Überschrift in Vers 1 kam zu einem gewissen Entwicklungsstadium des Psalms hinzu. Ob dies die letzte Ergänzung des Textes war, wird im redaktionsgeschichtlichen Modell der Psalmen 46-48 geklärt. Im Folgenden wird eine mögliche Motivation für das skizzierte Textwachstum dargestellt:

Die Grundschicht der Verse 2-3.6-7 ist thematisch, stilistisch und sprachlich in sich kohärent. Die Verse handeln von der Königsherrschaft JHWHs und seiner Erhabenheit über die Erde und das Lob der Völker dazu. Die Völker stehen JHWH positiv gegenüber. Sie sollen sich ebenfalls dieser Königsherrschaft bekennen, indem sie diese loben. Auch JHWH scheint sich im Gegenzug ihrer anzunehmen. Es ist eine Perspektive gegenseitiger Akzeptanz.

Durch die Verse 4 und 5 wird diese Perspektive durchbrochen. Die Verse 4 und 5 wenden sich ganz klar gegen eine allgemeine Völkerverständigung, da zwischen den Völkern und der Wir-Gruppe ein Machtgefälle konstruiert wird. Die Wir-Gruppe ist besonders erwählt und ihnen werden die Völker untertan gemacht. Dieser Eintrag scheint theologisch motiviert zu sein und

[26] Vgl. Kratz, Reste hebräischen Heidentums, S. 171.

postuliert einen Exklusivitätsanspruch der Wir-Gruppe. Die Verschiedenheit zu den vorangegangenen Versen ist auch durch die Verwendung von PK-Formen sprachlich markiert. Inhaltlich und syntaktisch wird in den Versen 4 und 5 ein Geschichtsrückblick konstruiert, der die Erfahrung der Wir-Gruppe mit ihrer Gottheit auch für die Gegenwart postuliert. Der Eindruck des allgemeinen Völkerlobs auf JHWH und seine Anerkennung als König über die ganze Erde durch die Völker wird durch den Eintrag der Verse 4 und 5 korrigiert, indem die besondere Beziehung zwischen JHWH und der Wir-Gruppe herausgestellt wird. Damit ist die Wir-Gruppe nicht länger allen Völkern gleichgestellt, sondern sie wird durch den Eintrag der Verse 4 und 5 über alle erhaben. Dieser korrigierende Eintrag ist nach Vers 3 logisch, der zuvor JHWHs Königsherrschaft und seine furchterregende Erhabenheit postuliert.

Vers 8 dient der Verbindung zwischen dem Textkomplex der Verse 2-3.6-7 und Vers 9. Vers 9 hat seine eigene Thematik, die des thronenden und über die Völker herrschenden Gottes. Dieses Thema passt gut zum Thema der Verse 2-3.6-7, allerdings fügt sich Vers 9 durch die Brücke von Vers 8 eher an den vorherigen Kontext an und ergänzt einen neuen Aspekt, ohne die Verse 2-3.6-7 zu kommentieren oder direkt zu ergänzen. Die Semantik und Syntax von Vers 9 zeigt, dass es sich bei diesem Vers um ein eigenes Element in Psalm 47 handelt, das eine sprachliche, inhaltliche und syntaktische Nähe zu Psalm 46,2-7 zeigt. Vers 8 ist in seiner Syntax anders als die Verse 2-3.6-7 und Vers 9, dennoch teilt Vers 8 die Semantik der Verse 2-3.6-7. In der jetzigen Form kann Vers 8 als eine Überleitung zu Vers 9 gelesen werden, sodass Vers 9 zum wörtlichen Inhalt des משכיל wird. Diese Verbindung kann durch die Zusammenführung von Erhabenheit und Herrschaft mit dem Motiv des thronenden Gottes motiviert sein, sodass beide Herrschaftselemente in Psalm 47 nun in einem Gottesbild zusammenstehen.

Vers 10 kommentiert und korrigiert den Eintrag der Verse 4 und 5 in die Völkerperspektive von Psalm 47. Gegen den Exklusivitätsanspruch, der in den Psalm eingetragen wurde, postuliert Vers 10, dass sich die Führungseliten der Völker zum Volk des Gottes Abrahams zusammenschließen werden. Die Gegenüberstellung Jakob (V. 5) – Abraham (V. 10) zeigt, dass mit dem Bezug zu den Erzvätern verknüpfte Völkervorstellungen (Jakob = das erwählte Volk; Abraham = Vater vieler Völker) in den Psalm eingetragen werden. Durch dieses Bild und das Bild des vereinten Schildwalls für Gott in Vers 10b wird die einstige inklusive Völkerperspektive aus Psalm 47 in einem heilsperspektivischen Ausklang wiederhergestellt.

Damit zeichnet sich ein fünfstufiges Textwachstum auf literarischer Ebene ab:

- Zuerst umfasste der Psalm die Verse 2-3.6-7, in dem die Völker zum Lob des Gottes, König über die ganze Erde, aufgefordert werden.

- Um das Herrschaftsbild zu komplettieren, wurden die Verse 2-3.6-7 mit dem bereits existierenden Vers 9 über den Brückenvers 8 verbunden. Vers 9 enthält eigenes Motivgut (der thronende Gottkönig) und steht mit Psalm 46 in Verbindung.
- Die Verse 4 und 5 wurden zwischen die Verse 3 und 6 eingefügt, um die Völkerperspektive zu korrigieren. Der Wir-Gruppe werden eine besondere Erwählung und eine erhabene Rolle über die Völker zuteil.
- Vers 10 korrigiert die vernichtende und ausgrenzende Perspektive der Verse 4 und 5 durch das heilsperspektivische Bild eines abrahamitischen Volkes bestehend aus den Führungseliten der Völker.
- Vers 1 kam als Überschrift des Psalms hinzu, möglicherweise im Zuge einer Zusammenstellung als Sammlung (Korachpsalmen).

4. Summary and Conclusion

This paper presents observations on the content and language of Psalm 47. A literary-critical analysis was conducted based on these observations, resulting in a literary layering with an explanation of the growth of the text. It was determined that the original core of Psalm 47 comprised verses 2-3 and 6-7. The original psalm was concerned with the majesty and kingship of God over the earth. These elements were conveyed through the nation’s expression of praise towards God.

The original core was disrupted by verses 4-5, which serve to correct the call to praise to all nations and the associated inclusive perspective on the nations. Verse 4-5 articulates an exclusive relationship between a select group and God, which is depicted in a distinctive election and the group's superiority over the nations.

Additionally, verses 8-9 and 10 did not belong to the original core of Psalm 47:2-3.6-7. Verse 8 functions as a connecting verse, establishing a transition to an autonomous textual unit in verse 9. Verse 9 may have originally formed part of Psalm 46:2-7, and may have served as a conclusion to this particular section of the text. The incorporation of Psalm 47:2-3.6-7 and the transition through verse 8 resulted in a disruption of the original literary context, leading to a reinterpretation of verse 9 as an additional aspect of God's kingship within a new literary setting. Verse 10 serves to temper the impassioned perspective evident in verses 4-5, thereby bringing the psalm to a close with an inclusive notion of salvation encompassing the nations under the kingship of God.

The present analysis constitutes a significant contribution to the overall project of my dissertation. A previous comprehensive textual criticism and linguistic analysis provided the

basis for the present examination of Psalm 47 in terms of content and literary criticism. Together with the analyses of Psalms 46 and 48, these investigations form the foundation for the overall redaction-historical model of the triptych of Psalms 46-48 in my dissertation. The literary criticism of Psalm 47, particularly in regard to verse 9, has already demonstrated the significance of examining the literary context and references to the other two Psalms in order to gain an understanding of the individual texts. My thesis that the texts are best understood together as a textual entity, mutually conditioning and changing each other by literary growth, has been substantiated by the results of this paper.

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Project Summary

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The project on which I am working is called “Artificial Intelligence and Ancient Hebrew Texts”. This two-year postdoc project at the University of Copenhagen is a collaboration of the Faculty of Theology (PI1: Martin Ehrensvärd) and the Department of Computer Science (PI2: Anders Søgaard). It is funded by the DataLab, which is an organization of the university that wants to stimulate interdisciplinary data research.

In the past 2 decades there has been an intense debate going on in the field of Biblical Hebrew Studies on whether or not it is possible to date biblical texts of unknown date (e.g. Jonah, Ruth, Psalms) on the basis of their language. According to some it is possible to do so using the Masoretic Text alone. For them, the Masoretic Text is a reliable source for the text of the biblical books, because its text has been transmitted conservatively. Also, they argue that language is the most objective criterion for dating biblical texts, because language is used (partly) unconsciously. Others are skeptical about this approach. They think that the text of the Hebrew Bible has had a complex history, which should be taken into account if one wants to date biblical texts or books. We are proponents of this approach.

A part of the project consists of the development of open-source annotated datasets of biblical texts, in particular the (biblical) Dead Sea Scrolls and the Samaritan Pentateuch. We started with the development of the latter dataset in 2023. Grammatical features were added to the text using AI. The dataset can be found here: https://github.com/DT-UCPH/sp.

In the project we focus on variation in the use of vowel letters of *matres lectionis* in Biblical Hebrew. A lot has been written on this topic, but most studies investigate the MT alone, or discuss only a few features. We opt for a quantitative approach, studying many features and considering biblical texts from different traditions. The present paper is part of a forthcoming monograph on this topic.

Spelling Variation in Qal Infinitive Construct Verbs in the Masoretic Text and the Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls

Martijn Naaijer

ABSTRACT

Spelling variation in Biblical Hebrew is an often-debated topic in the context of the history of the Hebrew Bible. The best-known example is the name David, which is written in two ways in the Masoretic Text (MT): the defective spelling דוד occurs predominantly in the Early Biblical Hebrew books (Pentateuch and Former Prophets), while the full spelling דויד can be found mostly in Late Biblical Hebrew books (Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles). The main hypothesis in scholarly literature about the use of vowel letters in the Hebrew language is that the earliest texts were purely consonantal, and gradually the consonants ו (waw), י (yod), ה (he), and א (aleph) were used as vowels to facilitate pronunciation, especially when Hebrew was in decline as a spoken language.

In my project I have studied the use of vowel letters in many different types of words in MT, the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and the Samaritan Pentateuch. In this paper I focus on the use of the vowel letter waw in the qal infinitive construct (קְטֹל/ קְטוֹל) of triliteral verbs. I investigate the use of the vowel letter in these verb forms in different sections of the Hebrew Bible, biblical books, manuscripts (MT and biblical DSS), different lexemes, and with and without prefixes and suffixes on the verbs. The data are studied using modern statistical techniques, which makes it possible to get a comprehensive overview over all the data.

1. Introduction

In the Hebrew Bible, many words can be spelled in different ways. The best-known example is the name David, which is spelled with or without a yod: דויד / דוד. The extra "י" in דויד has no consonantal value, but represents the i-sound. It is called a *mater lectionis* or vowel letter. In Biblical Hebrew (BH), four consonants can be used as a vowel letter. These are waw (ו), yod (י), aleph (א) and he (ה). Waw is used for the vowels o and u, yod for i, e and æ, aleph for a and o and he for o and a. He is only used in the final position of a word. The spelling of a word with a vowel letter is called full or *plene* spelling, whereas the spelling without it is called defective spelling.

In general, vowel letters are used for long vowels, but here and there they are used for short vowels as well. A characteristic of BH spelling is that vowel letters are not used consistently, not even in a single book in a manuscript. Therefore, Barr (1989, 2) calls BH spelling "consistently inconsistent".

On the other hand, the use of vowel letters is not completely random. Various researchers hypothesize that late texts generally use more vowel letters than early texts.

In this paper I will analyze the use of the vowel letter waw in Biblical Hebrew in one specific verb form: the qal infinitive construct of triliteral verbs. The infinitive verbs in this paper come from the Masoretic Text (MT) and the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS).

The structure of the paper is as follows: first I describe the context of this paper in section 2. In section 3, I describe the qal infinitive construct. Sections 4 and 5 deal with previous research on this topic. The data collections is dealt with in section 6, followed by the analysis of the data in sections 7, 8 and 9.

2. The broader perspective of the project

With Martin Ehrensvärd I work on a monograph on spelling variation in Biblical Hebrew from a quantitative perspective. Part of this project consists of the preparation of open-source datasets of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Samaritan Pentateuch[1].

In the monograph, I analyze the use of vowel letters in adjectives, nouns, and a number of verb forms (active participle, passive participle, qal infinitive construct of triliteral verbs, qal infinitive construct of lamed-he verbs, qal infinitive absolute, hiphil of triliteral verbs, niphal/hiphil of pe-yod verbs).

Even though this paper deals with the spelling of the qal infinitive construct only, there is a lot to say about it, for which there is no space in this paper. I would have liked to describe more literature with the same topic, to explain more about statistics, and so on. For more details, I refer to our upcoming monograph.

3. The qal infinitive construct

The qal infinitive construct of triliteral verbs has an o sound which can be represented by a vowel letter waw (קטוֹל/קטֹל). The long o developed from *qtul (JM §49a) which has a short, variable vowel. Therefore, full spelling is unusual. GKC even calls the spelling with a vowel letter incorrect (JM, §49a, GKC §45, also §84a e).

The qal imperative has the same vowel pattern and origin, therefore Andersen and Forbes (1986) group the infinitive construct and imperative together under vowel type 43.

[1] Dead Sea Scrolls: https://github.com/ETCBC/dss.
Samaritan Pentateuch: https://github.com/DT-UCPH/sp.

4. Review of literature

James Barr

An important study on spelling variation is Barr's "The Variable Spellings of the Hebrew Bible" (1989). Barr discusses spelling variation from a predominantly qualitative perspective. Also, his perspective is anti-diachronic. For Barr, it is impossible to date a biblical text on the basis of its spelling. He illustrates this with a number of examples, mainly from Early Biblical Hebrew (EBH) books[2], especially the archaic poetry occurring in these books. On the contrary, he opts for a distributional and descriptive approach, to find out which spelling patterns there are in the MT (Barr, 1989, 2–5). According to Barr, one of the most important factors that influence spelling is the presence of an affix. If a prefix or suffix is attached to a word, there is a tendency that the word has short spelling. Barr calls this the affix effect Prefixes can be the conjunction waw, the article ה or a prefixed preposition. A suffix can be a plural marker (ים or ות), a pronominal suffix or local he. An example of this effect with a prefix is עולם, which has full spelling if it is alone (without affix), but in MT Torah, it is predominantly spelled defectively if it has a prefixed proposition ל, e.g. in Genesis 3:22, 6:3 and Exodus 3:15.

Barr (1989, 106–107) discusses the qal infinitive construct of triliteral verbs only briefly. He observes that it is spelled defectively in most cases in the MT. In the case of אמר "to say", he finds out that it is spelled fully only three times (לאמור in MT Genesis 48:20 and Jeremiah 18:5, 33:19) out of a total of 900 attestations. These cases are not what Barr expected on the basis of the general consideration that these books often use defective spelling, and this is more or less what he seems to think about the spelling of the infinitive in general: there are no clear patterns in the distribution of the vowel letter. Another verb he discusses is דרש "to seek", about which he concludes:

"These are enough to give an idea of what to expect: on the one hand very rare *plene* spellings of a frequent verb, which may turn up almost anywhere; on the other hand, for the most part, defective spellings in the Torah, Kings with some exceptions, Jeremiah with some exceptions; a very mixed picture in Joshua, Judges and Samuel; and a distinct trend towards the *plene* spellings in Qoheleth, sometimes Ezra and Nehemiah, and particularly Chronicles, but there also with a good number of defective spellings mixed in." (Barr, 1989, 117)

He has a final remark about the first verses of Qoheleth 3, where there is a sequence of fully spelled infinitives among which there are three defectively spelled cases (לרחק 3:5, לאהב and לשנא 3:8). These are statives, on the basis of which he suggests that their vowel was not the same as that of the other infinitives (Barr, 1989, 117).

Aaron Hornkohl

In a paper on the historical development of the use of the vowel letter waw in the infinitive construct in Biblical Hebrew, Hornkohl chooses the framework of Hurvitz for linguistic dating as his methodological approach (Hornkohl, 2014, 645, also 648).

Elements of this approach are the three criteria of distribution, contrast and extrabiblical attestation for determining that a feature is a late feature (Hornkohl, 2014, 645). An accumulation of late features is an indication that a text is a late text. Another element of the approach is that "scholars who favor the diachronic approach outlined above usually base their analyses on the standard Masoretic Text (MT)" (Hornkohl, 2014, 646).

The use of vowel letters as found in the MT can be explained in two different ways, according to Hornkohl. The first is that pre-exilic texts must have some degree of orthographic updating, because these texts, even the archaic ones, generally have a fuller spelling than the pre-exilic inscriptions. This updating had taken place by the time of the composition of the late books (Hornkohl, 2014, 646–647, 655). The other explanation is that the whole Bible is a post-exilic

[2] These are the books of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets.

composition. This explanation should be rejected, because it goes against a lot of linguistic and non-linguistic evidence (Hornkohl, 2014, 647). Even though Hornkohl favors the idea that there has been some updating of the orthography, he thinks it "is not clear that they [the MT books] have been so extensively modified that the language of the original authors has become irretrievable and that meaningful diachronic analysis has therefore been rendered impossible." (Hornkohl, 2014, 647, in other words 655). This is, of course, a necessary starting point for the whole linguistic dating framework.

Hornkohl found "approximately 1835 cases of the infinitive construct in the pattern (lV)qṭol in the Hebrew Bible" (Hornkohl, 2014, 655), 950 of which are לאמר, the infinitive of אמר. It occurs only three times with the vowel letter waw, as noted already above by Barr. Therefore, Hornkohl considers the infinitive of אמר to be statistically invariant and does not include it in the analysis (Hornkohl, 2014, 655). He gives the distribution of the vowel letter in groups of books for the other verbs. From his table 1 (Hornkohl, 2014, 656), it becomes clear that the Pentateuch has by far the lowest concentration of fully spelled verbs (1%). The group with the fullest spelling of the infinitive construct is LBH plus Qoheleth (50%). Hornkohl concludes that "with a few exceptions here and there (see below), the various sections of the Hebrew Bible exhibit a gradual increase in the use of plene qal infinitive construct that basically corresponds to the historical order of their content" (Hornkohl, 2014, 656).

In table 2 (657), Hornkohl shows the extrabiblical distribution of full spelling in the pre-exilic inscriptions (0%), Ben Sira (40%), the biblical DSS (54%), the non-biblical DSS (85%), and the Mishna (97%). Here, Hornkohl observes a correlation again between full spelling and date of composition (Hornkohl, 2014, 658).

In his discussion, Hornkohl indicates that the variation of *plene* spelling between the different blocks in the MT is probably not the result of updates by post-biblical copyists, because if that were the case, it would be strange that the later books have fuller spelling than the earlier books. Therefore, it is more likely that the spelling of the MT reflects authorial practice (Hornkohl, 2014, 660). Another sign of this authorial practice is the variation between First and Second Isaiah. Each has five cases of full spelling, but first Isaiah has twice as many infinitives. If the spelling had been updated, one would expect a more uniform distribution (Hornkohl, 2014, 660).

Hornkohl notes that 82 different verbs account for the 174 *plene* cases in the MT (Hornkohl, 2014, 660). This is important, because it would have been possible for only a few verbs to be written *plene*, just like אמר which is almost always spelled defectively.

Hornkohl observes that some books in the MT have a higher incidence of full spelling than one would expect on the basis of chronology alone, such as Judges and Jeremiah (Hornkohl, 2014, 660-661). Here he sees variation which is probably due to the individual style of the writers. Other possible factor that could influence the spelling of the infinitive construct in the MT are syllable stress, of which Hornkohl does not see the relevance here, position in the verse/clause and/or prosodic factors, analogical processes in phonological patterns, and graphical factors (Hornkohl, 2014, 661–662).

In his data, Hornkohl observes that there are many cases of full spelling in verbs with second and third gutturals. Infinitives and yiqtols generally both have an o sound, except for these guttural verbs, which have yiqtal, but infinitive liqtol. The use of the waw could be a way to stress that the infinitive should be pronounced as o (Hornkohl, 2014, 662).

By "graphical factors", Hornkohl means the use of affixes, which he thinks is not relevant here, because most cases of the full spelling (160 out of 174 cases) have a prefixed preposition (137 times ל).

5. Reflection on other studies

It is clear that the works of Barr and Hornkohl provide a lot of inspiration for further thought. Barr's book has the title "The Variable Spellings of the Hebrew Bible", but in reality, he only analyses data from the MT. In my view, all the ancient traditions together are the Hebrew Bible: the MT, Samaritan

Pentateuch and the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls. Therefore, a more correct title of Barr's work would have been "The Variable Spellings of the Masoretic Text".

Hornkohl groups the books and calculates the percentage of full spellings in the group as a whole. However, by calculating an average of a whole group, variation between books becomes invisible. Hornkohl observes this problem, of course, and he observes the same problem for the individual verbs. He sees that אמר is almost always spelled fully in the MT, and therefore he removes it from his data. There may be other verbs that have a more or less fixed spelling, even though for the other verbs it may be less noticeable because they are less frequent in the MT. It would be ideal if there is a method with which it is possible to investigate the groups of books as a whole, without obfuscating the variation between the individual books in a group. The same is true for individual lexemes.

Hornkohl's dataset is relatively similar to my own dataset of the MT, but there are a few differences. In the first place, I include the verb אמר in the data, because even though there are only three fully spelled cases in the MT, there are fully spelled cases of this verb in the DSS. A minor difference is that Hornkohl includes a case like the spelling חטו of the verb חטא in MT Genesis 20:6 (Hornkohl, 2014, 663), which I exclude because not all three radicals are written. Finally, there is an issue with the way he analyzes the full spelling of verbs with a guttural as second or third radical, which I will show in the data exploration (section 7).

6. Data sources

I have stored the data for this research is a tab-separated file, called infc_qal_triliteral.csv, which was created by extracting relevant data from two openly available annotated textual datasets.

The first one is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia Amstelodamensis* (BHSA). The dataset can be found on GitHub (https://github.com/ETCBC/bhsa) and was developed by the EepTalstra Center for Bible and Computer (ETCBC) of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam since the late 1970. This dataset contains the Masoretic Text with linguistic annotations at the level of words, phrases, clauses and larger text units.

The second dataset contains the text of the Dead Sea Scrolls (https://github.com/ETCBC/bhsa), based on the edition of DJD. It contains word-level linguistic annotations.

With the Python package Text-Fabric (https://annotation.github.io/text-fabric/tf) one can extract and manipulate the data in these datasets and analyze the data further. I have used Text-Fabric to extract all the relevant verbs and store them in the file mentioned above. Each line in the file contains information about one verb.

The file contains 2196 rows. Each row in the file contains information about one verb in the MT or a biblical Dead Sea Scroll. These data are imported in R, which is software for statistical analysis, after which cases of ketiv/qere in the MT are removed. The results is a dataset of 2186 verbs. Of these verbs, 1826 occur in the MT and 360 in the biblical DSS.

The file contains many columns, each corresponding with a feature. For this paper, the most important columns are:

scroll: name of the scroll in which the word occurs. The value "MT" means that the word occurs in the Masoretic Text.

book

chapter

verse

lex: lexeme of the verb in ETCBC transcripton.

g_cons: consonantal representation of the word in the manuscript in ETCBC transcription.

has_prefix: indicates presence (1) or absence (0) of a prefix.

has_vowel_letter: indicates presence (1) or absence (0) of a vowel letter. This is the dependent variable in this research.

Hornkohl observes that there is variation in the use of the vowel letter between different groups of books and suggests that this is related to diachronic variation: later books tend to use the vowel letter more often than early books. Just like Hornkohl, I will divide the MT in groups of books. These are:

Pentateuch.
Former Prophets.
Late Biblical Hebrew, or LBH, consisting of Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles.
Other, this group contains all the other books in the MT.

An important distinction that I make in the biblical DSS is that between Qumran Scribal Practice (QSP) and non-Qumran Scribal Practice (non-QSP) scrolls. For this distinction I base myself on the classification made by Tov (2012, 104). It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the features of the QSP scrolls in detail here, but an important characteristic of them is that they have an abundant use of vowel letters.

Tov considers the following biblical scrolls to be the best examples of having the typical QSP characteristics:
1QDeut[a] - 1Q4
Great Isaiah Scroll - 1QIsa[a]
2QJer - 2Q137
4QNum[b] - 4Q27
4QDeut[k2] - 4Q38a
4QDeut[m] - 4Q40
4QSam[c] - 4Q53
4QXII[c] - 4Q78
4Qphyl A B - 4Q128 4Q129
4Qphyl J K L M - 4Q137 4Q138 4Q139 4Q140 4Q141

In my analyses I consider the Great Isaiah Scroll to consist of 2 halves; therefore I call it “1qisaaI” (chapters 1-33) and “1qisaaII” (chapters 34-66) in my scripts.
Other scrolls that are classified by Tov as QSP scrolls are:
2QExod[b] - 2Q3
2QNum[b] - 2Q7
2QDeut[c] - 2Q12
4QExod[b] - 4Q13
4QExo[j] - 4Q20
4QDeut[j] - 4Q37
4QDeut[k1] - 4Q38
4QIsa[c] - 4Q57
4QXII[e,g] - 4Q80 4Q82
4QPs[o] - 4Q96
4QQoh[a] - 4Q109
4QLam - 4Q111
4Qphyl G H I O P Q - 4Q134 4Q135 4Q136 4Q142 4Q143 4Q144
4QRP[a,b,c] - 4Q158 4Q364 4Q365
11QPs[a,b,c,d] - 11Q5 11Q6 11Q7 11Q8

These lists are not definitive. It is even very likely that they need to be updated, as indicated by Tov (2022, 132, footnote 53).

As said, the QSP scrolls generally use vowel letters more often than other DSS, therefore it is important to make the distinction between QSP and non-QSP scrolls. On the other hand, I also distinguish four groups of books in MT. Therefore, this distinction of four groups will also be used in the non-QSP and QSP scrolls. Of the 360 verbs in the dataset occurring in the DSS, 206 can be found in non-QSP scrolls, and 154 in QSP scrolls.

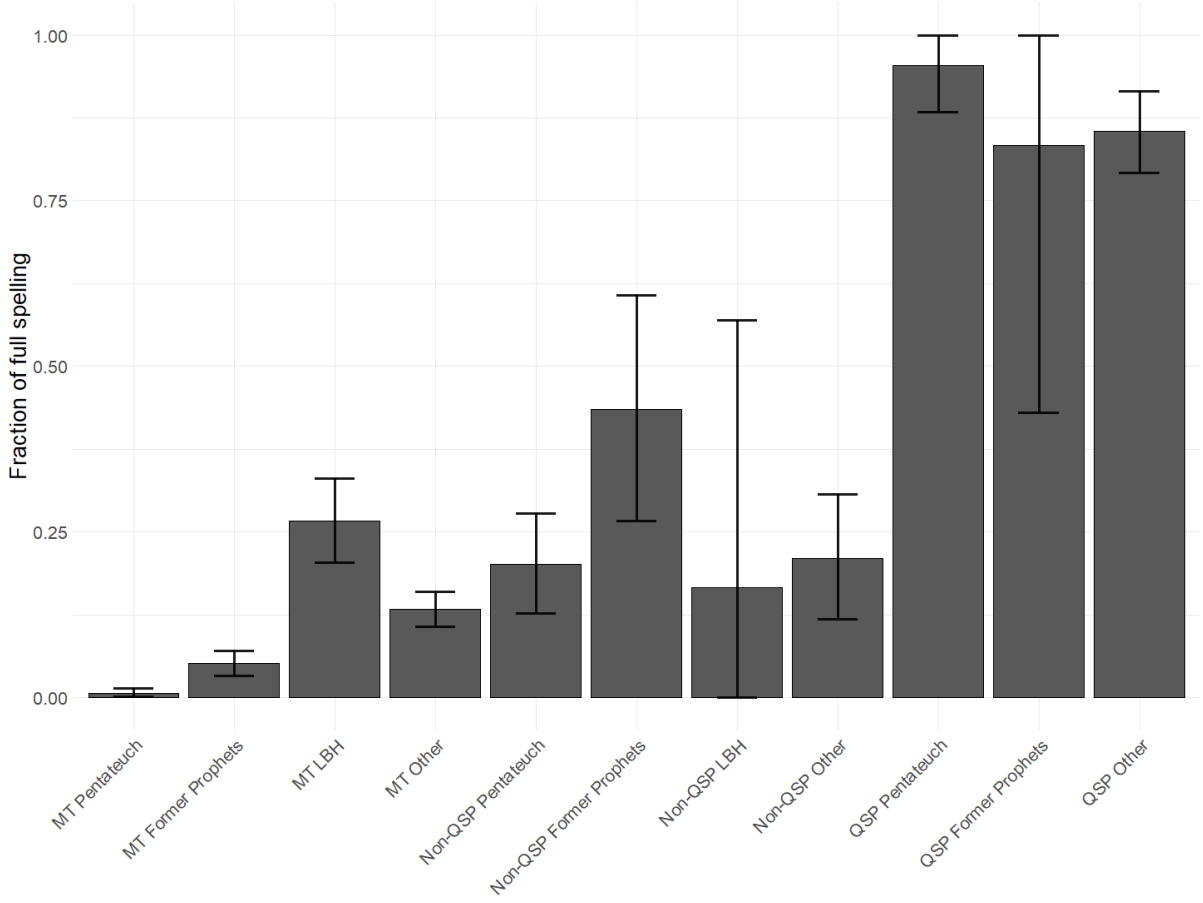
7. Data exploration

The dataset contains verbs with three consonants and an o-sound after the second consonant in the qal infinitive construct. In the preprocessing, most cases with suffixes are removed from the dataset, because they do not have an o sound, like לְעָבְדָהּ in Genesis 2.15 or אֲכָלְכֶם in Genesis 3:5. Hollow root verbs and I-yod verbs (e.g. ידע, which has the infinitives דְּעָה and דַּעַת) were removed. Also, I-nun verbs with an infinitive ending on ת were excluded. An example is נגש "to approach", of which the infinitive construct is גֶּשֶׁת. Other I-nun verbs were not removed. Finally, III-ה verbs were excluded. These verbs have an infinitive ending on ת/ות.

Note that אמר "to say" is by far the most prevalent verb in the dataset, it occurs 1111 times, and in the DSS, both in QSP and non-QSP scrolls it is more often spelled fully than in the MT: in the QSP scrolls it is always spelled with a vowel letter (51x), and in the non-QSP scrolls it is spelled 24 times with a vowel letter out of 114 cases.

I explore the variation in the use of the vowel letter in the qal infinitive construct on the basis of hypotheses and suggestions made by others, in this case Barr and Hornkohl. Firstly, I start with an overall impression of the groups of books as discussed above. Figure 1 shows the distribution of full spellings in each of the groups of books under consideration. In this exploration, I have excluded the verb אמר, but it is included in the model, which will be presented later.

Figure 1. Use of vowel letter waw in triliteral qal infinitive construct verbs.



In each bar in the figure there is a black error bar, which indicates the uncertainty of the estimated value based on the number of cases on which the estimate is based. This uncertainty is called the credible interval, and is narrower if there are more data available. If a certain group of books contains 2 relevant verbs, and one is spelled fully, the percentage of full spellings is the same as when one has

50 full spellings out of 100 verbs, namely 50%, but the latter group gives a better estimate of the spelling practice of a group of books than the former. The results in MT are similar to those of Hornkohl, which is as expected. It is also immediately clear that it makes sense to distinguish between QSP and non-QSP scrolls, instead of grouping them as "biblical DSS", as Hornkohl does. The QSP scrolls use the vowel letter much more frequently than the non-QSP scrolls.

Verbs with a suffix

In the dataset, there are only three cases of a qal infinitive construct with a suffix. These are קראות in Judges 8:1, and מלאות in Jeremiah 25:12. These three cases with the feminine plural marker ות do not offer enough information on the basis of which we can say anything about the effect of a suffix on the use of the vowel letter waw here.

Verbs with a prefix

Most of the qal infinitive construct verbs in the dataset have a prefix. Of the 2167 verbs, only 98 are not prefixed. Most prefixes are a preposition, of which ל is the most frequent, but ב, מ, .and כ occur as well. There are also cases with the article ה, the conjunction ו or a combination of one of these with a preposition.

The following table shows the counts for the presence and absence of a prefix and the use of the vowel letter waw in the sub corpora MT, Non-QSP DSS and QSP DSS.

Table 1. Distribution of vowel letter in qal infinitive constructs in verbs with and without a prefix.

	MT		Non-QSP DSS		QSP DSS	
	defective	full	defective	full	defective	full
Without prefix	73	14	8	1	1	5
With prefix	1593	146	150	47	17	131

In the MT, without a prefix, about 16% of the verbs have full spelling. With a prefix, the percentage is only 8%. Note that the verb אמר is included here. Without אמר the percentages would be 16% and 18%. There is a strong increase now of full spelling with a prefix, because אמר often occurs with a prefixed ל and is almost always spelled defectively in the MT. Without אמר, there is not much difference in the use of the vowel letter with and without a prefix, but it may be good to test it in a model to see if it makes any difference.

Gutturals and resh as second or third radical

As described in the literature review, Hornkohl (2014, 662) indicates that a surprisingly high number of verbs with full spelling have a guttural or resh as second or third radical. I explored this as well with my data in the MT alone, and without the verb אמר, to stay close to Hornkohl's approach. Figure 2 shows the distribution of full and defective spelling in words in which the second radical is a guttural or not. Figure 3 shows the same, but here the third radical is a guttural or not, and figure 4 combines these results, here the second and/or third radical is a guttural. In the figures, "Guttural" means that a radical is א, ה, ח, ע, or ר. Each surface in one of these figures represents the number of verbs with these characteristics.

Figure 2. Spelling of qal infinitive construct verbs in the MT in which the **second** radical is or is not a guttural.

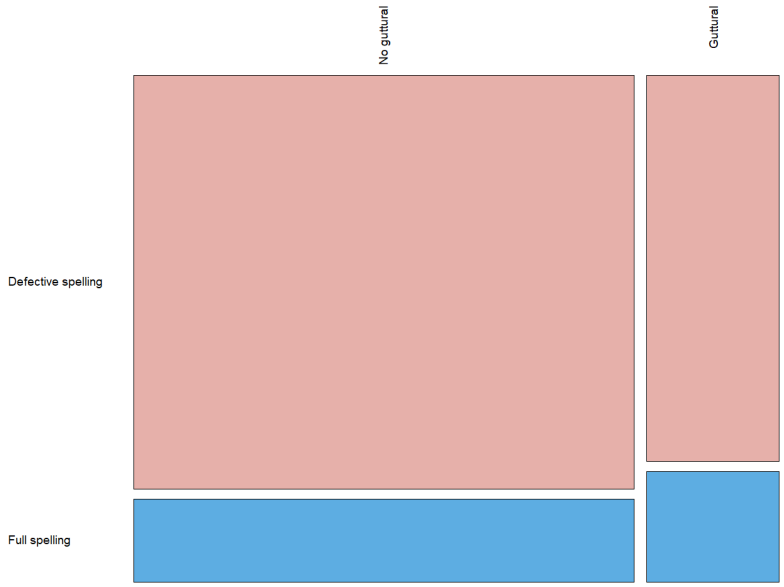


Figure 3. Spelling of qal infinitive construct verbs in the MT in which the **third** radical is or is not a guttural.

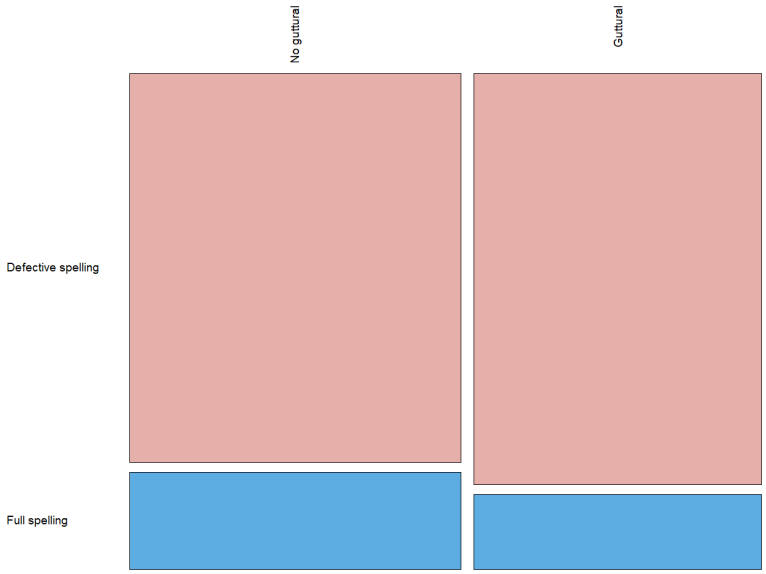
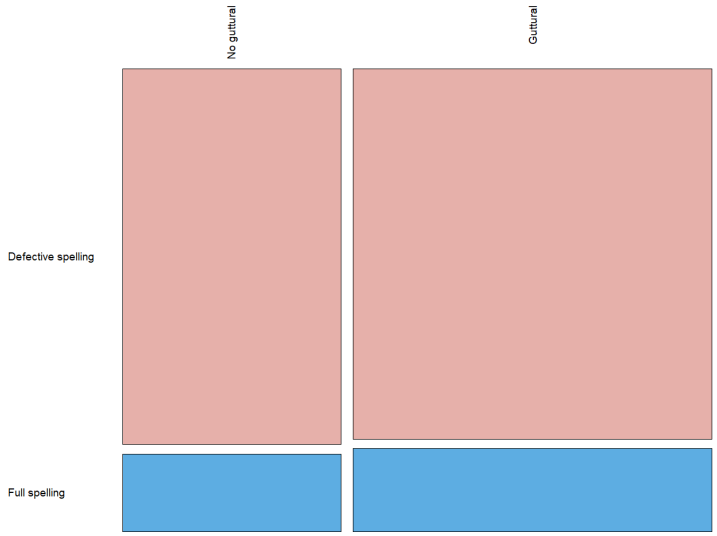


Figure 4. Spelling of qal infinitive construct verbs in the MT in which the **second or third** radical is or is not a guttural.



Looking at these figures, it is immediately clear that there is no overrepresentation of full spelling in verbs with a guttural or resh as second or third radical. How is it possible that Hornkohl thought otherwise? He observed that there are 81 fully spelled verbs with a guttural out of 174 fully spelled verbs in total in the MT. 81 out of 174 is almost 47%, and this would be surprisingly high, if the percentage of verbs with a guttural as second or third radical in the whole dataset would be lower, let's say about 10% or so. However, if the whole dataset contains between 40 and 50% of verbs with a guttural, 47% of verbs with full spelling is more or less as expected, and that is the case here. In other words, in an explorative statistical evaluation it is important to take all the data into consideration. In this case, that means that not only the fully spelled verbs should be studied, but also the defectively spelled verbs.

In the next sections, I will model the data using a statistical model. The exploration gives a good impression of the data, so why is it needed to use a statistical model? As Barr and others pointed out, there may be a certain conditioning of the use of the vowel letter based on the lexeme. For the qal infinitive construct this is clear in the case of the verb אמר in the MT, but this may also play a role in other lexemes, even if they do not occur very often. A similar issue is that we are interested in differences between groups of books, such as MT Pentateuch, MT Former, Prophets and MT LBH books. In figure 1 I have calculated the average values of these groups of books, but there is a hidden problem here, which is that there may be variation between the various books within a group. The group of LBH books consists of five different books, one of which has the longest text by far. The book of Chronicles is as long as the other LBH books together. Suppose that it also contains half of all the qal infinitive construct verbs of the MT LBH sub corpus, then its data influence the outcome much more than the other books do. It could even happen that the difference between MT Pentateuch and MT LBH as occurs in figure 1 is because there is an increased use of the vowel letter in Chronicles, but not in the other LBH books. In that case it might be better to speak of an increased use in the book of Chronicles instead of a characteristic of the whole LBH group.

These problems, that individual lexemes and individual books can behave idiosyncratically, are basically the same problem, and they will be solved using a special type of statistical model, a so-called hierarchical regression model.

8. Regression Models

What is a regression model?

In this research I use a regression model. A regression model is a statistical model to find out if there is a relationship between different variables in a dataset. First, there is a dependent variable. In our case that is whether or not there is a vowel letter in a word. I want to find out whether there is an association between this dependent variable and other, independent variables, such as a historical phase of the language. The relationships between the dependent and independent variables are numerically interpreted with a number of parameters, showing how strong the relationships between the variables are, and to what extent they can be based on coincidence.

Logistic regression

In this research, the dependent variable is whether or not there is a vowel letter waw in a qal infinitive construct. This is a binary variable, which has the values 0 (there is no vowel letter) or 1 (there is a vowel letter) in the dataset. With such a dependent variable the obvious choice is to use logistic regression, because with this type of model one investigates what the probability is of the presence of the vowel letter under different conditions.

Hierarchical models

In an ordinary logistic regression analysis it is assumed that the observations in the dataset are independent of each other. However, in many real-world datasets, this is clearly not the case, and the biblical data are a good example. For instance, Barr noted, that there is a harmonization in MT on the level of lexemes. For instance, in MT, אלהים is more or less always written defectively, and משה and כהן always have defective spelling in MT. כהן has the vowel pattern of qal active participles, and even though the use of a vowel letter is rare in qal active participles in the MT Pentateuch, it occurs more often in the other parts of the MT. This means that כהן deviates from the general use of vowel letters in qal active participles in the MT. In the case of the qal infinitive construct verbs it means that if the lexemes occur in varying frequencies in the dataset, there may be biased outcomes in the analysis of the use of vowel letters if one does not take into account that there is variation in the behavior of individual lexemes. The fact that observations within one lexeme are more similar to each other than between lexemes means that we have clustered data, where the assumption of independent observations is violated.

Another relevant example of how our data are clustered is in biblical books. Individual books were transmitted on individual scrolls, which means that the spelling of a book can show signs of an individual style of a scribe. Therefore, clustering takes place at the level of individual books as well.

One could argue that a third level of clustering takes place at the level of the manuscript. Codex Petropolitanus/Leningradensis contains all the MT books that may have been transmitted previously in individual scrolls, but in the whole Codex there seem to be some spelling features that are harmonized throughout the entire manuscript.

A way to solve the problem of clustered data is to use a hierarchical regression model, which is also called a mixed or multilevel model. Hierarchical models allow for both fixed effects and random effects. The fixed effects are the effects we are interested in in our research, such as the presence of a prefix or suffix, and the random effects account for the variability between groups in the data, which in our case are lexemes, books, and manuscripts.

In our analyses, we will only take into account the levels of lexemes and individual books within a manuscript, and we will not take into account the level of the manuscripts. The reason is that most Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts contain only one book, which means that there is a lot of overlap between the levels of books and manuscripts.

9. The model in R

The data were modelled with R, which is software for statistical computing and visualizations (https://www.r-project.org). For the regression model I used the package "Bayesian regression models using Stan" (brms, https://paul-buerkner.github.io/brms).

The R-formula for the regression model is:

```
has_vowel_letter ~
        book_group +
        (1 | scroll_book) +
        (1 | lex)
```

This formula consists of two parts. Left of the tilde (~) is the dependent variable: has_vowel_letter. Right of the tilde are three elements. Book_group is the dependent variable. In other words, we are interested in how the use of a vowel letter depends on the group of books. The dependent and independent part together are the fixed part of the model. In this fixed part, it is defined what we are basically interested in.

However, this fixed part is not the only important thing that needs to be defined here, because as described above, there can be variation between individual books and individual lexemes. This needs to be stated in the random part of the model. The random part of the model is (1 | scroll_book) + (1 | lex). With this part, the model knows that there is variation between individual lexemes, and individual books within scrolls.

Apart from the independent variable book_group, I have tested models in which the variable has_prefix is included. This did not lead to models that explain the data better than the model defined here[3], and therefore has_prefix is not used. In other words, has_prefix is not a significant variable.

Results

A hierarchical model like this contains a lot of information about how it interprets the data, and I will discuss the most important parts.

The model defined above explains about 58.6% of the variation in the use of the vowel letter in the dataset. This is not bad for a model with only one independent variable, but it means that 42% is not explained. There may be factors influencing the use of the vowel letter that are not included in the model, but there may also be some variation that is simply random. As Barr indicated, Hebrew spelling is "consistently inconsistent".

I am interested what the probabilities are of the use of the vowel letter in different groups of books, and whether or not there is substantial variation between these groups. The probability is expressed as a number between 0 and 1. In this model, however, it is expressed in a different way, namely as logit or log odds. The log odds is directly related to probability, if the log odds is 0, that means a probability of 0.5, and if the log odds is lower or higher than 0, this indicates a probability lower or higher than 0.5.

Here, logit gives clearer visualizations, and therefore I will continue to use it in this paper. From an intuitive perspective, the probability is easier to understand than the log odds, but with this model, which has a very unbalanced random component, the probabilities calculated by the model do not correspond with the observed probabilities in the data.

The model is visualized in figures 5, 6, and 7. Figure 5 shows the results for the groups of books of the MT. For each of the groups of books in the MT, there is a dot with an interval around it. This interval is the credible interval and indicates the uncertainty of the measurement. In general, more data means that the credible interval is narrower.

MT Pentateuch has, as expected, the lowest log odds of the four groups, followed by the Former Prophets, the Other books and LBH. However, there is quite a bit of overlap of the credible

[3] This was tested with the function bayes_factor() from the brms package.

intervals of MT Pentateuch, MT Former Prophets and MT Other, which means that there is no substantial difference between these groups. The only group that differs systematically from MT Pentateuch is MT LBH. There is a more formal way to come to this conclusion, which I will not give here, because it is a bit more technical. In the monograph that we write we will explain more about it.

Figure 5. Log odds of the use of a vowel in qal infinitive construct verbs in groups of MT books.

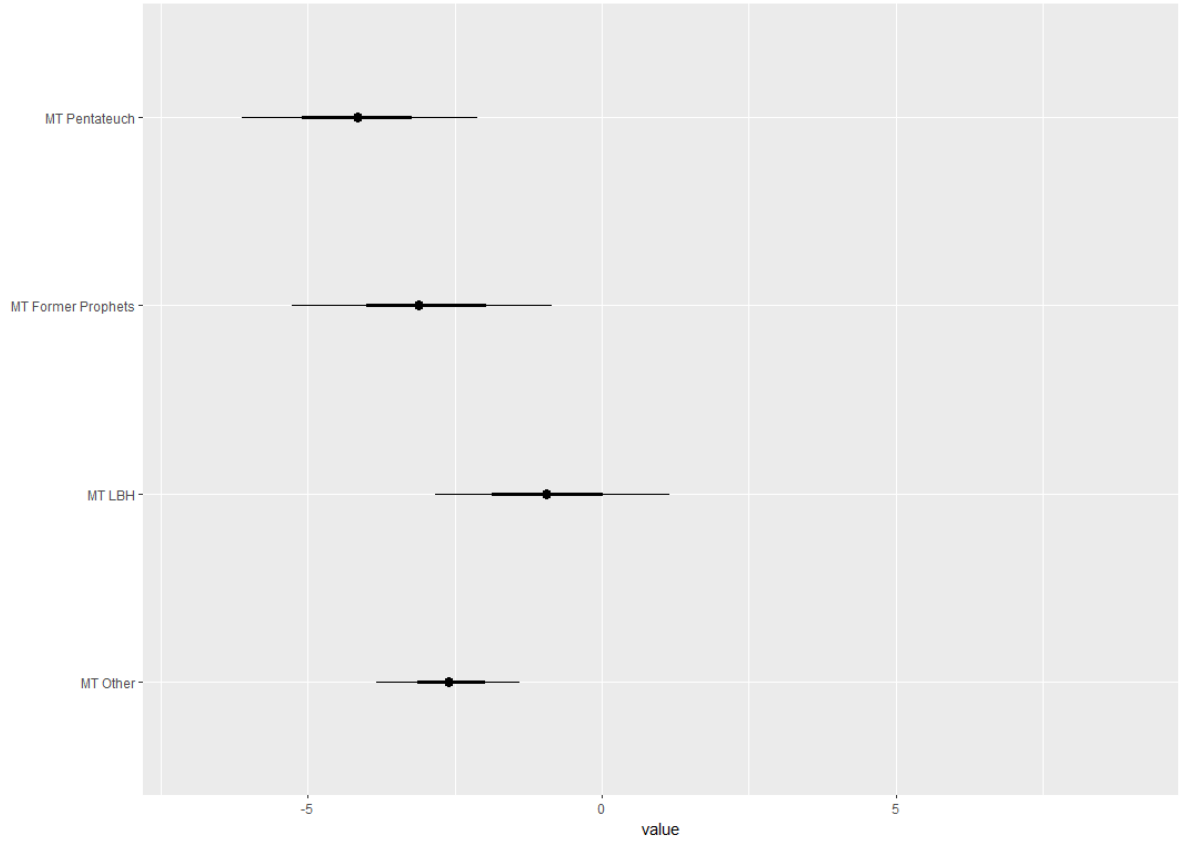
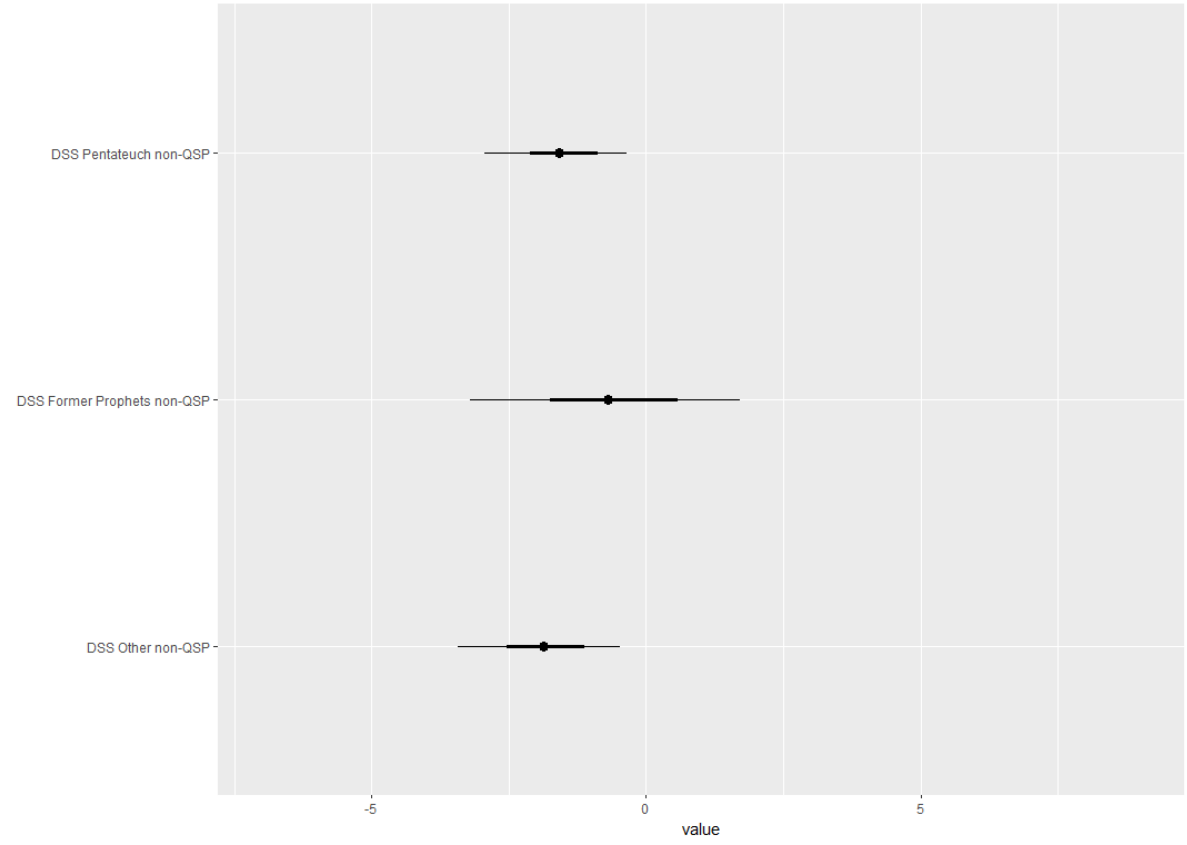


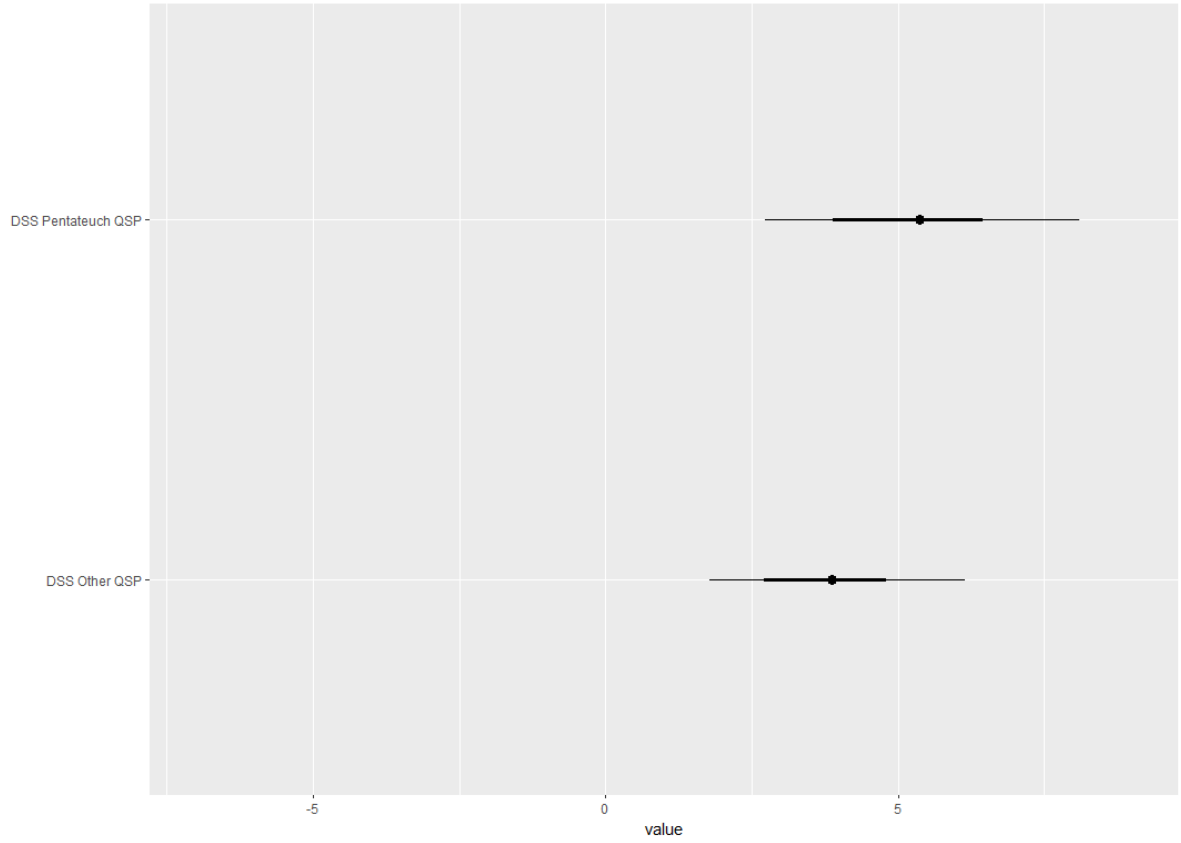
Figure 6 shows the results for the biblical non-QSP scrolls. The Other group has a value that is not extreme enough to say that it uses the vowel letter systematically more often than MT Pentateuch, but DSS Pentateuch non-QSP and DSS Former Prophets non-QSP use the vowel letter systematically more often. Note that the credible interval of the latter group of books is wider than the other two in the figure. This is because there are fewer data available. Note as well that LBH is not in the figure, because due to data scarcity the credible interval is so wide that the results have too little certainty to be of any use.

Figure 6. Log odds of the use of a vowel in qal infinitive construct verbs in groups of non-QSP biblical DSS.



Finally, figure 7 shows the situation for the biblical QSP scrolls. The QSP scrolls use the vowel letter very often, which is immediately visible when the values are compared with the other figures. The QSP scrolls deviate strongly in the use of the vowel letter from all the other groups in the dataset.

Figure 7. Log odds of the use of a vowel in qal infinitive construct verbs in groups of QSP biblical DSS.



There is much more I can say about the models, e.g. about the random component, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

10. Conclusions

In this paper I show the results of an investigation of the use of the vowel letter waw in the qal infinitive construct of triliteral verbs in the MT and biblical DSS. In relevant literature on this topic a number of factors are said to play a role in the use of the vowel letter. Among these are chronology, implemented as groups of books by Hornkohl and myself, attestation of gutturals and resh in the verbal root, and the presence of prefixes and suffixes.

In the exploration, it became clear that the presence of gutturals and resh does not have any relationship with the use of a vowel letter. In most cases, the presence of a suffix on a qal infinitive construct changes the relevant vowel, and therefore they are excluded from the dataset. The presence of prefixes does not have a relationship with the use of the vowel letter, because models with the prefix as an independent variable do not explain the data better than models without it.

The only independent variable that I have investigated that has significance for the use of the vowel letter is the group of books. The MT LBH books use the vowel letter systematically more often than the MT Pentateuch books. MT Former Prophets and MT Other books do not differ systematically from MT Pentateuch.

Non-QSP Pentateuch and non-QSP LBH use the vowel letter more often than MT Pentateuch.

On average, their use is similar to that of MT LBH

The QSP scrolls use the vowel way more often than all the MT and non-QSP groups. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between QSP and non-QSP scrolls.

How can these results be explained? In the case of the QSP scrolls, it seems clear that these were written by scribes with completely different spelling conventions than the other scrolls, but the variation between the other groups is more subtle. In the MT, only the LBH books differ systematically from the MT books. This difference can be explained by the fact that we know for sure that these books are late compositions. Another explanation is, that this is the only group that has a different convention for the use of the vowel letter in qal infinitive construct verbs. In this case, it is a stylistic instead of a chronological difference.

The non-QSP scrolls (Pentateuch and Former Prophets) use the vowel letter more often than MT Pentateuch. This could be related to freer scribal habits than MT. It is possible, and maybe even likely, that within this group of manuscripts there are different sub-groups that need to be distinguished further.

There may be hidden factors that can explain part of the variation in the data. As Barr suggests, certain verbs may have had a different vowel, and therefore the vowel letter was used more or less often. It is a pity that we do not know much about how Ancient Hebrew was pronounced, because this may have clarified many of the mysteries I face in this research.

The qal infinitive construct is only one feature among many interesting and relevant features that can be studied in relation to spelling variation. Therefore, the conclusions in this paper are only preliminary, and should be revised in the presence of other features, which I do in my upcoming monograph on this topic.

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Paper Summary

A Deep Mapping Approach to Spatiality in the Book of Ruth: The Return

Karen Preston, University of Edinburgh

Present doctoral project and its main objectives and methods

This doctoral project explores the form and function of spatiality in the book of Ruth through the integrated use of narratology and deep mapping methodologies. Undergirding the work of this project is the presumption that spatiality in the book of Ruth is not peripheral detail, but instead plays an active role in shaping the narrative's overall meaning and significance. Spaces and places in *Ruth* do not merely function as locations of action but also as sites and symbols of historical and ideological complexes to convey a world that aligns with the desired objectives.

The methodological approach to this exploration is a combination of narratology and deep mapping analyses. Narratology is well documented; thus, it will not be discussed here, except that it is an integral part of deep mapping analysis. Deep mapping analysis is a literary cartographic approach that assesses how narratives interconnect and create a tapestry of the meaning and sense of place. It is a diachronic approach to understanding historical, social, and cultural developments that make spaces meaningful. Like a palimpsest, a deep map contextualizes space through sedimented layers of memory. These memories reside within narrative substrata and are conjured through intertextual allusions and echoes. As deep mapping is an intertextual approach to narrative space, my methodological framework includes inner-biblical exegesis, drawing primarily from the work on intertextuality done by Michael Fishbane, Richard B. Hays, Matthieu Richelle, and Benjamin D. Sommer. My intertextual approach focuses on thematic and lexical linkages between texts, attending to similarities and differences, with the goal of understanding how the spatial connections inform the internal logic of the Ruth narrative and to what effect.

A deep mapping approach to *Ruth* begins with a close reading of the text to draw out the linguistic and semantic elements that constitute the framework for the story world, with particular attention paid to how these elements convey spatiality. Deep mapping analysis identifies textual markers that evoke memories of another time and space in the biblical narrative, suggesting the author's reuse of certain elements as literary devices that influence the meaning of the embedded argument in *Ruth*. This approach uniquely captures how narrative spaces acquire significance without imposing an overly prescriptive or ideological lens. It recognizes how the voices of the past illuminate the meaning of place in the narrative present. Using the language of the text to account for the horizontal and vertical aspects of place, deep mapping serves as a geographical object lesson of place and recovers a sense of place from its history. The usefulness of a deep mapping approach extends beyond the mechanics of spatial orientation that are needed to tell a

story and includes how space functions and therefore influences the theological interpretation of the book of Ruth.

This paper is part of my work on Act I of the book of Ruth (Ruth 1:1–22*a*); several elements have been omitted because of lack of space. The full scope of this dissertation encompasses all four chapters of *Ruth*. This includes a longer version of this paper as its own chapter, and chapters covering each of the remaining three chapters of *Ruth*. The thesis also includes dedicated chapters covering the research context, methodology, and a chapter that connects the linear progression of the four narrative spaces featured in each of the chapters: the return journey space, gleaning fields, threshing floor, and city gates.

A Deep Mapping Approach to Spatiality in the Book of Ruth: The Return
Karen Preston, University of Edinburgh

PREFACE

Thank you for taking the time to read and comment on this manuscript. I look forward to your feedback and know that it will be of immense help in directing my work toward this project. What you have before you is a portion of a chapter focused on the spatial dimensions of the first two scenes of Act I from the book of Ruth (Ruth 1:1–19a).

I would particularly appreciate your feedback regarding the following:

- Method: I am interested in hearing your feedback on my use of the literary deep mapping approach to spatiality in Ruth.
- Organization of content: Does the argument, as presented, flow logically and comprehensibly, or is there a better way to structure the elements?
- Suggestions for improvement: I welcome suggestions for improvement.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores spatiality in Act I of the book of Ruth[1] (Ruth 1:1–22*a*). The objectives of this chapter are, first, to demonstrate how the text constructs and represents spatiality and, second, to identify and analyze how the author's use and reuse of space shapes the biblical author's theological argument. The goal is to evaluate how the sedimented layers of memory beneath the narrative surface contribute to a greater understanding of the text's underlying message. After briefly setting the stage for the study, the spatial analysis of the first two scenes unfolds in order, beginning with Scene 1. The analysis for each scene begins with an evaluation of the narrative spaces as presented in the text, followed by a deep mapping analysis of the same scene.

1.1. Setting the Stage

Act I of the book of Ruth[2] may be divided into three scenes demarcated by character movements from one space to another: Scene 1 (vv. 1–6), Scene 2 (vv. 7–19*a*), and Scene 3 (vv. 19*b*–22*a*). Scene 1 provides contextual details of the time, space, and circumstances under which the narrative unfolds. It begins by narrating the first movements away from Bethlehem, thereby situating the departure point of Scene 2 as the field of Moab.[3] Scene 2 is framed by Naomi's first steps away from Moab and towards Judah, accompanied by her daughters-in-law (v. 7), and Naomi and Ruth's last moments of their journey before arriving at Bethlehem (v. 19*a*). Scene 3 narrates Naomi and Ruth's arrival at Bethlehem (v. 22*a*).

2.0. MIGRATION TO MOAB (vv. 1–6)

2.1. Mapping the Narrative Context

The Ruth narrative opens by providing important contextual information regarding the time, space, and circumstances in which the narrative unfolds. In literary theory, a framing narrative foregrounds and therefore influences a reader's interpretation of the story.[4] This process of *contextual anchoring* triggers readers to establish links between the story they are reading and the

[1] To distinguish between the shared name of the book and the character, Ruth, the book will either be referenced as "the book of Ruth" or be italicized in a shortened form, *Ruth*. All Hebrew translations are my own.

[2] The phrase "Act I of the book of Ruth" is often shortened to "Act I."

[3] Unless rendering linguistic elements of the Hebrew term(s) שדה מואב or שדי מואב, references to the "field of Moab" may be in a shortened form, "Moab."

[4] Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 30.

context in which it is situated.[5] The opening scene of *Ruth* establishes the narrative context of the story, the deictic center from which to interpret the opening scene.

Scene 1 opens with two consecutive clauses, each marked by the *wayyiqtol* form of the Hebrew verb ויהי (v. 1),[6] which establish the narrative context of *Ruth*. The first clause is temporal, situating the narrative in Israel's pre-monarchic era, "In the days when the judges judged" (ויהי בימי השפטים שׁפט) (v. 1). The second clause provides contextual detail, "there was famine in the land (ויהי רעב בארץ) (v. 1).[7] This opening frame recalls that there was a time when there were no kings in Israel (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). It was a time when "each man did what was right in his eyes" (17:6; 21:25) and "[the people] worshipped the baals (2:11), which was "evil in the eyes of YHWH" (Judg 2:11; 3:12–14). In Israel's collective memory, the time when judges judged Israel was linked to apostasy.

Bethlehem and Moab are anchoring spatial referents in *Ruth*. Narration of the characters' movements within and between them allows readers to create a cognitive map of the spatial relationships within the text.[8] The toponym בית־לחם (Bethlehem) (vv. 1, 2, 19 [x2], 22) is explicit and, therefore, mappable. It is the city in Judah from which Elimelech, with his family, flees famine and relocates to the "field of Moab" (שדי מואב) (v. 1, 2, 6, 22), also denoted in the Hebrew text as שדה מואב (1:6; 2:6; 4:3).[9] The author uses two different triconsonantal forms of the head noun to designate an area of Moab, a III-*yod* form (שדי) and a III-*he* form (שדה). Both forms of the word carry the same meaning, "pasture, open fields and land" as well as "territory of a tribe, or a people."[10] The Hebrew words שדי and שדה are considered generic terms that encompass the functional uses of land or property while they are also "always concretely related to a city or settlement."[11] In the context of *Ruth*, the head noun (שדי or שדה) in construct with the geographic location, Moab (מואב) lends itself to thinking in terms of territoriality, establishing a spatial and cultural dichotomy between Judah and the Moab.

[5] Herman, *Story Logic*, 211.

[6] GKC §118b; *IBHS* §33.2.4*b*; Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 54–55.

[7] Holmstedt, *Ruth: The Hebrew Text*, 52–55; Arnold and Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 99; *IBHS* §33.2.4b; Bush, *Ruth-Esther*, 62.

[8] Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu, *Narrating Space/Spatializing Narrative*, 76–100; Herman, *Story Logic*, 279; Guijarro, "Biblical Cartography," 1; Ljungberg, "Reading as Mapping," 95–99.

[9] Some scholars render the Hebrew nominal form שדי as a plural construct noun, translating the term as "fields" (Fried 2023: 24). On this point, Holmstedt (2010: 57) is clear that both שדי and שדה are singular. *See also* JM §96Bf.

[10] *TDOT* 14:37–40; *HALOT* 3:1307; BDB 961; Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 57; Schipper, *Ruth*, 80–81; Lau, *Ruth*, 67 fn10.

[11] *TDOT* 14:37.

2.2. Deep Mapping the Narrative Context

2.2.1. Bethlehem and Moab

Repetition of place references to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:1, 2, 10 [2x], 22)[12] and Moab (vv. 1, 2, 6 [2x], 22)[13] suggest their importance to the narrative purpose. The significance of these places is amplified by the emphasis on their identity associations: Judah (vv. 1:1, 2, 7; cf., 4:12) and Ephrathah/Ephrathites (vv. 1:2; cf. 4:11) are associated with Bethlehem, and Moabitesses are associated with Moab (vv. 1:4, 22; cf., 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10). Preserved memories associated with Bethlehem include Rachel's burial near Ephrath (Gen 35:16–19; 48:7; Mic 5:1; cf. Ruth 1:2), and that Obed, Jesse, and King David were Ephrathites of Bethlehem (4:17, 22; 1 Sam 17:12). The auditors of this post-exilic narrative would have recalled these "encoded"[14] ties between Bethlehem and Rachel and King David, a point that is reiterated in the closing act of *Ruth* (Ruth 4:11, 17, 22). Alternatively, the mere mention of Moab recalls Israel's long history of repeatedly ignoring YHWH and flirting with foreign gods, including Moabite gods (Judg 10:6; 1 Kings 11:7, 33; Num 25:1–5; Deut 4:3; Hos 9:10; Psa 106:28–29). The promising associations with Bethlehem and the negative associations with Moab as a cradle of Israel's apostasy establish the literary context for the return journey in Act I.

2.2.2. Memories of famine and migration

The opening language of *Ruth* evokes memories of the famine migration narratives of the patriarchs—Abram, Isaac, and Jacob—who, like Elimelech, "sojourned" (לגור) into foreign territories because there was "famine in the land" (רעב בארץ) (Gen 12:10; 26:1–3; 47:4).[15] The Ruth narrative does not explain the famine as a result of disobedience to YHWH. However, it does indicate that Naomi believes that her plight—famine, forced migration, and the deaths of her family members—was brought about by YHWH. This perspective is detected where she credits YHWH for her "bitterness" in three ways: "the hand of YHWH has gone out against me" (יצאה בי יד־יהוה) (v. 13), "Shaddai has made me bitter … YHWH has testified against me [ענה בי] and Shaddai has brought evil to me [הרע לי]" (vv. 20–21).[16] This language inheres a sense of judgment

[12] Bethlehem is also mentioned in Ruth 2:4; 4:11.

[13] The field of Moab is also mentioned in Ruth 2:6; 4:3.

[14] Wyschogrod, "Memory, History, Revelation," 23, in Matthews, "Remembered Space in Biblical Narrative," 68.

[15] A fourth formulaic use of "famine in the land" appears in the narrative of the Shunammite woman and her household who escape famine in Philistine territory (2 Kings 8:1–2).

[16] Scholars sharing the view that famines could be tied to covenantal disobedience include: Saxegaard, *Character Complexity*, 90; Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 42–43; Lau, *Unceasing Kindness*, 74–77; Fleenor and Ziese,

for the failure to do the right thing. Several biblical texts posit that "famine was the direct result of YHWH's hand," and, theologically, reflected a spiritual separation from God.[17] Indeed, the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel expounded upon the perception that God used famine (and sword and pestilence) as punishment for Israel's wickedness and apostasy (e.g., Jer 11:22; 14: 12–15; 18:12, 15; 19:3, 17; Ezek 14).

2.2.3. Patriarchal famine migration narratives: Abram

All three patriarchal famine narratives (Gen 12:10; 26:1–3; 47:4) share thematic and linguistic parallels with the opening of the Ruth narrative (Ruth 1:1). In researching the intertextual connections between famine migration narratives in *Ruth* and Genesis, some scholars emphasize the link between Abram and Ruth (the character),[18] while others observe parallels between Elimelech and Abram.[19] This section focuses on the inner-biblical allusions between Elimelech and Abram's famine migration events. Importantly, in most analyses of Elimelech and Abram, the work stops short of accessing the full interpretive potential of the Abram pericope by omitting discussions about the events and experiences that came before and after his migration to Egypt. A primary consideration in deep mapping analysis is how a sense of place develops over time and how it relates to other people, objects, and places, forging a "unified whole rooted to a particular geographical location."[20] This type of analysis intends to determine the significance of space in the arguments undergirding the text. In this analysis, the shared spatial language of the two pericopes serves as the point of departure for analyzing the full scope of Abram's migration event with the goal of extending the analysis to identify the internal logic of the Abram narrative and, therefore, how it informs the logic of the Ruth narrative. The discussion begins in this section with his outgoing migration to Egypt and resumes in Section 3.2.1 with his return to Canaan, the Promised Land.

Beginning with a side-by-side comparison of the language of both texts,

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Judges-Ruth, 22, 26. Lau, *Identity and Ethics*, 91–92. Scholars viewing Naomi as blameless—a Joban figure—include Nielsen, "Yahweh as Prosecutor," 74–81.

[17] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 42–43.

[18] Jones, *Reading Ruth in the Restoration Period*, 64–69.

[19] Scholars recognizing the intertextual links between the famine migration narratives in Ruth 1 and Gen 12 include: Nielsen, *Ruth*, 41; Lau, *Unceasing Kindness*, 72. Ruth scholars more commonly correlate the character Ruth's migration to Bethlehem with Abram's migration to Canaan (Ruth 2:11; Gen 12:1); *see* Jones, *Reading Ruth*, 69–69, 117; Ostmeyer, "The Lost Daughter," 65. This connection will be discussed further in the chapter focused on Act II (Ruth 1:22*b*–2:23).

[20] Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 247, in Maher, *Deep Map Country*, 15.

> ויהי רעב בארץ וילך איש מבית־לחם יהודה לגור בשדי מואב
> *There was famine in the land, so a certain man from Bethlehem of Judah went to sojourn in the field of Moab*
> (Ruth 1:1).

> ויהי רעב בארץ וירד אברם מצרימה לגור שם
> *There was famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there*
> (Gen 12:10).

These pericopes share thematic and lexico-syntagmatic similarities, which are important criteria for inner biblical exegesis.[21] Thematically, both texts narrate a famine-induced "sojourn" (גור) in foreign territory. Lexically, the texts use the same opening language to situate their narrative contexts, "there was famine in the land" (ויהי רעב בארץ). Syntactically, the opening verses in both narratives immediately name who "sojourned" to which foreign territory. This is followed by who went where; "a certain man" (Elimelech) went "into field of Moab" (Ruth 1:1) and Abram went down "to Egypt" (Gen 12:10). The departure point for both sojourns (Judah/Canaan), their reason for migrating (famine), and the characters' trajectories of movement towards foreign territories are the same. With minor lexical variations, the texts are strikingly similar, suggesting an intertextual relationship.

Before Abram could migrate to Egypt to avoid famine in Canaan, he had to first be in Canaan. Just as the opening verses of *Ruth* resituated a Judahite family in foreign territory (Ruth 1:1–2), Abram was resituated in Canaan (Gen 12:1–7). Upon arrival in Canaan, "[Abram] built an altar to YHWH at Shechem" (v. 6). As he progressed south through Canaan, Abram stopped near Bethel, his last recorded stop within the borders of Canaan before moving on to the Negev (v. 9) and then to Egypt (v. 10). Here, he "pitched [נטה] his tent [and] built there an altar to YHWH where he proclaimed the name of YHWH" (v. 8). As the embodiment of YHWH, the altar was a monument that memorialized the "sacredness of a place,"[22] triangulating the sacred interconnectedness between land, people, and YHWH. Read intertextually, the altars that Abram built supply an important contextual ethos, procuring a sacred association between the Promised Land and YHWH. If the land of Canaan was considered hallowed ground, then Elimelech's escape from famine was

[21] This project follows the criteria for inner-biblical exegesis modeled by: Richelle, *Interpreting Israel's Scriptures*, 277; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 281–291.

[22] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 27; cf., O'Connor, *Genesis*, 194–198; Leder, "City and Altar Building in Genesis," 72–77; Trigg, *The Memory of Place*, 85.

not only a physical departure from the Promised Land, but also a move towards Moab, which mimicked the Israelites' apostatic tendency of forsaking YHWH and turning towards Moabite gods.

3.0. THE RETURN (vv. 7–19*a*)

3.1. Mapping the Journey Space

Scene 2 is not only centrally positioned in Act I, but also central to understanding Act I, if not the entirety of the book of Ruth. In this scene, Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth embark on a return journey from Moab to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:7–19*a*). Triggered by the news that YHWH ended the famine in Bethlehem (v. 6), Naomi prepared to return to Judah, "she arose … to return" (ותקם ... ותשב) (v. 6). Her move towards Bethlehem began when "she went out" (ותצא) and, accompanied by her daughters-in-law, "they went in the way to return" (ותלכנה בדרך לשוב) (v. 7).

3.1.1. The meaning of שוב

The *leitwort* שוב occurs fifteen times in *Ruth* in various verbal forms, twelve of which are in Act 1 (vv. 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15 [2x], 16, 21, 22 [2x]).[23] Of the twelve occurrences, seven appear in scene 2. The high frequency of the Hebrew verb שוב registers is its thematic significance for *Ruth*.[24] The basic sense of the word inheres a return to an "initial point of departure."[25] In the *qal* form, it is often translated as "to turn back, return."[26] In the hiphil form, it carries a sense of causative action, and is often translated as "to bring back; to lead back; to restore."[27] Within a covenantal framework, שוב is understood to mean turning away from worshipping foreign gods and towards the undivided worship of YHWH (Deut 30:10; Jer 26:3; 27:22; 36:3; 44:5; 2 Chr 6:25).[28]

3.1.2. *The Road to Bethlehem*

The travel route between Moab and Bethlehem is a material, social, and liminal space. The text lacks a physical description of the landscape or toponyms that would aid in geolocating the precise

[23] שוב occurs three additional times in *Ruth* (Ruth 2:6; 4:3; 4:15).

[24] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 136; Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 365–440; Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 117, 223.

[25] Holladay, *The Root Šûbh*, 53.

[26] *TDOT* 14:295 §II.1–3; *TLOT* 3:1312–1316; *HALOT* 4:1429; BDB 996; Holladay, *The Root Šûbh*, 116–157.

[27] *HALOT* 4: 1432–1434; *TDOT* 14:298; *TLOT* 3:1312–1316.

[28] Holladay, *The Root Šubh*, 51.

location of the route. The limitation of what can be said about this physical space is that it was a dirt road upon which the women walked, and which stretched between two concrete locations. The same space was also a shared social space wherein Naomi and her daughters-in-law journeyed in each other's company while renegotiating and transforming their social, national, and deity relationships. Finally, the route may be characterized as transitional, a liminal space between the world left behind and a new world that has not yet been realized.[29] The time spent on the road to Bethlehem afforded Naomi and her daughters-in-law the opportunity to contemplate their inner sense of identity, who they were, and where they belonged. All three women would emerge from this dynamic, in-between space as different manifestations of themselves, both collectively and individually.[30]

3.1.3. Three speeches

The first words spoken in *Ruth* are Naomi's (v. 8). In a series of three speeches, Naomi begins each speech with an imperative command to one or both of her daughters-in-law, "Return!" (שבנה) (vv. 8), (שבנה) (vv. 11, 12), and (שובי) (v. 15), as she tries to persuade her daughters-in-law to return to "the house of her mother" (שׁבנה אשה לבית אמה) (v. 8). The Hebrew phrase בית אם is exceedingly rare, occurring only three additional times in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 24:28; Songs 3:4; 8:2).[31] Where Rebekah runs to "the house of her mother" (לבית אמה) to report about her encounter at the well (Gen 25:28), the female figure in Songs longs to bring her lover into "my mother's house" (בית אמי) (Songs 3:4; 8:2). Recent scholarship focused on the biblical "house of the mother" has primarily been from an anthropological perspective, arguing that all four of these texts reflect the female agency of ancient Israelite women as nested subunits within the household social structure of "the house of the father" (בית אב).[32]

Naomi's first speech was about social reorganization. According to Torah, a young widow was expected to "return to her father's house as in her youth" (Gen 38:11; Lev 22:13).[33] Scholars have speculated that the Hebrew phrase בית אם reflected the household location responsible for

[29] Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 11.

[30] Bal, *Narratology*, 127; Ryan, *Narrating Space/Spatializing Narrative*, 19.

[31] Several Latin and Vulgate manuscripts read "go home to your mothers" or "go home to your fathers," the Syriac reads, "go to your place and to the house of your people" (Fried, *Ruth*, 39 fn l). Four additional passages in Proverbs, though not explicitly, allude to a female figure and her household (Prov 9:1; 14:1; 24:3; 31:10–31); these will be further explored in a more extensive analysis.

[32] Chapman, *House of the Mother*, 75–90; Meyers, "To Her Mother's House," 49–51; Meyers, "Returning Home," 109–114. *See also*, Meyers, "Gendered Imagery," 209–210; Brenner, "Alternative Families," 43.

[33] Beattie, *Jewish Exegesis*, 54; Campbell, *Ruth*, 64.

marriage negotiations.[34] Indeed, a parallel verse in *Ruth* suggests that going to their mothers' houses would be where Orpah and Ruth might "find a resting place" (מנוחה) and "a house of her husband" (בית אישה) (Ruth 1:9).[35] Naomi's first attempt to redirect Orpah and Ruth to return to the social sphere of their mother was met with emphatic rejection and Orpah and Ruth's reaffirmation that they would maintain their social alliance with Naomi. They intended to return with her "to your people" (לעמך) (v. 10).

Naomi changed her rhetorical tactics in her second speech, creating a theological case based on a bleak view of the future. Naomi had no more sons "in my womb" (במעי) (v. 11). Once a fertile space, her womb had lost its generative capacity to reproduce sons and, therefore, to provide future husbands for Orpah and Ruth, who could eventually fulfill their levirate responsibilities (vv. 12–13). She credited her "bitterness" (מר) (v. 13) to YHWH, "because the hand of YHWH has gone out against me" (כי־יצאה בי יד־יהוה) (v. 13).[36] The Hebrew verb יצא (to go out) (v. 21) is sometimes used to describe the hostile intentions of an army.[37] The rare combination of the Hebrew phrase יד־יהוה plus the preposition ב (against) appears only nine times in the Hebrew corpus, always with a plural or collective object (Exod 9:3; 14:31; 16:3; Deut 2:15; Judg 2:15; 1 Sam 5:6, 9; 7:13; 12:15).[38] Naomi's characterization of YHWH's offensive against her inflects the perception that YHWH was also, by sheer proximity, an indirect threat to Orpah and Ruth's safety.[39] With the odds stacked against a positive outcome if they stayed with Naomi, Orpah kisses Naomi (Ruth 1:14) and then, by implication, separates from her and returns to Moab (v. 15). The physical, social, and theological divide between Naomi and Orpah widened (v. 15). Ruth, on the other hand, was not so easily dissuaded from following her mother-in-law, "Ruth clung to her" (דבקה בה) (v. 14). In the context of *Ruth*, דבק should be understood as "steadfast proximity" (cf., 2 Sam 20:2).[40] Ruth's physical act of clinging to Naomi thus narrows the physical and social space between them, symbolically forging a surety.

In a final effort to convince Ruth to return to Moab, Naomi's third speech was both social and theological. She draws upon Ruth's kinship ties to reorient her to "return after your sister-in-law" (שובי אחרי יבמתך) (Ruth 1:15). Twice in this exchange, שוב is followed by the verbal

[34] Chapman, *House of the Mother*, 57; Campbell, *Ruth*, 64; Meyers, "To Her Mother's House," 45–50; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, 10.

[35] The MT and Greek translations of בית אישה render "house of her husband," contrary to English translations, "house of your husband" (NRSV).

[36] Lau and Goswell, *Unceasing Kindness*, 74–77.

[37] Morris, *Ruth*, 259, in Michael, "Art of Persuasion," 154.

[38] Compare Ruth 1:13, which uses the preposition ב (against), with Ezek 8:11 and 40:1, which use the preposition על (upon). All these verses translate as "against me," suggesting a differentiation between YHWH's object as either one person or a group/collective.

[39] Michael, "Art of Persuasion," 154.

[40] *HALOT* 209.

adjective אחר (after), a "[term] often used of relationship with YHWH and other gods" (vv. 15, 16; cf., Judg 2:12, 17, 19; 10:13).[41] Naomi highlights that Orpah is returning "to her people and to her gods" (אל-עמה ואל-אלהיה) (v. 15). As an ethno-religion, Israelite culture was a socio-religio-cultic construct such that "religion was culturally embedded."[42] In "following after" a person, one was following the social-cultural and theological underpinnings of that person. When Naomi commands Ruth to "return after your sister-in-law" (שובי אחרי יבמתך) (v. 15), she means for Ruth to not only reaffiliate with her Moabite kinship group but also with her Moabite deities.

Surpassing Naomi's rhetoric, Ruth inverts Naomi's argument in an emphatic statement that her "return" will not be to her Moabite people and deities. In this well-known speech, Ruth pleads with Naomi, "Do not press me to abandon you [לעזבך] or to turn back from following you [לשוב מאחריך]" (v. 16). Naomi is a beacon that orients Ruth to Naomi's people and to Naomi's God. Thus, Ruth boldly remodels the social and theological narrative, renegotiating not only her notion of identity and belonging, but also Naomi's.

3.2. Deep Mapping the Return Event

A deep-mapping analysis of the return event in Scene 2 begins by returning to the Abram famine migration pericope and extending the analysis to include events associated with his migration to and from Egypt, to understand the underlying logic of these events. The discussion then proceeds to another layer of analysis that alludes to the exodus narratives. An analysis of these two interpretive layers pursues the question of how these inner-biblical allusions, sedimented beneath the road to Bethlehem-Judah, contribute to an understanding of "[returning] to the house of her mother" (v. 8). Interleaving this analysis is the characters' dual figurations, emulating real, embodied humans, and personified figures, which mediate the narrative's layers of spatiality.

3.2.1. Abram's return to Canaan

The earlier discussion about the inner-biblical allusion to Abram's famine migration demonstrated its thematic and linguistic parallels with the Ruth narrative. Introduced into the discussion was that while on his outgoing journey to Egypt, Abram "pitched [נטה] his tent [and] built there an altar to YHWH where he proclaimed the name of YHWH" (Gen 12:8). The erected monument and proclamation of YHWH's name established the site as sacred.

[41] *TLOT* 1:84; *TDOT* 1:201; *HALOT* 1:35*b*; Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 97.
[42] Zevit, "Textual and Social Embeddedness of Israelite Family Religion," 290.

A surface reading of Ruth 1:7 and Gen 13:3 reveals the thematic and lexical connections between Naomi's return from Moab and Abram's return from Egypt.

> ותצא מן־המקום אשר היתה־שמה ... ותלכנה בדרך לשוב אל־ארץ יהודה
> *She set out from the place where she had been there … and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah* (Ruth 1:7).

> וילך למסעיו עד־המקום אשר־היה שם אהלה [אהלו] בתחלה
> *He went to the place where his tent had been there in the beginning* (Gen 13:3).

This inner biblical allusion to "the place where [his tent] was there" (Gen 13:3) is a key point of departure for spatial analysis of the "return" pericope in *Ruth*. Thematically, both texts describe a return from foreign territories to the place from which their famine migration originated. Lexico-syntagmatically, the two versions are nearly identical, with minor linguistic variations that may seem inconsequential but appear to be interpretively significant.

The proliferation of spatial language in these verses testifies to the importance of place in the narratives. There are four important points of contact between these two texts. The first two points are interconnected. First, the Hebrew noun מקום, presented in the text with a demonstrative *he* (המקום), is a spatial noun derived from the verb קום (to arise). In many cases, the term has a neutral designation. However, it also carries the connotations of cultic memories associated with the sacred sites found in patriarchal narratives.[43] While the use of phrase המקום in the Abram narrative refers to the site where Abram pitched his tent and built an altar, the term as used in *Ruth* refers to the place in Moab "where [Naomi] had been there" (Ruth 1:7). The Ruth text describes the place "where she had been there" (אשר היתה־שמה) (Ruth 1:7) using a third feminine singular form of the copulative verb היה (היתה) in which Naomi is the subject. By comparison, the place "where it had been there" (אשר־היה שם) has, as its subject, "the tent" (Gen 13:3). The two subjects standing in parallel, the "tent" (Gen 13:3) and Naomi (Ruth 1:7), are correlated by their syntactical presentation and oriented by their emplacement. This is the first hint that Naomi is more than a human figure but is used literarily to benefit the narrative's argument. As a second, but related point, the peculiar use in *Ruth* of the inflected form of the adverb שם (there), שמה (to there; thither), imbues an affective orientation "towards there, thither."[44] Although most Ruth scholars

[43] *TDOT* 8: 534.

[44] GKC §90 *d*; *HALOT* 1546; Waltke & O'Connor §17.2*b*; *BDB* 1027; *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 417. Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 71.

avoid translating שם and שמה,[45] I propose that the inflected form used within the context of *Ruth* is not to be ignored but accounted for as an intentional manipulation to highlight a particular ideological perspective. The singular occurrence in *Ruth* (v. 7) among five other occurrences of the uninflected form שם (vv. 2, 4, 17; 3:4; 4:1) should not be considered a stylistic variation[46] and should not be ignored as being insignificant.[47] Instead, the adverbial form שמה imbues a sense of towardness towards Moab that is about more than Naomi's physical bearings but includes her developed social and theological inclinations. By setting these two passages in juxtaposition with each other, Naomi's emplacement at "the place … there" (Ruth 1:7) is antithetical to the Israelite ideal. The Abram narrative's internal logic suggests that Naomi is situated outside the realm of the Israelite ideal.

Third, the texts use different spatial prepositions that yield the same trajectories of movement towards the Promised Land (Canaan [Gen 13:3]; Judah [Ruth 1:7]). Whereas Naomi set out "from the place" (מן־המקום) in Moabite territory and went "to the land of Judah" (אל־ארץ יהודה) (Ruth 1:7), Abram went "to the place" (עד־המקום) in the land of Canaan (Gen 13:3). Fourth, the Abram pericope does not use the Hebrew verb שוב (to return) to characterize Abram's movement to Canaan but conceptualizes his "return" by twice highlighting that he went back to where he had previously been by using the Hebrew words בתחלה (at the beginning, previous occasion)[48] (v. 3) and בראשנה (in the beginning, previously)[49] (v. 4). The essence of this language inheres a return to "*the initial point of departure*."[50] Abram's return was to the place where he placed his tent and built an altar to YHWH before going to Egypt, "a hallowed place wherein to sanctify the name of God."[51]

When Elimelech "went" (ילך) to Moab with his family (v. 1), "they came" to Moab (ויבאו) (v. 1), "they were there" (ויהיו־שם) (v. 2), and "they dwelled there" (וישבו שם) (v. 4). The progressive intensification of motion verbs established a growing sense of family permanence in Moab.[52] The neutral presentation of being and dwelling "there" (vv. 2, 4) coheres with the temporary intentions inherent to the Hebrew verb גור (to sojourn) which describes Elimelech's migration to Moabite territory (v. 1).[53] However, after ten years of living in Moabite territory (v. 4), "there" ostensibly garnered new significance such that by the time Naomi was ready to leave

[45] Holmstedt (2010), Sasson (1979), Hubbard, Jr. (1988), Bush (1996), Block (2015), Hawk (2015), and Schipper (2016).
[46] Campbell, *Ruth*, 63.
[47] Lau, *Ruth*, 79 fn *a*.
[48] *HALOT* 1717, BDB 321.
[49] *HALOT* 1168; BDB 912.
[50] Holladay, *The Root Subh in the Old Testament*, 53 [italics original]; *TLOT* 3: 1310; *TDOT* 14:295.
[51] O'Connor, *Genesis*, 199.
[52] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 103.
[53] Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel*, 11; Awabdy, *Immigrants and Innovative Law*, 6.

Moab, she had fully assimilated and oriented herself "there" (שמה)—physically, culturally, psychologically, and theologically—towards Moab. While "the place" denoted in the Abram narrative was consecrated space for YHWH, "the place" in *Ruth* captured Naomi's attention. If it was the author's intention that the spatial language in *Ruth* allude to the same language in the Abram narrative, then it is reasonable to conclude that the use of the word המקום in conjunction with the adverb שמה in *Ruth* is an intentional critique of Naomi's immersion in Moabite culture, including her physical, social, and theological affiliation with Moab, its people, and its deities. When Naomi determined it was time to leave Moab, she departed with no more than a backward glance; it was "the place where she had been there [שמה]" (v. 7), and now she was going home.

By extending the analysis beyond the mere mention of the thematic and lexical connections normally cited by Ruth scholars, information about Abram's erection of altars in Canaan highlights the identity-forming significance of space for the people of Israel.[54] Memories associated with Abram's presence in, consecration of, movement away from, and return to the Promised Land introduced the internal logic of the return event in *Ruth*.

3.2.2. The exodus motif

Passages from *Ruth* and Exodus also share strong thematic and lexical similarities. The trailhead in scene two exhibits a cluster of Hebrew verbs that are shared with the exodus narrative,[55] thereby functioning as a spatial marker and pivot point to mark the transition from one place to another.

> ותקם ... ותשב ... שמעה ... כי־פקד יהוה ... תצא ... ותלכנה
> (She arose … to return … she heard … that YHWH attended to … she went out … they went) (vv. 6–7).

> וישׁמעו כי־פקד יהוה
> (they heard that YHWH attended to) (Exod 4:31).

> קומו ... צאו ... ולכו
> (Arise! … Go out! … Go!) (12:31).

[54] Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 81.

[55] For scholarship recognizing allusions to the exodus narratives in *Ruth*, *see* Braulik, "The Book of Ruth as Intra-Biblical Critique," 11–12; Caspi, *Women on the Biblical Road*, 71–72; LaCocque, *Ruth*, 56; Fried, *Ruth*, 42; Hubbard, *Ruth*, 101. *See also*, Propp, *Exodus*, 580.

The verbal sequences taken from Exodus are derived from two passages separated by eight chapters; these two passages complement each other and are linked to the same event. The first passage highlights the Israelites' response to the previewed signs that would subsequently be on full display for Pharoah (4:31). Semantically and syntactically, the language is virtually identical to Naomi's psychological turning point (Ruth 1:6). A key word shared by the Ruth and Exodus texts is the Hebrew verb פקד which has a broad semantic range including "to make careful inspection," "to call to account, avenge, afflict," or "to visit, take care of."[56] It includes contradictory meanings such that YHWH's assessments could be either "disastrous or favorable."[57] Biblical texts using the formula כי־פקד יהוה to convey YHWH's beneficence include Exod 4:31, 1 Sam. 2:21, and Ruth 1:6. The second passage which culminates the main event in Pharaoh's presence (Exod 7:14–12:32) ends with Pharaoh's command to the Israelites, "Arise! Go out! Go!" (12:31). This event culminates in a primary theme that begins with God's call to return to the mountain of YHWH to worship him there (Exod 3:12; 4:23; 7:16; 9:11, 13; 10:3, 7, 8, 11, 24, 26). Thus, Pharaoh releases the Israelites to "Go, worship YHWH, as you said!" (Exod 12:31). As if hearing this command reverberate from the past, Naomi complies just so, "she arose … she went out … they [she and her daughters-in-law] went" תלכנה ... תצא ... (תקם) (Ruth 1:6–7).

In the exodus narrative, the Israelites "went out from the land of Egypt" (יצאו … מארץ מצרים) (Exod 12:41, 51); "God led [ויסב] the people by the way of the wilderness [דרך המדבר]" (Exod 13:18). Similarly, Naomi "went out" (תצא) (Ruth 1:7) from the foreign place where she had been; she and her daughters-in-law "[they] went into the way [בדרך]" (v. 7). Naomi perceives that " [YHWH] has brought me back empty" (וריקם השיבני) (Ruth 1:20). Both texts use a *hiphil* verbal form to ascribe responsibility to YHWH for the journeys. The exodus narrative uses the Hebrew verb סבב (to cause to turn, go around)[58] to describe YHWH's role in leading the people and the Ruth text uses the Hebrew verb שוב (to bring or lead back; to cause to turn around).[59] Importantly, the semantic fields of the Hebrew verbs סבב and שוב overlap (cf. Gen 42:24; compare 2 Sam 6:20*a* and 1 Chron 16:43*b*).[60]

Briefly, due to lack of space, additional spatial markers alluding to the exodus narratives include the following: (1) Naomi's pathway back to Judah traces the footsteps of the Israelites when they, led by Joshua, returned to the Promised Land.[61] Indeed, the plains of Moab were integral to the exodus itinerary (Exod 19:2; Num 10:12; 20:1, 22; 21:10–11; 22:1); (2) Naomi and

[56] *TDOT* 12:54; *TLOT* 2:1018–19; *HALOT* 3:956; BDB, 6485; Hawk, *Ruth*, 56; Block, *Ruth: The King is Coming*, 83–84; Lau, *Ruth*, 78.

[57] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 44.

[58] *TDOT* 10:129 §IV.3; *HALOT* 2:739; BDB 686.

[59] *TDOT* 14:295 §I.2; *HALOT* 4:1432; BDB 998.

[60] *TDOT* 10:129 §III.2, Holladay, *The Root Sŭbh*, 54.

[61] Caspi, *Women on the Biblical Road*, 153.

Ruth arrived in Bethlehem just in time for the barley harvest which coincided with the celebration of the Passover (Ruth 1:22; cf., Exod 34:22); (3) Naomi grumbled along the way just like the Israelites grumbled, not to God but about God, "for it is more bitter for me than you because the hand of YHWH has gone out against me" (כי־מר־לי מאד מכם כי־יצאה בי יד־יהוה) (v. 13) (Ruth 1:11–13; 20–21; cf., Exod 15:24; 16:2–8; 17:3; Num 11:1; 14:1–17:13); (4) Intersecting Naomi's display of grumbling is a thrice-referenced Hebrew term מרר (bitterness) (Ruth 1:13, 20, 21) which constitutes the basis for two "bitter water" motifs in the exodus narratives (Exod 15:23; Num 5:11–31; 33:8). One of these encounters involves a name change for Naomi, "Mara" (מרא) (Ruth 1:20), which is also the name of the place called "Mara" in Exod 15:23.[62]

That a sizable portion of Act I is devoted to the stretch of space that extends between Moab and Bethlehem suggests that the time spent there was not about the materiality of the space, which has never been described, but about the transitions and transformations that occurred therein. With these two paradigmatic return motifs—Abram's migration narrative and the exodus motif—intersecting with the Ruth narrative, the analysis is poised to take a closer look at the central argument in Act I, the "return to the house of her mother" (v. 8)—to analyze how, in combination, these allusive elements might contribute to an interpretive understanding of Act I.

3.2.3. The House of the Mother

As discussed above, the "house of her mother" has attracted numerous suggestions to explain its use in *Ruth*. Some scholars have suggested that if Orpah and Ruth had fathers, "the text would say so" (cf. Lev 22:13),[63] or that the text presents a scribal error, using the word "father" (אב) rather than "mother" (אם).[64] Some have modified this model, suggesting that the "house of the mother" was just a different perspective of viewing the "house of the father" (בית אב), the basic social unit of ancient Israelite society.[65] Recent scholarship has aligned with the argument that the mother's house "was the locus for matters pertinent to marriage."[66] Thus, the reference describes a custom wherein young widows return to their mothers, who are solely responsible for making marriage alliances. While these explanations are reasonable, the extreme rarity of the phrase and its use within the context of a dialogical rift between Naomi and her daughters-in-law, undergirded by the

[62] LaCocque, *Ruth*, 56. In making a connection between the bitter waters in Exodus 15 and the Ugaritic *KTU* 1.23.9, Exodus scholar William H. C. Propp (1999: 580) adds, "the biblical embodiment of [bereavement and widowhood], Naomi, assumes the pseudonym *mārâ* 'Bitter' [Ruth 1:20]."

[63] Beattie, *Jewish Exegesis*, 54.

[64] Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 23; Schipper, *Ruth*, 91; Meyers, "Returning Home," 92; Block, *Ruth: The King is Coming*, 85. Codex Alexandrinus uses πατρός, "father."

[65] Meyers, "Returning Home," 95–96; Saxegaard, *Character Complexity*, 41; Lau, *Ruth*, 87.

[66] Campbell, *Ruth*, 64; Chapman, The *House of the Mother*, 57; Fewell, "A Space for Moral Agency," 83 fn 14.

Abram famine migration narrative and the exodus narratives, suggests something much more significant. There has been scant research published on the "house of the mother." The research that has been done emphasizes an anthropological perspective, focusing on female roles in ancient Israelite households.[67] Missing from these analyses is an extended exploration of the phrase, "the house of the mother," for its theological implications of returning to Judah. Continuing with a deep mapping approach to this text's spatial dimensions aims to reveal some of the veiled signposts that lead to a foundational understanding of how the text is using and reusing space to make its theological argument.

The linguistic expression בית אמה is comprised of two nouns in construct relationship, בית (house) and אמה (her mother). The Hebrew word בית carries a combined sense of material, social, and ideological qualities.[68] It may comprise a toponym such as בית־לחם (Bethlehem) (Ruth 1:1), refer to a material dwelling (a house, palace, or temple) (Judg 11:31; Gen 28:22; Jer 52:13), or function in construct as a social organizing principle such as "the house of the father" (בית אב) (Gen 24:38) or "the house of David" (1 Sam 19:11).[69] In this way, building a family or nation can be understood as building a house.[70] The Hebrew phrase אמה (her mother) is formed with the noun אם plus a final *hē* (ה-) which functions as a third feminine singular pronominal suffix meaning "her," and rendering, "her mother."[71]

The Hebrew term אם commonly refers to a female figure who is the biological mother of her child(ren).[72] It is used figuratively to describe Deborah as a "mother in Israel" (אם בישראל) (Judg 5:7) and to describe a "mother city, metropolis in Israel" (אם בישראל) (2 Sam 20:19),[73] where it functions as the "[personification of] a people or a city."[74] The Phoenician cognate term *ʾm* (mother) may similarly refer to a literal mother figure or a "mother-city of a colony [or a people]."[75] When David attacked and subdued the Philistines in 2 Samuel, he did so by taking "the bridle of the mother; authority of the mother-city [את־מתג האמה] out of their hands (2 Sam 8:1).[76]

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[67] *See* Chapman, Cynthia R. *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016; Meyers, Carol. "'To Her Mother's House': Considering a Counterpart to the Israelite Bet ʾAb." Pages 39–51 in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald On His Sixty-fifth Birthday*. Edited by David Jobling, Peggy L. Day, and Gerald T. Sheppard. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1991.

[68] Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 21.

[69] *HALOT* 1:124–125; Schloen, *House of the Father*, 269; Chapman, *House of the Mother*, 32; Adams, "The Book of Ruth as Social Commentary," 131.

[70] Faust and Bunimovitz, "The House and the World," 147. *Schloen, House of the Father*, 71.

[71] *HALOT* 1:61.

[72] *TLOT* 1:130; *HALOT* 1:61; BDB 51.

[73] *TLOT* 1:132.

[74] *TLOT* 1:132. *See also* Smith, *Where the Gods Are*, 101.

[75] Smith, *Where the Gods Are*, 101, 182n22; *PPD* 57.

[76] BDB 52; Smith, *Where the Gods Are*, 182 fn 23; *BDB* 52. In private email correspondence with Mark S. Smith (June 2024), Smith added to his footnote in the above-mentioned book, noting that the final-*he* on the phrase האמה in 2 Sam 8:1 may be a feminine marker, similarly present in Ezek 16:44.

The consonantal form האמה is the same in *Ruth*, with an added demonstrative *he*. Did the biblical author intend a double entendre of the term אמה in the context of *Ruth* as a reference to both a maternal figure and a sense of her authority over a city's domain?

This argument draws upon the possible inferences of the Hebrew term אמה as a maternal figure with domain authority over the place—the city—associated with the people of Israel. It presumes that, by extension, there is a commensurate mother figure who represents the Moabite domain. In directing her daughters-in-law to return to "the house of her mother" (Ruth 1:8), Naomi directs them to return to the domain of their respective mother cities. In a moving oath of confirmation, Ruth concluded the matter; to return to "the house of her mother" was a principled decision that reorganized her physical, social, and theological affiliations with Naomi (vv. 16–17). Ruth would live and die with Naomi; she would conjoin herself to Naomi's people and her God (v. 16). During their journey through the liminal space "betwixt and between" the field of Moab and Judah, Naomi and Ruth not only transitioned from one place to another but, in renegotiating their material, social, and religious affiliations, their "return" was emblematic of their transformed identities with place, people, and deity—Judah, Judeans, and YHWH.

3.3. Embodied and Personified Spaces

This final section considers the embodied and personified roles of the characters who mediate between narrative layers. The embodied figures in Ruth serve as dual mediums for both "site and sign" of emotions, experiences, and ideologies."[77] The body as "site" is the locus of conscious experiences, while the body as "sign" leverages its subjectivity and, thus, its ability to shape change.[78]

3.3.1. Naomi

The character Naomi portrays an authentic Israelite woman, who is a wife, mother, and widowed. Linguistic and thematic elements suggest that she simultaneously personifies Zion (sign) and embodies the totality of its literary ethos and ideology (site). Her embodied experiences with the spaces of the narrative surface and its substrata were mapped onto her body as traceable spatial markers. Strong verbal and thematic connections between *Ruth* and Lamentations[79] depict compelling parallels in which Naomi is the epitome of the Zion figure, "Naomi [is] a

[77] Cooey, *Religious Imagination*, 90–92.
[78] Cooey, *Religious Imagination*, 91–92.
[79] Additional intertextual connections between *Ruth* and Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah have not been included due to the brevity of this essay.

personification of Zion."[80] Both texts describe famine conditions (Ruth 1:1, 6, 11, 19; Lam 2:12, 19; 4:4, 9, 10; 5:10), widows whose children have died (Ruth 1:3, 5; Lam 1:1), female figures searching for "a resting place" (for מנוחה and מנוח) (Ruth 1:9; 3:1; Lam 1:3), and a sense of fullness and emptiness (Ruth 1:21; Lam 1:1). Both female figures credit YHWH and *Shaddai* for their "bitterness" (מרר) and suffering (Ruth 1:20–21; Lam 1:4) and they describe experiences of emotional suffering that occur on travel routes, "on the road" (בדרך) (Ruth 1:7) and "the roads to Zion" (דרכי ציון) (Lam 1:4). Just as Orpah and Ruth weep openly when asked to return to their mothers' houses (vv. 9, 14) and Naomi claims her bitter condition (vv. 13, 20), the author of Lamentations similarly describes how Zion's "young girls grieve, and her lot is bitter" (Lam 1:4).[81]

The imagery drawn from Lamentations construes "daughter Zion" as the personification of the city, capitalizing on the ancient near-Eastern literary genre known as the city laments. In these laments, a city's patron goddess laments its destruction; she "is imagined as a maternal figure, with the city's inhabitants identified as her children."[82] Understood as personified Zion,[83] Naomi represents not only a maternal figure—mother to her sons and mother-in-law to Orpah and Ruth—but also the "mother" city, the place otherwise known as is Zion. Naomi triangulates Ruth's reorientation towards the place, people, and deity of Judah, just as the Zion figure triangulates the relationship between people and YWHW.[84]

4.0. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter employed a deep mapping approach to analyze the form and function of spatiality in Act I. The language of the text was determinative in identifying different forms of space, including material, social, liminal, and embodied. Leveraging the language of the text, the identified spatial markers served as points of departure for delving beneath the narrative surface to plumb to the historical memories of places. Inner biblical allusions to Abram's famine migration and return narrative established the spatial significance of the Promised Land as consecrated space and emphasized the importance of returning to the sacred location associated with YHWH's presence. Similarly, the exodus narrative emphasized release from Egyptian captivity so the Israelites could worship YHWH and return to the Promised Land. The return journey in Act I invites

[80] Korpel, "Memories of Exile," 156.

[81] Intertextual evidence of these compelling parallel features are also found in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Deutero-Isaiah. These additional intertexts are included in the full-length chapter version.

[82] Crouch and Hays, *Isaiah*, 72.

[83] Korpel, *Structure of Ruth*, 231; Korpel, "Theodicy," 340; Korpel, "Memories," 156; Wetter, *On Her Account*, 92–96; Melton, "Perceiving Divine Absence," 85–86.

[84] Maier, *Daughter Zion*, *Mother Zion*, 217; Caspi, *Women on the Biblical Road*, 26–29; Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 75–76.

auditors to remember their Israelite identity and the centrality of the Promised Land as the place that YHWH promised to their ancestors.

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Research Project Summary

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Supervised by:

Head-Supervisor: Dr. Anja Klein, School of Divinity, The University *of* Edinburgh
Second-Supervisor: Dr. Suzanna Millar, School of Divinity, The University *of* Edinburgh

Project Working Title:

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: A Reading of The Cuneiform and Biblical Laws in Narratives Materials (Genesis, Judges, and 2 Samuel)

Project Summary:

My research project examines the sexual and gender-based narratives found in the Hebrew Bible (HB) and their relation to the cuneiform and biblical legal corpora. The criteria used here are biblical texts that show direct evidence where sexual violence has been exercised, not as a sidenote but rather as the narrative's main theme. The focus is on narratives that fit the category of forcible intercourse: a) completed male-to-female (Gen 34; Judg 19; 2 Sam 13); b) completed female-to-male (Gen 19:30–38); c) attempt male-to-male (Gen 19:1–29); and d) attempt female-to-male (Gen 39). It also analyzes the biblical laws concerning sexual behaviors (Exod 22:16–17; Lev 18:20; 19:20–22; 20:10; Num 5:11–31; Deut 22) in juxtaposition with the cuneiform laws (LU § 6–8; LE §§ 26–28; 31; LH §§ 129–30; 154–56; HL §§ 189–91; 197–98; MAL §§ 12; 15–16; 23; 55–56),[1] while discussing the absence of divine justice for victims of sexual violence. The most intriguing feature among these materials is that a single sexual act out of wedlock has the effect of creating

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* I have chosen to analyze each biblical passage as they appear in their canonical order.

[1] Abbreviation in this paper include:

ANE = Ancient Near East

HB = Hebrew Bible

CC = Covenant Code

H = Holiness Code

DC = Deuteronomy Code

LU = Laws of Ur-Nammu (ca. 2100 B.C.E)

LL = Laws of Lipit-Eštar (ca. 1900 B.C.E.)

LE = Laws of Eshnunna (ca. 1800 B.C.E.)

LH = Laws of Hammurabi (ca. 1750 B.C.E.)

HL = Hittite Laws (ca. 1700 BC B.C.E.)

MAL = Middle Assyrian Laws (ca. 1076 B.C.E.)

a web of violence.

The governing question of my project is: how do we interpret the connection between the cuneiform and the biblical legal corpora in relation to the sexual and gender-based violence in biblical narratives, and how do these materials speak to one another? These materials use sexual violence as an event precipitating conflict between members of one family/community over another, which demonstrates the social upheavals of ancient Israel. Therefore, the present research examines narratives that fit the category of forcible intercourse and its relations to the cuneiform and biblical legislations. For this reason, I will employ several exegetical methods: narrative criticism, biblical intertextuality, and gender criticism.[2] Each of these methods will shed a different light on our task.

The research will open with an introduction that seeks to provide the state of my project, its setting, and its significant features. It will also introduce the thesis, research objectives, research questions, and a review of scholarship that focuses on works that seek to give an account of the interpretation of sexual violence narratives. The first chapter will discuss how the legal materials inform our reading of sexual violence narratives and why the lawgivers framed their legislation in such a way to perpetuate gender-based violence. From the second to sixth chapters, I will analyze specific exemplary sexual and gender-based violence narratives—i.e., the accounts of Lot, Dinah, Joseph, the *Pîlegeš* Woman, and Tamar—and their relation to the legal materials.[3] The seventh chapter will examine what opportunities of divine justice, or lack thereof, exist for victims of sexual violence. The research project culminates in a conclusion, which will summarize the findings and light the path for future research.

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INTRODUCTION (in-progress)

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[2] Other methods, like textual criticism and historical criticism, would be applied whenever necessary to help evaluate the texts under consideration.

[3] The following narratives will be treated as individual chapters as they appear in biblical history. However, later I will see if there is an interdependence between these materials and if some of them could be grouped together.

Chapter V: An Incestuous Congress: The Case of Two Siblings Tamar and Amnon (2 Samuel 13:1–22)

PART II:
The Sexual Legal Framework In
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Chapter VI: Sexual Regulation Laws: The Ancient Near East Legal Framework

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Conclusion (In-Progress)

2 SAMUEL 13:1–22: THE CASE OF TWO SIBLINGS TAMAR AND AMNON

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Abstract:

The narrative of 2 Samuel 13 has been interpreted alongside David's and Bathsheba's sexual affair (2 Samuel 11–12)—which is a story of sexual violence, homicidal violence, political power, and divine intervention. Likewise, it is widely understood that Tamar's coercive sexual assault is a fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy against David's marital affairs. This article explores what function the "coercive sexual intercourse" in 2 Samuel 13 has within the biblical narratives that speak about sexual and gender-based violence. More specifically, this paper is interested in how this type of violence is portrayed in the narrative and what it can tell us about the violence committed against female figures. For this reason, the paper concentrates on the analysis of three scenes in which the elements of violence are expressed. These scenes of violence are expressed in three areas: a) the orchestration of the crime (vv. 1–6), the crime (vv. 7–14), and the aftermath (vv. 15–22)—all of which contributes to the social fragmentation of ancient Israel's society. The argument here is addressed in three movements. The starting point will be an analysis of 2 Samuel 13, outlining content and argument. Next, it will ask how the imagery of violence is embedded in the context of 2 Samuel 13. Therefore, this paper demonstrates that the narrative of 2 Samuel 13, like other sexual violence narratives (Genesis 19, 34, 39; Judges 19), draws from a common theme of violence towards female figures to depict the social decline of Israel, more especially a collapse of one phase and the emergence of another. Moreover, it argues that the author's use of speech compounds Tamar's victimization to expose the power struggle within David's royal household.

Keywords: 2 Samuel 13, Tamar, Amnon, Absalom, David, Sexual Crime Laws, Women, Gender, Rightsholder, Sex, Rape, Force Sex, Illicit Sex, Marriage.

Preface: OTSEM 2024

This chapter is part of my doctoral dissertation on the topic of **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence** in the Hebrew Bible. It is written in a chapter style; however, it is not the final version of the chapter. As you read my chapter, I especially appreciate discussions regarding the following two aspects:

1. Is there any further source or examples that would help me address the incest motif in 2 Samuel 13?
2. Is the rivalry between the two-sibling presented as a power struggle for the Davidic Throne?

These questions would help further analyze what is at the core of the narrative. All feedback, constructive criticism, and suggestions a strong welcome. It would indeed help me to further strengthen the chapter.

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CHAPTER SIX

2 SAMUEL 13:1–22: THE CASE OF TWO SIBLINGS TAMAR AND AMNON

1. INTRODUCTION

The theme of violence in the narrative of Tamar and Amnon is a case of sexual intercourse of first-degree incest.[1] This is not to limit the case in such terms but rather to accentuate the atrocity of the act in which a sister is sexually assaulted by her brother. This case points to the intra-familial nature of the violation within David's royal household. The narrative reflects a family disintegration pattern mirrored in the social fragmentation of David's kingship.[2] Therefore, this chapter will explore the notion of incestuous intercourse among David's royal family. More specifically, it is interested in how royal incest is portrayed and what it can tell us about the violence committed against a royal princess. The violence here is conveyed within the wall of the nuclear family since all the characters are linked with their family ties. For this purpose, I have chosen to concentrate my analysis on three scenes: a) the scheme (vv. 1–6), the crime (vv. 7–14), and the aftermath (vv. 15–22). From here, one can observe that sexual crime is at the center of the narrative and provides the fulcrum point between the pre-crime and post-crime actions. In between, as I shall show, stands the treatment of the legal dimension (vv. 12–13).

2. RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHARACTERS

The main characters in the story are Amnon and Tamar, while David, Jonadab, and Absalom take minor roles.[3] Within the arrangement of the characters, the narrator encompasses the rivalry between the two brothers.[4] Note that both the male characters are presented with equal status to each other since they are David's sons (see *Figure* I). Similarly, the narrative emphasizes by the extensive use of familial language that Amnon's behavior crosses the boundaries of the legal corpora. As the tale develops, "the narrator loads it with these reminders of family connection."[5] The two brothers form some sort of circular arrangement that centers upon Tamar. Both Absalom and Tamar have a direct link within the narrative, while Amnon is linked with Absalom in relation

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[1] There is a significant disagreement among scholars on whether half-sibling relations were considered incest at this time in biblical history. Rashkow, *Taboo or not Taboo*, 144 argues that "the familial relationships are emphasized throughout the opening of the narrative, highlighting the theme of incestuous rape." Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 93–100 analyzes Tamar's narrative as part of the four biblical narratives she calls a "text of terror." Similarly, Esler, "Dishonor Avenged," 322 sees this account as "one of the most disturbing narratives in the Old Testament." Lipka, *Sexual Transgression*, 203 argues that the author depicts the story as "an act of sexual coercion as a transgression against both communal boundaries and personal boundaries."

[2] Yamada, *Configurations of Rape,* 101

[3] For an analysis of the relationship between villain, hero, and victim in 2 Samuel 13, see: Fuchs, "The Biblical Sister," 200–224.

[4] Trible, *Texts of Terror,* 38 points out that "Two males surround a female… these sons of David compete with each other through the beautiful woman."

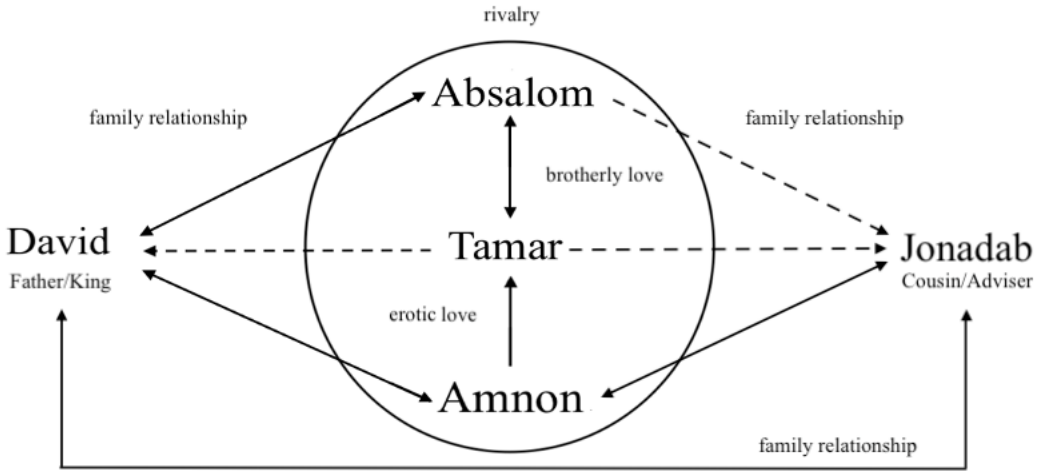
[5] Gunn and Fewell, *Gender, Power, and Promise,* 143

to David (v. 1)—as both are sons of the king and both are potential successors for the Davidic throne. In our story, Tamar (Absalom's sister) is introduced in David's saga for the first time.[6]

Following the above, the narrator associates Tamar with Absalom rather than with King David, her father. The relationship between Absalom and Tamar is indicated by the fact that in the narrative, they are mentioned in linked clauses of the same kind, namely, nominal clauses, while Amnon is mentioned in a verbal clause (v. 1).[7] The following diagram presents the relationship between the main characters.

Enclosed Relationship

Figure I



As the diagram shows, the narrator sets two types of opposite relations: a) brotherly love (Absalom/Tamar) and b) erotic love (Amnon/Tamar).[8] Note that Tamar stands in between the two brothers. She is never referenced as David's daughter or the king's daughter in the narrative, but rather, as either by her name, Tamar, or her epithet אחות ("sister"). Neither is she ever referred to as Jonadab's cousin—instead, this is implicit within their family structure. The usage of the Hebrew term אחות in relation to Absalom carries the meaning of full sister,[9] which insinuates that Tamar was a daughter of David and Maacah (the mother of Absalom, 2 Sam 3:3). In contrast, in relation to Amnon, the term implies half-sister (2 Sam 13:2). Note that the term "sister" in reference to Tamar, whether regarding Amnon or Absalom, occurs eight times in this narrative (vv. 1, 2, 4–6, 11, 21–22), while the term אח ("brother") is reference around nine times (vv. 4, 7–8, 10, 12, 21). This demonstrates that the narrator intends to stress the family tights between his characters. It is significant to note that only the male characters are connected to David. Besides

[6] Tamar was not mentioned before 2 Samuel 13; however, her brothers (Absalom and Amnon) were named in the list of David's sons born at Hebron (2 Sam 3:2–5).

[7] According to Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 241–242 a nominal clause, by its very nature, usually expresses a situation, while a verbal clause tends to communicate an action, a process, or an event.

[8] By brotherly love, I refer to a relationship between siblings in which there is no sexual desire from any party involved. With the term erotic love, however, I refer to the intense sexual desire that can lead to unexpected and sometimes unacceptable behavior. In other words, this is understood as a feeling of strong sexual desire for another person, which acts as the initial driving force.

[9] McCarter, *2 Samuel,* 320 mentions that "'sister' in this case means *full* sister."

this, the narrator does not specify when the rivalry between the two brothers began; rather, he simply presents them as opposite forces. Rather than a conflict of political interest, the tension between Absalom and Amnon is based on familiar ties: Tamar is the axis, and her two brothers are at the opposing poles. Likewise, the arrangement suggests that when Amnon commits a crime against his half-sister, his actions will affect his brother Absalom. Moreover, as her full sibling, Absalom will be more invested in what happens to Tamar since he is her protector.[10]

3. THE DEFILEMENT OF TAMAR

The Amnon-Tamar episode exemplifies a world of terror,[11] disturbance, and transgression of personal boundaries.[12] There is no doubt that the story is full of dramatic scenes that go from a non-violence interaction to a wave of violence that moves in all directions. Tamar's character, as stated, is portrayed as the recipient of Amnon's sexual desire while being both a daughter to David and a sister to Absalom. At first, as readers, and before Tamar has a chance to speak, we see her through the eyes of Amnon, the beholder. Through his eyes, we get to know Tamar. Her beautifulness is connected to Amnon's desire, which is reinforced multiple times throughout the first segment (see below).[13] This type of desire and objectification is seen in the case of Dinah (Genesis 34). In this sense, both characters turn out to be the objects of their ravisher's erotic love.[14]

3.1. The Scheme

In the first verse, the narrative opens with a vogue transitional formula in Hebrew ויהי אחרי־כן ("And after these things"), which marks a shift between the previous account and the present narrative.[15] In his arrangement, the narrator juxtaposes the two rivals of his plot (Absalom and Amnon), foreshadowing a conflict between the brothers.[16] The opening verse is built in such a way that, in addition to communicating information about the characters, it hints at what is to come.[17] Before this is resolved, I should mention that the tension between the characters is enclosed within strong emotions. For example, the narrative opens with the emotional state of love and thus closes with another emotional state of hate (v. 22).

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[10] Fuchs, "The Biblical Sister," 200 sustains that no biblical sister is shown to help or protect another sister. For her, the most detailed narratives about sister-figures present them as victims who depend for deliverance on their respective brothers (Genesis 34 and 2 Samuel 13).

[11] Trible, *Text of Terror,* 93–100

[12] Lipka, *Sexual Transgression,* 200–243

[13] Joseph's handsomeness (ויפה מראה) is also connected to the Egyptian woman's erotic lust (Genesis 39:6–7). In this case, both Tamar and Joseph are the object of their ravishers' desire, and the ravishers are the agents desiring, which places them in close proximity—see Chapter V.

[14] See Chapters III.

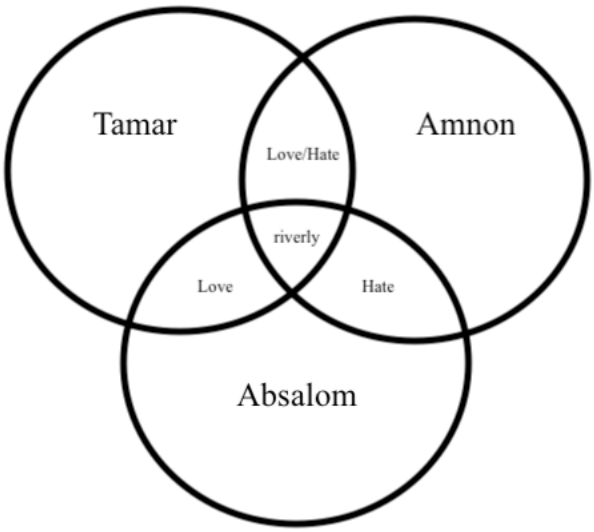
[15] Conroy, *Absalom*, 41-42

[16] Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 241 observes that the mention of Absalom at the beginning of the plot is surprising because his character plays only a minor role and at the conclusion of this narrative only, and it would have been sufficient to have introduced him then, stating his relation to Tamar. For him, the reason for his references is to the importance that his character would have later in the aftermath. In this respect, the mentioning in the opening verse serves as a prologue or first stage in the chain of narratives that follow it.

[17] Conroy, *Absalom*, 20 states that "the static initial condition is complicated by the new act of Amnon's falling in love (v. 1), and it is at this point that the story is set in motion and the reader's expectancy is aroused—will this desire be satisfied?"

Enclosed Emotional State

Figure II



The diagram above presents the emotional dynamic of the characters' relationship within the story. This dynamic is encompassed by a series of emotional intensity, which is a significant motive force for the internal action of the plot.[18] In this sense, the flow of emotions marks a transitional journey that moves from love to hate and from hate to love within the expanded narrative. In other words, the movement of emotion within the text can be diagrammed: love-love/hate-hate.[19] When the emotion of אהב ("love") is expressed in relation to Absalom and Tamar, it speaks of brotherly love. While in relation to Amnon and Tamar, it speaks of erotic love. A similar dynamic is shown when the emotion of שנא ("hate") is expressed. At the center stands the rivalry of the two brothers. Thus, this love/hate emotional movement propels the plot toward the retributive violence that ensues later in the chapter.

This framework shows the complexity of the triangle relationship between the siblings. This arrangement ties Absalom to his sister, bringing him into the dynamic of love/hate and fueling his revenge.[20] The sexual misconduct and violence that is brought upon Tamar's body provides the root excuse for Absalom's revenge and eventual rebellion against David (2 Samuel 13–18).[21] Besides this, the rivalry of the two brothers revolves around their sister Tamar, who is described as beautiful (v. 1).[22] Tamar's beauty is the reason for Amnon's love (v. 2), which in turn provides the motive for all that follows. It is interesting to point out that the notion of Tamar's beauty comes

[18] *Ibid*.

[19] Fokkelman, *King David*, 102

[20] Yamada, *Configurations of Rape,* 106

[21] Falk, "Incest and Parricide," 163 sustains that Absalom's incest with David's concubines may have had cultic significance as well. It was definitely a public political statement of Absalom claiming David's kingdom.

[22] Bader, *Sexual Violence,* 134 indicates that the term beautiful foreshadows sexual development in the narrative. This brings readers to a close connection with the case of Joseph (Genesis 39), who is described by the narrator as handsome and good-looking (see chapter 5).

between the narrator's comments about Absalom and Amnon, which structurally speaking would show a point of conflict between the male characters.

As indicated in v. 1, for instance, Amnon was in love with Tamar (ויאהבה אמנון בן־דוד). Amnon's description of love (אהב) has prompted various interpretations, ranging from unbridled lust to genuine love.[23] There are profound misunderstandings in the light of Amnon's feelings towards Tamar, which have nothing to do with love (אהב). George Ridout doubtfully suggests that Amnon had "great affection for his half-sister,"[24] which I disagree with. This understanding, however, falls short of the meaning of the verb אהב as far as Amnon was concerned. The term's usage, as Trible rightly indicates, directs readers to Amnon's "desire" for Tamar,[25] which is the core issue in the story. With this, as Robert Altar explains, such a description prompts readers to be "alert for consequence, immediate or eventual—either in the plot or theme."[26] From a narrative point of view, even before Tamar has the chance to speak, she is characterized by both her beauty and her sexuality. In other words, her identity is being sexualized by the plot's arrangement.

Following the above, the core problem presents the readers with two crucial issues within his characters: a) Tamar's social status and b) Amnon's internal dilemmas. On the one hand, the former describes Tamar with the Hebrew terms יפה ("beautiful") and בתולה ("young woman" or "virgin"). The first term is well used in biblical narrative to describe a character's physical appearance or virtue. In this sense, noble characters are often described as having a beautiful appearance. The second term which is used to describe Tamar is בתולה, which is essential for the plot. Scholars, like Kenneth Stone, understand the Hebrew term בתולה as "virgin,"[27] though they agreed that the main obstacle for Amnon is not the virginity of Tamar *per se* but rather her protector, namely Absalom. In a similar vein, Lipka argues that Tamar's virginity is not an obstacle for Amnon; instead, the real deal is gaining physical access to her body.[28] As a virgin, Tamar is a protected property of the household, inaccessible to males—including her half-brothers. Moreover, the social norm in ancient Israel is that a young woman, at a marriageable age, is expected to be married as a virgin—the lack of such virginity could cost her even her own life. As a result, the male members of the household (i.e., the father or brothers) must guard her virtue to ensure a great marriage deal for her. In Genesis 34, for example, the full brothers (Shimon and Levi) took the protection of their sister's virtue as a personal responsibility. In this case, Absalom is somewhat comparable to Shimon and Levi as a full sibling. This shows that the safety and well-being of their sister depended upon them as protectors.

On the other hand, the second core problem centers on Amnon's character, who is "distressed" (ויצר) to the point of making himself sick (להתחלות) on account of Tamar (v. 2).[29] It is also here where the narrator identifies Tamar, for the first time, as Amnon's sister. In this respect,

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[23] Contra Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 243 who argues that Amnon's love is infatuation, not "carnal desire."

[24] Ridout, "Rape of Tamar," 78; Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel,* 181 central thesis is that "To force David to name him heir, Amnon rapes Tamar hoping that his actions will assure him of the right of becoming monarch."

[25] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 26

[26] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 180

[27] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 38–39; Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power,* 107–112; McCarter, *2 Samuel*, 321

[28] Lipka, *Sexual Transgression*, 205

[29] Bader, *Sexual Violence,* 135

the narrator again penetrates Amnon's inner self, informing us that this love tortured him to such an extent that he made himself ill (v. 2). In a similar line of thought, the narrator seems to connect Tamar's virginity with Amnon's inability to have access to her.[30] This causes Amnon's portrayal to change drastically in the first segment. First, the narrator presents Amnon in a positive or at least neutral state regarding his love for Tamar (v. 1).[31] In v. 2, there is something odd about Amnon's loving Tamar—which raises the question of what kind of love Amnon had for Tamar. This characterization seems strange and unsettling for the reader because finding love, distress, and making oneself sick all at once demonstrates that Amnon's love is more than a brotherly affection. His love does not seem to be in its proper place, foreshadowing an increasing danger in the plot. Before moving on, I should indicate that it is not made clear just how the description of Tamar as a "virgin" relates to what Amnon experiences in v. 2, as "remarkable" or "wonderful" (פלא). To this, A. Graeme Auld observes that the term פלא is often associated with the "marvelous" actions of YHWH (Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17, 27; Zech 8:6).[32] In legal cases, however, when the local judges feel themselves incompetent to reach a decision, they seek the assistance of a different court (Deut 17:8–9). In this sense, the term פלא might be employed to reinforce Amnon's tormented state that is directly connected to his sexual desires for Tamar, but under the circumstances, does not know how to approach her (v. 2). However, only a character crafted could help him to access Tamar physically (vv. 3–5).

3.2. The Crime

Within the narrative context, the arrangement of the different parts points to the love and hate-power dynamics, showing a clear image of a dysfunctional family. To show how dysfunctional David's family is, one only needs to know that the son, the first in line, deceits his father, the king so that he can have physical access to his half-sister. This points to the fact that David's authority is weakened by his sons. Trible observes that the narrator's identification of David as king rather than father accents authority without power.[33] This goes further since David is deceived to the point of complicity. In other words, David is presented as an unwilling partner in the crime against Tamar. In v. 6–7, the text reads:

6 וישכב אמנון ויתחל ויבא המלך לראתו ויאמר אמנון אל־המלך תבוא־נא תמר אחתי ותלבב לעיני שתי לבבות ואברה מידה:	6 Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill, and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king: "Now, let my sister Tamar come so that she can make a

[30] Within the royal lineage, unmarried women were often well protected, and contact with men was closely monitored. For more details, see: McCarter, *2 Samuel*, 321; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 174; Matthew and Benjamin, "Amnon and Tamar," 345–346; Wenham, "*Betulah*," 326–348. For a general discussion on the term *Betulah,* see Frymer-Kensky, "Virgin in the Bible," 79–96.

[31] Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 243 mentions that, at first, Amnon is not presented in a negative light, and neither does he arouse feelings of disapproval or disgust.

[32] For Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 477 questions why the term is employed here in relation to Tamar's description. He writes, "Is doing something to Tamar part of a delicious fantasy, or something that in his eyes would require a miracle? Is it because, though of marriageable age, Tamar is not married? If she has been married, like Bathsheba, might she be more rather than less available? Or does Amnon, like some men, have fantasies about deflowering virgins?"

[33] Trible, *Texts of Terror,* 42

	couple of cakes in my sight; and thus, may I eat from her hand."
7 וישלח דוד אל־תמר הביתה לאמר לכי נא בית אַמנון אחיך ועשי־לו הבריה:	7 Afterward, David sent Tamar towards the house, saying: "Please, go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare him something to eat.

From these verses, one can note how Amnon deceived his father through his deeds and words. In v. 6, Amnon pretends to be ill (וישכב אמנון ויתחל) and, in the presence of his father, he deceit him with words: תבוא־נא תמר אחתי ("let my sister Tamar come"). With these two elements, Amnon's actions are performed to blind his father deceitfully by deeds and words. Ironically, even after deceiving his father, Amnon's request becomes the king's order. The text indicates that David wasted no time sending Tamar to Amnon's sickbed. In v. 7, for instance, this is made clear. David instructs his daughter on what to do. He states, לכי נא בית אַמנון אחיך ("now go to your brother Amnon's house") and ועשי־לו הבריה ("and prepare him something to eat").[34] With the usage of the Hebrew verb עשה ("do") along with the noun הבריה ("food"), the narrator links the scene back to Jonadab's original scheme (v. 5). Note that David's instructions allow Tamar to go to Amnon's help and serve her duty as sister. In this sense, there is no fear of virginity theft since Amnon is her half-brother. The narrator, as Bar-Efrat observes, not only conveys protection but "reflects (by implication) Tamar's feeling and thoughts" since "the words house and brother" make it a safe space. [35]

It is crucial to indicate that David does not use Amnon's language but instead uses something closer to Jonadab's original plan. In this sense, his participation facilitates the ravisher's scheme to sexually assault his object—suggesting that the plan is unfolding as intended. It also points the reader to David's indirect complicity in the crime against Absalom's sister and, perhaps, a contributing factor that could help us understand the reason for Absalom's rebellion in the first place (2 Samuel 13–18). Since David granted permission to Tamar, he indirectly grants Amnon physical access to her. Tamar does not refuse David's orders at any moment; instead, she obeys them in great detail. To this, the narrator states:

8 ותלך תמר בית אמנון אחיה והוא שכב ותקח את־הבצק ותלוש ותלבב לעיניו ותבשל את־הלבבות:	8 And Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, and he was laying down. She took the dough, kneaded it, and prepared the cake in his sight, and baked the cake.

From this verse, Tamar's journey seems to be happening simultaneously with Amnon lying down (שכב) in bed. The Hebrew phrase והוא שכב ("he was laying down") suggests at least two things to the reader. First, it points to the physical closeness between Tamar and Amnon, which is doubled down by the usage of the preposition ל ("to") and the noun עין ("eyes") with its possessive suffix ו ("his"). Second, it shows that Tamar's intentions with Amnon's well-being—that is to bake the cake (ותבשל את־הלבבות).

[34] Yamada, *Configurations of Rape,* 113

[35] Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art,* 256

Scholars, like Auld, have pointed out that there is a wordplay in vv. 6 and 8.[36] The suggestion is that the intention of preparing bread/cake (לבב) implies cordial hospitality, in which the one baking prepares the cake in a heart-shaped (לבב) to nurse the ill person. The baking-and-eating scene makes the reader wonder whether something more is going on. Elsewhere, for example, the verb לבב (D-stem) is used with a sexual nuance (Song 4:9–10). The text reads,

9 לבבתני אחתי כלה לבבתיני באחד מעיניך באחד ענק מצורניך:	9 You have enchanted my *heart*, my *sister*, bride. You have enchanted my heart with one glance of your *eyes*, with one bead of your necklace.
10 מה־יפו דדיך אחתי כלה מה־טבו דדיך מיין וריח שמניך מכל־בשמים:	10 How *beautiful* your loving, *my sister*, bride, how much better your loving than wine, and the scent of your unguents than all perfumes.

The author of Songs uses several terms that could be linked to the narrative of 2 Samuel 13—that is, "heart," "sister," "eyes," and "beautiful."[37] In 2 Sam 13:8, for example, the narrator stresses "his sight" (לעיניו), which suggests that Tamar was near Amnon. In this way, he could see whatever she was baking. From this verse, one can also notice how Tamar's actions resemble both David's command and Jonadab's plan in detail—showing how David is used by his nephew and son to gain physical access to the princess. Ironically, while preparing his heart-shaped cake, Tamar is turned into Amnon's sexual object since he watches her prepare the food—which reinforces the euphemistic overtone in the story.

Until this point, Amnon has played his role perfectly and smoothly since he craves intimacy with Tamar. As the text indicates, Amnon wants to eat from her hand (ואברה מיד), but in private, and thus so far nothing is inappropriate in public. In fact, until this point in the narrative, Amnon's actions seem harmless, which could suggest that Jonadab's scheme was only directed to assure Amnon a private meeting with Tamar.[38] In this regard, the argument that could be made is that Jonadab facilitates the private meeting, but he is not responsible for whatever Amnon does. In v. 9b, consequently, the scene changes drastically since the narrator states וימאן לאכול ("he refuses to eat"). Though by refusing the heart-shaped bread/cake, Amnon substitutes for something more appealing to his desires. In this context, as Hertzberg explains, one can assume that "Amnon's refusal to eat is regarded as a whim of the crown prince."[39] In other words, as the prince, Amnon is used to giving orders, which must be followed strictly. For example, the narrator indicates that Amnon commands his servants to "go away" (יצא) from his presence (v. 9). As Trible describes,

[36] Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 478 challenges the meaning of the verb לבב in the D-stem since it is somewhat strange.

[37] McCarter, *II Samuel,* 322 argues that Amnon calls Tamar "sister" (אחותי) "because of the traditional use of "brother/sister" terminology in love poetry" (Song 4:9).

[38] Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 287

[39] Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, 323

his command is "obeyed in identical language."[40] However, Amnon's imperious command of his servants may reflect "a courtly formula of dismissal,"[41] also found in Gen 45:1.

The departure of the servants is likely used to make it difficult for Tamar to produce witnesses in the event of a court trial, and thus, being unable to produce witnesses would result in favor of the accused party.[42] In this sense, Amnon tries to cover every base to protect himself from retaliation. This further illustrates that Amnon has command/power over his servants by showing how Amnon's power banishes all its limits. He commanded, and his servants obeyed. In this way, Amnon signals how Tamar should also obey his command—since his words have power due to his status as the crown prince and elder brother. Amnon's instruction to Tamar (v. 10) followed the same performative speech as his instructions to the servants (v. 9). Amnon never addresses Tamar by her name, thus showing how dismissive he is. By commanding Tamar into his chambers, Amnon reinforces his sexual desire for her, which transforms Tamar into the very object that he so desperately wants. Trible points out that what Amnon's eyes "have possessed, his hand seek to hold."[43] His apparent illness can only be satisfied by seeing and consuming the forbidden body of his sister. At this stage, Tamar is transformed into his meal/prey in Amnon's eyes. The transformation stage here is done smoothly so as not to make Tamar, his prey, run away from his sight.[44]

The narrator has been building his telling in such a way that the audience could figure out the true nature of Amnon's sick love (v. 2)—which now comes close to its fulfillment (v. 11). Though, the narrator delays telling his audience what is yet to happen to Tamar; instead, the narrative dramatically abrupt to reveal Amnon's true intentions with Tamar but such detail is held on pause to focus on Tamar's plea. Her plea, as Conroy argues, constitutes a moral obstacle to the fulfillment of Amnon's sexual desire.[45] She was expecting him to take/eat the cake (לבבות), but instead, Amnon grabs her (v. 11). With such doing, Amnon unveils the nature of his illness that is encompassed by his sick love for his half-sister. To this, Amnon's commands in v. 11 are very clear, he states: "Come!" (בואי). And then, he further adds: שכבי עמי אחותי ("Lie down with me, my sister!"). The sexual persuasion is done cleverly by adding a sweet/loving tone to the proposal. With this use of language, Amnon enacts the narrative's most powerful and dangerous words. In this sense, there is no doubt now that Amnon wants to have sexual intercourse with his half-sister.

I should further observe that the change to shorter sentences conveys the violence of Amnon's desire—which, according to Conroy, is reflected by the assonance in *î* that shows up four times.[46] In simple words, the movement of the telling here is rapid, denoting the change of events in a swipe downfall. Donna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn observe that "Amnon himself

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[40] Trible, *Texts of Terror,* 44

[41] Conroy, *Absalom*, 30, n. 45

[42] See Chapter VII–VIII in this dissertation.

[43] Trible, *Texts of Terror,* 43–4 argues that "the princess must suffer the consequences" of David's sin.

[44] Reis, "Cupidity and Stupidity," 43–60 observes that sexual intimacy is consensual since Tamar makes sexually arousing cakes for her brother. I cannot entirely agree with Reis regarding Tamar's willingness since she enters Amnon's chambers unaware of his scheme. As Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 381 rightly observe, Tamar, as a proper daughter, obeys her father's order; however, Amnon plots against Tamar's sexual well-being. Tamar does what Amnon desires, even though David did not tell Tamar to do what Amnon intended.

[45] Conroy, *Absalom*, 21

[46] *Ibid*., 30

perversely exploits the ambivalence of the term 'sister,' both calling upon it to invoke the authority of bother over sister and pressing it into services as a language of courtship and affection."[47] The usage of the verb שכב ("lay down") with the preposition עִם ("with") express a clear preference for sexual intercourse.[48] This clause, as Lipka argues, is "semantically neutral" and does not imply that the sexual act is either consensual or non-consensual.[49] As I pointed out elsewhere, the chain in which it is used suggests that the act is non-consensual and, by context, forceful. At this point, the audience is left wondering whether any of the servants would come to Tamar's aid since they might have heard her screams (Deut 22:24). Ironically, Absalom only retaliates against Amnon in the first place, and later David; however, Absalom does not react against those that were indirectly implicated in the assault—namely Jonadab and the servants—as the law implies. This further suggests that Absalom's actions are untimely, driven not by the assault against Tamar but rather by their rivalry.

As mentioned elsewhere, using familiar language evokes a brotherly affection in which none would expect a thing. In verse 11, for example, Amnon reuses the term אחותי ("my sister") in an attempt to bring the sexual request into a positive affirmation. This is to say that Amnon uses an address of endearment to bring her to comply. However, his initial attempt is met with her resistance, which marks her first attempt to diffuse the situation. In v. 12, we are told that Tamar refuses Amnon's request and calls it out by name. This is to show that Tamar resisted Amnon. First, she verbally resists the ravisher using the prohibition particle אל ("not") three times. She states:

אל־אחי	*No*, my brother!
אל־תעניני כי לא־יעשה כן בישראל	*Do not* violate me because such a thing is not done in Israel.
אל־תעשה את־הנבלה הזאת	*Do not* do this heinous offense.

In a personal appeal, Tamar matches Amnon's language by evoking their relationship. By doing so, Tamar desperately tries to hold on to their relationship tights. Similarly, Tamar frames the act as ענה ("violate") and thus doubles down, saying that such an act is a "heinous offense" (נבלה). Indeed, Tamar directly ordered him not to assault her. It seems possible that the employment of the term נבלה is used to remind the audience of two other cases in the narrative development of ancient Israel (e.g., Genesis 34 and Judges 19). The offer similar language to describe the sexual assault of Dinah and the *Pîlegeš* woman, respectively. Hence, the Hebrew term נבלה encompasses the sexual assault as a serious breach of the ancient laws and cultural values.[50]

At this point in the narrative, Tamar realizes that her brother intends to have sexual intercourse with her, whether she consents to it or not. Because of this, Tamar moves to her second plea with the ravisher, and this time around, she appeals to his moral sense. Verse 13 shows how Tamar revaluates her circumstance and rhetorically asks Amnon the following:

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[47] Gunn and Fewell, *Gender, Power, and Promise,* 144

[48] See Chapter IV for further discussion.

[49] Lipka, *Sexual Transgression*, 207

[50] See Chapters VII–VIII.

ואני אנה אוליך את־חרפתי	And where will I go with my shame?
ואתה תהיה כאחד הנבלים בישראל	As for you, you would be one of the foolish ones in Israel.
ועתה דבר־נא אל־המלך	Now, please speak to the king
כי לא ימנעני ממך	For he will not withhold me from you.

This rhetorical plea continues to match the language of v. 12. With such questions, Tamar first evokes the marriage customs of ancient Israel.[51] Although there is no right order in ancient Israel on how to take a woman as a wife, Amnon's actions do not point in the right direction. Tamar's characterization is thus portrayed as a strong-willed character. As Tamar seeks an alternative, she strongly reasons him to reconsider his intentions. Then, she doubles down on the matter using the Hebrew term נבל ("fool").[52] The term נבל is used to compare Amnon with the tradition of foolish people in ancient Israel—e.g., Nabal (1 Samuel 25), Abner (2 Samuel 3:33), and others.[53] In simple terms, Tamar tells Amnon that Israel will make out of him a fool (נבל).

In her last plea, Tamar calls upon the king to exercise authority. By doing so, Tamar distances herself from David as a father while evoking his authority as king.[54] She exhorts him not to do any harm whatsoever. In her assessment of the matter, Tamar's resistance becomes more practical. She understands that the deed would make her live with shame, and as for Amnon, it would expose him for all time to come as a fool. From her perspective, this would have a tremendous burden and a long-lasting effect on both. In a legal framework, bypassing the ancient norms and protocols directly implies that Amnon's proposed action is wrong and unwise. Because of this, Tamar uses shaming language to make Amnon reconsider. Her speech, as Conroy notes, "is carefully constructed and woven together on the level of sound, vocabulary, and syntax, and this enhances its importance within the story."[55] Her character understands that the illicit sexual encounter would jeopardize her opportunity for marriage. As a result, she wants to avoid an illicit sexual act (by force) that will spoil here her prospects. With such doing, Tamar proves herself to be a wise young woman in Israel[56] who can see the consequences of Amnon's wrongdoing even in the midst of her own victimization. In this way, she counters Amnon's obsessive passion with wisdom and reason—demonstrating with her actions that Jonadab is skillful in doing evil (v. 5; *cf*. Jer 4:22).

In v. 14, however, the narrator mentions Amnon's action with extreme brevity and in a cold-blooded tone. He uses five words, three of which are verbs (חזק, ענה, שכב) that do not come as a surprise since all had been planned out. Note that the narrator does not provide any verbal response from Amnon; rather, he describes the action. Because of this, one can argue that Amnon,

[51] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, 161

[52] Brenner, "*Deviation From Socio-Sexual Boundaries*," 99 sustains that the term נבלה refers to the "abomination" of Amnon's behaviour, and not the incestuous congress.

[53] Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 479

[54] Trible, *Texts of Terror,* 45

[55] Conroy, *Absalom*, 32

[56] Trible, *Texts of Terror,* 46; *cf*. Yamada, *Configurations of Rape,* 116

as an acquainted ravisher,[57] wants no more talking but rather doing. In other words, he wants to have intercourse with her. To this, v. 14 reads:

14 ולא אבה לשמע בקולה ויחזק ממנה ויענה וישכב אתה:	14 And he was not willing to listen to her voice; and thus, he *seized* her, *violated* her, and *slept* with her.

Amnon's actions are encompassed with the phrase ולא אבה לשמע בקולה ("he was not willing to listen to her voice"), clearly suggesting that the ravisher is acting without the verbal consent of the sexual partner.[58] Following this, the narrator frames the sexual assault within a three-verb chain that encompasses how violently the assault happened. First, the narrator uses the verb חזק ("to be strong," "to hold") to define the actions of Amnon. In the scholarly literature, we find a significant debate on how to understand the verb חזק; for example, the term has a range of semantic meanings, but it primarily relates to "strengthen" or "the display of strength." In the legal context, this could imply that the perpetrator took hold of something that was not his. He grabbed what he wanted without showing respect for the family's honor and the property protocol.[59] In our narrative, the usage of the verb implies that Amnon overpowered Tamar before performing the sexual act. The root חזק is used in cases of sexual nature; for example, Joseph is overpowered by the Egyptian woman (Gen 39:11; Deut 22:25)—which certainly makes it a stronger case for the act to be forceful rather than consensual.[60] Therefore, the resistance from the victim and the usage of the term חזק shows, as Robert Alter describes, "a clear sexual assault case."[61]

3.3. The Aftermath

What follows in this segment, however, is surprising and does not match the other two halves of the narrative; instead, the text moves to set Tamar into a perpetuated desolation (v. 20). Before addressing this, I should mention that a careful reading of Amnon's characterization demonstrates that his character exhibits a roller coaster of emotional states, moving from love to illness; and from there, in his final emotional state, hate (שנא) emerges. With this final emotion, Amnon's actions are described as violent. In v. 15, for instance, the narrator explicitly states that Amnon hated Tamar with a more tremendous hate (שנאה גדולה מאד). He says explicitly that Amnon's hate for Tamar was greater than his previous love for her (v. 1). In this regard, Amnon's love, as Gunn and Fewell observe, is exposed and expended as lust,[62] that is, as soon as the sexual desire ends, he acts with hate. To which v. 15 vocalizes Amnon's hate, קומִי לכי ("Get up! "Go away"). Note that in his words, Tamar is no longer "my sister" as in v. 11. He does not use a familiar language

[57] Acquainted ravisher refers to the perpetrator of a sexual crime against a known victim, which is consider as "date rape" or "acquaintance rape." Obviously, there are significant differences between these two types of sexual assault, see further discussion in Cowling, "Date Rape: The Evidence," 33–80. Furthermore, the sexual assault statistics show that if a victim is a female, her risk of being violated by someone known is "four times greater," than the "risk of being violated by a stranger," see more in Warshaw, *I Never Called It Rape*, 11.

[58] Southwood, *Marriage*, 124

[59] *Ibid*., 117

[60] The author uses the Hebrew term חזק, which relates to Deut 22:25. The act is described there as an act of sexual coercion. In this sense, Lipka, *Sexual Transgressions*, 203–223 denotes that the author of 2 Samuel 13 depicts his telling as a transgression against both communal and personal boundaries.

[61] Alter, *The David Story*, 269

[62] Leah is referenced in relation to Dinah, as her daughter (Gen 34:1); while Maacah is not even mentioned in the plot.

as he previously did, nor uses her name;[63] rather now, he rejects her—this is later amplified (see below). Tamar's response to Amnon ironically shows how her character embodies wisdom. She is the only one in the narrative who speaks wisely and truthfully, not even Jonadab, with his crafty understanding.[64]

By contrast, as Brueggemann observes, Tamar has a sense of moral propriety and her interests since his desire did not take her in.[65] She resists thoughtful appeals to his moral sense since the cost of his expulsion would be worse. In her third speech, indeed, Tamar speaks with sound clarity despite being sexually abused (v. 16). She categorically rejects Amnon's dismissal because of what it would mean for her future. In her plea, Tamar uses another prohibition particle (אל), summing up to four so far—which denotes how her character shows a resilient resistance against the ravisher. By pleading with the ravisher, Tamar emerges as a powerful character. The text reads,

16 אל־אודת הרעה הגדולה הזאת מאחרת אשר־עשית עמי לשלחני	16 "No, because this is a greater evil than the other which you have done with me, to send me away."

In her speech, Tamar makes it straightforward to Amnon that sending her away would be a greater evil (הרעה הגדולה הזאת) than that of the sexual assault. Tamar might likely have been evoking elements of the law tradition. According to the Israelite legal code, the ravisher would have been pardoned if he agreed to remain with the woman as a husband (Deut 22:28–29),[66] but this would confront future problems for Absalom (see below). I should mention that using the preposition עמי ("with me") implies that any future contact between them directly results from what happened in Amnon's chambers.[67] Thus, Tamar's voice and words go unheard by all the male characters in the narrative, especially her brother Amnon—who calls his servant to take her away from his presence (v. 17)—with such actions, the narrator reinforces Amnon's hate towards Tamar.

In his response, Amnon continues to reject any matter with Tamar—which is clearly shown in what he says to the servant (v. 17). In this verse, his orders are clear: Tamar is "this" (את־זאת). The woman he once loved (v. 1) is now nothing. With this usage of the language, Amnon completely disfranchises Tamar's agency. To which, he says, שלחו־נא את־זאת מעלי החוצה ("Please, send this away from me to the outside"). With this phrase, the narrator showcases how Amnon neglects Tamar—that is, as his sister, as a lover, as a future wife, and more boldly as an agent. In his orders, Amnon does not recognize any personhood in Tamar's character. In simple words, for him, Tamar is nothing—i.e., a merely disregarded object at his disposal. After the sexual assault, as Bader points out, Amnon distances himself from Tamar. She explains that Amnon does so in four expressions. She writes,

[63] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 46 observes that the name of Tamar never prefaces her speeches, which seems to be a literal license used by the narrator to hit at Tamar's powerlessness state.

[64] Following Trible's analysis, Bader, *Sexual Violence,* 146, n. 85 argues that the irony here is implicit: Tamar is wiser than Jonadab; *cf*. Peters, "Together in Guilt," 316–317

[65] Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 288

[66] I agree with Robinson, *Let Us Be Like The Nations*, 221; for further discussion see discussion, see Chapter VIII.

[67] Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 480

> "The first, in v. 15, when he ordered her to go (הלך); the second, when Tamar interpreted his dismissal as her being sent away (שלח). Next Amnon ordered his servant to send (נא) Tamar away, and lastly, the servant obeyed Amnon and made her go out (*hip'il* of יצא). The severance was achieved more quickly than the joining. Only four verbs tell of the separation (הלך, twice שלח, and יצא). Like the sexual intercourse, the separation was done against Tamar's will."[68]

The assault and the dismissal show us that Amnon acted irrationally—without objectively looking into the matter. He, as Bader correctly observes, distances himself from Tamar.[69] In other words, he disparately tries to cover up his wrongdoing by delegating the dismissal to the servant. It is worthwhile mentioning that Amnon's commandment to the servant is met with the same language of arrogance and prepotence shown earlier in vv. 9, 11, and 14–15. With his use of the language, Amnon expects the people under his domain to obey his orders without vacillation.

4. ROYAL INCEST AMONG FIRST-DEGREE RELATIVES

Earlier in the introduction, I have referred to the sexual intercourse between Amnon and Tamar as being an incestuous union that falls under the category of first-degree incest. However, the narrator never raises the question of incest; instead, this is done by implication.[70] In biblical material, first-degree incest is when consanguineous relatives (of the first, second, and even third generation)[71] are involved in any type of sexual pairing.[72] However, Stiebert suggests that this could be extended until the fourth generation.[73] Note that incest is not limited to consanguineous relatives but also includes in-laws (e.g., stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, and others). The biblical legal corpus regulates these practices to the extent that the legislator prohibits them—I will return to this in Chapter VIII.[74] In violation of the universal incest taboo,[75] there have been societies in which royal incest was practiced; for example, Egypt during the 18th and 19th dynasties (prior to 332 BC), the Ptolemaic (323–330 BC), and the Romans (30 BC to AD 324).[76] Like this, the story of 2 Samuel 13 has a significant parallel with the Egyptian and Phoenician royal family—who, in some

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[68] Bader, *Sexual Violence,* 150

[69] *Ibid*.

[70] Morrison, *2 Samuel*, 169

[71] See kinship diagram on Chapter VIII.

[72] Brenner, "*Deviation From Socio-Sexual Boundaries*," 91 defines incest as "Sexual [heterosexual] intercourse performed either by mutual consent, or else through unilateral coercion and/or trickery between sexually immature or sexually maturated persons, who are related either as blood kin, or else as marriage kin."

[73] Stiebert, *Frist-Degree Incest*, 51

[74] Girard, *Violence*, 115 argues that the purpose of the rite is to prevent the return of sacrificial crisis. For him, "rites are designed to prevent incest" since incest "is a produce of this crisis." Royal incest, even when it is deemed good, still festers with evil in the eyes of that culture. Where it is forbidden, it is still seen as beneficial; the king likes it and whatever he likes cannot be all bad since he brings both unity and salvation to the community. Further, institutionalized royal incest between siblings or parents and offspring has also been described in Zoroastrian Iran, the Incas, and in various African monarchies, see further discussion in Middleton, "Brother–Sister," 603–611.

[75] For scholars, the generally speaking, main explanation given for incest avoidance is mainly sociological rather than biological in origin and include Freudian guilt, and others which propose that the incest taboo serves simultaneously to maintain the cohesion of the family and encourage the establishment of affinal relations with other kin groups, see further discussion in van den Berghe, "Human Inbreeding Avoidance," 91–102; Thornhill, "Human Inbreeding and Marriage," 247–293.

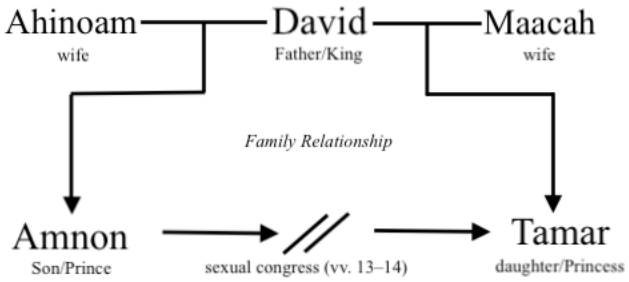
[76] Bittles, "Incest," 178–192

cases, married their siblings to preserve a pure strain of their lineage.[77] Perhaps this could further suggest the possibility that ancient Israel was not so distant from such practices; otherwise, why would the legislator prohibit such practices? For this reason, we now explore the implications of the incest motif in our story, which significantly impacts the Davidic household (from David → Asa).[78]

Incest often connotes coercive or coerced sexual intercourse between socially unequal blood kin. In this sense, it constitutes a sub-category of sexual misconduct, which was treated accordingly in the legal corpora. Brenner sustains that incest taboos are one of the means for organizing not only sexual boundaries—who can potentially have sexual intercourse with whom—but also social boundaries—how should coupling and consequently parenting and lineage within a given society be structured?[79] In this regard, the biblical narratives encompass a series of narratives that speak to these matters. Therefore, the analysis of cases like Amnon-Tamar incest is significant for understanding the notions of sex and gender within the HB. In the figure below, I present the close relationship between Amnon and Tamar, which directly points to any sexual contact between them as an act of incest.

Royal Incest

Figure IV



As I stated earlier, the narrator of our story makes the family links relationship indirectly. In other words, David is connected to the male characters in a direct form—while he is linked to Tamar by proxy rather than direct. In this sense, the narrator links all the characters by echoing their family ties. This begs the question of whether the sexual congress between half-siblings is permissible or is it incestuous/forbidden.

As briefly suggested, there are two views regarding incest unions in the biblical text. The first falls under the category of permissible unions in which one can find the examples of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 20:12)—in which two half-siblings married;[80] Jacob marrying two sisters (Genesis 29); Judah and Tamar sexual congress (Gen 38:15–36); and possibly, Amram and his aunt Jochebed (Exod 6:20; Num 26:59). It is also possible to include Lot and his daughters' sexual intercourse (Gen 19:30–38) under this category. As a note, even though these narratives present elements of the incest motif as an explicit theme, it is not the most dominant theme. Moreover,

[77] Brenner, "*Deviation From Socio-Sexual Boundaries*," 98 n. 24

[78] In the Davidic ancestry, there are various incestuous sexual parings. For analysis on incest on the throne of Judah, see Falk, "Incest and Parricide," 149–164.

[79] Brenner, "*Deviation From Socio-Sexual Boundaries*," 90

[80] see Hepner, "Abraham's Incestuous Marriage with Sarah," 143–155; *cf*. Brenner, "*Deviation From Socio-Sexual Boundaries*," 90–131.

these sexual pairings are presented as having been permissible during the pre-Mosaic era.[81] The second view, however, falls under the prohibition laws in Leviticus 18 and 20.[82] From the legal corpora, then the argument is evident that sex unions between first-degree relatives are forbidden. Concerning this, then where could one place the case of Amnon-Tamar incest? In contrast to these examples, the case of Amnon and Tamar is not part of the ancestral endogamy motif nor "mythical forebears,"[83] which means that they are not exempt from the incest taboo.[84] However, as Propp argues, Amnon and Tamar "are not ancient ancestors" or "ordinary folks" but rather royals.[85] This implies that their marriage union could be allowed as a particular case that could fall under permissible unions. As mentioned above, the closest parallel to the sexual intercourse between two half-siblings in the biblical narrative is the case of Abraham and Sarah, who are both children of Terah.[86]

Following this discussion, one can argue that these two views described above are echoed in 2 Samuel 13, especially in Tamar's (v. 13) and Absalom's (v. 20) speeches. In Tamar's first plea, one could interpret her being open to accepting the possibility of marrying her half-sibling. The text indicates that Tamar encourages Amnon to request her formally in marriage (v. 13). She even suggests that David himself is open to such a possibility since Tamar states, כי לא ימנעני ממך ("he will not withhold me from you"). Tamar seems to represent a faction of David's household open to the possibility of half-sibling marriage unions.[87] On the contrary, the second view is inscribed in Absalom's words to Tamar. In v. 20, Absalom states,

אחיה האמינון אחיך היה עמך	Has Amnon, your brother, been with you?
ועתה אחותי החרישי	For now, my sister, be silent!
אחיך הוא	He is your brother.

Once he sees Tamar's unwell appearance, Absalom immediately recognizes that the cause agent of her appearance is Amnon. As a result, Absalom asks whether Amnon has been sexual with her since the expression היה עמך ("been with you") could connote sexual intercourse. What is essential, however, is the repetitive familiar language used, 2x אחיך ("your brother") and אחותי ("my sister). These terminologies reinforce the implied legal prohibition of marriage unions between first-degree relatives. By evoking the family ties, Absalom prevents Tamar from the possibility of seeking a marriage union with her half-brother Amnon—which ultimately would not benefit

[81] Propp, "Kingship in 2 Samuel 13," 44

[82] See Chapter VIII.

[83] For further discussion on kingship and myth, see Oden, "The Patriarchal Narratives as Myth," 106–130

[84] Propp, "Kingship in 2 Samuel 13," 44

[85] *Ibid*.

[86] See genogram in Chapter III.

[87] Flak, "Incest and Parricide," 163 argues that royal incest was publicly accepted in the earlier era of Judah (2 Sam 13:13). He further adds that royal incest may have acceptable during the time of Kings David, Salomon, Rehoboam, and Abijam—though such practice was certainly condemned by the legislator in Leviticus, which punishes the couplable parties with the death penalty.

Absalom's political aspirations.[88] Thus, the silence here might be best understood as stopping Tamar from seeking justice through marriage.

As for Amnon, his definition of first-degree marriage unions is somewhat unclear because of an ambiguity in the text. First, his action towards Tamar at the start of the narrative is driven by love (v. 2). In contrast, in the development of the plot, such love is transformed into illness (v. 2) → sexual desire (v. 8) → physical obsession (v. 11) → sexual assault (v. 14) and later rejection → hate (v. 15). In this matter, Amnon relation to Tamar is defined; however, it does not say anything about his position on whether he is inclined to accept the sexual pairing or not. Second, after the assault, Amnon rejected a possible union, which could have strengthened Amnon's rightful claim to the Davidic throne succession by marrying the king's daughter—like his father and Michal (1 Sam 18:17–27). It is unclear from the text because Amnon rejects such a marriage possibility. Do such reasons have to do with being moral or immoral? The answer is not so simple to argue since he already had sexual intercourse with her—so this might not be the reason. Significantly, harm against Tamar by default is an attack on Amnon, her primary guardian. So, by attacking her, Amnon sends a direct message to Absalom that the rivalry between them is escalating drastically.

5. CONCLUSION

The above survey of 2 Samuel 13 depicts the sexual violence committed against a female body as an attack on her male guardian. In ancient Israel, as discussed above and elsewhere, sexual assaults were not committed against a female *per se* but rather against the male guardians and rightsholders. On the one hand, this means that the sexual assault is intrinsically connected to the Amnon and Absalom rivalry scheme. In other words, the sexual assault is an attack on David's role as father and king, and even more, an attack on Absalom rather than on Tamar since he is her male guardian, as she is considered his possession/responsibility. By attacking Tamar, Amnon sends a direct message to Absalom, which emasculates him and thus prevents Absalom from ascending to the Davidic Throne in this sense. This leaves us with the rivalry of the two male siblings as the core issue in the narrative framework—that is, two opposite forces fighting for David's throne, while the sexual assault and incest take a second stage. On the other hand, the narrative demonstrates that female figures, regardless of their social status, are silenced and objectified by their male guardians in a power struggle scheme.

In this regard, Tamar's silencing is surprisingly problematic since it reflects a pattern that repeatedly shows within patriarchal and phallogocentric societies. At the same time, Absalom does more harm than good by preventing Tamar from speaking out. In other words, he contributes to Tamar's disenfranchisement by silencing her. I should restate that Tamar is neglected and silenced by the three males (Amnon, Absalom, and David) who should have protected her. For instance, Amnon sexually assaults Tamar, Absalom silences Tamar, and David's inaction neglects Tamar as his daughter. In this sense, the combination of the sexual assault and Tamar's struggle for justice is what ultimately drives her to such a traumatic episode. She is a victim that keeps voicing her pain throughout the narrative and beyond it. She is desolated, neglected, and disenfranchised. In her desolation, Tamar's body is the embattled landscape that manifests the ravages of war, the plundering of the body.

[88] Propp, "Kingship in 2 Samuel 13," 45

Project Summary, Johanna Rönnlund

The Performance of Complaint: A Performance Analysis of Translations of the Psalter

Throughout millennia, communities have prayed the words of the Psalter orally. Many of the stylistic characteristics of the Psalms facilitate oral performance, and features like parallelism, chiasm, repetition, sharp contrasts, and visual imagery therefore connect the oral transmission and use of the texts with the texts of the Hebrew Bible (HB). Further, the oral use of Bible translations is broad and diverse, but are translations adapted for oral use and are the oral features of the Hebrew text transferred and transferable in translation?

My PhD-project examines select individual complaint psalms using performance criticism. The project focuses on biblical Hebrew poetry and contemporary Bible translations in Swedish and explores orality-oriented exegesis as a tool in creating orally poignant translations for communal reading, prayer, and liturgy today. The aim of the study is to (a) provide insights regarding the oral discourse of the Psalter, with a focus on exemplar complaint psalms. Selected texts include Psalm 13 and 3, however additional psalms may be added. Further, this investigation aims to (b) demonstrate how the performative elements of the selected texts are transformed in translation and what is lost or changed in translations; and to (c) contribute to the development of coherent methods for oral exegesis as a tool in Bible translation.

My project relies on the framework of biblical performance criticism (BPC). I use scholars such as Peter Perry, Richard Schechner, Ernst Wendland, and Ruth Finnegan to define performance and orality in relation to textual analysis and translation. I build upon the historical and current oral use of the Hebrew text as well as the Bible translations. The aim is, however, not to investigate historical performances of the texts. Rather, the analysis is based on the multiplicity of performers and audiences in different times and historical and cultural settings. The performance situation functions as the hermeneutical starting point from which the texts are analysed and the analysis is textually oriented and focuses on features in the text that have a function in the performance situation. The investigation, thus, aims to address the inherent performative qualities of the text as a means to analyse what happens when the text is performed. Thus, to answer questions such as: According to the text, who is addressed? What stylistic features in the text are actualised in an oral performance situation? In summary, this study rests on the assumption of an oral use of the Psalter but does not seek to investigate in which setting or on what religious occasion the Israelites used the texts. Instead, the focus is on identifying oral features within the texts of the Psalter and analysing their function in a hypothetical performance situation.

The project will contain three main steps of analysis. The first step (1) is to analyse the Masoretic text (MT), with a focus on the text's oral features and poetic devices. Because of the project's focus on Bible translations, the primary analysis of the biblical texts will be conducted on its canonical form, but the study will address textual critical, and redactional critical issues when relevant. The orally centred exegesis will engage the theories of Wendland and methods from the study of Biblical Hebrew poetry. Further, the analysis will include reflections on the Masoretic accent marks, which are in essence reading directions. The second step (2) is to analyse the contemporary Bible translations in Swedish. Through the methods of Wendland in combination with methods from the study of Biblical Hebrew poetry, the analysis will identify the oral and poetic features of the texts and compare them to the devices in MT. The analysis of the Swedish translations will be conducted in English and, when needed, the texts will be translated to facilitate the discussion. The third step (3) is to develop example translations of the selected texts. The starting point for the translations will be the model described by Dan Nässelqvist, to create a translation both *of* and *for* performance.[1] Furthermore, the aim of the translations is: a) to the highest extent possible render the Hebrew accurately and understandably in the target language, and b) to the highest extent possible, transfer the features from oral discourse into the target language. The translations will then be compared to the Hebrew text and the contemporary translations in order to examine to what degree and in what ways the oral analysis has provided insights into the translation.

The paper I present this year is a chapter from the first step, i.e. an analysis of a Hebrew text. The current plan is for the text about Psalm 13 to be the first part of the analysis followed by an analysis of Psalm 3 and one or more other psalms. In the next step, the text about Psalm 13 will the basis for a comparison with Swedish translations and the creation of new translations.

[1] Nässelqvist, 'Translating the Aural Gospel: The Use of Sound Analysis in Performance-Oriented Translation', 50.

Preface

Thank you for reading and commenting on my paper! In this paper I analyse Psalm 13 using performance criticism. The text is a work in progress with the goal for it to be a part of the analysis section of my dissertation.

I welcome any feedback but would particularly appreciate comments regarding:

- Application of theory: Does my application of the theory work? Where is improvement needed?
- Structure: Does the structure work and facilitate the argumentation? Does the distinction between *psalmist* and *performer* make sense?
- Argumentation: Is anything unclear in my argumentation? What is convincing and what needs to be revisited?

Thank you again for reading my paper, I look forward to an interesting conversation.

/Johanna

From Performer to Audience and Back Again: A Performance Analysis of Psalm 13

Introduction

In this paper I will analyse Psalm 13 from a performance perspective. I will examine the psalm as a script for oral performance and analyse features in the text that are actualised in an oral performance situation. These features include dialogical qualities of the text, such as, whose voice is speaking and who is being addressed. It also includes textual features that facilitate performance, such as, references, cues, mnemonic features, visual imagery, and repetition. I will begin the paper with an outline of the dialogical characteristics of the text. There, I will structure the text based on *speaker, addressee* and *type of discourse*. This outline follows Carleen Mandolfo's work with dialogical tensions in the psalms of complaint.[1] The aim of that analysis is not to identify historical speakers and audiences, rather the analysis is based on the multiplicity of performers and audiences in different times and historical and cultural settings.[2] The analysis is textually oriented and focuses

[1] I have adapted Mandolfo's *petitioner* to *performer* to better suit this project. I have also changed the order of the outline to emphasise the speaker and addressee in contrast to the type of discourse. Carleen Mandolfo, *God in the Dock: Dialogic Tension in the Psalms of Lament*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 357 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 31.

[2] In regard to the concept audience in relation to Habakkuk, Jeanette Mathews, *Performing Habakkuk: Faithful Re-Enactment in the Midst of Crisis* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2012), 71 writes: "The term 'audience' in relation to the book of Habakkuk has multiple layers. There would have been an audience for an eighth century prophet, for the prophetic traditions as they were used and transmitted in subsequent generations, for the compilers of the canonical text in about the fifth century and for later Jewish and

on features in the text that have a function in the performance situation, and the text is, thus, read as a script. The subsequent analysis is structured under the headings of *Script*, *Performer* and *Audience*. I will begin with analysing the psalm as *script* which entails an analysis of the themes, sequence, and stylistics of the psalm.[3] The analysis of the *performer* and *audience* builds upon the previous analysis of the text's dialogical qualities and its themes, sequence, and stylistics. There I will analyse what function these features have in relation to a performance situation. Thus, I will examine the features of the texts in regard to how the psalm portrays the performer/audience and how the stylistics aid the performer (i.e. features that facilitate oral performance) as well as the audience (i.e. features that facilitate aural reception).

Dialogical Characteristics

Verse	Speaker	Addressee	Type of Discourse
1	Performer/Other	Human audience	Framing the performance
2	Performer	Divine audience	Invocation, question
3	Performer	Divine audience	Question
4	Performer	Divine audience	Petition
5a	Performer	Divine audience	Petition
5b	Performer/Other	Divine audience	Petition, speech of the enemy
5c	Performer	Divine audience	Petition
6a	Performer	Divine audience	Exclamation of trust
6b	Performer	Human audience	Vow to praise

Christian faith communities who preserved and used the book as Scripture. Because of the privileged place Scripture holds in faith communities across generations, the identity of the audience cannot be limited to any one place and time, but continues through to the present day." The same can be said for the book of Psalms which has been used in different ways in liturgy as well as private and public prayer, reading, and singing through millennia, as identified by for example Carleen Mandolfo, 'Language of Lament in the Psalms', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 116. The multiplicity of performance contexts (including both performers and audiences) affirms the texts function as script in oral performance. However, it entails an intrinsic difficulty to distinguish one individual/group in a specific time and place as *the performer/audience* par excellence. The difficulties to determine the original setting of the psalms also entails problems to conclude who and in what Sitz im Leben *the original performer/audience* was. Although historical investigations are of immense value for biblical studies, the position undertaken here aims to address the inherent performative qualities of the text as a means to analyse what happens when the text is performed. Thus, to answer questions such as: According to the text, who is addressed? What stylistic features in the text are actualised in an oral performance situation? The most obvious example of a feature that is actualised in oral performance is phonetic features of different kind. In quiet reading, a reader can notice the repetition of letters and sounds, however, when the sounds are not heard the feature is not actualised as a phonetic repetition. Similarly, audience engaging features such as cues, well-known references, and dramatic imagery are experienced in quiet reading, however, they are actualised in oral performance where their function of engaging listeners becomes operational. The same can be said for structural features such as parallelism and chiasm (which are very common in biblical Hebrew poetry). They can be noticed and appreciated for their semantic and visual effect in quite reading, but they are actualised as mnemonic and audience engaging features in an oral performance situation.

[3] As accounted for above, the hermeneutical perspective undertaken here is that of the psalm as a script for performance. This is also the basis for the analysis of the performer and audience. In the analysis of the psalm as *script* the reader of the I-voice of the psalm will be referred to as *psalmist* and in the analysis under the heading *performer* I will refer to the I-voice as *performer*. This distinction serves to illustrate the difference between the textual analysis of the psalm as script and the investigation of how the features identified relate specifically to a performer.

Script

The psalm begins with a section of complaint,[4] where the psalmist expresses its hardship. The addressee of the complaint is evident through the divine name in the first line. The individual experience of the psalmist is highlighted through the reiteration of the 1sg. pronoun throughout the section. The structure of the complaint is built upon both repetition and change,[5] as עד־אנה is continually reiterated together with new themes, new information, and in different structures. The question suggests a continuous suffering, but it also implies an aspect of hope; the psalmist expects salvation from YHWH. The contrast between continuous suffering and expected salvation is most distinct in the first question where the word *for ever* (נצח) is placed in tension with the question *how long*.[6]

The first two questions focus on the divine-human relationship. The questions are parallel in theme, length, and structure as both questions consist of one bicolon. The third question relates to the internal suffering of the psalmist. The portrayal of the suffering is distinctively longer than the previous question which draws out the description and highlights it.[7] The fourth question describes the enemy as exulted over the psalmist which concretises the threat against the psalmist. The length of the question is shortened from eight to five words, and the lack of a following parallel bicolon makes the statement of the enemies appear even shorter.[8] Whereas the psalmist's excruciating experience needs to be explained vividly, the devastating revelation of the enemy simply needs to be stated. The enemy posits a contrast to YHWH. Whereas YHWH is passive and distant, the enemy is active and close with a threatening presence over the psalmist (עלי).

In verse 4 the mood shifts through a cluster of imperative verbs which introduces the actual petition. The petition section is tightly connected and aims to urge YHWH to act. It contains two cola with imperative verbs followed by three cola that describe a "worst-case scenario" that will happen if YHWH does not act. The description of the scenario is characterised by a "narrativity" with continuous progression between lines.[9] Interestingly, verse 5 even includes the speech of one

[4] I align with a majority of scholars that identify a three-part division of the psalm as v. 2—3 *complaint,* v. 4—5 *petition,* v. 6 *vow to praise,* see for example A. A. Anderson, *The New Century Bible Commentary, Vol. 1: Psalms 1-72* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 128–30; Peter C. Craigie and Marvin Tate, *Psalms 1-50,* 2nd edition, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2004), 140; Rolf A. Jacobson, 'Psalm 13: Waiting on the Lord', in *The Book of Psalms,* New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014), 158; Helmer Ringgren, *Psaltaren 1–41* (Uppsala: EFS-förl., 1987), 82–84 makes a twofold division of the psalm into Lament, v 1–5 (Klagan) and Confidence and promise, v 6 (Förtröstan och löfte).

[5] Jacobson, 'Psalm 13: Waiting on the Lord', 159–60.

[6] The durational expression expresses the dire situation. As Craigie states: "He does not know how long, but it looked like forever." Quote on p. 142. Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50,* 141–42.

[7] As Jacobson, 'Psalm 13: Waiting on the Lord', 160 notes, the poem moves from five words (cola 1—2) to six words (cola 3—4) and then to eight words (cola 5—7). Although this is true regarding number of words, the first two questions both consist of five beats since one word in colon 3 does not have any emphasis.

[8] I use the term colon (sg. cola pl.) to define one line, bicolon (sg. bicola pl.) to designate two separate lines, and tricolon (sg. tricola pl.) to designate three parallel lines.

[9] Alter describes the narrative tendencies of biblical Hebrew poetry as "a consequentiality of images and ideas that is incipiently narrative and may include brief sequences of explicit narrative development." He further writes: "It is far more common to find

of the characters which increases its narrative properties. Themes from the complaint are reused in this section.[10] The themes are, however, intensified as the complaint frames the description in a question of *how long* whereas in the petition section they are included in a finalised scenario of defeat. The petition increases the number of phonetic repetitions, and uses sound pairs[11] to further highlight the intensifying progression and the urge for YHWH to act.[12] Moreover, the repetition connects the lines and demonstrates the unity of this thematic part.

In verse 6 there is a dramatic shift in mood marked by *but I* (ואני) followed by an exclamation of trust and a vow to praise. This section once again focuses on the relationship between God and the psalmist, however, the relationship has vastly changed. The implicitly expected salvation in the question of *how long* is now explicitly celebrated. The coming salvation seems, however, only perceptible through the psalmist's trust. The psalm has at this point suggested no reason to trust YHWH, but the psalmist claims to have trust in YHWH. This represents a contrast to the previously described torment and the hypothetical scenario that will happen if YHWH fails to intervene. The contrast with other sections is highlighted through repeated words from the broader context of the psalm. This repetition functions as a means to highlight certain areas of contrast and change. Most distinctively, the repetition of גיל contrasts the hypothetical rejoicing of the enemy with the awaited joy of the psalmist. Jacobson highlights the importance of repetition in this psalm and identifies the repetition of גיל as a turning point in the argumentation of the psalm. He argues that the psalm uses this contrast to argue that a victory over the psalmist is a victory over their God. Thus, the psalmist argues for YHWH's intervention by asserting that they will rejoice in YHWH (thus, they are on YHWH's side) while the enemy will rejoice over the psalmist's fall (and thus, they are neither on the psalmist's nor YHWH's side).[13] Further, the repetition of לבב/לב highlight the contrast in regard to the psalmist's inner experience. In the complaint the

episodic narrativity rather than actual narrative in biblical verse." Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, Revised Edition (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 32; 73.

[10] Building upon Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message*, trans. Ralph D. Gehrke (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 39; Jacobson, 'Psalm 13: Waiting on the Lord', 160–61. Notes that the three portions of the lament consist of a You-complaint (complaint against God), I-complaint (complaint regarding the personal circumstances/suffering), and They-complaint (complaint regarding the enemy). These themes are matched in the petition with a You-request, I-request, and They-request.

[11] Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2007), 104 defines sound pairs as "the repetition in parallel words or lines of the same or similar consonants in any order within close proximity." I follow Berlin's definition, however, I broaden it to also engage the vowels in the analysis.

[12] Sound is crucial in the parallelism that connects cola 10 and 11 which are connected through a repetition of verb forms and sounds. The two first verbs in cola 10 and 11 (הביטה and האירה) match in form (Hiphil, imperative, masculine, singular) providing a phonetic resemblance. The second imperative of the first line answer me (ענני) is not matched by a corresponding verb, but by a noun and personal pronoun that correspond on a phonetic level, my eyes (עיני). The second important sound pair in the petition is in cola 12 (המות) and 14 (אמוט). both words end their respective line which further highlights their similarity. The words connect the third line of the tricolon with the second line of the following bicolon and, thus, they increase the connection between the two lines and the two parts of the petition. There is a vague semantic similarity between the words which is enhanced by their phonetic resemblance, and the sound pair therefore emphasises the dire fate of the psalmist.

[13] Rolf A. Jacobson, *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter*, The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Stydues (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 50.

psalmist's heart is suffering, and in the vow to praise the psalmist's heart is expected to rejoice. The praise section is also distinguished by its use of phonetic repetition. This section is characterized by multiple sounds which move within lines, within the bicolon, and between bicola.[14] Thus, the degree of repeated sounds is increased in this part both in terms of number of repetitions and number of sounds repeated. This spread repetition creates a well-sounding and closely connected phrase. In contrast, the complaint and petition sections use a punctual, more explicit use of phonetic repetition that primarily consist of repeated words and sound pairs. This phonetic difference further highlights the contrast between the praise and the rest of the psalm.

In summary, the psalm consists of three parts marked by both thematic and stylistic differences. The complaint section describes the current situation of need and invokes YHWH in a section of questions. The petition section is marked by a shift to imperative requests. The psalm argues for the requests through a section characterised by a distinct narrativity which is strengthened by the use of sound pairs. The vow to praise introduces a dramatic shift in tone and style. This shift is highlighted through repeated words and an increased number of repeated sounds spread throughout the section.

Performer

The psalm is expressed in a 1sg. voice throughout and there are no evident liturgical responses where an audience would speak. The 1sg. voice suggests a single performer but the individual may also be a representative for the community. This presents three possible scenarios regarding the performer of the psalm. Firstly, the psalm can be performed by an individual (either in solitude or in a communal setting). Secondly, the psalm can be performed by an individual who functions as a representative for the people. Thirdly, the psalm can be performed in a collective 1sg. voice by the community. There are arguments for all these alternatives.[15]

As described above, there is a 1sg. voice throughout the text. There are, however, two instances where there is ambiguity regarding who is speaking. The first is regarding the speaker of the paratext which can be read by the performer or by someone else as an introduction to the prayer. Interestingly, the paratext connects the psalm to a communal context, which poses a contrast to the individual voice and focus. This suggests that the text has been performed in

[14] Specifically, the first two lines repeat /b/ and /ch/. The second line also contains a repetition of /l/, /g/, and /i/. The third line continues the repetition of /l/ and /i/, and the fourth line continues the repetition of /g/ and /l/.

[15] As identified by Harris Birkeland, *Die Feinde Des Individuums in Der Israelitischen Psalmenliteraturen* (Oslo, 1933); Harris Birkeland, *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms*, Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, II (Oslo: Oslo, 1955). Birkeland is partly followed by Sigmund Mowinckel, *Offersang Og Sangoffer: Salmediktningen i Bibelen* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co., 1951), 227–76 who makes a distinction between the national complaints in a 1sg. voice and actual songs of the individual. The latter is mainly songs in times of sickness. Mowinckel suggests that Ps 13 is a national complaint since the focus of the psalm is the description of the distress (p. 221).

communal settings at some point in history.[16] The communal setting allows for all possible reading alternatives mentioned above. In a performance situation, the paratext both frames the performance and connects it to king David. This connects the prayer to the history of Israel in general and to the David narratives in particular.

The second example of speaker ambiguity, is the shift in voice in v 5, where the enemy speaks to express their victory over the psalmist. The citation of the enemy is in the context of the psalmist's description of what will happen if YHWH does not intervene. By providing the enemy with a voice, the vague threatening presence of the enemy becomes intensified and concretized. If the performer sleeps in death (and, thus, is eternally silenced), the enemy will speak in victory. The silence of the performer and the speech of the enemy illustrates this complete defeat. At first glans, the speaker appears to be the performer who is quoting the enemy. However, as Mandolfo and Hildebrandt has established, many psalms contain ambiguity in regard to who is speaking.[17] It is plausible to perceive a situation where someone other than the psalmist reads the enemy's speech. This would create a contrast of voices that would emphasise the quotation and vocally illustrate the silencing of the psalmist and the victory of the enemy. Even if the performer speaks, the quotation leads to a dialogical shift as the performer speaks for someone else.[18] The quote, thus, provides a theatrical quality to this section.

The psalm contains direct communication between the performer and YHWH. This is set in the complaint section which is built upon a high degree of "interactive discourse,"[19] i.e. discourse where the audience is addressed directly. Firstly, the dialogue is established through the initial invocation. The invocation serves to open up communication between the performer and YHWH. Westermann writes: "Calling upon a person by name is the necessary presupposition of calling on God. By means of the address, contact is established which makes talking to God possible. An address is something like opening a door. If a person addresses God by name – or vice versa – something happens at that moment. The address is an event which unites the one who calls

[16] Since this is not a historical study aimed to identify *the way* the psalm was performed in *the original performance setting* it is out of the scope to enter into a discussion regarding in what way the psalm was used in its first setting. Rather, I will identify the various ways in which the psalm can and, likely, have been performed. As argued above, there has been a variety of performance settings throughout history. This vide use and variety of settings regarding both culture and time suggests different usages, only some of which will be mentioned here. The later addition of the paratext and accent marks also support this diachronical perspective, since the text in itself contains various layers added in different historical times and settings. Both the paratext and the accent marks are textual features that connect the text to performance situations. The paratext does this in two ways: Firstly, it frames the psalm in a communal setting. Secondly, it connects performances of the psalm to Israelite history through King David. The Masoretic accents are essentially aids for performance, as they mark pauses, connections between words, and syntactical relationships. Without a diachronic perspective, it would not be possible to engage these textual features that are highly relevant for a performance analysis. They are important both because of their function but also because they have been used for performances throughout the history of the Masoretic text.

[17] Mandolfo, *God in the Dock: Dialogic Tension in the Psalms of Lament*; Samuel Hildebrandt, 'Whose Voice Is Heard? Speaker Ambiguity in the Psalms', *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (2020): 197–213.

[18] Jacobson, *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter*, 52–53.

[19] Ernst R. Wendland, *Finding and Translating the Oral-Aural Elements in Written Language: The Case of the New Testament Epistles* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2008), 25.

with the one who is called."[20] Secondly, the interactive discourse continues in the questions, where the performer directly addresses the audience (in this case YHWH, for further analysis se *audience*). Thus, the performer moves directly and abruptly into unrestrained speech to the deity. The relational focus of the first two question and the accusations against YHWH provide an intensity to the beginning of the performance. The intensity is highlighted through the persistent questioning of *how long* which does not leave any apparent room for response.

There is a distinct individual focus on the performer which runs through the psalm.[21] This focus is set from the beginning where 1sg. pronouns designate all actions as affecting the performer personally. The emphasis is apparent in the lengthening of the third question that portrays the performer's agonising experience. The suffering is designated to the psalmist through the terms *in my soul* and *in my heart* and, thus, bodily imagery is used to highlight the personalised experience of suffering. The use of bodily imagery in reference to the performer also occurs in v. 4 and 6. In v. 4, the request for YHWH to *light up my eyes* utilises bodily imagery to personalise the prayer for salvation and connect it directly to the performer personally. In v. 6 the *heart* of the performer is expected to rejoice. This reference connects the coming joy to the performer's person and illustrates the drastically different situation expected for the performer who will move from agony to joy. In summary, there is a strong focus on the performer that is expressed through repeated pronouns and portrayed in bodily imagery that emphasises the internal and personal experience of the performer. These features concentrate the attention on the performer and increases the intensity of the cry and portrayal of current distress. In the petition, bodily image is used to personalise the prayer of change and in the vow to praise bodily imagery is repeated as a means to contrast the expected joy with the current agony.

The petition section is distinguished through its requesting character and an intensification of the themes from the complaint. The shift to the petition is marked by a cluster of imperatives and a change to the usage of sound pairs. The combination of imperative verbs with evident phonetic repetitions demonstrates the importance of sound and suggests that this section can be marked through a louder voice or more intense reading. The sound pairs may have a mnemonic function for the performer as well as highlight the intensity of the section for listeners. Thus, the increase in repeated sounds emphasise the sections requesting character and the intensification of the themes.

The vow to praise represents a dramatic shift in theme. The initial exclamation *But I* marks the thematic change with a continued focus on the performer, who in this section personifies trust in YHWH. Craigie identifies a tension between "past experience and future hope" in this

[20] Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message*, 37–38.
[21] This is evident in the eleven repeated 1sg. pronouns in the psalms.

psalm, where the present situation may compromise the trust built upon previous experiences.[22] Craigie writes: "The present reality was of such nature as to undermine that past experience of trust, but it is in the nature of confidence to transform the present on the basis of past experience and thus to create hope for the future; and so the psalmist can affirm that he will 'rejoice' in God's deliverance, even though it has not yet come." [23] As Craigie identities, there is a tension between past experiences and known stories about YHWH's good deeds and the distress portrayed in the psalm, and the distress threatens to undermine the trust. However, the initial *But I* expresses a persistent decision not to allow the current circumstances to weaken the hope. Rather the performer relies on trust to YHWH to change the present situation. In this context, the descriptions of the difficult circumstances serve as the background to depict the performer as the ideal believer who remains in trust despite difficulties. The exclamation of trust, emphasised by the initial *But I*, encourages the performer and the audience to remain in trust in YHWH regardless of the difficult life experiences.

The next colon expresses the hope that the performer awaits their *heart* to move from agony to joy. The joy of the performer poses a contrast to the hypothetical joy of the enemy portrayed in the petition. This statement portrays a hopeful outcome and encourages the performer and the audience to remain in trust, since a change is coming. The contrast between the previously portrayed misery and the awaited salvation is highlighted through the repeated words in the greater context of the psalm as well as a higher degree of repeated sounds in terms of both number of repetitions and number of sounds repeated. Accordingly, the thematic shift is highlighted through a shift in the use of sound. The extended use of repetition creates a well-sounding and closely connected phrase that poses a contrast to the distinct use of sound pairs and repeated words in the other parts of the psalm and, thus, it reinforces the thematic contrast.

In the final bicolon of the psalm, the performer explicitly addresses the human audience in a declaration that they will sing to YHWH. Even though the explicit audience shifts, the focus is still on the performer. The performer expresses that they will sing to YHWH as a result of YHWH's good deeds toward them. The vow to praise allows the performer to commit to a life of continued praise, and the statement that YHWH has been good assists the performer to envision past experiences of good deeds done by YHWH. Envisioning the goodness of YHWH builds a bridge over the tension between past experiences and future hope created by the current misery, as it assists the performer to remain in trust and to maintaine the hope that will eventually change the situation.

[22] Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 143.
[23] Craigie and Tate, 143.

In summary, the focus on the performer continues throughout the last section of the psalm. The performer is presented as an ideal believer that remains in trust despite the difficult circumstances. The passage assists the performer and audience to remain in trust through a portrayal of a hopeful, future outcome and a reference to good deeds YHWH has done in the past. This builds a bridge over the tension between past experience and future hope identified by Craigie, as the current prayer builds on good past experiences to create hope for a good outcome in the future.

If the psalm is considered as a script for ritual, it would be what Schechner and Turner refers to as a rite of transportation. They define this as a ritual where a person is moved during the ritual, but when they leave the ritual nothing definitive has changed in the life circumstances. They compare this to rites of transformation, which is primarily rites of passage. In a wedding, the life situation of the people getting married have changed during the ceremony. They begin unmarried and when they leave they are married and life is changed. In contrast to this, a rite of transportation moves the person during the ritual but they would be "dropped of where she or he entered" when the ritual is over.[24] Every ritual does something to the participants. This is evident in Schechner's distinction between ritual and theatre, which is primarily based on the efficacy of ritual in contrast to the entertainment feature of theatre.[25] In a rite of transportation nothing in the external circumstances has changed during the course of the ritual. Looking at the psalm from this perspective some things become evident. The psalmist is moved and changed during the psalm. The psalmist is moved through a complaint of YHWH's persistent abandonment, to a request for YHWH to act, and end in a praise of YHWH's good deeds. There is a development here that indicate change within the ritual. However, the psalm does not indicate that the circumstances of the psalmist has changed. Accordingly, when the psalmist leaves the ritual and goes back to life the external circumstances are what they were before the ritual. Perhaps something has changed within the psalmist and in the relationship to YHWH, but the difficult circumstances have likely not changed yet. The psalmist is, thus, in one sense left at the same place where they were when the rite began. Thus, when regarded as script for ritual the psalm represents a ritual of transportation.

Although nothing yet has changed in the difficult situation of the psalmist, the praise section indicates that the ritual has had effect. Firstly, it has moved the psalmist from complaint to praise. Secondly, as will be argued below, the praise as well as other texts within the HB indicate that complaint can be considered the starting point of salvation. Considering this, the complaint

[24] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Third Edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 72.
[25] Richard Schechner, 'From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The Structure/Process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad', in *Symposium of the Whole: A Range of Discourse Toward an Ethnopoetics* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1983), 311–24; Richard Schechner, 'Ritual and Performance', in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology: Humanity, Culture and Social Life*, ed. Tim Ingold (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), 613–47.

has mobilised YHWH and connected the struggle of the individual to other well-known stories of YHWH's salvific activity. So even though the circumstances have not yet changed, the complaint enables the coming of salvation.

Audience

The psalm consists to a high degree of direct communication where the psalmist addresses YHWH. Firstly, the questions in the complaint are an example of interactive discourse. The first colon also has the function of invoking YHWH. The divine name does not appear in any of the other three questions, which demonstrates the function as both question and invocation. By calling on YHWH by name contact between the performer and the divine audience is established,[26] places the entire psalm within a framework of direct communication between YHWH and the performer. This direct communication is uninterrupted throughout the question-based complaint portion of the psalm. Secondly, the invocation together with the question may be examples of a genre-marking form. Wendland defines genre marking-forms as well-known words or phrases that effectively communicate genre to an audience.[27] Gunkel and other scholars have demonstrated that complaint psalms commonly begin with an invocation of YHWH.[28] Further, the question *how long* is common in complaint psalms,[29] and it occurs both in the Psalter and in complaints in other parts of the HB.[30] The frequency of these two features in complaints indicate that they are part of a "complaint language," and the placement of them in the beginning of the psalm suggests that they may have functioned as a way to communicate genre. This suggestion of genre, would be strengthened by the sombre tone of the specifying lines (the second lines of the first two bicola) and the well-known imagery of YHWH not hiding his face from the psalmist. The psalm expresses the active neglect through the physical imagery of YHWH *hiding* his *face*. This imagery occurs repeatedly in the HB and in the Psalms, and it indicates God's absence.[31] In the Psalms, the term is commonly used in

[26] Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message*, 37–38.
[27] A well-known English example would be "once upon a time" to introduce a fairy tale. If a text is introduced in that way it is expected by listeners that the text will be a fairy tale. Wendland, *Finding and Translating the Oral-Aural Elements in Written Language*, 30.
[28] Hermann Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski (Macon: Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998).
[29] Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 4th ed., Göttingen Handkommentar Zum Alten Testament (Göttingen: Dandenhoed et Ruprecht, 1926), 46; Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, Second Edition (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1965), 176–88; Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message*, 39–40.
[30] Different versions of the question *how long* occur in laments in the HB both within the Psalter and in other books. Common expressions are עד־מה and עד־מתי, but כמה and עד־אנה also occur. In the Psalter the expressions occur in Ps 4:3, 6:4, 35:17, 62:4, 74:9, 79:5, 80:5, 82:2, 89:47, 90:13, 94:3. Outside the Psalter different forms of the question appear in for example Jer 12:4, 13:27, 23:26, 31:22. Note that several of the texts represent YHWH as the lamenter who complains about the behaviour of the people. The phrase עד־אנה also occurs in Habakkuk's lament in Hab 1:2. Mandolfo, 'Language of Lament in the Psalms', 122–23 identifies this as a call for justice, since the psalmist does not admit to any wrong doing but only insists on being "persecuted by […] God's neglect".
[31] See, for example, Deut 31:17; 32:20; Isa 8:17; 54:8; 59:2; 64:6; Jer 33:5; Ezek 39:23; 39:29; Mic 3:4.

complaints where it expresses a desire for YHWH not to hide his face from the psalmist.[32] This expression is, thus, an example of well-known imagery which an audience would connect to YHWH's absence, and the expression would be connected to other texts where it is used. The expression is also an example of concrete imagery of an abstract concept which aids creates visual images and, thus, aids aural reception. The psalm contains physical imagery both in relation to the performer (see above) and the divine audience. Physical imagery, thus, aids the focus on the two parties. The human audience is not referred to in terms of physical imagery.

In summary, the questions have an audience engaging function, engaging both the divine and human audience. The initial call on YHWH emphasizes the divine audience, and sets the focus on the relationship between the petitioner and YHWH. This relational focus is consistent with the theme of the first questions which is a critique of God's lack of attentiveness to the psalmist. Further, the questions to and invocation of YHWH have a function in relation to the human audience as it effectively communicates genre and informs the human audience that the psalm is a complaint.

The direct communication continues in the petition where YHWH is addressed in a cluster of imperative verbs. The first two lines have a high concentration of imperative verbs, and three of the six words are imperatives. The addressee of the pleas (and thus of the interactive discourse) is made explicit through the words יהוה אלהי, which follow the imperatives in the first line. There is no corresponding title in the second line, and the title thus breaks an otherwise balanced structure and makes the first line longer than the corresponding one. The structure is similar to that in the first colon of the psalm, where the divine name is placed after the interrogative in the first line, which breaks a balanced structure by making the first line longer than the following corresponding lines. The divine name has not occurred since the introductory invocation, which makes this the second appearance in the poem. The appearance of the divine name together with the request for God's attention provides almost an invocational function to this line, which emphasises the beginning of a new part of the poem and connects the line to the complaint section in general and the first colon in particular. The divine name and title *my God* (אלהי) together with the imperative verbs provide the message with a sense of urgency, and emphasize YHWH as the primary audience. These features also highlight the relationship between the psalmist and God. The earlier lines with the same focus (the two first bicola of the complaint),

[32] See, for example, Pss 10:11; 13:2; 22:25; 27:9; 30:8; 44:25; 69:18; 88:15; 102:3; 104:29; 143:7. Note that the expression is used in Ps 51:11 in a prayer for God to hide God's face from the psalmist's sin, which also demonstrates that God is absent from that which God hides his face from. The Aaronic blessing contains the opposite notion of God turning God's face toward the recipient. This further emphasizes that the desirable state is for a petitioner and the people to have God's face turned toward them.

describe the relationship as problematic due to YHWH's lack of action, and now the psalmist calls on YHWH to change the state of the relationship.

The structure of the first lines in the petition section follows a common development. Westermann identifies two common features of the petition sections in complaint psalms that occur in this psalm. The first two lines of the petition contain one line that calls for YHWH's attention followed by one line that pleas for God to intervene. Westermann identifies that this is the common structure for the petition section in complaints.[33] Accordingly, the structure is familiar for a human audience and represents a well-known feature. Westermann further identifies that the petition often is connected to reasons for why YHWH should act. This is commonly expressed through references to YHWH, the enemies, or the petitioner.[34] In this psalm, the reasons for why YHWH should act is expressed through a portrayal of the consequences if YHWH does not act. The description portrays the victory of the enemy and the defeat of the performer (thus, aligning with the two last categories identified by Westermann; references to the enemies and the petitioner). The portrayal is framed within the direct communication to YHWH which emphasises its function in relation to the divine audience. It is communicated in a familiar structure and with features that are well-known to the human audience.

The praise section is different regarding addresses to the audience, as it includes much less interactive discourse than the complaint and the petition. In the complaint and petition, interactive discourse is central through the reiterated question and imperatives. In contrast, the praise contains no explicit example of interactive discourse in relation to YHWH. The jussives are one example of interactive discourse; however, they are not directed to YHWH but mark the psalmist's intention to praise. If the psalmist is considered a representative for a larger community, the jussives would also include the audience in a collective pledge to praise YHWH.

In the second bicolon of the praise, the psalm shifts to a description of YHWH in third person forms. This explicitly acknowledges the presence of a human audience who is now addressed directly. There is no indication of who the human audience might be. A human audience can function as an audience who witness the prayer and, in the end, are addressed in an explanation for the psalmist's trust in and expectations of YHWH. The presence of a human audience is further indicated through the superscription למנצח, which frames the psalm in a communal setting. It further indicates a possible historical public and communal element of the complaint of the individual.

The shift to praise may also be a means of communicating to the human audience. Gunkel demonstrated that the shift to praise is typical in complaints, and part of their basic structure. Building on him, Westermann argued that not just the complaint psalms but the entire Psalter

[33] Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message*, 43; 59.
[34] Westermann, 43.

moves from complaint to praise.[35] The shift to praise is, thus, a common element of complaint psalms and viewed from a performance perspective it represents a well-known feature. An audience who has experience with complaints would know and expect the shift as an important part of the prayer. Since the praise typically ends the psalm, it would also function as a cue that the psalm is ending. In the case of psalm 13, the second line of the petition is the only time the psalmist addresses the human audience and speaks of YHWH in the third person. This change in addressee, supports the theory that the praise has a function in relation to the human audience.

One interesting aspect of the praise is the perfect verb that expresses YHWH's good deeds toward the psalmist (גמל). The psalm has at this point suggested no change in the circumstances of the psalmist. Rather, the imperfect forms in the complaint-section suggests that the desperate situation is ongoing. Because of this, we could expect an imperfect verb to express trust that YHWH will eventually do good deeds toward the psalmist. However, the good deeds are expressed in a perfect form that commonly expresses completed actions. The functions of perfect and imperfect verbs are flexible in poetry. The perfect verb can, for example, express actions that are timeless or actions that the speaker are certain will happen in the future. According to Nyberg, when the perfect form in poetry refers to YHWH's actions it commonly refers to individual and collective experiences of YHWH's actions in the past in order to legitimize the belief that YHWH will act in the same way again.[36]

The perfect forms could also be a stylistic device, since biblical Hebrew poetry utilises shifts between perfect and imperfect verb forms to create contrasts between lines.[37] However, scholars have considered the perfect form as puzzling and have suggested various solutions to this strange feature. Anderson, for example, suggests that it is a "perfect of certainty expressing that God will be merciful to the stricken man."[38] When considering the praise as an address to the human audience, the reference to YHWH's good deeds could be a reference to well-known salvation narratives outside of the complaint. This is in line with Nyberg's suggestion of how the perfect verb commonly functions in relation to YHWH's actions in biblical Hebrew poetry.[39] The reference is vague enough to include both individual experiences of salvation as well as collectively remembered salvation narratives. Interestingly, a number of narratives in the HB describe complaint as the beginning of salvation regarding both national and individual crisis.[40] On a national

[35] Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans. Thomas M. Horner (Fortress Press, 1967), 20–22; Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*.
[36] Nyberg writes: "Då Jahves handlande angives, står det oftast perf. ind., när den talande åberopar individuella eller kollektiva upplevelser i förfluten tid, som berättiga honom att tro att Jahve kommer att göra detsamma i den närvarande situationen." Henrik Samuel Nyberg, *Hebreisk Grammatik*, 2nd Edition (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1952), 279.
[37] Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*, 35–36.
[38] Anderson, *The New Century Bible Commentary, Vol. 1*, 130.
[39] Nyberg, *Hebreisk Grammatik*, 279.
[40] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 317–24.

scale, the story of YHWH's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt in the Exodus narrative begin with the Israelites complaining (Ex 3:7—10). Further, the cyclic arrangement of the book of Judges describes the need of the Israelites as the starting point of salvation (Judg 2:11—19). On an individual level, the story of Hannah's prayer in the temple depicts a grieving person that expresses their complaint before YHWH, receives an oracle and leaves refreshed. This is then followed by YHWH's active interference where Hannah receives a son. Brueggemann identifies that, within the HB, Israel complains when YHWH does not act according to his promises. The complaint is Israel's part in the salvation process, and it aims to mobilize YHWH.[41]

Accordingly, when considering the praise as a well-known feature which communicates to the human audience it is possible that the perfect form refers to YHWH's deeds toward the psalmist and the people outside of the current situation. If complaint is viewed as the starting point of salvation, the exclamation of trust and praise may be considered a natural ending. When a person has complained the process of salvation has begun and YHWH is to be praised. This interpretation also explains the contrast between the perfect verb in the end of the psalm and the imperfect verbs which describe the current situation of need,[42] since the good dealings of YHWH does not have to be connected to the current situation but may refer to YHWH's dealings with the people in other well-known texts. This would make the reference to YHWH's good deeds a reference to well-known texts and traditions. It would also mean that the complaint psalm has the function of connecting the situation of the individual with communal history of salvation and incorporate the life and struggle of the individual or group with the history of YHWH's salvific activity with Israel.

In summary, YHWH is the explicit audience throughout the major part of the psalm. YHWH is directly addressed in questions and imperatives, and could therefore be considered the primary audience of the psalm. There are, however, features which are directed to a human audience. Firstly, the paratext frames the psalm in a communal setting. This framing stands in contrast to the individual focus and voice of the psalm. Secondly, features such as genre marking-forms and well known-features have a communicative function in relation to a human audience. Thirdly, the human audience is explicitly acknowledged in the end of the psalm where YHWH is described in the third person.

Conclusion and Summary

The psalm contains three distinct parts characterized by both different themes and stylistics. The complaint section (verse 2—3) has a question-based structure. It addresses YHWH directly and

[41] Brueggemann, 317–24.
[42] Particularly the phrase ירום איבי עלי in colon 9.

questions the divine absence, the internal suffering of the psalmist, and the prevailing enemy. The complaint section utilises well-known features as genre-marking forms and the well-known imagery of YHWH turning away his face is used to express divine absence. The reiterated question is the primary semantic and phonetic repetition.

The petition section (verse 4—5) aims to make YHWH act. It consists of imperative pleas and a description characterised by narrativity which describes a hypothetical situation that will happen if YHWH does not act. Phonetic repetition is increasingly important in this section, which uses sound pairs and semantic repetition. The well-known imagery of the psalmist not being shaken is reversed and utilised to express the compromised state of the performer.

The praise section (verse 6) represents a sharp shift in theme as well as style. Thematically, it focuses on the psalmist's trust and coming praise, as well as YHWH's good deeds. The initial *But I* marks a sharp contrast between the previous dire scenario and the psalmist's trust in YHWH. The contrast is reinforced through repeated words from the larger context of the psalm. This section employs phonetic repetition is a different way and contains many repeated sounds, in contrast to previous sections who used reiterated words and sound pairs.

The paratext frames the psalm in a communal setting. The psalm has a 1sg. voice throughout. If considered a script for ritual it is a rite of transportation where the psalmist is moved through from complaint to praise, however, the psalm does not suggest that the external circumstances of the psalmist has changed.

The primary audience of the psalm is YHWH, who is addressed directly throughout the complaint- and petition-sections. However, the psalm contains features that have a function in relation to a human audience. The questions and invocation may have a genre-marking function and effectively communicate genre. In the praise the human audience is addressed directly in a 3m.sg description of YHWH's good deeds. This description may be a reference to well-known salvation narratives and tradition outside the current situation.

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Abstract — Gender, Sexualität und Heiligkeit. Eine literarhistorische und gendersensible Untersuchung von Lev 18 und 20.

Gender, Sexuality, and Holiness. A literary-historical and gender-sensitive study of Lev 18 and 20.

Lev 18:22 and 20:13 are not only historically two verses with high conflict potential - they are also all too often misused in today's debates about homosexuality to support homophobic positions. The same is true of their respective contexts, chapters Lev 18 and 20, in relation to general discussions of Christian sexual ethics. So why do these passages repeatedly suffer such a fate, and how are they to be evaluated from an exegetical perspective? What counter-position, what better reasoned understanding could Old Testament scholarship reasonably bring against such problematic points of view?

Lev 18 and 20 both present a very similar series of commands and prohibitions. Given the variety of topics listed - incest, prohibitions of polygyny with several related women, prohibitions of adultery, prohibitions of intercourse during menstruation, prohibitions of Molech sacrifice, prohibitions of sodomy, prohibitions of divination and necromancy, etc. - the legal sentences seem, on the one hand, to cover the field of sexuality quite exhaustively. On the other hand, however, through their embedding in the Holiness Code, they also extend beyond this. Particularly through their connection through Lev 19, as well as through their framework, these prohibitions receive an additional religious - theological as well as cultic - dimension. With this connection of several fundamental-anthropological themes, it quickly becomes clear why there is such a high potential for conflict regarding these two texts.

In order to adequately address the complexity of the literary findings and the theological and ethical implications associated with them, a novel approach is required. The planned dissertation aims to achieve this by integrating two methodological approaches: the literary-historical analysis and the aspect of 'gender'. Both methods are well-suited to objectively explore the field of tension regarding Lev 18 and 20 due to their scientific nature, but thus far, they have largely enriched the research discourse independently of each other.

The questions that the research project seeks to clarify can thus be stated as follows:

- What assessments of the literary growth of Lev 18 and 20, of their interrelationship with one another, and of the significance of their contextual embedding can be gained from a diachronic analysis that, in accordance with the latest state of research, relates textual and literary history to one another?

- How can the texts be assessed in light of the postmodern category of 'gender'? Can universally applicable parameters for handling gender in the context of Old Testament exegesis be formulated, which can contribute to systematizing and unifying the approach? How should the scope and limits of such an investigative category be determined?

- Can new impulses for today's sexual-ethical debates be gained through a textual investigation that systematically combines literary analysis and 'gender' with regard to Lev 18-20?

Thus, the research project can be located between the following key areas:
Textual and editorial history; the history of theology; social and traditional history of the Old Testament and its environment; gender studies; feminist exegesis; masculinity studies; queer theology.

Louisa Schmacke, Kiel

How to undo Doing Gender in Lev 18 and 20 — Abstract

Using Lev 18 and 20 as an example, my dissertation project aims to combine the ‚classical' method of diachronic analysis with gender-sensitive exegesis.
The aim of my paper is to make a first proposal for a methodology of gender-sensitive exegesis based on a diachronic analysis — especially with regard to Lev 18 and 20.
Therefore, it will first discuss why a gender-sensitive approach to Old Testament texts is appropriate in general. The paper will propose a theoretical basis for gender-sensitive exegesis and reflect on the extent to which biblical texts, but also our research discourse, practice doing gender.
The paper will also reflect on the possibilities and limitations of a gender-sensitive perspective on biblical texts in general and on Lev 18 and 20 in particular.
Finally, the paper will consider initial ideas on how to evaluate the results of my diachronic analysis from a gender-sensitive perspective.

What I'd like to focus on in the session

First of all, thank you for reading my paper! I welcome any kind of feedback, but would especially appreciate a) general feedback on the basic idea of the approach as well as b) specific tips on methods of analysing Lev 18 and 20 from a gender-sensitive perspective.

How to undo Doing Gender in Lev 18 and 20

Gender studies emerged from the first wave of feminist research in the 1970s. [1]The concept of gender led to a new understanding of human sexuality and the distinction between biological and social sex.[2] Since then, the recognition of the close connection between gender and anthropology and the cultural determination of gender has come to the fore.[3] The concept of "gender" is used as a research perspective to unravel these connections.[4]

Gender-sensitive approaches to biblical texts have also become more and more established in Old Testament studies. However, there is no real methodology to gender criticism, which means a systematic and reflected approach for gender-sensitive exegesis is missing.[5]

When gender criticism is brought into dialogue with the historical-critical method, the situation becomes even more complicated.

Indeed, even the mother of gender criticism, feminist exegesis, has had and has until today its reservations about these methods: "The historical-critical method can and is suspected of serving male interests".[6] It is therefore hardly surprising that historical-critical methods are rarely used in gender exegesis, even though I believe that the combination of gender criticism and the historical-critical method offers remarkable possibilities for the analysis of Old Testament texts.

My dissertation therefore aims to dynamically combine the method of diachronic analysis with gender criticism using the example of Lev 18 and 20.

My diachronic analyses of Lev 18 and 20 have shown that both texts have grown in many ways and that their growth is interdependent in complex ways. In particular, the issues of sexuality and family discussed in the legal clauses of Lev 18 and 20 are closely related to the question of gender roles in and behind the texts.

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[1] A good overview of the development can be found in Pemsel-Maier, Anfängen, 13-30 or Frey Steffen, Gender, 31-91. Even today, gender studies and feminist studies are still closely linked, and in some cases the boundaries are blurred. - Cf. Pemsel-Maier, Anfängen, 24f.

[2] Cf. Frey Steffen, Gender, 13.

[3] Cf. Höpflinger, Einleitung, 19f.

[4] Cf. ibid., 20.

[5] Cf. e.g. Sawyer, Gender Criticism. A New Discipline in Biblical Studies or Feminism in Disguise.

[6] Monika Fander on the methods of historical criticism according to Shectman, Back to the Past, 69.

For this reason, the aim of the study is to evaluate the gender role images and the changes in the evaluation of gender done by Redaktion.
But first, I would like to discuss what a methodology for gender studies combined with diachronic analysis might look like and why such an approach is important and appropriate.
To this end, I would first like to ask: What might a theoretical basis for a gender-sensitive perspective on the Old Testament look like?
With reference to Judith Butler, I would like to point out three important aspects that are relevant for understanding gender: Power, Repetition and Performativity.
According to Butler, the individual needs an external power to which he or she can submit in order to become an individual at all.[7] The conditions of this power must be constantly repeated in order to continue to exist; this repetition, in turn, takes place within the subject.[8] Language, as a performative act, is one type of such constantly repeating power: through its performativity, language creates a reality that only becomes real through repetitive naming and quoting.[9] Gender roles represent such a performative act and are at the same time, in the sense mentioned above, a power to which the subject repeatedly submits in order to be a subject itself. Gender is therefore to be understood as a kind of daily performance that repeats and consolidates normative ideas. Gender is thus an interplay between performing gender and doing gender, in which everyone has to participate in some way, in order to simply be. At the same time, if gender is understood as the power necessary to become a subject, it is a timeless phenomenon that exists not only today but also in the Ancient Near East. But if gender is made real and repeated precisely through language, then Old Testament texts also bear witness to understandings of gender, even though the Old Testament itself is initially a written document and not a spoken language.
However, because we still receive the texts today, the written text also becomes part of our linguistic world, flows into our spoken word - and thus also shapes our reality and therefore our ideas about gender. A gender-sensitive study of the Old Testament is therefore important for research in two respects: not only can it be assumed that the biblical texts are shaped by ideas about gender, but it can also be assumed that we have unconsciously integrated such ideas into our everyday lives and our thinking about gender -

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[7] Cf. Butler, Psyche der Macht, 7f.

[8] Cf. ibid, 20.

[9] Cf. Butler, Körper von Gewicht, 22.

perhaps not all of this happens today, but the very anchoring of Western society in Christianity speaks in favour of the assumption that the Old Testament also influences our traditional knowledge and our traditional ideas, and therefore our thinking today.

Closely related to this idea is the following reality: ideas about gender are discursively produced.

They are therefore something that is epistemologically constructed.

It is therefore important for a gender-sensitive study of Old Testament texts that any study of biblical texts from a gender-sensitive perspective moves between two different discourses.

Firstly, it is confronted with the contemporary discourse respectively the discourse on gender in the research tradition. And second, assuming that Old Testament texts were subject to growth and redaction, a gender-sensitive study of the Old Testament is confronted with the ancient discourse on gender and gender roles at the time the biblical texts themselves were written and edited. Both discourses are quite complex. Our focus is first on the contemporary discourse.

Today's exegetes are not impartial when they analyse the biblical texts. Nor can they be. On the one hand, they are influenced by their own ideas and by the ways in which gender is performed around them in everyday life. On the other hand, they are influenced by the ideas that the scholarly discourse has about gender roles in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East. This is where things get complicated:

Because the theories of research all are in turn influenced by the life-world and the prevailing ideas about gender of the researchers who formulated the theses at any given time; and in the same time by the then current state of the research discourse in the time the theories were written, which in turn is influenced by another life-world, and so on.

This is precisely why it is imperative for gender-sensitive exegesis to reflect on positionality in advance and, at best, to disclose it.

If this is not reflected upon, there is a particular danger of introducing one's own interests into the exegesis of the texts or of unconsciously reproducing and thus consolidating certain positions.

This process can be described as 're-doing gender' if we recognise that the Old Testament texts already do gender, i.e. convey certain images of gender.

We turn to the second, the discourse within the text. While synchronic analyses of the texts on gender issues can be illuminating in relation to contemporary research discourse, the finding that biblical texts themselves do gender requires a diachronic perspective on the texts.

Common and divergent ideas about gender and their history of development can only be revealed by examining inter- and intratexual text-text interactions as well as the chronology of layers.
The results of diachronic textual analysis can thus provide an insight into the discourse on gender at the time the texts were written and at the time the texts were revised by different redactors. This insight, in turn, can enrich today's discourse on gender and provide clues as to how gender has been 're-done' in the history of research. It can prevent some gender images from taking on a life of their own and becoming unconsciously normative. What we must always bear in mind, however, is that we cannot know how much of the gender constructions in the text were based on the reality of life at the time.
Influences from the milieu of the authors or from the time in which the story is told are always possible. Because Lev 18 and 20 are legal texts, the problem is particularly acute: here, too, it is not possible to clarify whether they were or were intended to be normative, describe a lived practice, or merely reflect the ideals of the authors.
But let's go on and ask: Based on the previous considerations, what can a gender-sensitive exegesis of the Old Testament texts aim to achieve and how can it be achieved? I would for a start like to quote Deryn Guest:

"Gender criticism is interested in how the author of the text, consciously or unconsciously, constructs sex, gender and sexualities (legitimized and ostracized) for the characters and in so doing grants them a solidity of sorts. The reader is thus lulled into a compliance that it is 'men' or 'women' one is reading about, even when those 'men' or 'women' do not maintain gender expectations terribly well. Gender criticism's interest in citations, gaps, sites of disruption, has the tools to open those fissures to greater examination than the original authors ever imagined, and to re-set our eyes to see sexual politics at work. This is quite different from a textbook that has 'gender', in the title, and contains essays pertaining to the representation of both men and women in biblical texts. It goes beyond that."[10]

Gender exegesis is therefore concerned with revealing the ways in which gender is consciously or unconsciously conceptualised in texts. Gender exegesis is therefore a particular perspective on the analysis of a text, which must use linguistic methods in order to achieve its aim of revealing sexual politics. In order to define the aim and methodology of gender exegesis more concretely, I would like to refer to the findings of discourse linguistics.

[10] Guest, Beyond, 20.

Discourse linguistics recognises two forms of research: 1. descriptive discourse linguistics and 2. critical discourse linguistics.
While descriptive discourse linguistics aims to reveal linguistic structures and thought patterns or social processes of constructing and negotiating meaning, critical discourse linguistics aims to critique ideology.
It has political aims, evaluates issues from a moral and ethical perspective and is an advocate for change in social structures.
In my view, gender-sensitive exegesis should unite both perspectives, but clearly separate them.
First, the textual discourse must be analysed descriptively. For this, as already mentioned, a diachronic analysis is invaluable. Then the texts can be analysed using the methods of discourse linguistics: Linguistic features such as word choice, sentence structure, rhetoric and semantics can be considered, but also discursive strategies that contribute to the construction and legitimation of gender roles and hierarchies in the text. The ideologies underlying the text can also be analysed, if appropriate.
This must be done for each individual verse in all its reconstructed forms. The individual verses must then be combined for all the Schichten found in the diachronic analysis.
We must then ask ourselves which verses and Schichten convey which gender concepts and in what way, and whether and in what way differences in the evaluation and construction of gender can be seen between the Schichten.
In other words, we need to ask: How can the verses and their revisions be interpreted?
I will use Lev 18:14 and Lev 20:20 here as an example to illustrate my point.
My diachronic analyses have revealed several redactional revisions for Lev 18:14.
In addition, my analyses of the chapters have shown that Lev 20:20 is of a more recent date than is Lev 18:14:

Originally, Lev 18:14 read as follows:

A	Lev 18:14*	You shall not uncover the private parts of your father's brother's wife. She is your aunt. You shall not uncover her private parts.

Probably due to a spelling mistake, the אשת at the beginning of the verse is omitted:

B	Lev 18:14*	You shall not uncover the private parts of your father's brother. She is your aunt. You shall not uncover her private parts.

Leviticus 18:14 has then been corrected as follows:

C	Lev 18:14	You shall not uncover the private parts of your father's brother. You shall not go near his wife. She is your aunt.

Lev 20:20 picks up the verse and rephrases it as follows:

D	Lev 20:20	And a man lying with his aunt - he has uncovered his uncle's private parts. They shall bear their guilt; they shall die childless.

Next we ask: What possible interpretations can we make plausible for the verses and why? We go step by step from A to D:

A	Lev 18:14*	You shall not uncover the private parts of your father's brother's wife. She is your aunt. You shall not uncover her private parts.

The original wording of Lev 18:14 prohibits the ego from having sexual contact with the wife of his father's brother. This prohibition is justified by the family relationship between the woman in question and the ego: She is your aunt.

But there are (at least) two possible interpretations of this verse:

1. Although the woman in question belongs to the ego's family as an aunt, sexual contact with her is ultimately only forbidden because of her relationship with the ego's male relatives or his father. Why else would the aunt be mentioned only through the father's side of the family?[11]

or

2. The woman named has intrinsic value.

She may have become part of the family through the father's brother, but ultimately the prohibition is based on her relationship to Ego. Why else would they say: She is your uncle's wife instead of She is your aunt.

B	Lev 18:14*	You shall not uncover the private parts of your father's brother. She is your aunt. You shall not uncover her private parts.

The omission of the אשת in Lev 18:14a changes the possible interpretations considerably:

1. Ego’s aunt no longer has any intrinsic value. It is now only understood as the uncle's private parts and the reason for the prohibition is to protect the uncle's privacy.

[11] Here it would have to be considered whether the clan structure could be decisive, because the wife of the mother's brother would not live in the same family clan as Ego and his mother due to patrilocality, whereas it is conceivable that the younger brother and his wife are part of Ego's father's clan.

or

2. Lev 18:14 now contains two individual commandments: On the one hand, Ego is forbidden to have sexual contact with his father's brother and, on the other, to expose the private parts of Ego's aunt.[12]

C	Lev 18:14	You shall not uncover the private parts of your father's brother. You shall not go near his wife. She is your aunt.

The editing here closes the openness of the previous version of the verse. Two commandments are clearly formulated, as can be seen from the different use of verbs: a) The uncle's private parts shall not be revealed. and b) Ego must not approach his father's brother's wife because she is his aunt. The redactor therefore seems to understand the verse version B in the sense of variant B2.

D	Lev 20:20	And a man lying with his aunt - he has uncovered his uncle's private parts. They shall bear their guilt; they shall die childless.

It is interesting to see how the author of Lev 20 reinterprets verse C: here intercourse with the aunt is reinterpreted to reveal the uncle's private parts. Whereas in Lev 18:14 the idea of male-male intercourse between the uncle and Ego - even if forbidden - was allowed to exist, it is eradicated in the more recent text of Lev 20, which at the same time shifts the role of the aunt strongly in the direction of perspective B1. Although she is Ego's aunt, the reason for the punishments mentioned is that intercourse with the uncle's wife constitutes an intrusion into the uncle's private sphere: The uncle's wife and the uncle's private parts are identical. However, both the ego and the aunt are responsible for this crime. The joint criminal responsibility of man and woman for the sexual offence is particularly significant in connection with the framing passages of Lev 20:7-8.22-26: even if the aunt is seen here only as part of the uncle's sexuality, and thus is ultimately interchangeable as a person, she also bears responsibility for the observance of the divine commandments and for the salvation of the people, which consists in the preservation of the land given by YHWH.

Once all the verses, and also the verses as they can be grouped into their layers, have been openly considered in this way, and it has been established what gender constructions are contained in the texts and how they are constructed, we can go one step further. We can ask: is this redactional

[12] Especially with regard to the question of an Old Testament position on homosexuality, this perspective is extremely interesting!

intervention in the text an intentional or unintentional construction of gender? What are the possible motivations that guided the redactor?

I would suggest that we be careful here and only interpret those edits as deliberate gender construction for which we cannot identify other textual reasons, such as an attempt to harmonise two texts, etc.

Once this has been taken into account, the next step is to consider the following two questions, again in a descriptive way:

- What are the consequences of the findings for the handling of the text?
- What are the consequences of the findings for (supposedly) reliable research knowledge?

These questions should be answered carefully and all possible understandings should be presented. However, it is important to remember that one's own position will influence the interpretation of the texts and the answers to the questions. This means that it is probably not possible to give an exhaustive list of possible interpretations. Some things may be out of the question because of one's own positionality. However, if a large number of people work in this way, a large pool of readings can emerge and we can achieve a perception of the Old Testament texts that is genuinely gender-sensitive.

This is the end of one perspective of the study: The work of descriptive discourse linguistics is done. We leave the field of study that is primarily concerned with the Old Testament texts and the research discourse.

To do justice to the interests of gender criticism, we go one step further and look at the significance of the results for today.

In terms of critical discourse linguistics, we can practise ideological criticism and consider how we can deal with the findings in future studies and our every day lives.

In the case of Lev 18 and 20, this means looking particularly at the current debates on sexual ethics in church and society, and considering and naming what the study has to say about them.

For if such a transparent, gender-sensitive exegesis, which also takes into account the discourse within the text and all its possible interpretations, succeeds, a gender-sensitive perspective also offers opportunities to liberate our current gender discourse from false biblical-normative assumptions and stereotypes. But note:

Ideological criticism can only be the last step in gender-sensitive exegesis, and not its primary domain.

According to these considerations, a gender-sensitive exegesis of a text could be structured as follows:

1. the choice of the object of study and the formulation of the research question
2. contextualisation and literary analysis in a diachronic perspective
3. critical self-reflection/disclosure of one's own positionality
4. gender-oriented examination of individual verses and of all verses combined as textual layers - individually and in relation to each other
5. interpreting the redactional interventions from a gender perspective: What constructions of gender are there? How do they change?
6. interpretation of editorial motives: intentional or unintentional construction of gender?
7. critical reflection on the research discourse
8. critical reflection and moral judgement for everyday discourse
9. developing recommendations for action

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PROJECT SUMMARY:

THE BLESSING OF JACOB (GEN 49) IN LIGHT OF ANCIENT CELESTIAL CARTOGRAPHY

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The Blessing of Jacob is among the most scrutinized passages in the Bible. However, questions concerning its origin, age, and genre remain unsettled. The goal of this study is to shed light on these issues by examining, whether the blessing is an astrological divination based on an ancient celestial map. To achieve this goal, five hypotheses are tested:

1. The Blessing of Jacob is based on a celestial map
2. The celestial map, which the blessing is based on, resembles the celestial maps known from the first millennium BCE
3. By comparing the imagery of the blessing with the ancient celestial maps, it is possible to reconstruct the celestial map on which the blessing was based
4. The same celestial map was also the basis for some other biblical texts
5. Using the reconstructed celestial map, it is possible to identify which texts make use of it

Since the blessing may be the result of a single author's creative work, the last two hypotheses are not to be seen as prerequisites for the first three. However, the reconstructed model is more likely to be correct if there are references to it in other texts as well.

The study consists of three phases, each of which will end in the publication of an article. The draft presented at the 2024 OTSEM conference in Aarhus is part of the first phase. In the first phase, I will study the imagery of the blessing in order to reconstruct the celestial map on which the blessing was based on. The objective of this phase is to test the first three hypotheses. In the second phase, I will try to determine whether there are signs of the celestial map in other biblical texts, and test the last two hypotheses. In the third phase, I will examine the celestial map as part of the argumentative strategy used in the Death Bed episode.

The study begins with an analysis of the metaphors used in the blessing. I will make use of the Metaphor Identification Procedure developed at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, also known as MIPVU, which belongs to the tradition of cognitive linguistics.[1] After identifying the blessing's metaphors, they will be compared with the ancient celestial maps using a set of criteria abstracted from the naming strategies used in antiquity when transmitting astronomical data from culture to culture, in order to reconstruct the map used in the blessing.[2]

In the second phase of the study, text mining is used to search for the imagery of the celestial map from other parts of the Bible. This will be done by using open source software packages, such as TextFabric and Pandas, which will be run in the Python environment. The ETCBC database maintained by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the SBLGNT package published by Andrews University will provide the data for the analysis.[3] The results will be structured using the phylogenetic approach, which originates from the field of evolutionary biology and has been successfully applied to comparative mythology. In the phylogenetic approach, myths are considered to consist of smaller

[1] Steen et al. 2010.
[2] Kurtik and Militarev 2005.
[3] For the use of TextFabric and the ETCBC database, see for instance Nielsen 2017; Roorda 2018; van der Schans et al. 2019; van Peursen 2020.

sub-myths, mythemes, which are inherited, mutated and eliminated according to principles partly analogous to the evolution of genes. By examining the distribution of mythemes in different versions of myths, it is possible to reconstruct a phylogenetic tree or network describing the interrelationships between the myths.[4]

The mythemes examined in this study are the astrological elements of the blessing. These include, for example, a heel-biting snake, violent brothers and a lion ruling as king. The texts, selected on the basis of text mining, are encoded in a binary form for each mytheme (1 = mytheme, 0 = no mytheme). Using the SplitsTreeCE application, the encoded material is presented in the form of a phylogenetic tree, which will show the relationship between the texts. The more astrological mythemes a given text shares with the blessing, the closer it is to the celestial map on which the blessing was based.[5]

In the third phase of the study I will return to the Blessing of Jacob and use pragma-dialectical argumentation analysis to find out, what the final redactor of Genesis was hoping to convey by including the celestial map in the narrative.[6] By carefully examining the overall argumentation of the Death Bed episode, I will hope to identify, what role the celestial map plays as part of the book of Genesis.[7] Put together, the three phases of the study will help to appreciate, how and when the Blessing of Jacob came to be, and how it functions as a part of the Bible.

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[4] d'Huy 2013, 115; Thuillard et al. 2018, 123–125.
[5] d'Huy 2013, 115; d´Huy 2023, 11–12.
[6] This assumes, of course, that the final redactor of Genesis is the author of the blessing, or at least aware of the celestial map embedded within it.
[7] See for instance van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2000; van Eemeren & Snoeck Henkemans 2017.

The Blessing of Jacob (Gen 49) in Light of Ancient Celestial Cartography

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PREFACE

This paper is a draft, presented at the 2024 OTSEM conference in Aarhus. It is a complete reworking of a previous one, presented under the same title at the 2023 OTSEM conference in Lund. The focus of the present paper is on the methodology, which has been thoroughly revised. Another key difference is the emphasis on the Babylonian constellations instead of the Greek ones, used as a reference point in the previous paper. The focal points of discussion proposed for the conference are the suitability of the chosen methodology and possible directions for future research.

ABSTRACT

The Blessing of Jacob is among the most scrutinized passages in the Bible. However, questions concerning its origin, age, and genre remain unanswered. This study seeks to shed light on these issues by examining the blessing as an astrological divination based on an ancient celestial map. In this article I will propose, that the blessing was constructed in the late first millennium BCE, and that the author had access to a celestial map, whose content greatly resembled the Babylonian and Greek celestial maps. The analysis consists of two phases. First, the metaphor identification procedure MIPVU is used to discover the metaphorical elements in the blessing. Second, a set of criteria based on an astronomic-etymological approach are used to identify the constellations, which served as the source for the blessing's metaphors. As will be demonstrated, this reading resolves most of the problems regarding the blessing.

INTRODUCTION

How does one acquire divine knowledge? This question, around which humanity has revolved for thousands of years, forms a focal point in the book of Genesis as well. It is first put forward in the form of the tree of knowledge and the cunning diviner[1] in the Garden of Eden, and remains a central theme all the way through the book, as the patriarchs and other agonists and antagonists interpret their dreams and visions or use divination-artefacts[2] to discover the will of God(s). It is no surprise, then, that we find this very question looming in the background as we reach the end of the Joseph Cycle, the Deathbed episode, and its pinnacle, the Blessing of Jacob (Gen 49:1–27).

The Blessing of Jacob is an enigmatic poem at the end of Genesis. Jacob, the blind and dying paterfamilias, summons his sons to him and foretells them what will happen to them and their descendants 'at the end of days'.[3] Foretelling the future requires superhuman knowledge, and the acquisition of such knowledge calls for the art of divination[4]. In the ancient Near East, several forms of divination were known. Some of them were inductive, focused on the interpretation of natural phenomena, such as the trajectories of birds or the veins in a sacrificial animal's liver. Others relied on the diviner's ability to receive oracles or visions from the gods. These can be described as non-

[1] Gen 3:5. The Hebrew noun for 'snake' shares a common root with the verb 'divine'.
[2] See for instance Gen 44:5.
[3] Gen 49:1–2.
[4] For a more detailed description of the numerous forms of divination in the ANE, see e.g. Nissinen 2016; Cryer 2009.

inductive divination. The narrative does not state, which form of divination Jacob used to recite his blessing. At least not explicitly.

One method of inductive divination was astrology, the interpretation of celestial omens. This art, harnessed by the Mesopotamian elite and popularized by the Egyptians and the Greeks, entered the Jewish thought not later than the Second Temple period, when the five books of Moses were given their final touch.[5] In this article I will propose, that the form of divination used by Jacob is in fact implied in the blessing, and deducible quite easily, if the reader has some knowledge of the way in which people in the first millennium BCE viewed the night sky. I will suggest, that the blessing is written on the basis of a celestial map, and is meant to be read as such.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

It is not possible nor worthwhile to go through all the research done on the Blessing of Jacob. I will, therefore, present a brief summary of the status quaestionis, and provide in more detail only the papers of Zimmern[6] and Peano Cavasola[7], which discuss a possible connection of the blessing and the constellations of the zodiac. For a more thorough research history, the reader may refer to Raymond de Hoop's monumental book *Genesis 49 in its Literary and Historical Context*.[8]

Prior research has mostly been motivated by questions concerning the origin, age, genre and unity of the blessing. It has a number of linguistic features, which distinguish it from the surrounding narrative, and have made it difficult to reconcile it with the documentary hypothesis. Since the 18th century, the blessing has been generally viewed as a later addition to the narrative. Within form criticism, the majority view is that the blessing consists of originally independent tribal sayings, which circulated as oral tradition before they were assembled and placed in Genesis by one or several authors. Partly due to this view, less attention has been paid to the unified structure of the blessing or its current context. However, the theory of independent tribal sayings has recently come under criticism, and new arguments have been put forward in favor of the unity of blessing. The questions of the origin and genre are thus once again open for debate. [9]

Some scholars, most notably Zimmern and Peano Cavasola, have called attention to the resemblance between the numerous animal metaphors of the blessing and the twelve constellations of the zodiac.[10] Their articles focus on the Babylonian zodiac, which was the basis of, but sometimes differs from, the Greek one. Zimmern discusses seven of the eleven blessings, concentrating mainly on three of them, while Peano Cavasola explores them all. Zimmern dismisses the order of the blessings, and instead searches for the most obvious connections, while Peano Cavasola keeps the present order and seeks to connect each blessing with the zodiacal constellation next in line.

The idea, that the tribes of Israel are somehow connected to the constellations of the zodiac is not a new one – quite the contrary; a plethora of examples can be found in rabbinic literature.[11] The earliest examples come from the second temple period. Philo, noticing the corresponding number of the two, calls the sons of Jacob *ἀπεικόνισμα καὶ μίμημα τοῦ ζῳδιακοῦ,* 'an icon and a replica of the zodiac'.[12] For him, the twelve stars in Joseph's dream[13] are also a reference to the zodiac, as are the engraved

[5] Popović 2014; Cooley 2012, 28. Astral worship was also widely practiced already during the first temple period, partly due to Neo-Assyrian influence, see Cooley 2013, 246; Collins 2017, 31.
[6] Zimmern 1892.
[7] Peano Cavasola 2014.
[8] de Hoop 1999.
[9] de Hoop 1999, 2–7, 60–62, 78–79. For the arguments in favour of the unity of the blessing, see Twersky 2019; Knohl 2020.
[10] Zimmern 1892; Peano Cavasola 2014. See also Skinner 1910, 534–535; Bullinger 1893, 20–21.
[11] See, for instance, Yalkut Shimoni 418; Midrash Lekach Tov, Exodus 1:2; Kuzari 3:17; Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Vayetzei, Torah Ohr; Likutei Moharan 9:2.
[12] ON REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS, 65
[13] Gen 37.

tribal names on the stones of the high priest's breast plate.[14] Josephus, another example from the second temple period, also draw a connection between the engraved stones and the zodiac.[15]

As we can see, a tendency to treat the sons of Jacob as somehow connected to astral phenomena clearly existed within Judaism from early on. It should be noted, though, that none of the aforementioned sources specifically refers to the Blessing of Jacob as an example of this connection.[16] Nevertheless, Zimmern's and Peano Cavasola's proposals can be seen as a part of this long tradition and are therefore worth considering. Their conclusions are summarized in Table 1 and discussed further in the following chapters.

The Blessing	Zimmern	Main grounds for the connection	Peano Cavasola	Main grounds for the connection
Reuben			**Taurus**	The bull's rampant nature. According to Targum Pseudo-Jonathan the original emblem of the tribe was a bull.
Simeon & Levi	**Gemini & Taurus**	The violent brothers resemble Gilgamesh and Enkidu, who killed and mutilated the Bull of Heaven and the tyrant Humbaba.	**Gemini**	The armed brothers resemble the twins, which were heavily armed guardian deities in the Babylonian celestial map.
Judah	**Leo**	Leo stands for the Lion. Regulus is the scepter between its feet.	**Leo & Cancer**	Leo stands for the Lion. Cancer is the scepter between its feet.
Zebulun			**Virgo**	The blessing mentions Sidon, known for its devotion to Astarte. Virgo is placed near the Southern Sea, inhabited by Hydra and Argo. *Zbl* is an Ugaritic epithet for the sea god Yam.
Issachar	**Cancer**	Two stars in the constellation were seen by the Greeks as two donkeys in front of a manger.	**Libra**	Libra has two burdens in it.
Dan	**Serpens & Ophiuchus**	The serpent.	**Scorpius / Ophiuchus & Serpens**	The serpent. Jeremiah 8:16, 17. The northernmost tribe would be the first to face the attack of the invaders. Samson.
Gad			**Sagittarius**	The location of the tribe made it a target for nomads, who would attack on horseback.
Asher			**Capricornus**	The tribe's territory between the sea and the mountains corresponds with the twofold nature of the Goat-Fish.
Naphtali	**Aries**	The 'ram' read instead of 'doe'. The 'shophar' is a ram's horn.	**Aquarius**	The deer is a sacred animal of Ea, the Babylonian Aquarius. The nearby constellations Ibex, Deer, and Field fit the description.
Joseph	**Taurus & Orion**	The beginning of the blessing is read as speaking of a young bull calf. The bow is associated with Orion's bow and Sagittarius on the opposite side of the sky. Midrash Bereshit Rabbah connects Joseph's bow with Orion.	**Pisces**	The fish are not mentioned in the blessing to avoid an association with the local pagan cults. The tree metaphor can be associated with the area of Pisces in the sky.
Benjamin	**Aldebaran / Lupus**	Aldebaran identified as the Jackal star. Lupus is a wolf.	**Aries**	The Triangle, next to Aries, identified as holding the Wolf star in it. Dumuzid, the shepherd god, was turned into a wolf in the Epic of Gilgamesh.

TABLE 1. *A summary of Zimmern's and Peano Cavasola's arguments*

There are indeed some obvious parallels between the imagery of the blessing and the constellations of the zodiac, as demonstrated in Table 1. Yet, as one can see by comparing the table with the actual blessing, the correspondence remains partial. Many of the blessing's features are not accounted for,

[14] Philo, *On Dreams*, II, 2–6, 112–113; Philo, *Questions and Answers on Exodus*, II, 109; Philo, *Moses* II, 123–124. In the case of Joseph's dream Philo is critical, though, and treats the dream as an example of human desire for vain glory.
[15] Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, III,7,5–7. Josephus also links the zodiac to the shewbread, see *Ant.*, V,217.
[16] Contra Cooley 2013, 254, which seems to be based on a misreading.

and at times, the connections remain vague. Partly because of this, the view has not gained wider support.[17]

Another reason for rejecting this approach has been the question of dating. The blessing has many archaic features, which seems to suggest an early date, perhaps predating Iron II, while the system of twelve zodiacal constellations wasn't established until the fifth century BCE.[18] While this is a valid point, it should be noted, that the zodiacal constellations were already at place much earlier, as attested by MUL.APIN and other sources; there were simply more of them until the Ecliptic was divided into twelve parts for calendrical reasons.[19] It should also be noted, that form critical arguments aside, the blessing's early date is based mainly on its archaic features. Since these could indicate archaizing instead of archaicity[20], and since the dating of the Torah is still a matter of much debate[21], the question of dating should not be a reason to abandon Zimmern's and Cavasola's proposal.

In this article I will propose, that the Blessing of Jacob was indeed written to resemble the celestial maps known in antiquity. I will seek to overcome the weaknesses of the earlier efforts by expanding the scope of the study beyond the zodiacal constellations.[22] Including the non-zodiacal constellations, as well as easily noticeable celestial objects, such as low magnitude stars, planets, and galaxies, increases the number of parallels greatly, as will be shown in the following chapters. Another core difference between this article and the aforementioned ones is the applied methodology, which is based on the recent advancements in the field of cognitive linguistics, combined with an astronomic-etymological approach.[23] The methods will be discussed in the following chapters.

IDENTIFYING THE METAPHORS

While there is a consensus among scholars, that the Blessing of Jacob is filled with similes and other forms of metaphoric language, views differ considerably when it comes to deciding, which words should be counted as metaphors, and what their role in the blessing is.[24] During the past three decades, the field of metaphor studies has drastically changed due to the rise of cognitive linguistics.[25] Instead of simply viewing metaphor as a literary device or an ornament of style used by poets, cognitive linguistics treats the cross-domain mapping inherent to metaphors as a basic element of human reasoning. These changes in the field, most notably the introduction of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, have influenced Biblical studies as well.[26] However, none of the recent methods developed for metaphor identification has yet been utilized in the analysis of the Blessing of Jacob.

In this study, I will make use of the Metaphor Identification Procedure developed at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, also known as MIPVU. It belongs to the tradition of cognitive linguistics but differs from the Conceptual Metaphor Theory in some respects. In the field of metaphor studies, MIPVU has gained status as a reliable and valid means for metaphor identification.[27] Although the method was originally developed using English and Dutch data, is has been successfully converted to other languages as well.[28] A few studies have also applied it to the Bible and other religious texts.[29] Since the method relies heavily on the use of contemporary dictionaries based on large corpuses, it

[17] Cross & Freedman 1997 [1975], 56; Cooley 2013, 254.
[18] Cross & Freedman 1997 [1975], 46–47,56; Kurtik 2021, 59.
[19] MUL.APIN, for instance, reports 18 constellations "on the path of the moon", MUL.APIN I iv 31–39. For the development of the Zodiac, see Kurtik 2021.
[20] de Hoop 1999, 74–78.
[21] For the various contemporary approaches, see Dozeman 2017, 135–195.
[22] Zimmern and Peano Cavasola both include some non-zodiacal constellations, but not in a systematic manner.
[23] For the methodology, see Steen et al. 2010 and Kurtik and Militarev 2005.
[24] See the discussion in de Hoop 1999.
[25] For a thorough discussion, see Semino and Demjén 2017.
[26] Lancaster 2021.
[27] Steen et al. 2010.
[28] Nacey et al. 2019.
[29] Artemov et al. 2024.

needs to be slightly adjusted when applied to more limited corpuses like Biblical Hebrew.[30] In this chapter, I will briefly introduce the method and discuss the adjustments made for the present study. For a more thorough treatment, the reader may consult the resources mentioned in the footnotes.

The basic procedure of MIPVU is quite simple, though somewhat painstaking. First, the text is divided into lexical units. Each word, polyword, or part of a word, which can be labelled with an independent part-of-speech tag, will be treated as an individual lexical unit. In most cases, a lexical unit comprises of a single word. However, sometimes a lexical unit might be longer, as in the case of phrasal verbs, or shorter, as in the case of Hebrew suffices. After dividing the text, each lexical unit is analysed for potential metaphoricity. If a lexical unit is deemed metaphorical, it is labelled with a tag (MRW), which stands for metaphor-related word. This basic tag will be specified with additional labels to distinguish between different types of metaphor.[31]

In some cases, such as similes, the metaphoricity of a word is easily recognizable in the text.[32] In MIPVU, such obviously metaphorical lexical units are called direct metaphors.[33] An example of a direct metaphor can be found in Judah's blessing, in the phrase גור אריה יהודה 'Judah is a lion's cub'. Since the author is describing a human being using the words גור 'cub' and אריה 'lion' from a different conceptual domain, the utterance can be seen as metaphorical. The source domain, ANIMAL, is used by the author to make sense of the target domain, HUMAN. This process of sense-making by comparing two different conceptual domains is called cross-domain mapping, and lies at the heart of all metaphors.[34] If the comparison is stated explicitly, as in the case of Judah and the lion, MIPVU identifies the word as a direct metaphor, and it is tagged (MRW, direct).

Direct metaphors are often signalled by other lexical units, which in MIPVU are called metaphor flags.[35] An example of a metaphor flag can be seen in Reuben's blessing, in the phrase פחז כמים 'treacherous as waters'. The prefix כ 'as', though clearly not a metaphor in itself, indicates that some kind of comparison is about to follow. Although not all comparisons are necessarily metaphorical, the following word מים 'waters' undoubtedly is, since it is used to describe a human being in terms of WATER. The prefix can therefore be identified as a metaphor flag and labelled with a tag (MFlag). It should be emphasized, that since non-metaphorical comparisons exist, a metaphor flag can only be identified in relation to other metaphor related words.[36]

Although direct metaphors and metaphor flags are well known and quite easily recognizable, the most common form of metaphor is the indirect metaphor.[37] An indirect metaphor is at play, when a concept from a different domain is used to describe something, but the comparison is not stated explicitly. An example of an indirect metaphor can be found in Joseph's blessing, in the phrase וימררהו 'They have made him bitter'. The word מרר 'make bitter' refers to the source domain of physical senses, more specifically taste, but it is used here to describe the consequences of the malevolent behaviour of Joseph's antagonists. It should be stressed here, that MIPVU does not claim that an indirect metaphor would *always* activate the psychological processes of cross-domain mapping in the minds of the author or the reader. After all, it may be impossible to tell, whether a given author even knew about the different senses of a given word. What MIPVU simply states, is that *at least* on a lexical level, such a cross-domain mapping exists, and must therefore be considered when identifying the metaphors in a discourse.[38]

An indirect metaphor is identified using three steps.[39] First, the lexical unit's contextual meaning is defined. Often the contextual meaning is conventional and can be found in a dictionary, but

[30] Artemov 2024.
[31] Steen et al. 2010, 25–32.
[32] It is worth noting here, that cognitive linguistics doesn't usually differentiate between metaphors and similes or other such literary devices, as long as they utilize cross-domain mapping.
[33] Steen et al. 2010, 38–39.
[34] See, for instance Kövecses 2017.
[35] Steen et al. 2010, 40–41.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Nacey et al. 2019, 4.
[38] Steen et al. 2010, 8.
[39] Steen et al. 2010, 32–38.

sometimes it may be a novel one, not yet recorded in a dictionary. Within Biblical studies this is more often the case, given the many instances of hapax legomena and otherwise rare words in the Hebrew Bible. In the case of מרר, however, the contextual meaning is given by the Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, and the word can be translated 'to provoke'[40].

Second, the dictionary is consulted to determine, whether the word has a more basic meaning, which contrasts with the contextual meaning. The basic meaning of a lexical unit is not necessarily the most common one. Instead, MIPVU guides the analyst to seek for a more concrete, specific, and human-oriented or bodily meaning among the entries of a dictionary. As mentioned earlier, the basic meaning of מרר given by HALOT is 'to make bitter'. This meaning differs considerably from the contextual sense, which means that the analysis should continue to the next step.

Third, the analyst determines, whether the current context of the lexical unit – the target domain of the metaphor – can be meaningfully understood in terms of the source domain. In our case the answer is yes: the negative emotions or other consequences, which come about in a person's life due to provoking behaviour of others can be compared with bitter taste. As a conclusion, it can be stated that since there exists a contrast between the contextual and basic meanings of the lexical unit, and since the target domain can be meaningfully compared with the source domain, we have identified an indirect metaphor and can label it with the tag (MRW, indirect).

A fourth category of metaphor-related lexical units are the implicit metaphors, marked by a tag (MRW, implicit).[41] They are either lexico-grammatical substitutes, such as pronouns, or ellipses, the omissions of words. These are to be considered metaphorical only, if they refer back to a lexical unit which is in itself metaphorical. For instance, in Joseph's blessing, the suffix in וימררהו 'they have made *him* bitter*'* could be identified as an implicit metaphor, if we read it as referring to the preceding metaphorical word שור 'bovid.[42] If, on the other hand, we read it as referring to the non-metaphorical proper noun יוסף 'Joseph', it is not an implicit metaphor and receives no tag. Whichever choice the analyst makes, MIPVU guarantees that the entire process is transparent and open for criticism.

Sometimes the contextual meaning of a lexical unit is unclear, or it is impossible to determine, whether an expression should be regarded as an indirect metaphor or as a metonymy. In these cases, the lexical unit will be given a tag (WIDLII), which stands for 'when in doubt, leave it in'. This is often the case with rare words in the Hebrew Bible. In order to prevent loss of data, these instances should be taken into account in the analysis and treated as metaphors. The final tag, reserved for ellipses, whose contextual meaning cannot be determined with certainty, is (DFMA), which means that they are discarded for metaphor analysis.[43]

In most cases, the quality of analysis is ensured by following the MIPVU guidelines in a devout manner. Sometimes, however, excessive piety might lead the exegete astray.[44] Such a case can be found on the second line of Reuben's blessing, where the verb פחז is used to compare Reuben with מים 'waters'. The verb's contextual sense is 'to be undisciplined'[45]. Along with the contextual sense, HALOT gives a separate entry with a more concrete, water-related meaning 'to gush over'[46]. Since there is a contrast between the contextual and basic meanings, and since the source domain WATER can be used to understand the target domain HUMAN, a tag (MRW, indirect) seems appropriate. However, as it turns out, the lexicon entry 'to gush over' might in fact be a misinterpretation, based solely on the present context of the word.[47] If this is the case, then using the lexicon to define the basic sense of the word leads to circular reasoning and a false positive in metaphor identification. If we accept de Hoop's argument, the basic sense of the word is 'to be treacherous'.[48] This sense

[40] HALOT 638, I מרר, pi.
[41] Steen et al. 2010, 39–40.
[42] HALOT 1451–1452, שור, 1a.
[43] Steen et al. 2010, 33–34.
[44] See Artemov 2024.
[45] HALOT 923, פחז, 1.
[46] HALOT 923, פחז, 2.
[47] de Hoop 2023.
[48] Ibid.

belongs to the HUMAN domain, but is also used to describe the WATER domain in the context of suddenly disappearing wadis.[49] Thus, although פחז is used in the blessing to clarify, how Reuben's behaviour resembles the waters, the basic sense of the word is the same as the contextual sense, and the lexical unit should not be treated as an MRW.[50]

Another example, in which an orthodox application of MIPVU might distort the data, can be found on the same line, when פחז כמים is accompanied by the verb יתר in the clause אל־תותר 'you will not have priority'[51]. Along with the contextual sense, HALOT gives an alternative sense 'to leave over'[52]. Since none of the two appears to be more concrete, specific or human-oriented than the other, the analyst is instructed to treat the word as a non-MRW. However, the verb יתר shares a common root with the noun יתר, whose basic sense is 'tendon' 'bow-string' or 'tent-cord'.[53] Each of these carries the sense of 'fastening something with a cord', which comes close the verb's sense 'to leave over' – that which is firmly attached will not be taken away by winds, animals or other forces. Thus, the basic meaning of the verb can be construed, but only by crossing the boundaries of word classes in the lexicon. As a rule, MIPVU doesn't allow for a shift in grammatical category when looking for the basic meaning of a lexical unit, though some exceptions are allowed for.[54] Since the Hebrew Bible is a small corpus, and its research is an ongoing process, other exceptions may sometimes be necessary.[55]

Finally, although MIPVU is an excellent tool for identifying the linguistic forms of metaphors, it gives no instructions when it comes to detecting the source domains of the metaphors. The analyst must either rely on pre-existing lists of conceptual metaphors or seek to identify the source domains inductively.[56] In this study, I will first apply inductive reasoning to determine the source domain for each of the identified metaphors, and then use the ancient celestial maps as a reference point to determine, whether all of the metaphors in the blessing could be considered as a single extended metaphor referring to the celestial sky as their source domain.[57] The following chapter discusses the methodology used for comparing the blessing's metaphorical language with the celestial maps.

IDENTIFYING THE CONSTELLATIONS

If the Blessing of Jacob was indeed written as a celestial map, it belongs to a long continuum of written depictions of the night sky. This tradition began with the Sumerian and Old Babylonian star lists in the second millennium BCE, and in the early first millennium BCE led to the development of the Neo-Assyrian MUL.APIN, a compendium of constellations and other celestial phenomena, which remained as an authoritative source for nearly a millennium. This collection surpassed the earlier *Three Stars Each* astrolabes*,* and together with the omen series *Enuma Anu Enlil* formed the backbone of Middle Babylonian astronomy. Although developments in observational and mathematical astronomy eventually led to MUL.APIN's displacement, the constellations remained largely in use through the Late Babylonian period.[58]

Via scholarly networks, this tradition disseminated into the surrounding cultures, and by the advent of the Hellenistic era, had already found its way to Greece.[59] There, the Babylonian celestial map incorporated the local constellations, and the first complete Greek celestial map was written by the

[49] Ibid. The latter could be seen as metaphorical, since human attributes are given to non-human objects, unless the texts are taken as referring to river-gods or other humanlike agents.
[50] There is, of course, the possibility that one reads the word as belonging within the simile, in which case its subject 'water' would be described in terms of human behaviour, and the word could be labelled (MRW, indirect). This seems like an unlikely interpretation, though, given the place of the MFlag *after* the verb.
[51] HALOT 451–452, יתר, hif. 4.
[52] HALOT 452, יתר, hif. 1.
[53] HALOT 452, II יתר, 1–3.
[54] Steen et al. 2010, 35–36.
[55] Artemov 2024.
[56] Steen 2017, 130.
[57] For a discussion on extended metaphors, see Dorst 2017.
[58] Beaulieu et al. 2018, 1; Hoffmann 2020; and even some of the mathematical parts of the compendium were still used within schematic astronomy in the Late Babylonian period, see Steele 2021.
[59] Kurtik 2021, 59.

fourth century BCE astronomer Eudoxus. The original mathematical work has unfortunately been lost, but a descriptive edition is preserved in Aratus' poem *Phaenomena*, written ca. 275 BCE.[60] Other written maps existed as well, such as the second century BCE astronomer Hipparchus' map, which nowadays exists only in fragments, but inspired the most famous ancient celestial map, Ptolemy's *Almagest* in the second century CE. [61] Although the Greek celestial maps differ from one another in some respects, some being mathematical treatises and others ekphrastic poems, they can all be traced back to the same lineage of written celestial maps, which originated in ancient Mesopotamia.

Writing is, of course, a secondary mode of description, when it comes to displaying visual objects such as the constellations.[62] It is no surprise then, that visual celestial maps – though rarely portraying the entire night sky – predate the written ones by several millennia.[63] To date, no drawings of the entire night sky have been discovered in Mesopotamia, but numerous images of the individual constellations can be found in temples, royal inscriptions, and kudurru boundary stones – to mention a few examples. These images, as well as the instructions for drawing them, provide valuable information about the way in which the ancient Mesopotamians saw the night sky.[64] As for the Greeks, the earliest examples of complete visual celestial maps are the Farnese Globe and Kugel's Globe, both depicting the constellations in Aratus' *Phaenomena* and dating back to the first century BCE.[65] Another example from the Hellenistic world, combining Greek and Babylonian influences with native Egyptian constellations, is the Dendera Zodiac, also from the first century BCE.[66]

These sources, along with the associated star-lore, forms the reference point when determining, whether the Blessing of Jacob belongs to the genre of celestial maps. In the following chapter, I will analyse the metaphorical language of the blessing with MIPVU, and compare it to the celestial maps using a set of criteria, which I have abstracted from the naming strategies used in antiquity when transmitting astronomical data from culture to culture.[67] These criteria will be used to identify, which constellations are alluded to in each of the individual blessings. They are as follows:

- **Location**
  - Is the constellation positioned in proximity of a previously identified constellation?
- **Nomenclature**
  - Does the language of the blessing recall the constellation's name, either in the form of translations, loanwords, or wordplay?
- **Myth**
  - Does the blessing's language bear resemblance to a myth or deity connected to the constellation?
- **Appearance**
  - Can the imagery of the blessing be seen as an allusion to the constellation's physical properties?

[60] Schaefer 2004, 161. Concerning the differences between Eudoxus' and Aratus' works, see Mastorakou 2021.
[61] Acerbi 2010, 154. Another early, but since lost work is the third century BCE astronomer Eratosthenes' *Catasterismoi,* which inspired the first century BCE Roman poet Hyginus' work *De Astronomica*, and its contemporary Pseudo-Eratosthenes' *Epitome Catasterismorum.* Also from the first century BCE comes the Greek polymath Geminus' astronomical treatise *Isagoge. See* Dekker 2012, 4; Marx 2020.
[62] See, however, Krieger 1992 for a through discussion on the subject.
[63] See, for instance, d'Huy 2017.
[64] Beaulieu et al. 2018.
[65] Dekker 2012, 102, 111. The globes' dating is a matter of some debate. Kugel's globe has been dated even as early as the third century BCE, see Mastorakou 2021, 63. For a thorough discussion and a comparison of all the Greek sources, see Dekker 2012.
[66] Gullberg et al. 2023, 186.
[67] The criteria are based on the etymological work of Kurtik and Militarev, who identified four strategies, and listed three additional factors to be considered, when comparing the names of constellations in different cultures. The strategies are: 1. echoing, or full translation of a Sumero-Akkadian term; 2. shift of meaning or interpretation of the latter; 3. lexical, or "material" borrowing; 4. folk etymology, or misinterpretation. The additional factors include: 1. the constellation figure and its location on the heaven sphere; 2. a constellation deity the corresponding mythological notions; 3. certain astronomic laws of celestial bodies' motions. Kurtik and Militarev 2005, 4–5.

Ideally, each criterion should be applied, not only to every metaphor related word in every blessing, but also to all of the constellations in each of the celestial maps. However, this would lead to an enormous amount of data and render this article unreadable for most readers. It is also unlikely, that the blessing's author would have chosen the constellations in a random order. Therefore, the location criterion will be prioritized over the rest, to narrow down the list of possible candidates. The remaining criteria will at first be applied to the nearby constellations, and to the further ones only, if a plausible connection cannot be established with the nearby ones. The zodiacal constellations will also be preferred over the non-zodiacal ones. As for the celestial maps, priority will be given to the earliest written celestial map, MUL.APIN. Other celestial maps, such as Aratus' *Phaenomena*, will be consulted when need be.

Although the criteria will be thoroughly tested in the following chapters, an example may be at place here to illustrate their applicability. The *crux interpretum* of the blessing, שילה 'Šiloh' will serve as a test bed. The analysis begins by applying MIPVU to the text. Despite several suggestions, the basic meaning of the lexical unit is unknown to us.[68] The contextual sense can, however, be deduced to a certain extent, since the word is related to the preceding מחקק 'ruler'[69], who will remain in his position 'between Judah's legs' until the arrival of שילה. Thus, the contextual sense can be defined as 'someone or something, that surpasses the ruler'. Based on the metaphorical language used in the context, it may be assumed that שילה is also a metaphor, but since the basic meaning is uncertain, it will be given a tag (WIDLII).

To apply the location criterion, we must first locate the previously identified constellations on the celestial map. As will be demonstrated later in the article, the word אריה 'lion' on the preceding line is a direct translation of the Sumerian ^{mul}UR.GU.LA and the Greek Λέων, both of which correspond to the modern lion constellation Leo. The מחקק 'ruler' is in turn a translation of the Sumerian name for Regulus, Leo's brightest star, known as ^{mul}LUGAL 'The King'.[70] MUL.APIN gives the location of the star in the entry MUL *ša₂ ina* GABA ^{mul}UR.GU.LA GUB^{zu} 'the star that stands in the Lion's breast'.[71] The location given in the blessing is בין רגליו 'between his feet', which is not a direct translation, but a description of the constellation's appearance. The שילה oracle can thus be situated near the constellation Leo.

Using the location criterion, we may first turn to Virgo, the constellation following Leo on the zodiac. Virgo's Sumerian name is given in MUL.APIN as ^{mul}AB.SIN$_2$ ^{d}ŠA.LA *šu-bu-ul-tu₄* 'The Furrow, Šala, the ear of corn.[72] Using the nomenclature and myth criteria, we note that the constellation is closely associated with the goddess of agriculture, Šala, whose name שילה 'Šiloh' clearly resembles.[73] This could indicate, that we are dealing with a direct loanword. By turning to the appearance criterion, we notice that the ear of corn, associated in MUL.APIN with Šala, is often depicted in the hand of the human-shaped constellation, and represents its brightest star, Spica.[74] This star is of lower magnitude than Regulus, and therefore surpasses it in brightness. Taken together, it seems obvious that Judah's blessing contains at least two direct references to stars, מחקק being one of them and שילה the other.

As demonstrated, when combined with MIPVU, the criteria constitute a useful tool for identifying the constellations, which served as the source domain for the blessing's metaphors. After establishing the methodological foundation for the study, we may now turn to the Blessing of Jacob. The analysis

[68] HALOT 1478, שילה.
[69] HALOT 374, מחקק, po. 2.
[70] MUL.APIN I i 9. The translations used in this article are from Hunger and Pingree 1989, as quoted by Watson and Horowitz 2011. Zimmern also identifies מחקק as Regulus, and gives credit to H. Gunkel for pointing it out. Zimmern 1892, 163.
[71] MUL.APIN I i 9.
[72] MUL.APIN I ii 10.
[73] An exact match would be שלה, which is the reading found in the Samaritan Pentateuch.
[74] Kurtik and Militarev 2005, 6. The constellation eventually evolved into the Greek Παρθένος, possibly through an association with the nearby ^{mul}*a-ru₆* 'Frond', the constellation of Marduk's spouse, Sarpanit. Perhaps this shift sparked some of the later messianic traditions within Judaism.

has been divided into chapters, each chapter dealing with a single blessing.[75] In each case, the metaphors will first be identified with MIPVU, and then the set of criteria will be applied to the celestial maps in search for the common source domain.

REUBEN – THE RISING SON

ראובן בכרי אתה כחי וראשית אוני יתר שאת ויתר עז

'Reuben, you are my firstborn, *my family's* (WIDLII) strength, and the first and best of my generative power, *excessive (WIDLII)* in *sovereignty (MRW, indirect)*, and *excessive (WIDLII)* in power'.

פחז כמים אל־תותר כי עלית משכבי אביך אז חללת יצועי עלה

'Treacherous *like* (MFlag) *waters* (MRW, direct), you will not *have priority* (MRW, indirect) because you *went up* (MRW, indirect) on your father's *marriage bed* (MRW, indirect), then you *defiled* (MRW, indirect) *it* (MRW, implicit); he *went up* (MRW, indirect) on my *bed* (MRW, indirect).'

There are three indirect metaphors (שאת, עלית, עלה) in Reuben's blessing, which share a common source domain: UPWARD MOVEMENT.[76] The first one describes Reuben's prominence within the family, while the latter two condemn his attempt to overpower his father by having sexual intercourse with his stepmother, Bilhah.[77] Since in each case the contextual sense is connected to gaining social status, they can be understood as examples of a conceptual metaphor SOCIAL STATUS IS VERTICAL MOVEMENT.

Another indirect metaphor in the blessing is יתר 'to have priority', whose basic sense is 'to leave over'.[78] The nominal root has an even more basic sense of a 'cord used for fastening something'.[79] It is used three times, clearly indicating a wordplay. The first occurrences are positive, praising Reuben for his qualities, while the final, negated אל־תותר, describes the negative result of his treason. Since יתר is used to compare the act of holding on to social status with the act of staying put in a physical location, and since the nearby words refer to upward movement, it can be seen as another example of the contextual metaphor SOCIAL STATUS IS VERTICAL MOVEMENT.

Two other indirect metaphors (משכב, יצוע) are used in the blessing to refer to Bilhah as Jacob's furniture.[80] These euphemistic expressions can be seen as referring to an underlying conceptual metaphor FAMILY MEMBERS ARE PROPERTY. The indirect metaphor (חלל) has the contextual sense 'to defile', and the basic sense 'to pierce'.[81] The basic sense might be a euphemism for sexual intercourse, but in any case, causing social defilement can be understood in terms of damaging physical objects by piercing. This example fits the FAMILY MEMBERS ARE PROPERTY contextual metaphor as well. The same contextual metaphor might already be alluded to in כחי 'my strength', which can be read either as a metonymy (Jacob = Israel), or as a direct metaphor, since Reuben is described as a physical trait of Jacob.[82]

As for the direct metaphors, only one (מים) can be positively identified. It is used to assimilate Reuben to waters. The preceding verb פחז 'to be treacherous' is not an MRW, but defines the manner, in which Reuben's behaviour should be seen as resembling the suddenly disappearing waters. As the wadis may lose their waters in an instant and become worthless, so the firstborn son will lose his place due to his mutinous act. The comparison does not, therefore, extend to the entire WATER domain, but only one aspect of it, the untrustworthy WATER SOURCES. Such demarcations are

[75] This draft only includes the first chapter.
[76] HALOT עלה, qal 1a, 3; HALOT 1301, I שְׂאֵת, 1, 2.
[77] de Hoop 258–260.
[78] HALOT 452, יתר, hif. 1, 4.
[79] See HALOT 452, II יתר, 1–3.
[80] HALOT 427, I *יְצוּעַ; HALOT 646, מִשְׁכָּב, 2.
[81] HALOT 319 I חלל, pi. 1; HALOT 320 II חלל, pi.
[82] In the case of metonymy, the lexical unit of interest would the possessive suffix, while in the case of metaphor it would be the noun.

common in metaphorical language.[83] The contextual metaphor FAMILY MEMBERS ARE PROPERTY can be applied here as well, since Reuben is compared to a run dry water source. Taken together, the metaphors in the blessing emphasise, that Reuben's incestuous act was aimed against Jacob, to whom he belongs and who is above him.

Now that we have identified the metaphors in Reuben's blessing, we may turn to the celestial maps to see, if a matching constellation can be found. In doing so, the themes of the blessing – loss of high status, sexual immorality, furniture, and water sources – should be treated as indicators of a possible connection. The repetition of יתר 'cord' is also worth looking into.



IMAGE 1. *The vernal equinox in 750 BCE and the constellations of MUL.APIN, equipped with Akkadian translations of the Sumerian names. The orange line stands for the ecliptic, the blue one for the celestial equator.*[84]

The location criterion will be applied first. Since Reuben's blessing is the first one, and the 'first place' of the 'firstborn' is emphasized by repetition, we should look for a natural place to begin a celestial map. At least two possible locations are to be considered. First, the constellations used as a starting

[83] Kövecses 2017, 43.
[84] Stellarium 24.1, Images by Jessica Gullberg, constellation labels by Susanne M Hoffmann.

point in the contemporary celestial maps, and second, the beginning of the year, which in the Jewish calendar coincided with the vernal equinox.[85] MUL.APIN begins with ^{mul}giš$_2$APIN = *epinnu* 'The Plow, and gives ^{mul}LU$_2$.ḪUN.GA$_2$ = *agru* 'The Hired Man' as the constellation rising on the 1st of Nisan.[86] As demonstrated in Image 1, both of these constellations would have risen side by side on vernal equinox at the time when MUL.APIN was composed. Since ^{mul}LU$_2$.ḪUN.GA$_2$ is stationed on the zodiac, it will be given priority over ^{mul}giš$_2$APIN.

The name ^{mul}LU$_2$.ḪUN.GA$_2$ = *Agru* means 'hired man'. In astronomical texts from the late first millennium BCE, four abbreviated forms of the name occur: ḫun.ĝa, ḫun, lú and lu. The last one, lu = *udu* 'ram', was the basis for the Greek Κριός and the modern Aries.[87] Since the blessing of Reuben is among the few that contain no animal metaphors, a direct connection based on nomenclature is hard to establish. The only possible reference to animals is עז 'strength', whose root has the basic meaning 'goat'.[88] This seems like an unlikely connection, though, since the same word is also used in the blessing of Simeon and Levi. Perhaps a tentative association could be made based on argumentum ex silentio, since there are only a few blessings *without* animal metaphors, and also very few non-theriomorphic constellations, ^{mul}LU$_2$.ḪUN.GA$_2$ being one of them – at least until the latter half of the first millennium BCE. This is far from conclusive evidence, though. Next, we will turn to the myth criterion.

The deity associated with the constellation in MUL.APIN is ^{d}DUMU.ZI = *Dumuzi* 'Faithful Child', the shepherd-king of Uruk and the consort of the goddess Inanna.[89] Several myths related to Dumuzi and Inanna are known. A central one, recounted in *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld,* describes the unsuccessful attempt of Inanna to replace her sister Ereškigal, queen of the netherworld. Though Inanna is eventually brought back from the dead, she is required to provide a substitute to take her place in the netherworld. To find someone who deserves such a horrible fate, she visits her consorts in various cities and finally ends up in Uruk, where Dumuzi is throwing a party instead of mourning for his deceased wife. The enraged goddess allows the galla-demons to take Dumuzi down to the netherworld. Eventually, Inanna regrets and allows Dumuzi's sister Geštinanna to take turns with him, so that both can spend half a year on earth and the other half in netherworld. If ^{mul}LU$_2$.ḪUN.GA$_2$ is the source domain for Reuben's blessing, Dumuzi's role as the ever-falling, ever-rising god would explain the use of the SOCIAL STATUS IS VERTICAL MOVEMENT metaphors.

The sexual motifs in the blessing could be reflecting the central concept in the myth and cult of Dumuzi and Inanna, the sacred marriage. This tradition began in the Sumerian royal court, where the kings were assimilated with Inanna's lover Dumuzi, and consummation rituals were performed to ensure the fertility of the land.[90] Although the royal cult faded away during the second millennium BCE, and the land's fertility was replaced with other connotations, the concept of sacred marriage was used in love poetry throughout the cuneiform era.[91] Applied to the Blessing of Jacob, the rightful consort of the goddess would be the patriarch himself. This may be alluded to in Joseph's dream, where Jacob and his wife are depicted as the sun and the moon.[92] Although Inanna's primary association was with Venus, the crescent moon was among her common symbols.[93] The prime example of the FAMILY MEMBERS ARE PROPERTY metaphor, Jacob's marriage bed, may be a reference to the 'splendid bed' of Inanna, a recurring feature in texts related to the sacred marriage.[94] In this case the phrase עלית משכבי אביך, which contains language similar to Isaiah 57:7, can be translated 'you sacrificed on your father's altar'.[95]

[85] Jacobus 2014, 393.
[86] MUL.APIN I i 1, I ii 36.
[87] Kurtik and Militarev 2005, 17–18.
[88] HALOT 804–805, עֻז, 1.
[89] MUL.APIN I I 43; Frayne et al. 2021, 75–79.
[90] On the different views about the exact nature of the rituals, see Lapinkivi 2008, 22–28.
[91] Lapinkivi 2008.
[92] Gen 37–10.
[93] Lapinkivi 2008, 19–20.
[94] Ibid. 20.
[95] See HALOT 646, 2, מִשְׁכָּב.

For the final conceptual metaphor, WATER SOURCE, we may turn to the appearance criterion. ^{mul}LU$_2$.ḪUN.GA$_2$ is located next to ^{mul}*a-nu-ni-tu$_4$* 'Anunitu', who, together with ^{mul}*ši-nu-nu-tu$_4$* 'Swallow', would later become the constellation Pisces.[96] In the late Babylonian era, the two constellations were envisioned as the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, an image which could account for the WATER SOURCE metaphor. The rivers intersected near ^{mul}LU$_2$.ḪUN.GA$_2$ in ^{mul}ZIB, an asterism depicted in iconography as a cord, tying together the two constellations.[97] The overall appearance of these constellations could explain the recurring יתר 'cord' in Reuben's blessing.

To sum up, we may state that although at first sight the metaphors in Reuben's blessing didn't seem to have clear counterparts in the nomenclature or appearance of ^{mul}LU$_2$.ḪUN.GA$_2$, the mythology of the associated deity provides many motifs, which could have served as a source of inspiration for the blessing's author. The appearance of the surrounding constellations, especially in the forms known from the Late Babylonian era, further strengthens the association. However, given the relatively few metaphors used in Reuben's blessing, it could also be understood without a reference to the celestial maps. It is thus the analysis of the remaining blessings, which will either confirm or disprove the connections established here. These will be discussed in the final article.

[96] Beaulieu et al. 2018, 5. The constellation was associated with water from early on, sometimes even depicted as a fish. In late Babylonian astrology, ^{mul}*a-nu-ni-tu$_4$* was also considered the *bīt niṣirti* 'secret place' of Inanna. Ibid, 12, 35, 39, 44–45.

[97] Ibid, 44–45.

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Project summary

My PhD project (working title: 'Dangers, Borders and Intimacy: Sacrifice in Rabbinic Texts from Late Antiquity') is carried out at the Theological Faculty of the University of Uppsala, and deals with Rabbinic texts from Late Antiquity. I map out and investigate a certain phenomenon that is found in several Rabbinic texts about the sacrificial cult. In these texts, the Rabbis connect various elements of the sacrificial cult in the temple and tabernacle with the love poetry of Song of Songs. Through this connection, they portray God and Israel as the bride and bridegroom of Song of Songs, and the cult as both the couple's meeting place, as well as their actual meeting itself. The sacrificial cult thus becomes, in eroticised terms, a representation of the most intimate meeting possible between the divine and the human. A brief example of this is how rav Huna in *Shir hashirim Rabbah* interprets the verse 'Your lips are like a crimson thread, your mouth is lovely' (Song of Songs 4:3) by referring to the sacrificial cult, because just like a crimson thread ran the blood on the altar in the temple. This image might seem like an unexpected combination of ideas, but its roots are deep and wide. It also seems like it can tell us something about how sacrificial cults might have been regarded: like the most intimate or physical way of meeting a god who in many ways was separate from the human world.

The aim of the thesis is to explore the complex of motifs present in these texts, and investigate how it works, with the help of a framework built on theories of reciprocity and liminality. These theories have been central within many academic fields for understanding sacrificial cults, as well as the relationship between the human and the divine in general. Reciprocity as a theory has its roots in the writings on gifts and giving, by sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss. It has been given new life in the works of modern bible scholars and philosophers such as Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme or Moshe Halbertal. Liminality also has its roots within anthropology, beginning with Arnold van Gennep's research on rites of passage. Later, it has to some extent been applied to studies of sacrificial cults, especially concerning how the risks inherent in the human contact with the holy give rise to a more ritualised relationship.

To conduct this investigation, I do three textual analyses of larger excerpts of source materials where this kind of interpretation is done at length and with variation. The chosen material is *Seder Olam Rabbah* 7:2, b.*Sukkah* 49a, b.*Yoma* 54. *Seder Olam Rabbah* 7:2

discusses the sacrifices at the time of the inauguration of the tabernacle through the lens of Song of Songs 4:16-5:1 (‘Awake, o north wind! Come, o south wind! Blow upon my garden, that its perfume may spread. Let my beloved come to his garden, and enjoy its luscious fruits! I have come to my garden, my own, my bride; I have plucked my myrrh and spice, eaten my honey and honeycomb, drunk my wine and my milk. Eat, lovers, and drink: Drink deep of love!’). Here, the various elements are interpreted as incense offerings, the scent of the burnt meat, the tabernacle itself, wine libations, different types of animal sacrifices, etc. b.*Yoma* 54 discusses temple spaces and objects with reference to Song of Songs 1:13 (‘My beloved to me is a bag of myrrh, lodged between my breasts’) with the Yom kippur liturgy as a background. The quote from Song of Songs 1:13 is applied to the cherubs on top of the Ark of the Covenant, who are described as embracing each other. According to rav Ketina in this source, the embracing cherubs is seen as a symbol for God’s and Israel’s love for each other, hidden within the Holy of Holies, and is shown to the people when they appear at the temple during the pilgrimage festivals. b.*Sukkah* 49a, discusses the drainpipes of the temple altar, which are interpreted with reference to Song of Songs 7:2, and the water libations during the holiday of *Simchat bet hashoeva*.

Preface

Dear readers,

I look forward to meeting you at the OTSEM conference! The text below is an excerpt of my analysis of b.*Sukkah* 49a. As this is my first draft, I hope you can have patience with unfinished thoughts of line, translations, footnotes, and so on. It will be very valuable for me to hear your comments when the final text is still in formation. In the end, this text, together with two other analyses, will form the analysis chapter of the thesis. As I'm about to rewrite all three analyses, my wishes for the seminar is to focus mainly on the following points that I want to revise:

- What changes should be made to the analysis questions? At the moment, there might be a risk for circular reasoning.
- How can I deepen my analysis and understanding of the Rabbis' readings of Song of Songs 7:2 in this context?

All best,

Miriam

APPENDIX (the source text: b.*Sukkah* 49a, with translation by Steinsaltz)

סוכה מ"ט א

שֶׁכָּל מִזְבֵּחַ שֶׁאֵין לוֹ לֹא כֶּבֶשׁ וְלֹא קֶרֶן וְלֹא יְסוֹד וְלֹא רִיבּוּעַ — פָּסוּל לַעֲבוֹדָה. רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בַּר יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר: אַף הַסּוֹבֵב. אָמַר רַבָּה בַּר בַּר חָנָה אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: שִׁיתִּין, מִשֵּׁשֶׁת יְמֵי בְּרֵאשִׁית נִבְרְאוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "חַמּוּקֵי יְרֵכַיִךְ כְּמוֹ חֲלָאִים מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָמָּן". "חֲמוּקֵי יְרֵכַיִךְ" — אֵלּוּ הַשִּׁיתִּין. "כְּמוֹ חֲלָאִים" — שֶׁמְּחוֹלְלִין וְיוֹרְדִין עַד הַתְּהוֹם. "מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָמָּן" — זוֹ מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אוּמָּנוּתוֹ שֶׁל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא. תָּנָא דְּבֵי רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל: "בְּרֵאשִׁית", אַל תִּיקְרֵי "בְּרֵאשִׁית", אֶלָּא "בָּרָא שִׁית". תַּנְיָא, רַבִּי יוֹסֵי אוֹמֵר: שִׁיתִּין מְחוֹלָלִין וְיוֹרְדִין עַד תְּהוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "אָשִׁירָה נָּא לִידִידִי שִׁירַת דּוֹדִי לְכַרְמוֹ כֶּרֶם הָיָה לִידִידִי בְּקֶרֶן בֶּן שָׁמֶן. וַיְעַזְּקֵהוּ וַיְסַקְּלֵהוּ וַיִּטָּעֵהוּ שׂוֹרֵק וַיִּבֶן מִגְדָּל בְּתוֹכוֹ וְגַם יֶקֶב חָצַב בּוֹ". "וַיִּטָּעֵהוּ שׂוֹרֵק" — זֶה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, "וַיִּבֶן מִגְדָּל בְּתוֹכוֹ" — זֶה מִזְבֵּחַ, "וְגַם יֶקֶב חָצַב בּוֹ" — אֵלּוּ הַשִּׁיתִּין. תַּנְיָא, אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר בַּר צָדוֹק: לוּל קָטָן הָיָה בֵּין כֶּבֶשׁ לַמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּמַעֲרָבוֹ שֶׁל כֶּבֶשׁ, וְאַחַת לְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה פִּרְחֵי כְהוּנָּה יוֹרְדִין לְשָׁם, וּמְלַקְּטִין מִשָּׁם יַיִן קָרוּשׁ שֶׁדּוֹמֶה לְעִיגּוּלֵי דְּבֵילָה, וּבָאִין וְשׁוֹרְפִין אוֹתוֹ בִּקְדוּשָּׁה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "בַּקֹּדֶשׁ הַסֵּךְ נֶסֶךְ שֵׁכָר לַה'" —

1. **As any altar that lacks a ramp, or a horn, or a base, or** the shape of **a square,** either because it was not erected as a square or due to damage, **is disqualified for** use in the Temple **service. Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda says: Even the surrounding ledge** must be complete, and if it is lacking it disqualifies

the altar.

2. **Rabba bar bar Ḥana said** that **Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The drainpipes [*shittin*]** built into the altar and extending beneath it **were created from the six days of Creation, as it is stated: "The hidden of your thighs are like the links of a chain, the handiwork of a skilled workman"** (Song of Songs 7:2). The Gemara interprets the verse homiletically: **"The hidden of your thighs"; these are the drainpipes** that are concealed within the altar; **"are like the links of a chain [*ḥala'im*]"; they are hollow [*meḥolalin*] and descend to the depths; "the handiwork of a skilled workman"; this is the handiwork of the Holy One, Blessed be He.** On a similar note, **it was taught** in **the school of Rabbi Yishmael** that it is written: **"In the beginning [*bereshit*]"** (Genesis 1:1); **do not read** it as: ***Bereshit,* but rather as: *Bara shit,*** meaning that God created the pipeline descending from the altar.
3. **It was taught** in a *baraita* that **Rabbi Yosei says:** These **drainpipes are hollow and descend to the depths, as it is stated: "Let me sing of my well beloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, and he dug it, and cleared it of stones, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a vat therein"** (Isaiah 5:1–2). Rabbi Yosei interprets these verses homiletically as referring to the Temple. **"He planted it with the choicest vine"; this** is referring to the **Temple; "he built a tower therein"; this** is referring to the **altar; "and hewed out a vat therein"; this** is referring to **the drainpipes.** As the owner of the vineyard is a parable for God, this indicates that the drainpipes are a natural part of Creation.
4. **It was taught** in a *baraita* that **Rabbi Elazar bar Tzadok said: There was a small gap between the ramp and the altar west of the ramp, and once in seventy years young priests** would **descend there and gather from there the congealed wine** left over from the libations that set over time, **which resembled round cakes of** dried and pressed **figs. They would** then **come and burn it in sanctity** in the Temple courtyard, **as it is stated: "In sanctity shall you pour a libation of strong drink unto the Lord"** (Numbers 28:7).

ANALYSIS OF B.SUKKAH 49A

1. Introduction

> When the righteous sit in the world to come . . . they occupy themselves with the study of the Torah, which treats of bodily life in our lowly world. . . . The universal *homo religiosus* proclaims: The lower yearns for the higher. But halakhic man, with his unique mode of understanding, declares: The higher longs and pines for the lower.
>
> - Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*

With Soloveitchik's words on how the higher longs and pines for the lower in mind, this chapter will analyse an excerpt from b.*Sukkah* 49a. Similar to the holiday of Sukkot, the Talmudic tractate *Sukkah* often deals with rain, and what can be done to make it fall when it is the most needed. The 49th daf of tractate *Sukkah* discusses the water libations performed during *Simchat bet hashoeva*, in every evening of Sukkot, during the driest time of the year when water was scarce. As one prays for the rain to fall, water is taken from the cisterns, and is poured on the altar in the temple of Jerusalem, in the hope of awakening the earth's subterranean hydraulic system. During the joyous celebration of *Simchat bet hashoeva*, large amounts of water are wasted in an effort to gain more water in the future – not far away in thought from ceremonies and feast such as the potlatch that Marcel Mauss writes about in his *Essai sur le don*.

When discussing these libations, and especially the design and workings of drainpipes of the altar, the Rabbis add another layer to the complex reasoning by bringing Song of Songs 7:2 ('The hidden of your thighs are like the links of a chain, the handiwork of a skilled workman') to the forefront. This topic and context, the drainpipes of the altar during Simchat bet hashoeva, eventually become a platform for the Rabbis to explore the sacrificial cult as a platform for intimacy with God. This connection between the sacrificial cult in the form of libations, liminal stages like that between drought and rain, and Israel's and God's relationship as interpreted with the help of Song of Songs, is what I aim to investigate here. To do that, I will conduct a textual analysis in three steps, but before that, I will briefly address two important background topics: libations, and *Simchat bet hashoeva*.

1.2 Libations

Famous theorists like Émile Durkheim, René Girard, Marcel Mauss, Mary Douglas, etc., who wrote extensively on the topic of sacrifice during the 20th century, are more or less quiet on

the topic of libations. In the setting of biblical scholarship, animal sacrifice was a hot topic during the 20th century, but libations did not seem to gather as much interest. Still up until today they have not – perhaps it had partly to do with the unassuming practice of pouring wine on an altar compared to that of slaughtering an ox? The spectacular appearance of animal sacrifice surely drew the attention of some of its most famous exegetes, like Girard who for example based his mimetic theory of desire more or less on the presence of violence in the sacrificial system.[1] The topic of libations has also been burdened by a longstanding prejudice against the supposedly 'primitive' origins of all kinds of drink offerings: that they, unlike animal sacrifices, were instigated to placate chthonic gods or dead ancestors who could only receive what was poured directly on the ground. According to this view, libations were later on reimagined within the framework of a monotheistic sacrificial cult, where animal sacrifice from the beginning had an undisputed place.[2]

However, libations had a central role in the Israelite sacrificial cult. Together with animal sacrifice, vegetable offerings and incense burning, libations (sing. נסך) made up its backbone. Burnt offerings and peace offerings in biblical times were always accompanied by a libation of wine poured on the altar. According to the Rabbis, water libations were added to the daily sacrifices during Sukkot, on top of the wine libations, but there are actually no biblical texts that ask for this practice. *Sifrei Bamidbar*, a collection of midrashim on Numbers, comments the following on Numbers 28:7 ('The libation with it shall be a quarter of a *hin* for each lamb, to be poured in the sacred precinct as an offering of fermented drink to the Lord') to prove that the water libations were in fact asked for during Sukkot:

> Whence is derived the water libation on Succoth? R. Akiva says: It is written that the omer is to be brought on Pesach so that the grain be blessed for you, and bring bikkurim on Shavuoth so that the fruits be blessed for you. Also, (by induction), present a water libation on Succoth so that the rains of the year be blessed for you. R. Yehudah says: On the second day it is written 'veniskehem' ('and their libations'); on the sixth, 'unesachehah'; and on the seventh, 'kemishpatam' — (superfluous) Mem Yod Mem, which spells 'mayim' (water) — whence the water libation (on Succoth) is Scripturally intimated. R. Nathan says: What is the intent of (Bamidbar 28:7) 'On the holy place (the altar) pour a pouring'? To include the water (libation).[3]

By pointing out that the first grains and the first fruits were brought to the temple on Pesach and Shavuot respectively, to ensure good harvests, rabbi Akiva argues that logically, water

[1] See Girard, Violence and the Sacred
[2] Reference for this!
[3] Sifrei Bamidbar 150: add Hebrew text, and do my own translation

should be brought during Sukkot to ensure good rains during the coming year. Even if the connection between rain and Sukkot is not obvious in biblical text, it surely is in Rabbinic materials. Sukkot in temple times, as it is described in the Mishna, contains repeated prayers for rain in connection with daily water libations accompanying the usual pouring of wine libations. Very little concerning the cult seems to have passed by the Rabbis without discussion, and as expected, libations constitute a topic that is dealt with carefully in Talmud Bavli, and tractate *Sukkah* is the most obvious place to discuss such material. The connection between Sukkot, water libations and prayers for rain is a topic that will be discussed at length in the analysis.

1.3 Simchat bet hashoeva

Concerning the celebration of *Simchat bet hashoeva*, it has not really been part of the holiday of Sukkot since the Temple was destroyed. Sukkot as a holiday is placed right on the border between the dry summer season and the rainy winter season, which means that at the time of its arrival, the need for rainfall to replenish empty water reserves was great. Sukkot is also the time of the year when God judges the world for the coming year's rainfall, which is one of the factors that an agricultural society stands or falls with, especially in a warm climate. The need to make sure that the rainfall comes in the right time – right after Sukkot – and right amount is great. The eight-day period of Sukkot is in that sense a kind of liminal state: first, one prays for rain, then, the outcome of one's prayers will determine the quality of the following year, and once Sukkot is over, it is possible to see whether the prayers were met with approval or refusal. The celebration of *Simchat bet hashoeva* should be viewed with this in mind.

According to Rabbinic sources, every morning during the eight days of Sukkot in Temple times began with the ritual of *nisukh hamayim* – 'pouring of the water' – which was simply a gigantic water libation.[4] The last water left after the summer in the pool of Siloam was drawn,

[4] In 'The Water Libation in the Festival of Booths,' *Bible Review* 12.6 (1996): 18, 55–56, Jacob Milgrom writes the following about the water libation: Synagogue services during Sukkot have been distinguished by waving palm branches adorned with myrtle, willows and fragrant citrons. In biblical times, however, the main rites occurred in the Temple. Particularly memorable was the water libation, which, surprisingly, is not mandated by Scripture but is described in detail by the rabbis: "The water libation: How so? A golden flagon holding three logs was filled from the pool of Siloam. When they arrived at the Water Gate they sounded a prolonged blast, (and) a quavering note, and a prolonged blast. He (the priest) went up the ramp and turned to his left where there were two silver bowls…And they each had a hole like a narrow spout, one wide and the other narrow, so that both were emptied out together, the one to the west was for water and that to the east, for wine…R. Judah says,

carried up in a joyous parade to the Temple and poured into the drain pipes of the altar. To add to the grand gesture of wasting one's last resources in a time of need, the celebration continued each night with *Simchat bet hashoeva* – 'rejoicing at the place of the water drawing' – where enormous quantities of oil were used to light huge torches in the Temple courtyard, and dancers, singers and musicians would perform throughout the night. Pious Torah scholars would dance and rejoice; there is even a famous saying in *Mishna Sukkot* 4:9 that '[h]e who has not seen the rejoicing at the place of the water-drawing has never seen rejoicing in his life'. Even today, the festival of Sukkot is known as *zman simchatenu*, the 'time of our joy'.

1.5 Structure of the analysis

In the following analysis of b.*Sukkah* 49a, I will attempt to understand how the water libations of *Simchat bet hashoeva* are understood by the rabbis within the theoretical framework I have chosen. The cluster of motifs that I trace across all the Rabbinic texts chosen for this thesis appears here again: verses from *Shir hashirim* are used to interpret technical details of the altar's drainage system, the temple is understood through the metaphor of a garden, and intimate love relationships become the main metaphor used to portray details of the sacrificial cult. My three questions have been chosen to discuss three aspects of b.*Sukkah* 49a in particular: 1) the context of *Simchat bet hashoeva* and water libations, 2) the usage of *Shir hashirim* in connection with libations, and especially in relation to the altar's drainpipes, 3) the altar and water libations *vis-à-vis* wine libations, within the framework of reciprocity and liminality. With the help of theories of reciprocity of liminality, I will look at how *Simchat bet hashoeva* and libations lend themselves to portraying the relationship between Israel and God.

2. Analysis

2.1 How is the holiday of *Simchat bet hashoeva* used as a platform to portray liminality and reciprocity within the sacrificial cult?

To return to the topic of libations and *Simchat bet hashoeva*, the question that presents itself

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with one log they would carry out the libations all eight days." (Mishnah *Sukkah* 4:6, 9).[4]

first is: why do the Rabbis portray such a colossal wasting of resources at the time of the year when they are the scantest? Why would one undertake such a great risk in a time of threatening draught? If the rain fails to fall, the catastrophe would be a fact. The importance of rain should not be understated. A quick look at tractate *Ta'anit* ('fast') in Talmud Bavli shows that out of a whole tractate expected to deal with *halachot* concerning fasts, the majority of it actually deals with how one should fast when the rain fails to fall. The major reason behind fasting in the Rabbinic period – apart from important religious holidays such as *Yom kippur* or *Tisha b'Av* – seems to have been lack of rain. With this knowledge, the pouring of water libations during Sukkot might seem even more confusing. But anthropologists have written about similar rituals for a long time. If one allows a geographically far removed parallel, the practice of the *potlatch* can shed some light on our case. It is a sacrificial feast among indigenous peoples of the north-western United States and Canada, where great quantities of valuable objects are either gifted away without restraint or sacrificed to the spiritual world by destruction. Marcel Mauss writes the following about the *potlatch*:

> In a certain number of cases, it is not even a matter of giving and reciprocating, but of destroying, to avoid even giving the impression of wanting your gift to be reciprocated. They burn whole casks of olachen (candle-fish) oil, or whale oil; they burn houses and thousands of blankets; they break the most valuable coppers and throw them into the water, in order to crush and "flatten" their rival.[5]

The act of destroying valuable resources can be viewed as an assertive declaration of faith in the fact that the 'gift' will be returned plentifully – 'one receives a gift as a burden', as Mauss is often quoted.[6] But it is also a way of showing one's dominance, displaying one's wealth, and urging the receiver to do the same but on an even greater scale. Additionally, when the destruction of resources is aimed at the supernatural, it can be viewed as a case of sympathetic magic. Sacrificing one's resources to the gods should obligated the gods to return the favour, and pouring water on the earth should, supposedly, provoke a similar reaction from above. As with other types of sacrifices, offering libations is a way to bind the deity in a reciprocal relationship, where rainfall is to be expected as a result of the massive amounts of water being poured out. This ritual, in connection with daily prayers for rain, is clearly a way to cajole the deity into a reciprocal relationship.

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[5] Mauss, 116-117
[6] Mauss, 126-127

Concerning sympathetic magic as a core element of this ritual, in both Biblical and Rabbinic sources, the temple is often conceived of as the fundamental source of fertility and blessing. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein traces the mythological red thread behind *Simchat bet hashoeva* in an excellent way in *A History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods*. According to Rabbinic sources, God suppressed the great primordial waters, *tehom rabba*, after the flood, and sealed it with what was to become the foundation stone of the temple, *even shtia*. As Rubenstein points out, when king David was to build the temple, he sought to find the deep waters to be able to place the altar right on the centre of the world, where heaven, earth and underworld intersect: the foundation stone. An *aggada* from Talmud Bavli illustrates this story:

> When David came to dig the foundations of the temple, he dug fifteen hundred cubits but did not find the Deep. Finally he found a shard and wished to lift it. It said to him, "You cannot." He said to it, "Why?" It said, "Because I press down the Deep here." He said to it, "From when were you here?" It said to him, "From when the Merciful One made his voice heard from Sinai, 'I am the Lord your God.' Then the earth shuddered, and I am placed here to press down the Deep." Nonetheless, he did not listen to it. As soon as he lifted it the Deep rose and wished to flood the earth…"[7]

The Deep is the source of the fertility of the earth, and as long as it stays pressed down at the right level by the foundation stone, the earth is irrigated by rivers and subterranean channels instead of being flooded or dried out. But the workings of this mythic system are intricate. All of it needs to be accurately handled by men to ensure access to the right amount of water at the right time, and this is where the libations and the drainpipes of the altar come into play. The only point of contact between men and the deep waters are the *shittim*, the drainpipes that according to our source text b.*Sukkah* 49a were built into the altar, and created from the six days of Creation. Thus, what is poured through the altar's drainpipes has great consequences for the growing and harvesting of crops, access to drinking water, rainfall, and so on. Not only is the temple loosely associated with fertility – its drainpipes are the conduits for human survival. When libations are poured onto the altar, they travel through its 'nostrils', down the drainpipes, until they meet the Deep. Rubenstein quotes rabbi Eliezer saying the following about what happens when the Sukkot libations encounter the waters of the Deep:

> When they pour the water libation on the Festival, the Deep says to its companion, "Let your waters spring forth. I hear the voice of two friends," as it says, "Deep calls to Deep in the roar

[7] Rubinstein, p. 127

of your ducts" (Ps 42:8).[8]

As has been mentioned previously, during Sukkot libations of both wine and water are poured, and this what is referred to by 'the voice of two friends'. When these libations are poured on the altar, it is taken by the Deep as a sign that it is time to let the waters rise and irrigate the earth. To pour water on the altar is a form of communication, a way to tell the great waters of the Deep when to rise and when no to. To summarise this discussion, this means that the libation rituals of Sukkot are enclosed by the greater framework of reciprocity that surrounds the entire sacrificial cult, although in a slightly different way compared to alimentary sacrifices. While animal sacrifices can be seen as an attempt at gifting something valuable as directly as possible to the deity by destroying either the whole thing or parts of it, and thereby binding the deity in a reciprocal relationship that demands the gift of blessing in return, the water libations during Sukkot take a slightly different track. In the Israelite sacrificial cult, a food offering in the form of meat and grains was usually accompanied by a drink offering in the form of wine, thus offering a full meal. The water libations are not added to satisfy God who happens to be thirstier than usual – they are added because of an agricultural need for water at a certain point during the year. The waters of the Deep are given a form of agency in the Rabbinic texts, taking what would otherwise be God's place as recipients of the water sacrifice. I will write more about this topic under the heading of the third analysis question, suffice it for now to conclude that even if the water libations are presented as a gift to God like any other sacrifice, the Rabbis first and foremost understand them as an attempt at manipulating or interacting with the mythic hydraulic system of the earth, in a liminal season of the year.

2.2. How are motifs and metaphors from *Shir hashirim* used in connection with libations and drainpipes?

When tracing the cluster of motifs where the sacrificial cult is juxtaposed with verses or metaphors from *Shir hashirim* through b.*Sukkah* 49a, one soon stops at the second paragraph. b.*Sukkah* 49a:2 shows us the cluster of motifs in full flower: at the centre are the altar's drainpipes, next to the 'hidden of the thigh' of the beloved in *Shir hashirim*. Before digging into this combination, we will look at the paragraph sentence by sentence. It opens with a central argument: that the drainpipes of the altar were created by God at the time of the creation of the world. What is not said is that the drainpipes differ from the altar in this

[8] Rubenstein, 128

respect, since the altar was created by human hands both for the tabernacle and the temple, whilst its drainpipes supposedly lay ready and waiting in the Jerusalem ground. With this line of reasoning, we are left with a situation where, rather than creating the focal point of the temple cult, God chose to create its hidden plumbing system to transport waste liquids.

To support this argument, the *gemara* makes use of *Shir hashirim* 7:2. This verse is translated in various ways. Jewish Publication Society has a translation that is closer to the Hebrew text: 'Your rounded thighs are like jewels/The work of a master's hand'. The word חֲמוּק means 'curve' or 'curving', and חַמּוּקֵי יְרֵכַיִךְ 'curve of your thighs', so any choice to translate it as the here very apt version 'hidden of your thighs' is an attempt at a euphemism – the 'curve of your thighs' is supposedly also the 'hidden of your thighs'. Like the drainpipes of the altar, the curved lines of the bride's thighs are kept hidden, claims the *gemara*. Even if the *gemara* does not spell this out for us, it might be interesting to note here that the word for thigh is also often used to describe the side of the altar in biblical texts (see for example Lev. 1:11). The drainpipes are, literally, the 'hidden' of the altar's thighs. The word חֲלָאִים, 'jewellery' or 'ornaments', perhaps in the form of golden rings or something curved, also serves as material for a play on words here. Even if the root letters of the words are different, when pronounced, חֲלָאִים sounds similar to מְחוֹלְלִין, 'hollow': the drainpipes are hollow and descend to the depths. Like the ornaments of the bride, the drainpipes are works of art, created by a skilled craftsman, who in this case is God himself.

The last part of the paragraph returns to the initial argument that the drainpipes were created by God during the six days of creation. A claim from the school of rabbi Yishmael is brought up: that the word בְּרֵאשִׁית, 'in the beginning', should be read as בָּרָא שִׁית, 'he created [the] pipeline'. The word שִׁית is derived from the root with the same name: 'to put/place', or 'foundation' as a noun. The drainpipes, called שִׁיתִּין, 'foundations', in the Talmud, are thought of as the foundations of the altar, and in a wider sense, of the whole world. Not only is their status elevated by the claim that they were created by God, but as a result of the argument, they are even put at the centre of world.

Before attempting to answer the question of why *Shir hashirim* is juxtaposed with the drainpipes like this, it is useful to look at the use of motifs in the paragraph that follows 49a:2. Here, an excerpt from the 'Vineyard Song' of Isaiah 5 is brought in and juxtaposed with the drainpipes. Like the usual rabbinic interpretation of *Shir hashirim*, this text also tells the story of the relationship between God and Israel. Here, Isaiah uses the vineyard as a

metaphor for Israel, and the 'well beloved', the viticulturist, as God: with a lot of trouble, he dugs out a hill, plants expensive vines, and hopes for it to yield sweet grapes. In the rest of Isaiah's story, the vineyard rebelliously defies its owner and yields sour grapes instead, and is eventually threatened with destruction. The rabbis however still used the first two verses to talk about how God built both temple, altar and drainpipes for Israel. Thus, Isaiah's metaphor is transformed into a new one, where the vineyard is not Israel but the temple. The 'choicest wine' becomes the temple itself, the 'tower' becomes the altar, and the 'vat' that is hewed out in the vineyard is the drainpipes of the altar. Interestingly, in the original metaphor, the role of the narrator who tells the story about the well-beloved and his vineyard, is the prophet himself. In the rabbis' version, the narrator's identity is less clear – perhaps the narrator here is Israel? Apart from arguing for the existence of the drainpipes since the creation of the world, the rabbis might also intend to say that by creating all the necessary practical circumstances for Israel to conduct the sacrifices, he gave Israel all she needed for their mutual relationship to take place.

What is most noteworthy is however not exactly how the metaphor is transformed, but rather the intertextuality that is at play here. When the rabbis talk about some kind of intimacy with God through the sacrificial cult with the help of biblical materials other than *Shir hashirim*, they still choose texts that share motifs with *Shir hashirim*. Isaiah 5:1-2 and *Shir hashirim* at large have much in common: they revolve around an intimate relationship were the participants themselves or their actions are described in poetic language in a garden setting. In general, *Shir hashirim* is at large a text that revolves around various versions of a garden motif or garden metaphor, which in turn lends itself well as a platform for the Rabbis to talk about the temple. The kind of language and motifs that can be found in *Shir hashirim* can of course also be found in other biblical books. When it is used to discuss the relationship between Israel and God, it becomes even more appropriate material for the Rabbis to talk about matters pertaining to the sacrificial cult, like libations and drainpipes.

Now, to return to the analysis question: why comment on something as mundane, or even gross, as drainage plumbing, with the help of this kind of flowery language? To say that the rabbis try to elevate the drainpipes from their practical function as transporters of liquids from libations as well as blood from the altar is not entirely fair. If anything like it, they want to bring an element of sacredness down into their practical function, as even the handling of waste from the temple cult is handled is a suitable topic for halachic discussion. The rabbis rarely shy away from what might be considered repulsive subjects – the last paragraph of

b.*Sukkah* 49a is after all a discussion of how to clean away seventy-year-old leftovers of libations:

> There was a small gap between the ramp and the altar west of the ramp, and once in seventy years young priests would descend there and gather from there the congealed wine left over from the libations that set over time, which resembled round cakes of dried and pressed figs.

The discussion of how the altar as well as the drainpipes were cleaned continues in the Rabbinic tradition.[9] Steinsaltz summarises the discussion well: according to traditions cited in the responsa literature of the ge'onim, as well as by Rambam, drainpipes were one cubit wide and six hundred cubits deep. Clearly, they were too deep to clean entirely, even for young and fit priests. In the metric system, the drainpipes would have been approximately 45 cm wide and 270 metres deep.[10] The discussion in b.*Sukkah* 49 continues into the area of halacha: how should what was found inside the drainpipes be handled, once they have been cleaned? Without going into detail, the halachic problem that presents itself is how to deal with the leftovers of something that has been consecrated to God once, without diminishing its holiness (according to the principle of *ma'alin baqodesh v'ein moridin*: when it comes to matters of holiness, we ascend and do not go down). Either, libations are considered expended the moment they are poured out, and therefore there is no sanctity to whatever is left after that, or, the dried-up leftovers should be burned at the altar.

This context is important to mention to understand the role that the cluster of motifs from *Shir hashirim* (and in this case also Isaiah) plays in connection with the libations. We must first let go of any preconceived ideas of the drainpipes as something that has to be elevated from the realm of nauseating mixtures of congealed liquids to a loftier place, because since these liquids pertain to the sacrificial cult, they become topics of rabbinic discussion in their own right. From there, we can move on to examine exactly how libations and drainpipes relate to the quotes from *Shir hashirim*.

By adding *Shir hashirim* 7:2 as well as the vineyard metaphor from Isaiah to the discussion of the altar's drainpipes, the Rabbis underline the connection between the sacrificial cult and the relationship between the groom and bride, or Israel and God. Every detail of the sacrificial cult, however grisly or strange, could be linked to the relationship between Israel and God. The common ground between libations and drainpipes and the cluster of motifs from *Shir*

[9] Give examples!
[10] Steinsaltz, Talmud Bavli tractate Sukkah, p. 237

hashirim and other biblical texts is the reciprocal relationship between God and Israel. From this shared soil, sprouts that at first glance look very different can grow. To state this clearly, in b.*Sukkah* 49a the following two motifs used to describe and understand the drainpipes of the altar: 1) the hidden part of the bride's thighs that are as beautiful and as skilfully made as a piece of jewellery, and 2) the well-tended vineyard planted on a fruitful hill. The first motif is gathered from the area of sexuality or even eroticism. The second motif is taken from the area of gardens, and the fertility of the tended landscape. Both motifs are used to underline aspects of the sacrificial cult that are not obvious at first glance.

We will now move on to say something about the interplay of these two motifs. What happens when motifs of intimacy or eroticism are used connection with the sacrificial cult can be summarised by the following quotation from Moshe Halbertal's *Sacrifice*:

> The fatal possibility of rejection gives rise to an important function of 'ritual': successful transfer. Ritual is a prescribed procedure meant to guarantee the transfer's success. Adherence to detailed routine makes the passage from laying down to acceptance less fraught. Ritual is thus a protocol that protects from the risk of rejection. In that respect, ritual is analogous to legal systems as a whole insofar as they impose order while confronting the unreliability and capriciousness of emotional responses.[11]

In short, ritual is the protocol to use when establishing an intimate relationship with another being, whose response we cannot be certain of. Part of the explanation for why the Rabbis frequently return to *Shir hashirim* when discussing the sacrificial cult can be found here, since the mechanisms behind the relationship between a groom and a bride do not differ very much from that between Israel and God in a cultic context. Both aim to establish a reciprocal relationship in a situation that is fraught with risk of rejection, and when doing so, the procedure of anything from courtship to temple rituals can help.

On the topic of garden motifs used to talk about the temple, it is worth noting that one of the first examples of connections between the temple and gardens is Gen. 2:10-14. Here, one of the four rivers branching out from the garden of Eden is named Gihon, just like the spring in Jerusalem that supplied the temple with water. To draw direct connections between the garden and the temple is far from unheard of in a biblical context. Gardens, and especially vineyards, have the feature that they are a mixture of nature and cultivation – in this sense, they are already a liminal place between nature and civilisation. The temple, in turn, is also a

[11] Moshe Halbertal, *Sacrifice, 39*

liminal place – the 'liminal zone which partakes of the qualities of both [worlds] . . . and is the focus of ritual activity', in the words of Edmund Leach.[12]

When used together in connection with texts concerning sacrifices or the temple, these motifs present an opportunity to illustrate the reciprocal and liminal aspects of the cult. Regardless of what kind of sacrifice is brought to the altar – be it animals, libations of water or wine, or vegetable offerings – this type of intimate meeting with the holy will always be surrounded with risks. By using the cluster of motifs to talk about the drainpipes of the altar, the Rabbis not only bring together as seemingly disparate parts as the love between bride and groom of Song of Songs, *halachot* for the pouring of libations, and technical details concerning the building and maintenance of the altar.

2.3 How are reciprocal relationships and liminal spaces portrayed in the context of water libations, *vis-à-vis* other sacrificial temple rituals?

To answer this question, it is necessary to begin by looking at the premises for the sacrificial cult. b.*Sukkah* 49a begins at the centre of the stage by discussion the altar, its layout, its drainage system, and its cleaning. According to the rabbis, libations were poured out on the altar into two openings situated in its southwest corner, which were also the opening of the drainpipes. These 'nostrils of the altar' also received excess blood from slaughtered animals. After being poured out on the altar, the liquids would travel through the drainpipes out into the Kidron Valley.[13] To have a wine libation accompanying each animal or vegetable sacrifice would create a full meal for the deity, and after the destruction of the temple, the idea of the altar as God's table would be transposed into that of one's own shabbat dinner table, where wine, bread and meat was offered to hungry guests:

> **Rabbi Yoḥanan and Reish Lakish both say** the following exposition: **When the Temple is standing the altar atones for a person; now** that the Temple has been destroyed, it is **a person's table** that **atones for him,** for his feeding of needy guests atones for his sins.[14]

In a sense, the distance between these two tables is perhaps not so great. The altar did not only receive whole burnt offerings for God, but also served to feed hungry guests, and the idea of a shared meal is crucial to the sacrificial system. The alimentary function of the

[12] Leach, 82
[13] As summarised by Rambam in *Sefer Avoda, Hilchot Beit HaBehira* 2:11
[14] *bChagigah* 27a

sacrificial cult, and the role that it has played for later Rabbinic formulations of kashrut and ritual slaughter, should not be underestimated. Much has been written on the topic as God as the recipient of food-offerings. The focus is most often on animals as a sacrificial gift, and grains or vegetables and wine libations are handled as less interesting side-dishes. Possibly since the water libations during Sukkot are not mentioned in any biblical text, water libations are excluded from these discussions. What happens with the alimentary aspect of sacrifice when water is libated? Considering the fact that the practice of frequent water drinking is relatively modern, we have to assume that the Sukkot water libations were not intended as a drink offering in the same sense as wine libations.[15] Rather, they were a special addition during a holiday that in many ways revolved around rain, aimed at interacting with a sort of mythological hydraulic system of the earth. Based on this, should the water libations still be viewed within the theory of reciprocity and sacrificial gift-giving as presented by for example Marcel Mauss or Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, or are they are part of some other system altogether?

An offering of a gift is an invitation into a reciprocal relationship. What is gifted is of lesser importance, but it always tells us something about the relationship, as Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme exemplifies with clarity in her article, 'Tomhændet må ingen se mit ansigt! Gavens teologi i Det Gamle Testamente'.[16] She calls the giving of gifts an incredibly refined social practice that can craft relationships between humans no matter how unequal, or between humans and gods. The value of the gift is unimportant, instead, the main point is that the exchange should never become even: once both parts have gifted equally valuable gifts to each other, the transaction as well as the bond is over. The gifts themselves, however, almost always tell you something about the relationship: if a man gifts a food processor to one woman and silk underwear to another, many things can be read into the relationships. Likewise, a parent has no need for gifts made by their small child, yet these kinds of gifts might be kept for the rest of their lives.[17]

We begin by applying Gudme's examples of 1) the inequality of the relationship, and 2) what is the gift can tell us about the giver and the receiver, to our case. To the worshippers, the gift of water libations is a great risk – it is an act of sacrificing one's last resources at the time

[15] I need something to back this up here…
[16] Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme, "Tomhændet må ingen se mit ansigt! Gavens teologi i Det Gamle Testamente", *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift, 78*(4), 2015, p. 306
[17] Ibid, p. 307

when they are the most needed. The receiver, however, does not need to water any crops, and were he even to drink, he would probably prefer wine. The gift of water libations tells us everything we need to know about the hierarchy within the relationship, and it is not only that one side has more power than the other. Viewed within the framework of a reciprocal relationship, the process is as follows: by gifting one's last water to a powerful deity who does not need it, one relinquishes every last control and throws oneself in the deity's hands: now it is up to you to save me by letting the rain fall – according to our contract! It is a way of affirming the hierarchy within the relationship, whilst at the same time forcing the powerful side to act, unless the relationship is to end. Thus, from the perspective of reciprocity, the fact that God needs excessive amounts of water even less than he needs wine and meat is not a problem. The question is rather whether the water libations were actually intended as a gift for God: neither are they asked for in the Torah, nor do they fit into the alimentary system of the sacrificial cult where libations are drink offerings.

As I have mentioned earlier, the ending paragraph of b.*Sukkah* 49a discusses what was done with the congealed leftovers of wine libations: '[The priests] would then come and burn it in sanctity in the Temple courtyard, as it is stated: "In sanctity shall you pour a libation of strong drink unto the Lord" (Numbers 28:7)'. All alimentary sacrifices resulted in some sort of leftovers, and these had to be disposed of within an intricate framework of rules – ashes of burnt animal sacrifices, congealed wine, old showbread – but the water libations left no such traces. Within this context, something must be said about the altar as a liminal zone where objects are transformed. Alimentary sacrifices that are brought to the altar undergo a transformation where the goal is to have them transported from a human realm and accepted by the deity. The transformation means destruction in some way: by being poured out for drinking, or by being put on fire and turned into smoke and ashes. The water libations are not 'transformed' from human food to divine food, neither directly nor metaphorically. They are poured out to tell the deep primordial waters to rise, as rabbi Eliezer said.[18]

With the help of the conclusions drawn earlier about the ritual of *Simchat bet hashoeva*, I will conclude by arguing that the water libations are not aimed as gifts to God in the same way that animal sacrifices or wine libations are. The water libations can still be viewed within the framework of reciprocity, as they are a forceful act offering up one's last resources, aimed at

[18] Rubenstein, 128, as quoted earlier.

provoking a response from the other part within the relationship. But the dynamic is different: according to the rabbis, the practice of pouring water libations works outside the alimentary and directly relational context that otherwise frames what goes on at the altar. Instead of putting the libations within a relational context where the aim is to interact directly with God, the goal is to awaken a sort of mythical or cosmological hydraulic system.

Freedom of Movement in the Book of Jonah: Running from Authority to Free Will /

Anat Shapiro, Aarhus University

Project Summary

The Book of Jonah tells the story of a prophet literally attempting to flee his god and miserably failing. A natural result of the dramatization of this premise is a story about a person running across space with a god in pursuit. Another inevitable result of this scenario is a power dynamic of a superior authority figure (Yahweh) pitted against an inferior subject (Jonah). While many commentators have wondered about the theological aspects of this kind of brazen disobedience, not many have considered the more experiential aspect of the embodied dramatization of this disobedience in travel-story form. In this dissertation, I examine the spatial aspect of Jonah's confrontation with Yahweh as it is dramatized in the story in the form of a conflict between an individual and an omnipotent god. Since both movement across space and a power dynamic are implied in the very concept of flight – and the story is organized as a dramatization of a flight - both aspects are crucial to the understanding of the story. I argue that a spatial reading of Jonah's agency in the context of his relationship with Yahweh will show that the narrative employs space itself as a literary device for the representation of Yahweh's absolute freedom as opposed to Jonah's oppression.

Since the spatial and power-dynamic aspects of the concept of flight are dramatized in the Book of Jonah – a narrative text – a study of its literary design and mechanisms will be especially useful for an examination of these themes as they are represented in the story. These will allow an insight into the underlying messages and

implicit dynamics that are signaled to the reader by the exploitation of literary conventions and artistic design. Since the plot of the Book of Jonah takes the form of a travel story, a consideration of it as such will focus this literary analysis further, and assist in identifying the specific mechanisms of the literary representation of a person moving across space. This analysis will be done using a close synchronic reading of the Hebrew Masoretic text using interpretive tools from the fields of biblical studies, narratology, travel literature, philosophy, and geography.

Read this way, the Book of Jonah imagines what would happen to a person who would actually try to run from Yahweh. As the extreme example of this notion, Jonah is persistent in his resistance. Since the message of the story is that resisting Yahweh is impossible, Jonah has to fail in his resistance, but his insistence upon his own point of view remains, and it leads him to the depths of despair. The story tells the reader that mere obedience is not enough to achieve happiness, but only a full-hearted acceptance of Yahweh's authority will do. Jonah is the example of an individual who refuses to submit to Yahweh full-heartedly, and is severely punished for it.

Following the introduction chapter, the first chapter of the dissertation will be dedicated to the plot of the story (namely, the narrative frame of the travel story); and the second chapter will be dedicated to the textual design of space – both from the perspective of Jonah's confrontation and relationship with Yahweh. The paper submitted relates to the third chapter of the dissertation, which will be dedicated to themes of space, authority, freedom, and their dynamics. An analysis of the spatial design and the internal laws, logic, and dynamics of the story-world of the book in the first two chapters will provide a more nuanced context for a more theoretical

discussion on the representation of notions of power, individuation, oppression, and freedom of movement in the Book of Jonah. This discussion will draw from theories of these issues and their interaction from other fields of study – such as philosophy, psychology, geography, spatial studies, and more – and consider these power dynamics as they are reflected and represented in the biblical text.

The Symbolical Function of the Movement and Positionality of the Human Other in the Book of Jonah

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I. Introduction

Apart for its namesake, the human characters in the Book of Jonah are depicted collectively, in two distinct groups in two distinct yet parallel scenes: the sailors in 1:3–16 and the Ninevites in 3:5–9.[1] In terms of their plot function, both groups undergo a similar process: they begin as non-Yahwists under Yahweh's mortal threat, acknowledge and accept Yahweh's authority as a result of their encounter with Jonah, and are subsequently saved. As a result, they create a story-world where Yahweh's authority follows Jonah wherever he goes, and the entirety of the cosmos operates in his service – not only nature but also the human and social sphere. A spatial reading of the positionality and movement of the human Others[2] will show that the Ninevites and sailors do not represent any

[1] The sailors in ch. 1 and the Ninevites in ch. 3 are represented in the plural form in the first, second, and third person. In ch. 1, the sailors are referred to in the plural in all grammatic persons, for example: ולא נאבד (1:5); וייראו המלחים, ויטלו (v. 6); לכו ונפילה גורלות ונדעה בשלמי הרעה הזאת לנו (v. 7); הגידה נא לנו (v. 8); שאוני, עליכם (v. 12); וישאו ,ויטלהו (v. 15). The Ninevites in chapter 3 are likewise referred to in the plural form, for example: אל יטעמו מאומה אל ירעו ומים אל ישתו (v. 7); ויאמינו אנשי נינוה באלהים ויקראו צום ולבשו שקים (v. 5); ויתכסו, ויקראו, וישבו (v. 8); ולא נאבד (v. 9). In addition, the sailors are collectively referred to as "the sailors" (1:5) and "the people" (vv. 10, 13, 16), and the Ninevites are collectively referred to as "The People of Nineveh" (cf. 3:5; Lowell K. Handy, *Jonah's World: Social Science and the Reading of Prophetic Story* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 70, 74). The only singular "I" voice in both groups is that of a leader figure – the captain and the King of Nineveh – who emerge from the group anecdotally to speak on their behalf, before merging back with the group (cf. Jonah 1:6 and 3:6; A possible objection would be to point at 1:5 as indication of subjective variety amongst the sailors, as they call "each to their own god." However, the mention of the sailors crying to their gods serves other purposes here and is not concerned with representing the sailors as complex subjects. See below).

[2] I refer to the human characters in the Book of Jonah, excluding Jonah, as "Others" in relation to Jonah, the protagonist of the book. The rest of the humans in this narrative are marked as different from

particular ethnic or religious groups, but are used symbolically to represent different aspects of humanity, for the purpose of establishing Yahweh's absolute authority meristically. While each group manifests a different aspect of Yahweh's authority – religious and social – taken together, both the sailors' and the Ninevites' acceptance of him has the same conclusion: Yahweh's is an absolute supreme authority, and he decides the fate of humanity.

The idea that the human Other in the Book of Jonah is part of the story-world itself – rather than subjectively meaningful characters – finds its basis in literary theory, where scholars differentiate between dynamic and static characters.[3] Lotman divides the story-world of a narrative into mobile and immobile elements. Immobile elements are designed to characterize the story-world or the "[mobile] hero's environment."[4] Immobile characters are included in the immobile elements of the story, and are characterized by a high degree of typicality and generalization.[5] Immobile characters are in essence the embodiment of typical, repeated behavior and circumstances, which represent familiar social paradigms.[6] As such, they are intrinsically linked to the spaces with which they are associated and cannot change reality.[7]

Jonah in ethnic, national, religious, and social terms (cf. 1:5–6, 9; 3:5). Their differentiation from Jonah is further underscored with the collective representation, dividing the human characters into two groups (sailors and Ninevites), which Jonah does not belong to. For this reason, I use the term "Other" in relation to Jonah, and not in the context of Othering as it is used in contemporary political or social contexts.

[3] Juri M. Lotman, "On the Metalanguage of a Typological Description of Culture," *Semiotica* 14, no. 2 (1975): 119.103; cf. Jan Joost Van Baak, *The Place of Space in Narration: A Semiotic Approach to the problem OF literary Space. With an Analysis of the Role of Space in I.E. Babel's* Konarmija (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1983), 96.

[4] Lotman, "Metalanguage," 102.

[5] Ibid., 103.

[6] Ibid.; Van Baak, *The Place*, 96.

[7] Lotman, "Metalanguage," 103.

The human characters in the Book of Jonah (excluding Jonah himself) are the quintessential immobile characters as described above. First, the supporting human characters are anonymous and typical, a result of their collective representation. This type of character representation, much like that of the immobile character, results in characters that are reduced to their stereotypical, functional roles.[8] Second, they are limited to their respective settings: the sailors to the ship and the Ninevites to their city. Furthermore, these settings are likewise stereotypical in the sense that they are closely associated with the characters' symbolical functions (the sailors on a sailing ship and the Ninevites in Nineveh). Such "functional" settings, combined with the association with a "functional" character, serve as a coded characterization device for the space of the scene, allowing the reader to fill gaps of information regarding the specifics of the space based on prior knowledge and familiarity (for example, a modern, Western reader would easily reconstruct what a doctor's office would generally have in it and what would be expected to transpire there).[9] Lastly, as the following will show, they have absolutely no ability to change reality.

The spatial representation of the human Other in the Book of Jonah, then, reflects the social dynamic in the story-world, which Jonah must navigate in the narrative. An examination of this aspect of the story shows that the human Other serves to emphasize

[8] Uri Margolin, "Character," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan; London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 55; Maria Nikolajeva, *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2002), 60–61, 76; Tobias Kunz, Lukas R. A. Wilde, *Transmedia Character Studies* (Routledge Advances in Transmedia Studies; London and New York: Routledge, 2023), 59–60; Margrit Tröhler, *Offene Welten Ohne Helden: Plurale Figurenkonstellationen im Film* (Marburg: Schüren, 2007), 49–50; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 330.

[9] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 96–145.

Yahweh's absolute authority as the central, organizing principle of the human experience. Two main features of these characters are employed to construct this notion: their plot function (specifically, their repentance/conversion to Yahweh); and their collective representation by a leader figure. In this paper, I will consider both features for a better understanding of the nuances of the social and political dynamics in the story-world of the Book of Jonah, and the interests and focuses of the narrative.

II. Repentance / Conversion to Yahweh

II.I. The Sailors

In their acceptance of Yahweh in ch. 1, the sailors demonstrate humanity's helplessness in the face of nature and the divine. The sailors first appear in 1:5, in the midst of the life-threatening storm created by Yahweh in 1:4, in the height of their panic, and they are described as desperately throwing objects overboard and crying out to their gods.[10] It is often noted that this depiction serves to contrast their frantic, verb-abundant behavior with Jonah's passive disassociation as he descends below deck and falls asleep (cf. 1:6).[11]

While active in comparison with Jonah, a closer examination of the sailors' actions shows that they are in fact quite passive in their handling of the storm. If anything, their actions are all aimed at turning to a higher power for assistance, rather than attempting to avoid the threat of the storm themselves: they call out to their gods (vv. 5–6); cast lots

[10] As noted by Person, the sailors are arguably indirectly mentioned in 1:3, when Jonah is reported to find and board the ship to Tarshish, yet they do not actively or directly appear before 1:5 (cf. Raymond F. Person Jr., *In Conversation with Jonah: Conversation Analysis, Literary Criticism and the Book of Jonah* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament supplement Series 220; eds. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 55.

[11] Cf. for example: Avigdor Shinan, Yair Zakovitz, *The Book of Jonah: A New Israeli Commentary* (ed. Dov Eichenwlad; Tel Aviv: Miscal, 2015), 34.

to ask the gods for help in identifying the responsible party for their predicament (v. 7); and finally turn to the prophet of the responsible god for his guidance on how to please the deity (vv. 10–13). Even when they take initiative in the form of refusing to throw Jonah overboard in vv. 13–14, they do so out of fear of divine punishment for murder.[12]

This "active passivity" serves the narrative in its effort to shift agency from the human subject to the divine. One way in which Yahweh's absolute sovereignty – as opposed to the sailors' agency – is shown to control their fate is the futility of their attempts at avoiding death using familiar methods, like communicating with their gods, alleviating the ship, and avoiding murder (cf. 1:5, 7, 13–14). Only when the sailors throw Jonah into the water does the storm cease (v. 15). In this way, the text makes it clear that it is pleasing Yahweh (by throwing Jonah overboard), not some moral virtue or heroic feat, that saved the sailors from the deadly storm.[13]

The same dynamic is manifested in the sailors' positionality and movement. The sailors demonstrate human movement along the vertical axis, which represents

[12] Cf. Daniel C. Timmer, *Obadiah, Jonah and Micha: An Introduction and Commentary* (ed. Tremper Longman III; Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 26; London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2021), 59; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah* (World Bible Commentary 31, Waco: Word Books, 1987), 463; There is some debate surrounding the motive for the sailors' attempt to row to shore in v. 13, with some commentators rejecting the idea that the sailors are trying to avoid a moral or religious transgression, for instance suggesting that they are trying to avoid accountability as Jonah's accessories to his disobedience to his divine master (cf. for example: Ehud Ben Zvi, *The Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud* (ed. Ehud Ben Zvi; JSOT Testament Supplement Series 367; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic / Continuum, 2003), 71–72; Thomas M. Bolin, *Freedom Beyond Forgiveness: The Book of Jonah Re-Examined* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 1997), 86–87; Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretations* (The Anchor Bible 24B; New York: Doubleday, 1990), 142). That the moral argument is the plausible explanation for their choice is evident at the very least by the context, as the sailors proclaim this themselves in v. 14. For the purpose of this discussion, however, their motive for this attempt is immaterial, as its purpose is at any rate to demonstrate the futility of an attempt to resolve the problem of the storm by any means other than those desired by Yahweh (as reported by Jonah in 1:12).

[13] Sasson, *Jonah*, 141.

communication and relationship with the divine in the ANE.[14] As long as they are unaware of Yahweh's sovereignty or misunderstand it, the sailors' actions are in the downward direction: they throw objects into the water (1:5); cast lots, described with a repetition of the verb נפל [fall] (v. 7); and finally, this chain of descending actions culminates in their rowing back to shore, using a verb denoting a burrowing into the ground – alluding even to Sheol (v. 13).[15] Ben Zvi notes that the image of the sailors' attempt to row back to shore in v. 13 reflects a convention of depicting foreigners as misunderstanding the geographically unlimited nature of Yahweh.[16] This shows that despite the sailors' best religious (and moral) intentions, human agency that goes against Yahweh's wishes is equated with distance from him and increasing danger.

Accordingly, in contrast to their descending throughout ch. 1, the sailors' final acceptance of Yahweh is marked with their lifting up of Jonah into the air before throwing him into the water as per Yahweh's wishes in 1:15. By lifting Jonah before throwing him overboard, the sailors perform an upward-oriented gesture, indicating their willingness to accept the divine. Interestingly, however, while upward-oriented, this gesture is not one

[14] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Prophane: The Nature of Religion* (trans. Williard R. Trask; New York: Harcourt, 1959), 70; Nicolas Wyatt, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 40; Gert T. M. Prinsloo, "Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World: Theory and Practice with Reference to the Book of Jonah," in *Constructions of Space V: Place, Space and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (eds. Gert T. M. Prinsloo and Christl M. Maier; Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 576; London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 10.

[15] BDB, חתר; cf. Amos 9:2; Sasson, *Jonah*, 130; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 455; Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah,* 52; Rashi and Metzudat David on Jonah 1:13; on the Captain's call to Jonah to "rise up" in 1:6, see III.I below.

[16] Ibid., 72–73. Ben Zvi suggests several possible readings of the sailors' actions in v. 13 – ranging from their absolute obedience to Yahweh to an expression of extreme disobedience on their part. Interestingly, however, all of his various suggestions ultimately point to the fact that while acknowledging Yahweh's existence, the sailors in their actions demonstrate an utter misunderstanding of him (ibid., 71–74).

of agency and human transcendence, but of submission. Rather than ascend themselves (by rising or raising their hands in the air, for example), the sailors lift Jonah up, presenting Yahweh with his offering, while also positioning Jonah as a partition between them and the divine.

While the non-Yahwist sailors' ignorance of Yahweh had made it so that it took them some time to acknowledge Yahweh's absolute authority, the text by no means judges them for it. Rather, it presents their initial pagan beliefs as ironic folly rather than idolatry. For example, after calling out in vain to their (false) gods using the verb זעק in 1:5, the sailors finally call out to Yahweh using his name and the verb קרא, used in the Book of Jonah to denote communication with Yahweh as a higher authority (cf. 1:14).[17] As זעק in the HB denotes a genuine, desperate cry for help, this difference reads more as a representation of their naivete than of their sinfulness as adulterers.[18]

More importantly, the sailors' conversion is depicted in a highly favorable view in terms of their Yahwistic piety. First, the sailors explicitly acknowledge Yahweh's freedom to do as he will as supreme authority, quoting psalms 115 and 135, both hymns describing Yahweh's rule over all nations of the world.[19] As noted by Timmer, the wording of their gestures of sacrifice in 1:16 functions as yet another reference to Psalms (cf. 50:14, 23), depicting their conversion as traditionally Yahwistic, to the point that they are equated

[17] Cf. Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah*, 54.

[18] Cf. Sasson, *Jonah*, 98; Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah*, 34; BDB, זעק.

[19] Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (trans. Waldemar Jansen, S. Dean McBride Jr. and Charles A. Muenchow; ed. S. Dean McBride Jr.; Minnesota: 1517 Media, 1977), 12; cf. Daniel Timmer, *The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve: Thematic Coherence and the Diachronic-Synchronic Relationship in the Minor Prophets* (Biblical Interpretation Series 135; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 81.

with the People of Israel, as if to acknowledge the "correctness" of their acceptance of Yahweh.[20]

Finally, the sailors' physical location on the Tarshish-bound ship at sea has an important function in the narrative's assertion of Yahweh's absolute authority over the entirety of humankind. As evident from Jonah's attempt to flee Yahweh by sea, the narrative humors the possibility that Yahweh's authority is limited to dry-land, and specifically to the land of Israel.[21] When the sailors accept Yahweh's authority at sea, which supposedly marks the limits of Yahweh's territory, they demonstrate the unlimited nature of his religious sovereignty.[22]

In sum, considered spatially, the sailors' conversion to Yahweh in ch. 1 shows that the scene is used to represent human obedience and submission to him as a religious authority and a creator god. The pagan sailors, initially ignorant of Yahweh yet operating with the best of moral intentions, unknowingly descend, dangerously nearing their demise and Sheol by not accepting Yahweh's authority. When they finally do, this is represented with an upward-oriented gesture of submission, indicating their acknowledgement of Yahweh but also of their inferiority in relation to him. In turn, this submissive obedience is met favorably with Yahweh, as evident by the textual design of the sailors' conversion in highly pious Yahwistic terms. Taken in its entirety, this scene demonstrates Yahweh's ultimate sovereignty over the whole of the human realm – both ethnically and geographically – but most importantly, it demonstrates Yahweh's complete

[20] Timmer, *The Non-Israelite*, 81–82; cf. Person, *In Conversation*, 50.

[21] See for example: Bolin, *Freedom,* 76; Gerda Elata-Alster and Rachel Salmon, "Eastward and Westward: The Movement of Prophecy and History in the Book of Yonah," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1984), 18; Stuart, *Hoshea–Jonah*, 451; Prinsloo, "Place," 14; Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah*, 28–29; Timmer, *Obadiah, Jonah*, 55–56; Malbim, Rashi, Radak, Abarbanel on Jonah 1:3; cf. Sasson, *Jonah*, 81.

[22] Cf. Timmer, *The Non-Israelite*, 78.

and absolute control over the fates of humans: all of the sailors' initiatives have been proved to fail, while their appeal to Yahweh and acknowledgement of his divine freedom has led to their rescue. Ultimately, the result is that human agency is equated not with resourcefulness and initiative in the face of danger, but with submission to Yahweh.

II.II. The Ninevites

As parallel story elements to the sailors, the Ninevites' function as a demonstration of Yahweh's universal sovereignty over all of humanity is constructed in similar ways, namely by orienting their movements towards Yahweh and associating their salvation with their submission to him. But if the sailors represent human submission to Yahweh along the vertical axis (or in the religious aspect), the Ninevites represent submission to Yahweh along the horizontal axis (or as a social or political power). Their repentance places the emphasis on their behavioral or moral change and on the inclusivity of all social strata in it, thus relating moral repentance to obedience to Yahweh. However, to identify the notion of Yahweh's moral authority with the notion of human submission to him, the narrative also expropriates agency from the human characters, representing it as an almost automatic performance act, demonstrating how all human movement and action in the world is controlled by and oriented towards Yahweh.

The expropriation of agency from the Ninevites begins with the spatial depiction of Jonah's prophecy itself: the "call" that Jonah is commanded to call in 3:2 is described as moving across space, changing it along its way. When beginning to narrate Jonah's prophecy to Nineveh, the narrator first notes the size of the city ("three days' walk," cf. 3:3), and then places Jonah – the bearer of this "call" – in a specific point in it, or to be exact: in the first third into the city ("one day's walk," cf. 3:4). Once Jonah utters the prophecy in 3:4, he disappears from the scene, re-appearing only in the following chapter

(cf. 4:1), leaving the reader with the call itself as the focalizer whose movements the narration follows. The reticent narration of the Ninevites' response to Jonah's prophecy in 3:5, where the call directly follows the mention of the Ninevites' faith in Yahweh, creates the effect of an immediate, almost magical cause-and-effect reaction, with the reader imagining the closest people to Jonah hearing the call and immediately believing.[23] This image is continued with the דבר [word] reaching the King of Nineveh in the following verse (cf. 3:6), described with a vivid, tactile verb ויגע, and then spreading from him to the rest of the city (3:7–8), creating a semi-contagenic-magical effect where the touch of the word effects what is touched by it.[24]

The choice of the word דבר to describe the news heard by the king in 3:6 has two important effects: it turns the prophecy itself into the subject of the sentence, charging it with a degree of agency and control over the events; and it identifies these news with Yahweh's word that has come to Jonah twice before in the story (cf. 1:1; 3:1).[25] As a result, the impression is that Yahweh's word is spreading over the entire city, sweeping all that it encounters with it and causing them to turn to Yahweh.[26] This sort of account creates the impression that the divine call serves as an external force driving Nineveh to repentance, rather than some religious or moral initiative of their own.

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[23] Commentators debate what exactly is the meaning of the Ninevites' "faith," what it is they "believe," and who is the god in whom they believe in 3:5 (cf. for example: Ibn Ezra, Abarbanel on Jonah 3:5; Wolff, *Jonah* 150; Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah*, 100). To me, however, this debate is irrelevant, as the Ninevites' reaction to Jonah's prophecy is, as I discuss in this section, a symbolical event meant to demonstrate a repentance controlled by Yahweh, rather than an example of a "proper" repentance with specific theological implications.

[24] BDB, יגע.

[25] Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah*, 102; James Limburg, *Jonah: A Commentary* (The Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 81.

[26] Cf. Amy Erickson, *Jonah: Introduction and Commentary* (Illuminations; Grand Rapids: William B. Eedermans, 2021), 306.

This impression is further supported by the Ninevites' repentance itself. Commentators note the immediacy with which the Ninevites accept Jonah's prophecy and of Yahweh, contrasting them with both the sailors who had witnessed Yahweh's wrath before accepting his authority, and other audiences of prophecy in the HB, who never accept a prophecy of doom without objection.[27] Taken together with the spatial manifestation of the call's spreading throughout the city, this immediacy reads as part of the magical effect the word of Yahweh has on Nineveh, evident also in the uncanny, almost automaton-like repentance of the city. Timmer notes that while impressive in their performance, the Ninevites' response to Jonah's prophecy – namely fasting and wearing sackcloth (cf. 3:6–8) – is represented as a limited, partial conversion to Yahweh, as these actions do not include an explicit absolution of sins on the part of Yahweh; the Ninevites' renouncing of their gods; nor the positive aspects of the sailors' conversion that would have been expected to be repeated in the Ninevites' repentance, as well.[28]

Other commentators have also noted that the emphasis in the Ninevites' repentance is on their actions and gestures, rather than direct reports on their cognition – either by them or the narrator (excluding the initial report of their "believing" in Yahweh,

[27] See for example: James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea–Jonah* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 439; Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah*, 100; Malbim on Jonah 3:5.

[28] Timmer, *The Non-Israelite*, 84; On the other hand, some claim their repentance includes at least the minimal conventional elements of evading disaster in the HB, as it is depicted in relation to the People of Israel, mainly the divine threat, the acts of repentance, and the divine relenting (cf. 1 Sam 7:3–14; Ez 8:21–23; Est 3:7–4:17; Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 223; T. Desmond Alexander, *Jonah: An Introduction and Comentary* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 26; ed. Donald J. Wiseman; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 91). For the purposes of this discussion, however, what is important is that Nineveh's repentence is depicted in a symbolical way rather than as a reliable representation of such repentence – wether as a minimal, stereotypical act or as a partial, overly-ritualistic empty display.

to indicate the effect of the word on them).[29] This emphasis on performance to me indicates a sort of "caricature" of a repentance, an automatic, almost robotic-like display of gestures, rather than a true repentance for one's sins. Similarly, what their "evil" actually was is not specified in the text, leaving the reader free to fill this informational gap with whatever "evil" they see fit.[30] This indicates that it does not matter what exactly the Ninevites' change entailed; what is important is that they "checked off" the ritualistic acts of repentance required of them by protocol. In this way, the narrative shifts the focus from the theological or moral aspects of the repentance to the behavioral aspect of obedience to Yahweh.

Another feature of this concretized, animated manifestation of Yahweh's word in space is that it brings the entirety of the city under its spell, leaving no breathing creature unaffected in its wake.[31] Many have noted the great detail in which the narrator specifies the participants in Nineveh's repentance in 3:5–9, with the mention of the king, his ministers, the commoners, the big, the small, the beasts, the cattle, and the livestock.[32] This meristic description has the effect of equating all social strata, as well as humans with animals, representing humanity's submission to the divine, while also demonstrating the exhaustiveness of Yahweh's authority. It also contributes to the fantastic effect of the alteration of the Earthly space by Yahweh's word.

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[29] See for example: Erickson, *Jonah*, 307; Susan Niditch, *Jonah: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; ed. David Vanderhooft; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023), 135; Chesung Justin Ryu, "Silence as Resistance: A Postcolonial Reading of the Silence of Jonah in Jonah 4.1–11," *JSOT* 34, no. 2 (2009): 206–207.

[30] Handy, *Jonah's World*, 75–76; cf. Erickson, *Jonah*, 309.

[31] Cf. ibid., 306.

[32] See for example: Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah*, 100; Person, *In Conversation*, 57; Limburg, *Jonah*, 81.

Perhaps not accidentally, this image evokes a significant event in Israel's history, where Yahweh directly interferes with the human realm to advance his agendas. Exodus 11 describes Yahweh's tenth plague on Egypt, which ultimately led to the Israelites' release from Pharoah's bondage, with Yahweh himself descending upon Egypt to deliver his judgement. This passage uses a remarkably similar description of the inflicted to the one in Jonah 3:

> ויאמר משה כה אמר יהוה כחצת הלילה אני יוצא בתוך מצרים ומת כל-בכור בארץ מצרים--מבכור פרעה הישב על-כסאו עד בכור השפחה אשר אחר הרחים וכל בכור בהמה. והיתה צעקה גדלה בכל-ארץ מצרים אשר כמהו לא נהיתה וכמהו לא תסף. ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ-כלב לשנו למאיש ועד-בהמה--למען תדעון אשר יפלה יהוה בין מצרים ובין ישראל. וירדו כל-עבדיך אלה אלי והשתחוו-לי לאמר צא אתה וכל-העם אשר-ברגליך ואחרי-כן אצא ויצא מעם-פרעה בחרי-אף. (Ex 11:4–8)[33]

This passage and Jonah 3:4–10 share an almost identical structure: both begin with Yahweh's manifestation in space (cf. Ex 11:4; Jonah 3:4); present a meristic description of the population made up of the king sitting on his throne and the common people (cf. Ex 11:5; Jonah 3:6–7); include the beasts and animals in the events (cf. Ex. 11:5, 7; Jonah 3:7–8); mention a public, communal outcry (cf. Ex 11:6; Jonah 3:7–8); a reference to humanity's knowledge of Yahweh's reasoning (cf. Ex 11:7; Jonah 3:9); a mention of Yahweh's חרון/חרי אף [wrath] (cf. Ex 11:8; Jonah 3:9); and a final report of the favorable

[33] "And Moses said, Thus said Yahweh: at midnight I will exit into Egypt. And any first-born in the land of Egypt will die – from Pharoah's first-born sitting on his throne to the first-born of the family that turns the grinding-stone and any first-born of the beasts. And there will be a great cry in all of the land of Egypt the likes of which never has been and never will be again. And to all of Israel not even a dog's tongue shall be scraped, from man to beast, so you will know that Yahweh discriminates Egypt and Israel. And all of these your slaves will come down to me and bow to me and say, leave, you and all of your people that is at your feet. And after that I will leave, and they shall leave from Pharoah's hold in wrath" (Ex 11:4–8).

result of Yahweh's actions for the rescued humans (cf. Ex 11:8; Jonah 3:10). This reference reminds the reader of Yahweh's ability to physically intervene with the Earthly realm and decide the fates of all creatures and entire nations. Above all, however, it contextualizes the fantastic representation of Yahweh's word in space in Jonah 3, equating the Ninevites' repentance with the tenth plague: both events were Yahweh's doing, not acts of human agency, and in both cases, no one and no thing had ever any chance of escape.

In addition to attributing Nineveh's repentance to Yahweh's word rather than to Nineveh itself, their repentance has another role in the story, which relates to the narrative function of their parallels in ch. 1. If the sailors represent human movement along the vertical axis, the Ninevites represent human movement along the horizontal, Earthly axis.[34] The Ninevites' actions in space can be divided into three main categories: acts of communication (announcing and crying: 3:5, 7–8); wearing of sackcloth (vv. 5, 8); and returning [from their evil ways] (vv. 8–10). The acts of communication are performed between themselves, apart from 3:8, where they call to Yahweh using the leitwort קרא. The act of wearing sackcloth, in addition to its self-deprecating aspect, is also spatially an act of submission that keeps them bound to the horizontal axis. Like the sailors raising Jonah into the air in 1:15, drawing attention to the act of covering oneself with a piece of clothing is equal to a symbolic partitioning of oneself from the divine above.

But the most significant spatial manifestation of the Ninevites' repentance is the concentrated use of the root שוב in 3:8–10. In the final verses of the chapter, the narrator recounts the successful repentance of the Ninevites by repeating this significant root, which denotes both repentance and physical return, attributing it both to the Ninevites'

[34] I refer here to the Ninevites' purely collective actions. The king's rising from his throne and sitting on the ashes in 3:6 is indeed a movement along the vertical axis, but this is performed by this representative character, and will also be discussed separately (see III.II below).

changing of their ways and to Yahweh's relenting of his anger towards them (vv. 3–10).[35] With this moment establishing the success of their repentance, the narrative identifies the moral repentance represented by the Ninevites with a return to Yahweh as it is understood also in a religious sense. As a result, the most meaningful human movement in space, and the one that assures the Ninevites' rescue from calamity, is a movement revolving around and returning to Yahweh.

The identification of the Ninevites with the horizontal axis establishes their part in a wider meristic image of humanity along with the sailors. In this way, the human Other represents humanity's submission to Yahweh both religiously and socially. And just like the sailors embody this notion in their physical location in space as well as in their actions and movements (by placing them in the liminal sea where Yahweh's authority is not expected to apply) so it is with the Ninevites. Considered spatially, the significance of the Ninevites' submission to Yahweh's authority emerges as not in it being Israel's historic enemy (as is most often asserted),[36] but their foreignness as a non-Yahwistic nation. The choice of the symbolical Assyria further drives the point of Yahweh's absolute sovereignty over all human, political authority home, by having a symbol of the greatest, highest Imperial power not only accept Yahweh's dominion, but be manipulated by him like tools at his disposal.[37] Lastly, just like the sailors, the Ninevites end their repentance with an

[35] The literal denotation of the root שוב, which is the conventional Hebrew word for "repentance," is "to return" but in Judaism, this root is used figuratively to represent repentance as a return to Yahweh and his righteous ways (cf. BDB, שוב; Jacob Neusner, "Repentance in Judaism," in *Repentance: A Comparative Perspective* (eds. Amitai Etzioni and David E. Carney; Mariland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 61–62; Kaufmann Kohler, Max Schlesinger, "Repentance," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of The History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (eds. Isidore Singer, Cyrus Adler, et all.; 12 vols.; New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Company: 1906), 376.

[36] Cf. for example: Ryu, "Silence," 202; Wolff, *Jonah*, 168; Timmer, *Obadiah–Jonah,* 72.

[37] Cf. Ex 11; Jer 18:1–11.

acknowledgement of Yahweh's divine freedom (cf. 3:9), finally completing the parallel image of the two scenes, and with it the meristic image of the entirety of humanity submitting to Yahweh wherever Jonah goes.

III. The Human Leader

A spatial reading of the human Other in the Book of Jonah shows that the sailors in ch. 1 and the Ninevites in ch. 3 together make up a meristic image of humanity – in all its aspects and locations – as submitting to Yahweh. This meristic image is created by constructing two parallel scenes, signaling to the reader that they should be read in relation to one another. Another central parallel feature of these two scenes is the incorporation of a singled-out leader figure, who anecdotally emerges from the collective representation, speaks for the group, before re-merging with it (cf. 1:6; 3:6).[38]

This singling-out is typical of collective representation, and is used both for strengthening the collective identity of the group and for depicting actions or functions attributed to the collective character, but of the kind that can only be performed or embodied individually.[39] In the Book of Jonah, since the story-world – including the

[38] Kenneth M. Craig, *A Poetics of Jonah: Art in the Service of Ideology* (second edition; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1999), 61; Person, *In Conversation*, 57; Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Old Testament Series; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 113.

[39] Tröhler, *Offene Welten*, 49; Not surprisingly, it is becoming increasingly recognized that the Greek chorus, too, represented a much more diverse group of people than initially thought. In her study of choral identity in Greek Tragedy, Foley, for example, notes the relationship between the gendered, socio-economic, and ethnic members of the chorus and the individual roles or dances they would perform on stage (Helene Foley, "Choral Identity in Greek Tragedy," *Classical Philology* 98, no. 1 (2003): 10–11). More interestingly, however, is the attention she gives to the importance of the chorus leader figure, who is crucial both for the internal functioning of the chorus as a group and for the coherence of human representation (i.e., maintaining a social hierarchy on the one hand, while providing an individual voice that is more easily communicated to the audience on the other – cf. ibid., 11–12).

human Other – is designed to embody Yahweh's absolute authority (also as a political or social authority), the fact that the singled-out character is a leader, an authority figure in itself, is significant.

A spatial reading of the captain in 1:6 and the King of Nineveh in 3:6 shows that just like their human subordinates, these leaders' main function is to establish Yahweh's supreme sovereignty, emphasized by subordinating the human leader to the deity. In this way, the narrative shows divine authority to surpass the human variety. In addition, the narrative employs intertextual references to 1 Kgs 19 in the representation of both leader figures to establish Yahweh's divine freedom as an absolute ruler. In what follows, I will examine the two leader figures in the Book of Jonah in terms of their spatial representation and narrative function, for a more exhaustive understanding of the literary function of the human Other in the Book of Jonah and the messages it helps communicate to the reader.

III.I. The Captain (1:6)

The captain, or רב החבל, makes his appearance in the story in 1:6 as the representative of the sailors who comes to wake Jonah from his sleep at the bottom of the ship, to encourage him to join the sailors' efforts to combat the storm and call to his god.[40] While the title רב החבל is singular in the HB, narrative context and studies of marine merchant activity in the ANE allow us to identify this figure with a ship's captain, who was the highest authority on board a merchant ship of the sort depicted in the Book of Jonah.[41] Since the

[40] The specifics of this character's leadership role are not provided explicitly, but his authoritative status can be inferred from the prefix רב, conventionally denoting in Hebrew the head or a leader of a group or a certain social function (BDB, רב 2; cf. for example 2 Kgs 18:17; 25:8; Isa 36:11; Jer 39:3, 13; 41:1; Dan 1:3; cf. Rashi, Radak on Jonah 1:6).

[41] Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah*, 38; Handy, *Jonah's*, 73–74; Sasson, *Jonah*, 102–103.

representation of the human Other in the narrative is symbolical and archetypical, this singular yet straightforward title serves as an efficient way of representing a typical figure of a leader for the sake of its leadership function, without "confusing" the reader with an overly specific characterization that might distract them from the character's main symbolical role.

The captain's main function is to shift authority from the human realm to the divine. The most immediate way in which this is achieved is by having the captain urge Jonah to appeal to an authority higher than himself (to call to his god) in order to fight the storm, rather than give Jonah some pragmatic task like throwing objects into the water (cf. 1:4). In this way, the captain transfers responsibility over the crew's fate from himself to a higher, divine rank, and submits to this higher divine authority (who, unknowingly to him at this stage, is Yahweh). Like the sailors, who express their recognition of Yahweh's absolute freedom in 1:14, the captain incorporates a similar declaration in 1:6b, where he expresses the possibility that Jonah's god might change his mind and spare their lives.[42]

The captain, then, presents a microcosmic foreshadowing image of the sailors' overall function in the narrative (of demonstrating Yahweh's absolute control over entire humanity) by emphasizing Yahweh's supreme authority, absolute freedom, and attributing their saving from the storm to him.[43] The linguistic design of the captain's spatial representation, however, shows that this function is also achieved using intertextual references. The captain's emergence from the group is designed in a marked way that draws the reader's attention to it, stalling the progression of the plot and

[42] Bolin, *Freedom*, 81.

[43] At this point of the story, the captain is still unaware of Yahweh and his involvement in the creation of the storm (cf. 1:10). However, 1:6 still serves as an ironic foreshadowing for the inevitable ending of the scene, where the sailors finally discover Yahweh as the god to whom they should call to stop the storm.

signaling to them to read it with great care: the singular form רב החבל creates a phonetic wordplay with the verb ויקרב [neared], which in turn phonetically underscores the central point of the verse, the expression קום קרא [rise, call], made of two charged spatial leitworts in the Book of Jonah. This emphasis on the two verbs "rise" and "call" placed in the mouth of the captain further reminds the reader (and Jonah) of Yahweh's divine command from which Jonah is fleeing (cf. 1:2, 6).[44] Read this way, the captain not only transfers authority from the human to the divine in its general sense, but specifically (and ironically) refers to Yahweh's authority as supreme master of both his prophet and humanity as a whole.

While I agree that the use of קום קרא in 1:6 has this literary effect, I also agree with commentators who note that the linguistic similarity between 1:2 and 1:6 is somewhat loose and general, as the grammatical structure of the two verses is quite different, and the structure of קום followed by another imperative is quite common in the HB.[45] The choice of קום and קרא is by no means arbitrary and is definitely meant to evoke Yahweh's divine order (as these words function consistently throughout the Book of Jonah), yet their appearance here is designed to evoke a more significant intertextual connection: to 1 Kgs 19.

While the phrase קום קרא does not appear in 1 Kgs 19, the structure קום followed by an imperative does appear there under remarkably similar circumstances (cf. 1 Kgs 19:7). While this structure is indeed common enough for it to seem suspicious as a mark of intertextuality, it should be noted that this is not the only reference connecting these

[44] Shinan and Zakovich, *The Book of Jonah*, 38; Allen, *Jonah*, 207–208; Trible, *Rhetorical*, 137.

[45] Sasson, *Jonah*, 102; Stuart, *Hoseah–Jonah*, 458–459.

two texts, nor is 1 Kgs 19 just any intertext when it comes to the Book of Jonah.[46] In the context of 1:6, at least, it appears that the linguistic similarity to 1 Kgs 19 is anything but accidental: the reference to this text begins already in 1:5, where Jonah is described as lying down and falling asleep [וישכב וירדם], using a similar structure to Elijah's depiction when he lies down and sleeps [וישכב וישן] (cf. Jonah 1:5; 1 Kgs 19:6). In this way the captain is positioned in the same narrative role as Yahweh's angel who wakes Elijah from his sleep in 1 Kgs 19:7 and commands him to get up and eat (cf. קום קרא – Jonah 1:6; קום אכול - 1 Kgs 19:7). This intertextual connection is further established with the phrase מה לך נרדם [what is it to you that you shall fall asleep] in 1:6, which echoes Yahweh's repeated question to Elijah,מה לך פה [what is it for you here], during his divine revelation in Mount Horeb (cf. 1 Kgs 19:9, 13).

The most immediate effect of this reference to 1 Kgs 19 is evoking Yahweh's unavoidable omnipresence – a lesson not yet learned by Jonah at this stage of the story. This reference does this not only by evoking the divine command itself (manifested in Yahweh's word to Jonah and the angel in 1 Kgs), but also the figure of Elijah, who had fled to the wilderness to hide from a human ruler (1 Kgs 19:2–3), but was found by Yahweh's angel (v. 5) and consequently Yahweh himself (v. 9). But perhaps even more significant is the fact that this reference identifies human rescue with Yahweh's agendas: the eating that sustained Elijah so he can continue his journey and reach divine revelation (cf. 1 Kgs

[46] 1 Kngs 19 is especially important as an intertext for the Book of Jonah, with both thematic (the fleeing prophet, the death wish) and imagery references (the sleeping prophet, the sitting under a plant), which are dispersed throughout the Book of Jonah (cf. Jonathan Magonet, *Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah* (Bible and Literature Series; Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983), 65–67). As a result, references to this particular text are marked as especially significant, and as a result, the Book of Jonah can evoke 1 Kgs 19 using allusions that can be less elaborate and quotational than would usually be required to identify an intertextual connection.

19:8) is equated with calling out to Yahweh in the storm to continue the journey (in Jonah's case, like Elijah, also a journey to divine communication with Yahweh). As a result, the leader of the human group not only transfers authority from the human to the divine, but again displaces human agency from any rescue from danger and attributes it to Yahweh as the only source of protection.

III.II. The King of Nineveh (3:6)

The King of Nineveh makes his appearance in 3:6, where the word of Yahweh is said to have reached him, causing him to rise from his chair, remove his robe, dress in sackcloth, and sit down on the ashes – presumably as a gesture of humility, mourning, and repentance.[47] Just like the captain in ch. 1 represents the transference of agency from the human authority to the divine, so does the King of Nineveh fulfill this function in ch. 3. The King of Nineveh's placement and movements in space shows that the two leaders are intentionally represented in a parallel way, signaling to the reader that they should be read in relation to one another and as fulfilling the same narrative function: to represent human authority in its general sense, as a symbol of power and authority and not in relation to any concrete ethnic or national affiliation.

Just like the title רב החבל, the title מלך ננוה [King of Nineveh] is equally unrealistic (or at least not historically accurate) but is clear enough from context as denoting the highest political authority of an Imperialist power.[48] In the Book of Jonah, the King of Nineveh functions as a stock figure of the foreign king, who stands in the HB for the

[47] The king is also mentioned in 3:7, where his decree to the Ninevites is reported on his behalf (מטעם המלך), but as he is not an active actant in this verse and it is also where the king re-merges with the group (cf. מטעם המלך וגדליו), I focus this discussion on the king's more pronounced role in 3:6.

[48] Handy, *Jonah's*, 78–79.

symbolical ruler of the entire world, who ultimately realizes and acknowledges Yahweh's authority, thus representing humanity's submission to this god.[49] In this sense, the King of Nineveh might represent a progression along the hierarchal ladder in comparison with the captain (i.e., representing a higher human authority). More importantly, however, a stock representation of an archetypical king like the one in Jonah shows that it is his function as king of a mighty empire that is important to the narrative, not his specific Assyrian or even foreign identity. This is evident, for example, in the use of the title "King of Nineveh," which was not used for any Assyrian king in any Assyrian inscriptions or sources. This places the emphasis on the title "King" and identifies this king with Nineveh – the capital of a major Imperialist power – but only in a symbolical, rather than historical, sense.[50]

The emphasis on the king's great authority aligns with the association of the Ninevites with the horizontal axis, which represents the human plain.[51] As a character representing a higher social status than all other humans, the King of Nineveh is likewise the only Ninevite who moves along the vertical axis in the story. The king's immediate response to the word of Yahweh that reaches/touches him is described ironically, using the charged verb ויקם [he rose], contrasting him with Jonah, who does not rise in obedience to Yahweh when ordered to do so (cf. 1:2–3).[52] Similarly to 1:3, the narrator uses this verb to surprise the reader: rather than have the king rise in a demonstration of his supremacy over his people when preparing to lead them in times of crisis, the king hurries to sit down in the ashes.[53] Spatially, then, this gesture is an expression of his

[49] Ibid., 80–82.

[50] Shinan and Zakovitz, *The Book of Jonah,* 15; Sasson, *Jonah*, 20–21, 248–249; Ben-Zvi, *Signs*, 94.

[51] As the opposite of the vertical axis; see note 13 above.

[52] Magonet, *Form*, 19.

[53] Timmer, *Obadiah, Jonah*, 69; Wolff, *Jonah*, 151; Allen, *Jonah*, 224.

submission to Yahweh, when he moves up the vertical axis, only to immediately move back down along it to an even lower point than before.

The King of Nineveh's self-humiliation is in fact the central function of his character in the narrative. Like the captain, the King of Nineveh removes responsibility for the fate of the city from himself and places it with the divine, by announcing a public repentance as his strategy to save his people (cf. 3:6). Furthermore, many commentators note the remarkable obedience demonstrated by the King of Nineveh, evident in the immediacy in which he accepts Yahweh's divine judgement and preforms a display of removing signs of authority, like replacing his throne with a pile of ash and his royal robe with sackcloth.[54] In addition, the king equates himself with his subjects when he merges with the collective for the city-wide, meristic repentance, and actively participating in this public repentance, which is unexpected for a king of his stature.[55]

A consideration of the King of Nineveh's movements in this context also indicates, like in the case of the captain in 1:6, a significant intertextual connection to 1 Kgs 19. Just like the narrator draws the reader's attention to this reference using a wordplay of ויקרב and רב החבל in 1:6, in 3:6, too, the narrator underscores the description of the king's changing of attire using a wordplay on the admonished throne [כס] and the wearing of the sackcloth [ויכס שק]. The text ties this act with 1 Kgs 19 through the royal robe that is replaced with sackcloth.

As noted by Sasson, the verb ויעבר in relation to a royal robe is singular in the HB.[56] But while there is no other king in the HB who uses this verb to remove his royal robe, in 1 Kgs 19, Elijah is described using this verb when he encounters Elisha and throws his

[54] See for example: Wolff, *Jonah*, 151; Erickson, *Jonah*, 306–307.

[55] Cf. Timmer, *The Non-Israelite*, 80.

[56] Sasson, *Jonah*, 251.

robe on the ground in front of him (cf. 1 Kgs 19:19).[57] Commentators commonly see Elijah's mantle as a symbol of his prophetic authority.[58] In 1 Kgs 19:19, the verb עבר appears in the same verse as the throwing of the mantle, which symbolizes the transference of the prophetic duty from Elijah to Elisha as ordered by Yahweh (cf. 1 Kgs 19:16). The replacement of Elijah with Elisha is part of a wider change of leadership in the kingdom of Israel decided by Yahweh (cf. 1 Kgs 19:15–18). By referencing the transference of the prophetic commission to Elisha in 3:6, Jonah's narrator reminds the reader of Yahweh's ability, prerogative, and willingness to interfere with the goings-on of the Earthly plane – both with nature (as he did with the storm) and with the socio-political sphere.

IV. Conclusion

The spatial representation of humanity in the Book of Jonah establishes Yahweh's absolute authority over the story-world of the narrative. Unlike Jonah, who challenges Yahweh's authority, the rest of the human characters in the story represent the extreme opposite. All human movement in the story is related to Yahweh, and all human action in space exhibits an acceptance of Yahweh's authority.

By dividing the representation of the human Other into two parallel scenes, the narrative creates a meristic image that encompasses humanity in its entirety and

[57] While conventionally translated differently to English, the Hebrew word for the King of Nineveh's royal robe, אדרת, in Jonah 3:6 is the same word used for Elijah's mantle in 1 Kgs 19:19.

[58] Cf. Christina Marie Fetherolf, "Elijah's Mantle: A Sign of Prophecy Gone Awry," *JSOT* 42, no. 2 (2017): 199; it is Fetherolf's argument that Elijah's mantle is in fact not a symbol of his prophetic authority but of prophecy gone wrong (ibid.). While an interesting reading, as she notes herself, the traditional reading sees the mantle as a symbol of prophetic authority. For the purpose of my reading, both symbols align with the overall story, yet I am inclined to accept the traditional interpretation in this case.

represents the panoptic space that is completely under Yahweh's control – from the peripheral wilderness to the cultural center of the city. Focusing the movement of each human group on the vertical or horizontal axes charges this meristic image with the associated symbolical connotations of these axes. As a result, the sailors – whose movement is focused on the vertical axis – represent religious obedience to Yahweh, while the Ninevites – whose movement is focused on the horizontal axis – represent social or moral obedience to him. Accordingly, they demonstrate Yahweh's authority over all areas of human life, both physically and socially.

The symbolical use of the human Other in the book of Jonah not only validates Yahweh's authority in all places and all aspects of the human experience, but serves to construct Yahweh's supremacy over humanity as a sovereign authority. The human Other is represented in a collective, anonymous way that negates personal initiative. Collective human initiative in the narrative is represented as a shifting of the responsibility for human fate from the human leadership to the divine authority, and consequent submission to the latter. This is how the two human groups are saved from imminent threat and gain Yahweh's favor. In their movement in space, the human characters demonstrate their limitation to the horizontal axis, and any act of movement towards the divine (i.e., upward) is followed by a demonstration of their inability to ascend.

This notion is underscored by the emergence of a leader figure for each human group, whose entire function in the narrative is to forego their human authority and demonstrate their submission to Yahweh. A common reference to 1 Kgs 19, and specifically to contexts that address Yahweh's salvatory abilities and his ability to intervene in the political order, further emphasizes Yahweh's supremacy over any other potential human power.

The unrealistic, collective design of the human Other also contributes to the expropriating of agency from humanity by representing human efforts to save themselves as automatic, almost robotic responses to external stimulation. The sailors apply their pagan understanding of the divine onto Yahweh and are only saved when they act against their better judgement; the Ninevites are depicted as performing a caricaturist, mechanical, demonstrative repentance that is performed in such a way that makes it seem more like the magical effect of Yahweh's word on them than any expression of genuine moral intention. Combined with an anonymous, collective representation and an emphasis on their ethnic and social Otherness in relation to Jonah, an uncanny effect is created of a Stepford Wife-like humanity that is entirely controlled by Yahweh – whether they are aware of it or not.

The textual representation of movement in the story-world of the Book of Jonah, then, reflects the (literal) centrality of Yahweh's authority in the human experience and his control of it. The understanding that the human Other is not designed to reliably represent any national or historical reality, but only to characterize the story-world and its dynamics, has important implications for the understanding of the narrative as a whole. This representation of humanity shifts the focus of the story from the extension of divine favor to foreign nations to the extension of Yahweh's sovereignty to the entire cosmos and all aspects of life.

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Aphrahat's Use of Isaiah against the Jews: The Grapecluster (*Dem.* 23)

PROJECT SUMMARY

My doctoral dissertation *Jacob, the Torah, and the Abrahamic Promise: Studies on the Use and Interpretation of the Jacob Story in the Book of Jubilees* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2023) dealt with the early reception history of the Jacob Story and how the author of Jubilees utilized the story for building early Jewish identity. Thus, I was immersed in the reception history of the Pentateuch and Genesis in particular, although Isaiah began to play more and more crucial role in the reception of the Jacob Story in Jubilees, too.

After completing the dissertation, I have continued in my post-doctoral research with early Syriac Christianity and how the Book of Isaiah is understood and used there as part of a larger project "Isaiah between Judeo-Christian Borderlines," led by prof. Antti Laato (https://polininstitutet.fi/jesaja-i-granslandet-mellan-judiskt-och-kristet/). As my earlier expertise lays on the early *Jewish* reception history, I am very interested in seeing both *continuity* and *discontinuity* in how the early Christian writers and groups possibly adopted and adapted earlier Jewish interpretive traditions. The early Christian explication did not start from a scratch, and the early reception began at the same time as the final composition was established. A new research along these lines are from prof. Antti Laato, *Message and Composition of the Book of Isaiah: An Interpretation in the Light of Jewish Reception History* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2022). One can also note the closer connection, crossing and combination of both traditional textual criticism and literary and redaction criticism in textual historical studies: the changes in the manuscript are evidence of exegesis and interpretation, and early reception!

The larger JESAJA project investigates how the early Christian and Jewish reception histories of the Book of Isaiah are related to one another. The starting point in the project is Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew* (c. 150 CE). There are many reasons for this: (1) Justin is one author, and thus the analysis does not become Mosaic, which can happen easily if one starts from the New Testament. (2) Justin refers to Isaiah a lot. The whole dialogue, in my opinion, could be characterized as "How should the Book of Isaiah be understood?" (3) Justin may have relations to early Jewish-Christian explication, which is perhaps also witnessed by *Ascension of Isaiah* (an important book which has been the focus of Laato, also now translated into Finnish from Ge'ez). Justin knows many Jewish-Christian traditions and is open for Jews to continue following the Mosaic Law, but he knows also many other opinions in the early Christian groups. (4) It is easy to go both horizontally in time to other authors (Tertullian, Origen, Origen's Hebrew Master, Ascension of Isaiah etc) as well as vertically to earlier (Paul) and later Christian authors, of which Aphrahat is a good example.

As Aphrahat writes in the Sassanid regime, which during his lifetime begins a new set of wars with the recently-shortly-Christianized Rome, he has a totally different attitude for example with eschatological aspects of Isaiah than Eusebius. He gives a good perspective how Isaiah is

understood and used outside the Christian Rome. Further, in comparison with Ephrem the Syrian, Aphrahat is much less influenced by "the Greek spirit," if one can say so. He is an idiosyncratic writer, and possibly also a witness of very early Syriac traditions. As the origins of the Old Testament Peshitta is still related to early Jewish(-Christian) groups, it is interesting to look for possible interpretive traditions which are similar with Jewish traditions. This does not yet prove that Aphrahat would have inherited them from Jews, or from the early Syriac Church, but if similar argumentation of Isaiah is used as with Justin and/or his predecessors, which still is different from the New Testament which Aphrahat knew, this *could* lead into discerning some very early reception history among the Jewish-Christian Circles.

This set of questions (looking for very early reception) is precluded with overall analysis of Aphrahat's Isaiah exegesis, which has not been studied before. As my earlier expertise lays also in the early Jewish reception history of the Pentateuch, I will in future also study the patriarchal stories in Aphrahat in relation to that reception history.

Earlier, I have presented a paper "Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar and Isaiah in Aphrahat, "On Wars" (Dem. 5) in a national conference in Turku, Finland (May 2024), where I studied *Dem.* 5 and how Aphrahat used the historical figures Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar and Isaiah in explaining how the dire situation raised by Shapur II affecting the Christians will not be the final word. Aphrahat has read Isaiah very carefully here. In May 2023 I presented a paper "Aphrahat's Use of Isaiah in Demonstrations: Some Case Studies," in the kick-off conference for the project "Isaiah between Judeo-Christian Borderlines" mentioned above. This paper will be updated into an article after the OTSEM conference. There I am writing about the Peshitta of Isaiah, Aphrahat as an Exegete in general and exegete of Isaiah in particular, and offer some case studies pertaining to how Aphrahat is generally using Isaiah with possible similarities with Justin.

Forthcoming planned papers include but are not restricted to:

- Aphrahat and the Jacob Tradition
- Early Jewish Exegetical Techniques in Aphrahat?
- Aphrahat and Esau/Edom
- Aphrahat and Abraham

I plan to write a monograph regarding "Abraham" and Genesis whereas "Aphrahat and Isaiah" will consist of mostly independent articles.

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Aphrahat's Use of Isaiah against the Jews: The Grapecluster (*Dem.* 23)

0 Preface

The paper is very incomplete, but should nevertheless be at least opening a perspective to the early Syriac reception history of the Hebrew Bible. The observations in this paper are preliminary and the strength of the allusions to Isaiah (or elsewhere) vary greatly, some more plausible and some more implausible. This will need to be taken care of in later iterations of the paper. Further, the discussion with secondary sources, including the sources mentioned in footnotes in this paper, is of yet very limited.

The following questions, perhaps in this order, could be elaborated upon in the session.

(1) What is enough for an allusion to be discerned?
(2) Distilling Isaiah-quotations from the wave of biblical quotations. Can Isaiah be analysed in separation of Aphrahat's overall "biblical interpretation"?
(3) How much should Aphrahat (and Syriac Christianity) be introduced and/or Aphrahat's relation to Judaism (of course depending on where this will be published)?
(4) How much should the train of thought be explained?
(5) How much should one discuss with (historical-critical) exegetical Isaiah-research in reception historical research?
(6) Aphrahat's relation to other early Jewish and/or Christian Isaiah interpretations.
(7) Secondary sources which should be noted and discussed with.

1 Introduction

The Book of Isaiah is one of the most used scriptural work on both early and rabbinical Judaism as well as in early Christianity. In Christianity, the book is often called "the fifth gospel."[1] Justin Martyr's *Dialogue* can be understood as a dispute on how to understand the Hebrew Bible in the correct way, with Isaiah playing a central role in the dialogue.[2]

Isaiah was also used in polemics between different Jewish groups. First Enoch and Jubilees can be taken as two such examples. Jubilees emphasizes the "holy seed" (Isa 61:3) and "righteous plant" (Isa 6:13; cf. Ezra 9:2–3) as the patriarch Jacob and his seed, God's chosen "friend" (Isa 41:8) who will follow the Torah propagated by the author. In the author's time during the first half of the second century BCE, the "holy seed" represents the law-obeying Jews, who will emerge and study

1 See, e.g., John F. A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Sawyer got the name from modern evangelicals, but it is also widely used name for the Book of Isaiah in Ethiopian Christianity. Isaiah is often raised up as the prophet *par excellence*, also by Aphrahat (*Dem* 15:3; PS 1.I 188:15).

2 The Academy of Finland and Polin Institute funded project "Isaiah between Judaeo-Christian Borderlines" (2022–2026) in ÅAU, led by prof. Antti Laato, starts from Justin's *Dialogue* in understanding the early Christian explication of Isaiah and continues then horizontally and vertically to other early Christian interpretations. On the project, see briefly the not updated description in https://polininstitutet.fi/en/isaiah-between-judeo-christian-borderlines/ (accessed 01/07/2024).

the Law anew (Jub 23).[3] The eschatological parts of Jubilees are greatly influenced by Deut 28–30; Isa 65–66, and Ps 90.[4] In addition, First Enoch is greatly influenced by Isaiah 65–66, developing many concepts not exluding dualism further.[5]

The usage of Isaiah 65–66 in such apocalyptic works[6] is not accidental. The chapters themselves are "toward apocalypticism," as Green argues.[7] The chapters are dualistic and already used in intra-Jewish polemics, which can be seen in the usage of persons in Isa 65:8–16.[8]

Aphrahat the Persian sage wrote his *demonstrations*, the only surviving work, between 335–345 in the Sassanid Persia. He was part of a minority in a time when Rome was becoming Christian, and the Sassanids regarded Christians as enemies of the state. This also raised concerns among the Christians, which is one theme in Aphrahat's fifth demonstration "On Wars," where Aphrahat compared the fate of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar with king Shapur II and comforted his "friend" that everything is in God's hand.[9] At least earlier scholarship saw also the Sassanids to favour Jews over Christians, which also led into persecutions in later years.[10]

3 See Topias K. E. Tanskanen, *Jacob, the Torah, and the Abrahamic Promise: Studies in the Use and Interpretation of the Jacob Story in the Book of Jubilees* (Diss.; Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2023). A revised edition is forthcoming in the series Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies by de Gruyter with the title *Jacob in Jubilees*.

4 James L. Kugel, "The Jubilees Apocalypse," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 1.3 (1994): 322–337; James C. VanderKam, "Psalm 90 and Isaiah 65 in Jubilees 23," in *Revealed Wisdom: Studies in Apocalyptic in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. John Ashton, AJEC 88 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 73–81.

5 Stefan Green, "Jerusalem as the Centre of Blessing in Isaiah 65–66 and 1 Enoch 26:1–2," in *Understanding the Spiritual Meaning of Jerusalem in Three Abrahamic Religions*, ed. Antti Laato, STCA 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 41–70; *idem*, *Toward Apocalypticism: A Thematic Analysis of Isaiah 65–66* (Diss.; Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2020), *passim*; *idem*, "Ethical Dualism in Isaiah 65–66 and 1 Enoch," in *Herald of Good Tidings: Essays on the Bible, Prophecy, and the Hope of Israel in Honour of Antti Laato*, ed. Pekka Lindqvist & Lotta Valve, HBM 97 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2021), 23–43.

6 On Jubilees as Apocalypse, see, e.g. John J. Collins, "The Genre of the Book of Jubilees," in *Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam*, ed. Eric F. Mason, JSJSup 153 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 737–755.

7 Green, *Toward Apocalypticism*.

8 MT has already 2. pl. m. suffixes in "your iniquities" and "iniquities of your fathers" in Isa 65:7, but not so in the LXX Syr Eth [Isa 65:6] (3. pl. m.). For an analysis, see Green, *Toward Apocalypticism*, 88–118.

9 Topias K. E. Tanskanen, "Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Isaiah in Aphrahat, 'On Wars' (*Dem.* 5)," paper presented in *Research Conference in Theology and Religion*, 22th of May 2024, Turku, Finland.

10 On the persecutions of Christians in the Sassanid era and how the christianization of Rome affected it, see, e.g. Arman Akopian, *Introduction to Aramean and Syriac Studies: A Manual*, Gorgias Handbooks (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2017), 171–173. The most important source is "the Acts of Persian Martyrs," but they are already embellished. See, e.g., Touraj Daryaee, "The Sasanian Empire," in *The Syriac World*, ed. by Daniel King, The Routledge Worlds (New York: Routledge, 2019), 33–43 (34–36), and esp. Kyle Smith, *Constantine and the Captive Christians of Persia: Martyrdom and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), esp. 103–109 on Aphrahat. Smith downplays the argumentation and allusions of the dire political situation in Aphrahat.

Aprahat's relation with the (imaginary or real) Jews is a well-trodden road.[11] The biblical interpretation of Aphrahat has been less discussed in this context with the exception of Bukovec.[12] However, also Bukovec remains in quite general lines and does not delve deeper into the interpretations of Aphrahat.

Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* are full of biblical quotations and allusions, which form a tight web. The nature of demonstrations make them both a fruitful and difficult object for studying biblical interpretation in early Syriac Christianity. The demonstrations offer much material for study, but Aphrahat often continues his voyage to other passages which make it difficult to follow his train of thought. Isaiah is among the most quoted texts in Aphrahat along with Genesis and Psalms. The indexes of various translations give around 90–100 quotations[13] and even more can be discerned if verbal and conceptual allusions are taken into account.[14]

In this paper, I consider the lengthiest and last demonstration by Aphrahat, "On the grapecluster" (*Dem.* 23), which is based on his reading of Isa 65:8. Before analysis of usage of Isaiah in this demonstration, I will first briefly introduce the contents of the demonstration.

2 *Demonstration 23*

Aphrahat wrote his *demonstrations* acrostically. Every demonstration began with the next letter in the Syriac alphabet consisting of 22 consonants. The 23th demonstration begins again with the first consonant, aleph. Therefore, some have suggested that the demonstration is not authored by Aphrahat. Lizorkin, by contrast, sees the demonstration as a beginning of a new set of demonstrations which ultimately became incomplete due to Aphrahat's death. Both are unnecessary assumptions. Aphrahat informs on his writings in three different occasions, in the end of the 22th demonstration where he dates the first ten demonstrations and the following twelve (*Dem.* 22.25), in the 14th demonstration where he dates the letter written for a synod which is included in the

11 Aaron Michael Butts and Simcha Gross, eds., *Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020); Naomi Koltun-Fromm, *Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia*, Judaism in Context 12 (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011); Eliyahu Lizorkin, *Aphrahat's Demonstrations: A Conversation with the Jews of Mesopotamia*, CSCO 642 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), compares different Jewish traditions and customs depicted by Aphrahat and the Talmuds with somewhat questionable methodology. See also earlier Jacob Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran*, StPB 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), where Neusner sees Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* witnessing of Jewish circles little affected by rabbinical Judaism.

12 Predrag Bukovec, "Auslegung in Abgrenzung: Antijüdische Bibelexegese bei Aphrahat dem Persischen Weisen," in *"Written for Our Discipline and Use": The Construction of Christian and Jewish Identities in Late Ancient Bible Interpretation*, ed. Agnethe Siquans (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 89–107.

13 I have consluted the following translations: Adam Lehto, *The Demonstrations of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage*, GECS 27 (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2010); Kuriakose Valavanolickal, *Aphrahat Demonstrations I–II* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011); Jouko Martikainen & Veijo Koivula, *Afrahat Persialainen Viisas: Uskon monet värit* (Helsinki: Kirjapaja, 2008). See esp. the index of the Syriac edition, in J. Parisot, ed., *Aphraatis Demonstrationes,* 2 vols, PS 1.I–II (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Socii, 1894 & 1907), PS 1.II 483. See also the helpful register by Kristian S. Heal, "Scripture Citations in the Works of Ephrem the Syrian," (March 2018), which includes scripture indexes of Ephrem's works along with Aphrahat and *Liber Graduum*.

14 In this paper, I follow the terminology proposed by Matthias Henze and David Lincicum, "Introduction," in *Israel's Scriptures in Early Christian Writings: The Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. Matthias Henze and David Lincicum (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023), 1–20, in differentiating between marked and unmarked citations, verbal allusions ("a reference to a specific word or string of words without an explicit marker" [p. 11]) and conceptual allusions ("a reference to a theme or topic that is not tied to a specific text in Scripture but nonetheless may be plausibly seen to derive from it." [p. 11]). See further the helpful methodological discussion by Jeffery M. Leonard, "Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case," *JBL* 127.2 (2008): 241–265.

demonstration (*Dem.* 14.50), as well as in the end of 23th demonstration where he discusses his writings (*Dem.* 23.69):[15]

> I have written this letter to you, my friend, in the month of Ab in the six hundred and fifty-sixth year of the kingdom of Alexander, son of Philip the Macedonian, and in the thirty-sixth year of Shapur, king of Persia, who has stirred up persecution and in the fifth year after the churches had been uprooted, and in the year in which there was a great ravaging of martyrs in the land of the east, after writing those twenty-two previous chapters, arranged according to letters, one after the other.

The demonstration could be regarded as an epilogue to the 22 demonstrations. The word "grapecluster," possibly a title added later, refers directly to Isa 65:8, quoted in the beginning fo the demonstration (*Dem.* 23.1; PS 1.II 1:1–9):

> I am writing to expound to you, beloved friend, concerning the topics you requested of me, concerning that blessing which is hidden in the cluster (ܒܟܠܫܐ ܕܒܥܝܢܐ ܕܒܪܟܬܐ ,ܡ ܠܛ). It is because of the grapecluster of blessing that the cluster is not given over to destruction (ܠܐ ܐܬܡܪ ܒܟܠܫܐ ܡܐܢ ܕ ܒܪܟܬܐ ܕܒܥܝܢܐ). For in the days of Isaiah, the Lord of the cluster wanted to destroy it, but it was said in a [certain] passage that the cluster would not be destroyed because of the blessing that was in it (ܡܢ ܒܐܢ ܒܪܟܬܐ ܠܐ ܒܟܠܫܐ ܠܛܒܕ ܐܬܡܪ).

The terms "grapecluster" (ܥܢܒܐ), "cluster" (ܟܠܫܐ) "blessing" (ܒܪܟܬܐ) and "destroy" (root ܠܛܒ) are found in Isa 65:8:

.ܟܠܫܐ ܕܥܢܒܐ ܒܗ ܐܡܪ ܡܪܝܐ ܗܟܢ .ܐܡܪ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡ ,ܡܬܠܛܒ ܕ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܒܪܟܬܐ ܕܒܥܝܢܐ ܠܐ ,ܐܬܡܪ ܐܝܟ ܐܥܒܕ ܠܐ ,ܟܠ ܠܐ ܐܒܕ ܕܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܐܡܪ ܠܛܒ.	Thus says the Lord: "As the grapecluster is found in the cluster and man says to his friend: 'Do not destroy it because a blessing is in it,' thus I will do because of my servants and not destroy all of them."

This quotation is followed by Aphrahat giving reasons for writing. Apparently his "beloved friend" had asked about whether "the righteous and the just are found on the earth at all times," and "why are the righteous sometimes heard when they pray, but at other times God does not hear them." (*Dem.* 23.1). Further, the third topic of the demonstration, according to Aphrahat, is supersessionalism – or as he puts it, with a new allusion to Isa 65:8 (*Dem.* 23.1; PS 1.II 1:17–4:4):

> calculation of each generation up to the time when Jerusaelm was destroyed and goodness was taken from it (ܥܕܡܐ ܡܢ ܕܐܒܕܘ), and how the righteous were watchful over [this] blessing which continued on from them to the time when, through Jesus, its lineage passed (ܕܥܠܡܐ ܠܥܡܡܐ ܐܚܐ) over to the peoples.

As the demonstration is very long, it is necessary to give a short summary on how the demonstration is built:[16]

I. Introduction Dem 23.1–2

15 The translations follow Lehto, *Demonstrations*, if not noted otherwise.
16 Cf. Lehto, *Demonstrations*, 481–482.

II. Righteous always Preserved, and World Preserved Because of Them	Dem 23.3–13
III. The Grapecluster guarded because of the blessing (presence of righteous and lineage)	Dem. 23.14–21
IV. Chronology of the Blessing from Adam to Christ	Dem 23.22–46
V. Grapecluster removed from Cluster	Dem 23.47
VI. On Prayer and God's Gifts	Dem 23.48–52
VII. Petition to God with Language of Persecution	Dem 23.53–59
VIII. God's commandments must be kept, especially not to swear by God's name	Dem 23.60–66
IV. Closing words	Dem 23.67–69

In this paper I focus on how Aphrahat explicates the grapecluster (Isa 65:8) and the blessing in "it" throughout this demonstration. I will not discuss all the important parts of how Isaiah is used, along with other prophets (esp. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel), throughout the demonstration, nor the calculations of the chronology in Dem 23.22–46 in more detail.

3 The Tree of Life

The argument of Aphrahat begins in *Dem.* 23.3 with referring to the tree of life dropping it fruits over the fence even though Adam was cursed and the curse followed his descendants throughout the centuries. Those wise enough in coming near the fenced tree of life can enjoy its life- and wisdom-giving fruits. In this way, throughout the centuries, some have eaten the fruit and gotten away from the curse (*Dem.* 23.3). Aphrahat compares those eating the fruit with the grapecluster (*Dem.* 23.3; PS 1.II 8:17–24):

> Those who eat the fruit are kept safe (ܢܛܪܝܢ), like the grapecluster inside the cluster, and because of the blessing the whole cluster is kept safe (ܢܛܪ) until the time set by the Most High is fulfilled. And though the decision against the rest of the cluster (ܫܐܪ ܥܢܒܐ ܕܐܫܬܗܝ) they did not want to repent through the strenght of the blessing, so as to ripen and become sweet (as compared with the bitterness which they have received), and to become partakers of the sweetness of the fruit.[17]

How does Aphrahat associate the grapecluster and the blessing in it with the tree of life? It may be the case, that this is caused by the near-context of Isa 65:8. In Isa 65:18–25, there is a mention of "the tree" (Isa 65:22, according to Peshitta):

> Because the days of my people are like the days of the tree, and the deed of their works will my chosen ones eat.

Although Peshitta (emphatic state) and the MT (article) do not further identify the tree, the LXX (and Eth following the LXX) and Targum Ps.-J. on Isa 65:22 include the interpretation "the tree of life," which may very well be how Aphrahat has read his text too.[18] Given the context of Isa 65:18–25 depicting the new creation, it suits Aphrahat well to associate the tree of life with the grapecluster. The relationship between Isa 65 and the Eden is further strengthened by the mention of the serpent in Isa 65:25: "And as for the serpent, dust is its food." According to Aphrahat (Dem 23.3), "the Adversary" became confused as he saw some eat the fruits of the tree of life, and "he

17 For the differing translation from Lehto here, see the discussion in the next section below.

18 In Classical Syriac, the emphatic state has already lost its "emphatic" or "determinative" aspect. See Theodor Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar*, transl. James A. Chrichton (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001), §202.

became angry with the fruit and those who ate it." Given that the devil "preys" the offspring of Adam, it is reasonable to suggest that Aphrahat has read Isa 65:25 as the affirmation that the serpent cannot "eat" anything else than only dust. The curse that Adam received meant, according to Aphrahat, that he became food for the serpent (*Dem.* 23.3). Of course, the reference in Isa 65:25 is probably to Gen 3:14, where the serpent will eat dust the rest of its life, too. This strengthens the reading of Aphrahat here.

4 Rest of the Cluster Not Repenting

In the quotation of *Dem.* 23.3 above, Aphrahat spoke of a decision against the "rest of the cluster" (ܥܓܘܕܐ ܕܫܪܒܐ) having been delayed. Even though this had happened,[19] "they," meaning the "rest of the cluster" did not want to repent. Aphrahat continues (*Dem.* 23.3; PS 1.II 8:25–9:1):

> The planting (ܢܨܒܐ ܕܝ) is cultivated by the wisdom of the cultivator. For a long time they have been deprived the advantage and the recognition of the gift of [this] remedy. At the opening of the gate which proclaims peace, and through the rising of the light of the intellect, and through the fruitfulness of the light-giving olive tree, the gloom which [hangs over] the minds of many vanishes.

ܢܨܒܐ ܕܝ is found in Isa 6:13 with reference to the chosen people of God. What is more important is the usage of the same word in Isa 5:7, which has some peculiarities in the Peshitta Isaiah:

> For the vineyard of the mighty lord is the house, the house of Israel, and the men *from* Judah the *new* and beloved planting.[20]

Although the Peshitta rendering of Isa 5:7 has been alleged to be Christian, this is most probably not the case.[21] Nevertheless, it seems to me that the Peshitta of Isaiah emphasizes the *new* beginning for people "from" (ܡܢ) Judah.[22] Such positive reading for Isa 5:1–7 is possible given the intertextual link to Isa 27:2–5.[23] However, Aphrahat seems to relate this "new planting" with the followers of Jesus, if the forthcoming "opening of the gate which proclaims peace" is, as Valavanolickal argues, related to Mary and the birth of Jesus.[24] With this new event, the "gloom of the mind" (ܚܫܘܟܐ ܕܢܟܣܐ) is removed. The word ܚܫܘܟܐ "gloom" is used in Isa 29:18:

> And the deaf will hear the words of the book in that day, and the eyes of the blind will see from the darkness and the gloom (ܡܢ ܥܡܝܡܐ ܘܡܢ ܚܫܘܟܐ).

19 See the translation by Valavanolickal, *Demonstrations* 2:258: "He had delayed for them the decree (sentence) concerning the rest of the cluster, but they were unwilling to repent…" *Pro* the translation by Lehto, *Demonstrations*, 485: "And if the decision against the rest of the cluster is delayed, it is because they do not want to repent…" The question is whether the ܐ + pf. in the beginning of the sentence should be understood as conditional ("if") and further, whether the perfect should be understood as present or past. Given the following ܚܝ ܕ "they did not want" is in pf. and not in participle (~present case), the translation by Valavanolickal is to be preferred.

20 The italics note the main differences between the MT and the Peshitta.

21 Attila Bodor, *The Theological Profile of the Peshitta of Isaiah*, STHB 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 153–155.

22 Bodor, *Theological Profile*, 154, argues that the preposition indicates the origin of the men in question, which is admittedly a possible reading. However, given the parallel expression of "house of Israel" with construct phrase, there seems to be difference between the two. The House of Israel is the demolished vineyard, but a new planting will consist of men *from* Judah. This does not mean that the rendering is of Christian origins, as such dualism is found also in Isa 65–66 and in many early Jewish texts, including First Enoch and Jubilees to some extent.

23 Antti Laato, *Message and Composition of the Book of Isaiah: An Interpretation in the Light of Jewish Reception History*, DCLS 46 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2022), 263.

24 Valavanolickal, *Demonstrations* 2:258 n. 61.

This being said, the new event with the advent of Christ, the blessing hidden in the grapecluster, and the olive tree, the eyes and ears are opened for many again, after a long time of darkness. The interlude period of darkness may be related to Isa 8:16–22, where the same word ܚܫܘܟܐ "gloom" is found in Isa 8:22. Isa 8:16, 20 talk about a sealed testimony for posteriority.[25] Sealed book is also found in Isa 29:11 which, in the composition of Isaiah, seems to be intratextually linked to Isa 8:16–18.[26] This suggestions becomes plausible also in light of what follows in *Dem.* 23.3 as Aphrahat clearly will allude to Isa 9:1 (see the following section).

5 The Results of the Fruit

Aphrahat continues explicating what the olive tree (tree of life?) is (*Dem.* 23.3; PS 1.I 9:5–12):

> In the olive tree is the sign of the mystery of life, and through it the annointed ones are perfected: priests, kings, and prophets. It gives light to those in darkness, fattens up those who are feeble, and brings the hidden mystery to those who repent. For those who crowd together and draw near, it drops a taste of itself to their secret ears; they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and they represent its images in the perceptions of their meditations.

The text includes some Isaianic allusions. The "olive tree" is now "sign of the mystery of life" (ܣܝܡܐ ܕܪܙܐ ܕܚܝܐ) which may be related to the crucifixion of Jesus.[27] Priests, kings, and prophets are who are anointed, and in light of some New Testament passages (e.g. 1 Pet 2:4–10; though without "prophets") this may refer to the people of God in general (the Christians?). "Illuminates (causes light) those in darkness" (ܡܢܗܪ ܠܒܥܠܝ ܚܫܘܟܐ) may be related to the famous passage in Isa 9:1: "The people who walk in the darkness saw a great light" (ܥܡܐ ܗܠܟܝ ܒܚܫܘܟܐ ܚܙܘ ܢܗܝܪܐ ܪܒܐ).

That the tree "brings the hidden mystery to those who repent" is interesting. First, the "mystery" itself may be related to Isa 24:16 where the word ܪܙܐ "mystery" is found.[28] Second, "those who repent" (ܕܬܒܝܢ) may allude to Isa 6:10, 13 (where the verb ܬܒܐ is used, albeit originally in a different meaning in the latter verse).[29] The following sentences regarding seeing and hearing are definitely related to Isa 6:10, too. Further, the repentance as a concept can be related to Isa 65–66. As Green has demonstrated, the repentance of the rebellious is still a lingering possibility in the last chapters of Isaiah.[30]

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25 These verses actually are basis for the apocalyptic revelation of "Law" and "Testimony" in Jubilees, which then is revealed in this book. See Tanskanen, *Jacob*, 62–75.

26 On Isa 29:9–24 and its connection to Isa 8:16–18 among others, see Laato, *Message and Composition*, 145–149.

27 Valavanolickal, *Demonstrations* 2:258–259, translates the phrase: "wherein is the (baptismal) mark of the mystery of salvation" with reference to baptism, and the following "perfection" with reference to the imposition of the hands. This interpretation is related to the parlance of the sacraments as mysteries in Syriac (and Greek) Christianity, which is a possible interpretation.

28 The substitution of the Hebrew רזי with Aramaic/Syriac ܪܙܐ/רז has a known reception history in rabbinical Judaism in relation to Hezekiah and Messianism. On Isa 24 and its relation to Hezekiah in early Jewish reception history, see Laato, *Message and Composition*, 88–105.

29 On Isa 6:13, see J. A. Emerton, "The Translation and Interpretation of Isaiah vi.13," in *Studies on the Language and Literature of the Bible: Selected Works of J.A. Emerton*, ed. Graham Davies and Robert Gordon, VTSup 165 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 209–235; in Peshitta of Isaiah in particular, Bodor, *Theological Profile*, 155–156. Although Emerton states that the verb origianlly was auxiliary meaning "again," as reflected in many translations, the early readers' interpretation was not restricted with rigid philological analysis. The verb ܬܒܐ is used in Peshitta Isaiah only in Isa 6:10, 13; 30:15; 31:6.

30 Green, *Toward Apocalypticism*, XX–YY.

The fruit from the tree of life makes it possible to see and hear again. This sentence seems to allude to Isa 6:9–10 along with its reception in the Gospels (e.g., Mark 4:11–12).[31] Since Isa 6:9–10 is the *locus classicus* in Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics, the positive connotation (the Christians, who have received the secret and hidden mystery with understanding) may include a negative connotation, too (the Jews are still blind). This can be compared with how Justin the Martyr uses Isa 6:9–10 (*Dial.* 12.2; 33.1).[32] However, Aphrahat may also allude to Isa 29:18 which includes an eschatological aspect and which was alluded to earlier: the deaf will hear the words of the book again. These two passages in the Book of Isaiah are related: The Book of Isaiah will remain hidden and sealed and the people hardened (Isa 6; 8:16–18; 29) until God brings forth a new reality.

6 The Righteous Preserving the World

According to Isa 65:8, the whole cluster is saved because of the grapecluster and the blessing found in it. Aphrahat explains that the righteous are preserving the world and through them repentance is possible for the sinners, too (*Dem.* 23.3). God is patient with judgement. With reference to Ezek 22:30, the evil ones are kept behind a fence, but the evil and God's punishment will spread out if there is a breach in the fence surrounding the evil ones, and no just person will take its place in the fence.

Following this, Aphrahat brings forth a cavalcade of examples from the Old Testament to make the point: Ten generations from Adam "were guarded" before the flood until Methushelah, but as this righteous died, the flood came. Other examples include Noah and ten generations after him, Abraham preserving the Canaanites, Moses, Aron, and Miriam preserving the Israelites, and the righteous kings Hezekiah and Josiah (*Dem.* 23.4). Aphrahat explains that when the sinners have the upper hand, even the prayers of the righteous will not be heard. Jesus as an example is strong indeed: if even Jesus's prayer was not heard, it is possible that the prayers of the righteous will not be heard either (*Dem.* 23.5–12).

Folowing this, Aphrahat quotes Isa 65:8 again, now along with verse 9, with reference to the just preserving the world (*Dem.* 23.13; PS 1.II 37:20–40:13):

> It is for this reason that the just are left on the earth, in a world of falsehood, so that because of them justice will not prevail and enter into the world, which continues in mercy, to require judgement in a place where there is no judgement. The just are hidden in this world, so that on account of them, [the world] is not destroyed through wrath, like the grapecluster hidden in the cluster (ܪܙܝܢܐ ܪܙܐ ܕܚܛܐ ܪܙ ܐܝ ܕܟ ܚܣܝܕܐ ܕܠ ܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܫܩܪܐ ܕܡܢ ܕܚܠܦ ܕܪܙ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܕܚܣܝܕ ܐܬܪܐ). It is because of the grapecluster that the cluster is preserved for so long. It is in

31 Note the "mystery [ܪܙܐ] of the kingdom of God" being revealed to the disciples, whereas the rest will be left without understanding.

32 See, e.g., Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*, JSOTSup 64 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 148. It should be noted that the analysis of Evans is restricted to the Western fathers and excludes the Christian reception of Isa 6:9–10 in the Syriac East with the exception of the Peshitta, which though most probably predates the Christian interpretation. On the Jewish background of Peshitta Isaiah, see Bodor, *Theological Profile*; Preston L. Atwood, "The Peshiṭta of Isaiah in Past and Present Scholarship," *CurBR* 18.3 (2020): 211–245; Topias K. E. Tanskanen, "Aphrahat's Use of Isaiah in Demonstrations: Some Case Studies," in *Isaiah between Judaeo-Christian Borderlines*, ed. by Judith König, Antti Laato, and Tobias Nicklas, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Seiebeck, *forthcoming*). On Justin and the inability of Jews to understand the Scripture, see Sven-Olav Back, "'A Seed for Salvation' (Isa 1:9/*Dial* 55.3): Justin Martyr on the Ability to Understand the Scriptures," in the same forthcoming volume.

this way that we understand the word which the prophet preached and said to the people, "If a grapecluster is found within a cluster, a man says to his friend, 'Do not destroy the cluster, for there is blessing in it.' And [the Lord] said, 'Thus I will do on behalf of my chosen ones. I wiill not destroy all of them, but will bring out a seed from Jacob and from Judah, an heir to my holy mountain." The cluster is the people Israel, and the blessing in the midst of it is Christ the King (ܡܫܝܚܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܒܓܘܐ ܒܪܟܬܐ ܕܒܥܕܪܐ ܡܢ ܐܝܬ ܒܐܓܘܢܐ).

According to Aphrahat, the just, often hidden in the world, are likened to the grapecluster hidden in the cluster. That is, there are "the chosen ones," the righteous and just, who form the grapecluster and who have always existed. The cluster, however, is not identified as the world, but specifically as the people Israel, even though this is not totally clear-cut.[33] The blessing in the midst of "it" is Christ, or "The King, the Messiah." But what does "it" refer to, to the grapecluster (the just [among Israel]) or to the cluster (the people of Israel)? It seems that "it" refers ultimately to the grapecluster, as becomes evident in the following.

7 Grapecluster and Blessing Guarded And Guarding Until Christ

Aphrahat illustrates how "the grapecluster" and "the blessing" was preserved throughout the centuries, starting from Adam, continuing with Seth, Noah, and Shem. Noah had remained in Ur of the Chaldeans and guarded "the blessing of the righteous" for 292 years after the flood (*Dem.* 23.14). Thus, the genealogy and the office of guarding continued directly from Noah to Abraham, as Abraham, according to Aphrahat, was 57 years old when Noah died in Ur of the Chaldeans. Precisely then Abraham decided to leave the city. The lineage continues with Isaac and Jacob, "in whom was hidden the blessing of the righteous." (*Dem.* 23.15). Aphrahat also notes that Shem was still living after Abraham, and thus died only when Jacob was already 52 years old.[34] The blessing was then preserved in Judah and further in Perez, Hezron, Aram, Aminidab, and Nahshon, "the head of the children of Judah." (*Dem.* 23.15).

Aphrahat vacillates between different terms of what is guarded/preserved/hidden (see the table below). Before the time of Abraham, He speaks of the "grapecluster" (in Adam), "the blessing" (in Seth and all his descendants; Noah; Shem) or "the blessing of the righteous" (in Noah) "being guarded in [someone]" (ܢܛܝܪܐ ܒ). The Syriac preposition ܒ should be understood as spatial, even though "the seed of the righteous" was also "guarded by/from him [Adam]" (*Dem.* 23.14; PS 1.II 40:16) and Noah is the subject of guarding in the end of the same verse (*Dem.* 23.14; PS 1.II 41:14–15).[35] After the death of Noah, Aphrahat does not mention that anything would be "guarded" in

33 See *Dem.* 23.15: "The blessing was guarded in an ark of wood, and all the ungodly were were destroyed by the wrath which was poured out when the grapecluster was plucked and taken from them."

34 Note the interpretive tradition pertaining to the plural "tents" in Gen 25:27 which was understood to refer to Jacob's learning in, e.g., Jub 19:23–25 and targums. In rabbinical traditions, this "academy" was identified as the house of Shem and/or Shem's descendant Eber. Apparently, the mention of tents in Gen 9:27 connected Shem's name to learning as well. See, e.g., James L. 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), 354, 365–366, and the primary sources referred to therein. Perhaps another contributive aspect would be the chronology: Shem was still living in the time of Jacob, at least in Aphrahat's chronology, which deserves a study of its own. Aphrahat may have known such early interpretive tradition of which also Jerome may have been aware. On different chronologies relating to Genesis, see Antti Laato, *Guide to Biblical Chronology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2016), 106–111, not discussing Aphrahat.

35 Note the translation by Lehto, *Demonstrations*, 496, who renders the preposition ܒ with "by" (*Dem.* 23.15), but who has to translate the remaining phrases with *be* in non-agentive way (*Dem.* 23.16). The sentence structure is the

Abraham, although that is presupposed. The same goes with Isaac, whose birth is narrated. From Isaac's blessing of Jacob onwards, the language shifts to the blessing being mostly "hidden" in Jacob/loins of Perez, and of "the blessing" "residing" in/to somebody or "going forth" from somebody.

Dem 23.14–16

What	How	In Whom	Attribution
ܒܪܟܬܐ "Grapecluster"	ܐܬܛܪ ܒܝܫܐ "was guarded"	ܒܐܕܡ in Adam	"The first firstborn"
ܙܪܥܐ ܕܟܝܢܐ "The Seed of the Righteous"	ܐܬܛܪ "was guarded"	ܡܢ by/from Adam	
ܒܪܟܬܐ "The Blessing"	ܐܬܛܪ "was guarded"	ܒܫܝܬ ܘܒܟܠ ܕܪܗܛ ,ܙܒܢܐ in Seth and in all his generations[36]	
ܒܪܟܬܐ"The Blessing"	ܐܬܛܪ "was guarded"	ܒܢܘܚ ܕܫܟܚ ܒܕܪܗܛ in Noah	"Found righteous and innocent in a corrupt generation"
ܒܪܟܬܐ "The Blessing"	ܐܬܛܪ "was guarded"	ܒܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܐܘܟܡܐ "in ark of wood"	
ܒܪܟܬܐ "The Blessing"	ܐܬܛܪ ܒܝܫܐ "was guarded"	ܒܫܡ in Shem	"The Father of the righteous"
ܒܪܟܬܐ ܗܕܐ "this blessing"	ܐܙܠ "proceeded"	ܒܕܪ ܫܪܐ ܡܢ ܢܘܚ ܥܕ ܐܒܪܗܡ "in ten generations from Noah until Abraham"	
ܙܪܥܐ ܕܒܪܟܬܐ "The blessing of the righteous"	ܛܪ ܢܛ "Guarding"	ܡܢ Noah	
ܙܪܥܐ ܕܒܪܟܬܐ "The blessing of the righteous"	ܐܬܛܪ ܒܟܝܢ "was hidden"	In Jacob	
ܒܪܟܬܐ "the blessing"	ܐܬܛܪ "was guarded"	ܒܝܗܘܕܐ ܒܪ ܝܥܩܘܒ "in Judah the son of Jacob"	Prior he went to Egypt
ܒܪܟܬܐ ܗܕܐ ,ܙܪ "This blessing"	ܐܬܛܪ ܒܟܝܢ "was hidden"	ܒܚܨܝ ܕܦܪܨ "In the loins of Perez"[37]	After Jacob and Judah went to Egypt
[The blessing]	ܐܬܝܫ "resided"	ܒܐܠܝܥܙܪ "in Eliezar"	"The son of Aaron the priest, from whom was born Phineas"

same in Syriac! With passive participles, the most common usage is to use ܠ to denote agents, but also ܒ is possible, which is used with the perfect here. See Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar*,§247, §249D, §279A. At the very least I suggest that Aphrahat had the spatial in mind here, since this is the usage of the preposition ܒ in Isa 65:8.

36 *Pro* "descendants" (Lehto). Cf. Valavanolickal and Payne-Smith's lexicon. This could mean that Seth bare the blessing "in all his generations" up to Noah, who actually was still alive when Seth had died, according to Aphrahat (cf. *Dem.* 23.22ff).

37 "The loins of Perez" may be related to the usage of the word in Peshitta in such passages which confirm that king will come from "the loins" of Abraham (Gen 17:6) Jacob (Gen 35:11) or David (2 Sam 7:12; cf. 1 Kgs 8:19 and 2 Chr 6:9), although the word is also used in general of descendency (Gen 46:26; Exod 1:5; 4 Macc 18:1). Note also *Dem.* 23.18 (PS 1.II 53:24–25) below.

ܟܗܢܘܬܐ ܘܟܝܢܘܬܐ ܘܟܘܣܝܢܘ “The blessing of the kingship and the priesthood”	ܢܦܩ “Went forth”	ܡܢ ܥܡܝܢܕܒ “From Aminidab”
ܟܗܢܘܬܐ ܘܟܘܝܕܪܐ “Leadership and kingship”	[Went forth]	ܡܢ ܢܚܫܘܢ From Nahshon
ܟܘܣܝ “Priesthood”	[Went forth]	ܡܢ ܢܚܫܘܢ ܕܣܒܥ ܪܓܙ ܐܠܗܐ ܒܩܢܝܘܗܝ ܕܐܚܬ ܐܠܥܙܪ “from the son of the sister of Nahshon who gave birth to Phineas”	Who satisfied the wrath of God in his zeal
ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܘܟܘܝܕܪܐ “Leadership of the kings”	ܢܦܩ “went forth”	ܡܢ ܒܥܙ ... ܕܒܪ ܕܒܪ ܐܠܝܥܕ ܘܪܘܬ ܡܐܒܝܬܐ “from Boaz… by Boaz and Ruth the Moabite”	[Son of Sela son of Nahshon]
ܟܗܢܐ ܗܢ “this blessing”	ܐܬܛܡܪ “was guarded”	ܒܟܠ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܒܝܬ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܝܗܘܕܐ ܡܢ ܕܘܝܕ ܥܕ ܝܗܘܝܟܝܢ ܕܡܠܟ ܒ ܘ ܥܣܪ ܡܠܟܝܢ “in all the kings of the house of Judah from David to Jehoiachin, in 18 kings”	

Aphrahat notes that Lot, because of his friendship, became “partaker in the blessing of the righteous” (ܒܪܟܬܐ ܕܙܕܝܩܐ ܫܘܬܦ) by means of Ruth the Moabite and Naama the Ammonite, the later of which was the wife of Solomon and the mother of Rehoboam, son of Solomon (*Dem.* 23.16–17). Further, the blessing hidden (ܟܝܡܐ) in the kings of the house of David and their seed was, according to Aphrahat, the reason for David being forgiven of his sin (apparently with Bathsheba), Solomon being a great king despite him abandoning the Law, and God not taking away the kingdom from Rehoboam. (*Dem.* 23.17).

Although the blessing was “hidden” in David, Solomon, and Rehoboam, “the blessing of the righteous” was “bubbling up” (ܐܒܥ) in Asa who practiced righteousness, and then “guarded” in Jehoshapat who was also a good king. Joram (and not the blessing) “was guarded because of the blessing.” The grapecluster was “guarded” in Joash, who sinned. Because of that blessing “his seed was preserved.” (*Dem.* 23.17). The same is true then for Amaziah, (Uzziah), Jotham, and Ahaz (*Dem.* 23.18).[38] Regarding Hezekiah, Aphrahat mentions that he was a righteous king who “served worthily the blessing of the righteous which was in him” (ܕܫܠܝܚ ܒܪܟܬܐ ܕܙܕܝܩܐ ܕܒܗ ܐܫܪܬ; *Dem.* 23.18; PS 1.II 53:10–11) and was thus healed from his sickness.

Here, Aphrahat makes the interesting case for why Hezekiah was healed (*Dem.* 23.18):

> It was for this reason that Hezekiah the righteous king suffered: he did not yet have a son, and in his loins was hidden the blessing of the righteous. Thus he said in his torment, “The blessing which has travelled (ܐܙܠ) through all previous ages, from Adam to me, through

38 Uzziah was struck with leprosy but Aphrahat does not mention that he or his seed would have been guarded because of the blessing.

> forty-six generations, why will it not go forth (ܢܦܩ) from me, and [why] is the grapecluster taken away from me? Is the cluster given over to destruction?" When he had thought these things and had prayed in sadness, Isaiah the prophet came to him and said, "Thus says the Lord: 'Behold! I am adding to your years. You will live fifteen [more] years."

Aphrahat can make this conclusion, since Manasseh became king as a twelve year old and Hezekiah had lived 15 more years (2 Kings 21:1). Thus, Manasseh was not yet born when Hezekiah had fallen sick. The same interpretive tradition is found also in Jewish traditions.[39] Actually, the metaphors of childlessness in Isa 38:12, 18–19 can be read in connection with Hezekiah's possible childlessness, at least in the final composition of Isaiah.[40]

Aphrahat, who puts great emphasis on the historical situation of the historical prophet Isaiah in the times of Hezekiah and the Assyrian crisis,[41] can also relate Isa 65:8 to the times of Hezekiah. Of course Hezekiah would be aware of the *locus* in Isa 65:8, since it was Isaiah who prophecied to him. Thus, Hezekiah is wondering whether the cluster, people of Israel, would be destroyed.

Aphrahat continues with Manasseh, "wicked child… born from a righteous man." Even he was "guarded because of the blessing." (*Dem.* 23.19) "Because of the blessing which was in him" also his son Amon "governed the kingdom." (ܡܠܟ ܒܪ ܚܙ; *Dem.* 23.19; PS 1.II 57:25).

Josiah was a righteous man, who died before the evil had come. Aphrahat does not mention the blessing (of the righteous) with reference to Josiah, but it is presupposed. Aphrahat though states that Jehoahaz son of Josiah did not prosper "because the blessing was not in him" (*Dem.* 23.19), meaning thus, that the lineage continued actually through Jehoiakim, "since the blessing of the righteous was hidden in him" (*Dem.* 23.19). The same is true with his son Jehoiachin, in whom the blessing was also hidden in Babylon. At the same time, Zedekiah and the remnant of the people in Jerusalem were left out without the blessing. The blessing had now come to Babylon, where it was transferred to Shelatiel son of Jehoiachin and ultimately to Zerubbabel. Aphrahat maintains that Babylon had peace as long as the blessing was there, but as Zerubbabel left Babylon, they were conquered. Thus, Zerubbabel (and the high priest Joshua) continued with the blessing (*Dem.* 23.19–20).

Aphrahat makes clear that the people with Zedekiah in Jerusalem are not anymore partakers in "the blessing." The blessing came back only when Zerubbabel returned to Judea accompanying Ezra the Scribe, according to Aphrahat. Following this, taking the genealogy from Matthew 1:13–16,[42] Aphrahat identifies the lineage from Zerubbabel to Joseph "who was called the father of Jesus the Messiah." (*Dem.* 23.20). According to Aphrahat, both Mary and Joseph were from the house of David, with possible references to Luke 2:4–5[43] and 3 Corinthians.[44]

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39 David Rothsthein, "Hezekiah's Prayer and Childlessness: Variant Forms of a Tradition, as Reflected in LXX, Josephus, and Rabbinic Sources," *ZAW* 128 (2016): 267–283.

40 Laato, *Message and Composition*, 117–122.

41 See Tanskanen, "Hezekiah, Sennacherib."

42 The text is the same with the exception of some differing *wavs*.

43 Although the Greek text of Luke 2:4–5 does not make it possible for such a reading, the Syriac is different: ܡܛܠ ܕܗܘ ܡܢ ܒܝܬ ܘܡܢ ܫܒܛ ܕܕܘܝܕ ܥܡ ܡܪܝܡ ܡܚܬܢܬܗ ܕܗܘ ܡܒܣܬ ܒܗ ܘܐܬܝܠܕ "For he was from the house and tribe of David with Mary his betrothed…"

44 On 3 Cor and Aphrahat, see J. Edward Walters, "Evidence for Citations of 3 Corinthians and Their Influence in the Demonstrations of Aphrahat," *Vigilae Christianae* 67.3 (2013): 248–262, esp. 252–254 on this specific passage in

One should note that the priesthood was, according to Aphrahat, part of the blessing along with "leadership and kingdom" in Dem. 23.16. The blessing of kingship continued through Nahshon from the tribe of Judah, whereas the priesthood continued via the sister of Nahshon. Now, Aphrahat wants to demonstrate that Jesus was not of Joseph's seed although "the name of fatherhood was taken from Joseph and placed upon Christ" (ܫܡܐ ܕܐܒܘܬܐ ܐܬܢܣܒ ܡܢ ܝܘܣܦ ܘܐܬܬܠ ܥܠ ܡܫܝܚܐ; *Dem.* 23.20; PS 1.II 65:2–3). As Mary is also from the seed of David, he got the body and "name of birth" from Mary. But what about priesthood then? Aphrahat briefly notes, that "the name of priesthood" came via John, who, according to the Gospels, was Jesus's cousin. This is not, however, elaborated more (*Dem.* 23.20).

8 Grapecluster Plucked from the Cluster

The supersessionalist nature of Aphrahat's interpretation of the salvation history through Isa 65:8 becomes evident next (*Dem.* 23.20; PS 1.II 65:7–12):

> After sixty-two[45] weeks [of years] Christ was born and was killed. The grapecluster of blessing was taken from the cluster, and the whole cluster was given over to destruction (ܠܫܘܠ ܟܠܗ ܥܠ ܫܘܒܠܐ ܕܒܪܟܬܐ ܐܬܢܣܒ ܡܢ ܐܫܟܘܠܐ ܟܠܗ ܐܫܟܘܠܐ ܐܬܝܗܒ ܠܫܘܠ). The vineyard was ravaged for lack of gardening (**ܥܒܕܗ** ܕܠ ܒ **ܟܪܡܐ** ܫܘܬ), and it produced wild grapes and bitter fruits (ܒܟܝܪ ,ܥܒܕ **ܒܫܐ** ,ܡܪܝ), the vine was ravaged and the stem uprooted (ܐܬܚܒܠ ܟܪܟܐ ܐܬܝܫ ܒܫܡ).

The wording of *Dem.* 23.20 is from Isa 65:8, which is combined with allusions to Isa 5:2 (speaking of vineyard, ܟܪܡ, Isa 5:1) and possibly to Ps 80:15–16 which is the only time in the Peshitta Old Testament where both words ܟܪܟܐ ("vine") and ܒܫܡ ("stem") are used in the vicinity of one another. Of course Aphrahat's explication may be influenced by how Jesus speaks of the vineyard in his parable (Matt 21:33–46 and par.), given his quotation from Matt 21:43 in *Dem.* 23.47 (see below).

ܘܒܢܐ ܟܪܟܐ ܒܓܘܗ ܘܣܝܓ ܠܗ ܒܓܘ ܘܒܢܐ ܒܝܬ ܡܓܕܠܐ ܒܓܘ **ܥܒܕܗ** ܘܚܦܪ ܒܓܘ ܒܪ ܡܥܨܪܐ ܐܦ ܚܦܪ ܘܐܫܟܚ ܕܢܥܒܕ ܥܢܒ ܒ **ܒܫܐ** (Isa 5:2)	"He **gardened** it (the vineyard) and surrounded it with a hedge. And he planted it with branches and built a tower within it. Indeed he made a vinepress there. And he looked for (it) to make grapes, but it made **wild grapes**."
ܐܝܬ ܟܪܟܐ ܡܢ ܡܨܪܝܡ ... ܒܩܪ ܗܕܐ ܟܪܟܐ ܘܓܦܢܐ ܕܢܛܥ ܝܡܝܢܟ **ܒܫܡܐ** (Ps 80:8, 15–16)	"You brought out a **vine** from Egypt… Visit this **vine** and the **stem** which your right (hand) planted."

As was discussed above, Aphrahat may have read Isa 5:7 in relation to the "new planting" which is the followers of Jesus (*Dem.* 23.3).

Aphrahat had identified the cluster as the people of Israel before, and the blessing as Christ. Now, as the blessing is not anymore found in the cluster, as the "grapecluster of blessing" was snatched away in Christ's death, the cluster was destroyed. The people Israel are no more the chosen people by God, the new planting is now formed by the followers of Christ.

Dem. Cf. Rom 1:3–4 which may have influenced 3 Cor in this regard.

45 Lehto translates wrongly with sixty-three.

Aphrahat then elaborates in great length and detail on the chronology of the 63 generations from Adam to Christ in *Dem.* 23.21–46. In the end of this calculation, he returns to the grapecluster and the cluster (*Dem.* 23.46; PS 1.II 92:8–16):

> After the return Israel remained in Jerusalem for seventy weeks, as Daniel had prophesied. These weeks [totalled] four hundred and ninety years. After the death of Christ the King, Jerusalem was destroyed (ܐܬܚܪܒ), and will not be inhabited again, until the end of the judgements. It remains desolate (ܫܪܝܐ ܠܐ ܐܬܝܒ). But the grapecluster was removed from the cluster, the cluster was given over to destruction, and the people were deprived of grace (ܐܬܐܚܕ ܒܝ ܡܢ ܥܡܐ ܕܫܪܝܐ ܠܫܪܝܐ ܘܐܬܝܗܒ ܐܡܬܐ ܕܫܪܝܐ ܒܝ ܐܬܒܛܠ ܒܠܥܕܝܐ).

Aphrahat continues by stating that "from Jesus, the blessing passed to the peoples," with reference to what Jesus says in his parable of the tenants of the vineyard Matt 21:43: the kingdom of God will be taken to "people that bears fruit."[46] This means, that the grapecluster, and the blessing in it, is now to be found among "the peoples," that is the Christians which for the most part seem, at least in Aphrahat's mind, to not be Jews. This does not mean that they were not of Jewish origin, but they perhaps should not, in Aphrahat's view, be Jewish anymore. One should note here, that it seems that the ethnicity did not play that great a role in Antiquity as the religion could have, of course Judaism being closely tied to the ethnicity.[47]

9 Old Testament and Isaianic Passages Applied to the Christians

Aphrahat ends his demonstration on the grapecluster with a prayer, which alludes to Isaiah and especially to the Suffering Servant (*Dem.* 23.53; PS 1.II 105:2–17):[48]

> When we had gone astray, you saved us. When we were scattered, you assemble (ܕ ܟܢܫܬܢ ܥܠ ܕ ܦܙܪܬܢ ܥܠ).[49] When we were in darkness, you gave us light (ܕ ܐܢܗܪܬ ܥܠ ܕ ܐܬܥܕܝܬ ܥܠ). When we were imprisoned, you brought us out. When we were captured, you snatched us away (ܕ ܐܦܩܬ ܥܠ ܕ ܫܒܝܬ ܥܠ). When we were in bonds, you released us (ܕ ܐܬܝܪܬ ܥܠ ܕ ܫܪܝܬ ܥܠ). From a confining pit, when we had no hope, you called us to hope in you. Though we were sinners you took pleasure in us, that we might be justified. Though we did not ask you, you sent us your Only-Begotten One. Through his blood you saved us, and through him we know you. You sent him to us through we did not call out to you. You made our wickedness fall upon him, though we did not ask you. You sent him down to Sheol, though we did not compel you. You humiliated him on our behalf, though we had angered you. You saved us through his suffering, though our wickedness was great before you.

Note the similarities with Isa 53, but also with Isa 9:1; 56:8, and 61:1.

ܗܟܢܐ ܐܡܪ ܡܪܝܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܟܢܫ ܦܙܝܪܐ ܕܐܣܪܝܠ ܐܢܐ ܥܕ ܟܢܫ ܠܝ ܠܘܬ ܟܢܫܝ ,ܐܚܪܢ ܠܘܬ ܟܢܫ	Thus says the Lord God who assembles the scattered of Israel: I will still gather others to the gathered. (Isa 56:8)
ܥܡܐ ܗܠܟܝ ܒܚܫܟܐ ܚܙܘ ܢܗܝܪܐ ܪܒܐ	The people walking in **darkness** saw a great **light.** (Isa 9:1)

46 Note *Dem.* 23.1, where Aphrahat speaks of the same thing with the same terms.

47 Reference to the new works on the subject.

48 The translation of Lehto is altered somewhat to show the similarities with Peshitta Isaiah.

49 Cf. Deut 30:3–4; Isa 11:12; Jer 23:3; 29:14; 31:10; 32:37; Ezek 11:17; 20:34, 41; 28:25; 29:13 etc. But the context of Isa 56:8 is telling.

ܪܘܚ ܡܪܝܐ ܐܠܗܝܐ ܥܠ ܝ̈ ܡܛܠ ܕܡܫܚ ܐܢܐ ܘܫܕܪ ܐܢܐ
ܠܡܒܫܪ ܠܥܢ̈ܝܐ ܠܡܟܒܝ ܠܒܐ ܠܩܪܝ ܠܫܒ̈ܝ ܘܠܡܫܪܪ ܠܡܬܒ̈ܪܝ
ܠܡܟܪܙ ܠܫܒ̈ܝ ܘܠܐܣܝܪ ܠܡܬܚ̈ܝ

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me for the Lord has anointed me and sent me to announce the good news to the humble, to bandage the broken-hearted, to call freedom to the **captured** and **release** to the **bound.** (Isa 66:1)

The same sort of alluding continues (*Dem.* 23.56; PS 1.II 116:7-20):

> We know that in every time your custom is to hear the afflicted, for in various times you have answered the captives, brought relief to the persecuted, strengthened the weak,[50] lifted up the humble, saved those who are troubled, delivered those who have been plundered, set free those in prison,[51] given light to those in darkness,[52] satisfied the hungy,[53] and made wealthy the poor,[54] in every generation. We know that you have done these things for your servants. It is you who have made known to us, "I am the first and I am the last."[55] You are the God of the first and the last. You are the God of the two worlds: all that has been[56] and all that shall be.

Aphrahat does not seem to allude purposefully to any specific text in his prayer, only more vaguely to such concepts that abound in the Old Testament regarding the plight of the Israelites and the help they can receive from God. These are now naturally applied to the Christian group without further regard. In the end, Aphrahat quotes Isa 44:6 and/or 48:12 verbatim as it/they stand in the Peshitta Isaiah. Both the mention of servants and what God does to his servants and the explication, namely that God is the God of "what has been" (ܩܕܡܝܐ) and "what shall be" (ܕܐܬܝ̈ܢ) can be understood from the near-context of this quotation.

In Isa 44:1–5, God exhorts his chosen "servant" Jacob/Israel to hear what he has to say regarding *the future*.[57] After Isa 44:6, in Peshitta Isa 44:7, God asks anyone to tell the "signs that will come." He has told everything already before (Isa 44:8). The positive future is then depicted further in Isa 44:21–28.

Isa 48:12 has a similar context. According to Isa 48:1–11, God had foretold everything and also made those. Now he is announcing of new things, which Israel did not know. Thus, he is the God of history and future. In Isa 48:12–21, God then also speaks of history, future, and especially redeeming "servant Israel."

10 Conclusions

The Book of Isaiah is among the most important books of the Bible in *Demonstrations*. Isa 65:8 forms the backbone for Aphrahat's reading of the salvation history from Adam to Christ and beyond:

(1) The Grapecluster and the Blessing in it is ultimately about two things: (a) The righteous ("grapecluster"), and (b) the blessing hidden among the righteous (or not so righteous) throughout

50 Cf. Ezel 34:16.
51 Cf. Ps 146:7 (also "who gives bread for the hungry").
52 Cf. Isa 9:1.
53 Cf. Jer 31:25.
54 Cf. Sir 11:21.
55 Precisely as Isa 44:6; 48:12.
56 As translated by Valavanolickal, *Demonstrations* II:298; *Pro* Lehto, *Demonstrations*, 520 ("that is").
57 See also Isa 44:21.

the history with its culmination in Christ. The blessing hidden among the Davidic kings is the reason why the kings were "guarded" despite their failures. Ultimately, for Aphrahat the blessing in Isa 65:8 is related to the heir from Judah in the following verse.

(2) The Grapecluster and its blessing is related to the tree of life, which at the same time seems to symbolize the olive tree, that is the cross where Jesus died. The association may be influenced both by Isa 65:9 as applied to Christ as well as the mentioning of tree in Isa 65:22 and the paradisaic atmosphere of Isa 65–66 for the righteous.

(3) The cluster, Israel, is related to the vineyard and vine in Isa 5:1–7. A new planting, according to Peshitta Isaiah, comes forth from Judah, which is applied to the Christians. As the blessing (Christ) is taken away from the cluster, then Israel and Jerusalem will be demolished and the cluster destroyed. Now, it continues in the new planting. Thus, the chosen ones will inherit God's mountain (Isa 65:9). The fate of Zedekiah and Jerusalem is a case in point from history, as the blessing had been transferred to Babylon.

(4) The tree with its fruit (grapecluster/blessing) offers possibility to understand the Scripture (Isa 8:16–20 and 29:9–24), as it illuminates those in darkness (Isa 9:1). Conversely, those without the grapecluster/blessing (Christ) remain in the darkness.

(5) The general Old Testament and Isaianic concepts regarding to the difficult situation of the people of Israel are applied to the dire situation faced by the Christians.

Although not everything is stemming from Isaiah, and much is read into Isaiah, for Aphrahat, Isa 65:8 is the main *locus* in understanding the history, how the Israelites (cluster) had been abandoned and destroyed, whereas the kingdom of God and the blessing was transferred by Christ to the peoples which are now the new people. The Jewish people do not have any special place. For Aphrahat, they ultimately belong to the past.

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DOCTORAL PROJECT SUMMARY

THE RHETORIC AND GENRE-RELATED ELEMENTS OF THE SONG OF SONGS AND ARABIC LOVE POETRY (6th-13th Century)

Alice Volkonski

Similarities between the Song of Song and Arabic poetry have been often observed. For instance, it has been suggested that for studying the Ancient Hebrew language and texts, a search for the meaning of Arabic or Aramaic word roots is helpful. We can also move a step forward and try to find alternative meanings of the Ancient Hebrew texts using methods and terminology from Arabic or other Semitic traditions. Modern research mostly relies on Johann Gottfried Wetzstein's theory that the Song of Songs is similar to the composition of different secular Syrian wedding songs. The most famous parallel that has been observed beside the sensual language in the Song of Songs is the descriptive theme of *waṣf* that is from terminology of Arabic poetry and appears in 4:1–7; 5:10–16; 6:4–7 and 7:2–8. Other examples mentioned by Scott B. Noegel and Gary A. Rendsburg include Arabic *nasīb*, *ḥiǧāʾ* and *tašbīb*. The aim of my doctoral project is to continue the research that has already been initiated and ask whether it is possible to find more examples of common ground between the Song of Songs and Arabic love poetry. What is needed, therefore, is critical comparative research on the work of poets familiar with the Song and its interpretation and other traditional love songs and who more or less expressed the tradition in their work. They sometimes retained specific elements and added new ones to those already present. By applying different methods and alternative terminology, I will try to find support for common formal and generic features in the two traditions.

My main source besides the Song of Songs is pre-Islamic-, *ʿuḏrī*, Medieval Arabic love poetry. For instance, I have found the *Dīwān* of an-Nābiġa aḍ-Ḍubyānī (535–604), who was the first court poet particularly inspiring. His language and style mix Bedouin tradition and luxurious courtly elements. His poems provide evidence of his knowledge of Christian, Jewish, and Arabic tribal traditions. This year, I have been working mainly on the poetry of ʿUmar ibn al-Fārid, who is called "The Prince of Lovers". A comparison of his poetry with the Song of Songs is the topic of my presentation at the OTSEM meeting.

As for the methods I have followed, with a touch of critical attitude, some Western scholars, such as Harris H. Hirschberg, Johann Gottfried Wetzstein and Roland Meynet. I have also learned from the 9th-century authors, such as Ibn Qutayba and Ibn Qurayš. My dissertation takes three main methodological steps:

1) Marking different genre-related elements – themes, motifs and keywords; I analyse their characteristics, sequence and narrative context.
2) Analysing and comparing the Hebrew word roots with Arabic word roots and their meanings; occasionally, I am looking for parallels with Akkadian.
3) Rhetorical analysis following Roland Meynet's approach, and poetical analysis following several scholars, such as Wilfred G.E. Watson.

The methods will be synthesised to gain new knowledge or to support or refute the results of previous research.

I have written two articles:

2019 "Heebrea Ülemlaul ja araabia an-Nābīġa *qasida* kontsentriline idee. Roland Meynet' retoorilise meetodi põhjal" ["The Concentric Idea of the Hebrew Song of Songs and Arabic an-Nābiġa's qaṣīda Based on Roland Meynet's Rhetorical Method"] – *Usuteaduslik Ajakiri* 2/2019 (75), 25–47. https://usuteadus.ee/?page_id=1112&lang=et

2024 (forthcoming) 'The Generic Elements of Song of Songs Against The Backdrop of Early Arabic Poetry'. In: *Song of Songs in Sense, Sound and Space*. G. Fernandes *et al.*, eds. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press).

Current OTSEM paper "The Tradition of Semitic Love Poetry: Hebrew Song of Songs and Arabic *ġazal* in pre-Islamic, *ʿuḏrī* and ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ`s Poetry" is an example of how I analyse the poetry of Song of Songs. The analysis will be part of my dissertation.

As an Arabist, I am aware of my untraditional approach, and I am thankful for the justified criticism and questions that I have not noticed myself.

The Tradition of Semitic Love Poetry: Hebrew Song of Songs and Arabic *ġazal* in pre-Islamic, *ʿuḏrī* and ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ`s Poetry

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Abstract

Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1854) has called ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ's *qaṣīda* 'The Chain of Comportments' (*Naẓm as-Sulūk*) an Arabic Song of Songs, referring to its similarity to the Hebrew Song of Solomon. Nearly 15 centuries separate these two poems. ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ (1181-1234), known as the Prince of Lovers, is the most famous Sufi poet in Arabic. His *qaṣīda* is the longest written in Arabic, consisting of 761 couplets. Its central themes are the loss of love, transformation, and final union (Homerin 2001). The paper will focus on thematic and stylistic patterns, motifs, and keywords in the Hebrew Song of Songs and in the Arabic *ġazal* (love poetry) in ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ's *qaṣīda*, against the backdrop of Arabic pre-Islamic poetry since the 6th century and *ʿuḏrī* courtly love poetry since the 7th century. Analysing both Hebrew and Arabic love poetry with some examples will answer the question about their resemblance. What are the poetic and language features that make these resemblances more understandable? What makes us maintain that something is "common" or "resembles" something? Was there any common Semitic tradition that has persisted through different eras?

1. Introduction

Song of Songs (the Song) has been the inspiration for various poems and interpretations for two millennia. As the book is different from other Hebrew Biblical books with its sensual language, it is difficult to define it as sacred or secular literature. Attributing the book to King Solomon may give even more scope to the imagination. In Arabic folklore, he is portrayed as a mythical king who ruled over two armies, one of jinns and one of men, and additionally over an army of birds whose language he spoke.[1] In Islam, Solomon was seen as a prophet and in Ethiopian *Kebra Nagast*, he is known for his love affair with the Queen of Sheba, Bilqīs. Modern research mostly relies on Johann Gottfried Wetzstein's theory that the Song is similar to the composition of different secular Syrian wedding songs.[2] Wilhelm Hermann has found parallels to Mesopotamian mythological texts and Egyptian love songs; also, there are other parallels in older ANE texts.[3] What is needed, therefore, is critical comparative research on the work of poets familiar with the Song and its interpretation and other traditional love songs and who more or less expressed the tradition in their work. They sometimes retained specific elements and added new ones to those already present.

Comparisons to later Semitic poetry have already been made. My aim is to focus on the comparison of the Song with the Arabic love poetry *ġazal*, which has borrowed elements from the pre-Islamic era and from the 7th-century *ʿuḏrī* "courtly" or "platonic" love poetry, which in turn has influenced Islamic philosophy and mysticism.[4] ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ (1181-1234), "the Prince of Lovers", has been considered one of the greatest Sufi poets in Arabic. My paper

[1] Homerin 2001: 246.
[2] Wetzstein 1873: 270-302.
[3] White 1978: 50-51. See also Gault 2019 on the body metaphors in the Song or the commentary of Keel (1994); Nissinen (2016); and Gerhards (2010).
[4] Blachere 2012; Jakobi 2012; *ʿuḏrī* is mainly defined as a "courtly" or "platonic" love song, but there may be other examples..

will compare motifs, themes and keywords from his *qaṣīda Naẓm as-sulūk* "The Chain of Comportments" (the Chain)[5] and the Song. Since Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1854) called this *qaṣīda* the Arabic Song of Songs[6], my analysis looks for similarities and hypothetically asks whether it is possible to arrive at some interpretation of the Song with the help of the 13th-century Sufi Arabic poem. What are the elements that have brought the Semitic love song through almost 16 centuries? What elements has al-Fāriḍ precisely chosen for his work? Was he really influenced by the Song?

Methodologically, I lean to my article "Genre-Related Elements of Song of Songs against the Backdrop of Early Arabic Poetry"[7] where I argued that next to *waṣf*, also other themes[8] in Arabic poetry occur in the Song: *madīḥ* "panegyric", *hiǧāʾ* "lampoon", *riṯāʾ* "lament", *ġazal* "love", *faḫr* "self-glorification", *ḫamriyya* "bacchic", *luġz* "riddle" etc. In the framework of the themes, I will define common motifs and keywords. Thereby, certain comparable keywords are used to confirm the motifs. The meaning and scope of the keywords will be additionally confirmed by their context in the Sufi-, *ʿuḏrī* and pre-Islamic love poetry *ġazal*.

Annemarie Schimmel has written about al-Fāriḍ's poetry:

> Contrary to the Sufis in early times, whose language carried hardly any reminiscences of classical, "worldly" love poetry, Ibn al-Fāriḍ employed the whole heritage of traditional poetry.[9]

The Chain contains 761 bayts[10] and is the longest *qaṣīda* ever written. The first 163 bayts differ from other verses having the main theme of *ġazal*.[11] Common motifs with the Song are apparent: dialogues between lovers, meeting in a dream, obstacles from the guards, etc. In this paper, I will focus on only a few of them.

2. The Song 1:1-4 and the Chain 1-7

2.1. The Song 1:1-4[12]

1:1 The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's[13]	*šīr haššīrīm ʾašer lišəlomō*
1:2a **Let him kiss me**[14] with the kisses of his mouth!	***yiššāqēnī*** *minnəšīqōt pihu*
1:2b For **your love** is better than **wine**,	*kī-ṭōḇīm* ***dodēḵā miyyāyin***
1:3a as regards an odour, your oils are good,	*lərēaḥ šəmānēḵā ṭōḇīm*

[5] The title *Naẓm as-sulūk* can be translated differently. The poem is mostly known in the West as "The Sufi Way", but the translation is not exact; it rather indicates the purpose and tries to indicate something to readers unfamiliar with Sufi tradition.

[6] Hammer-Purgstall 1854: ix.

[7] Volkonski (2024); see also Jones (1996); Noegel and Rendsburg (2009); Schoeler 1974 (cf. Stetkevych 2009: xxiii); Kennedy 1997: 2-3.

[8] According to Jones, who follows the example of Ibn Qutayba, the *qaṣīda* has been considered to be composed for four 'purposes' (*ġaraḍ)* which are broadly: *madīḥ* (panegyric), *hiǧāʾ* (lampoon), *ġazal* (love) and *riṯāʾ* (lament), and there are seven *themes* (*funūn*) in the Arabic *qaṣīda* that are somehow overlapping with these four purposes. Beyond the four aforementioned 'purposes', that now overlap as themes, there are: *waṣf* (description), *faḫr* (self-glorification) and *ḥikma* (wisdom). There are also other subthemes.[8] See Jones 1996: 2.

[9] Schimmel 2001: 41. See also further in chapter 2.1.3 about the name Salmā.

[10] *bayt* – Arabic notion that indicates couplets or hemistich in a *qaṣīda*.

[11] Homerin 2001: 18.

[12] Hebrew translation from now and on by Pope and Murphy, modified. The words in bold will be addressed in the analysis below.

[13] Or "for Solomon".

[14] Or "let him make me drink".

1:3b poured out oil is **your name**	*šemen tūraq* ***šəmeḵā***
1:3c therefore, the **maidens** love you.	*ʾal-kēn ʿ**alāmōt** ʾahēḇūḵā*
1:4a **Draw me after you, let's haste**	***mašəḵēnī ʾaḥarēḵā nārūṣā***
1:4b **Take me**, the king, to **his chambers**	*heḇīʾ anī hammeleḵ **ḥadārāw***
1:4c Let us **be glad and rejoice** with you	*nāgīlā wəniśməḥā bāḵ*
1:4d Let's **praise your love** more than **wine**	*nāzkīrā **dodēḵā miyyayin***
1:4e Rightly they love you	*mēšārīm ʾahēḇūḵā*

2.1.1. Section in the introduction, the Song 1:1-4

The Song starts with a line that is usually defined as a title. It can be translated differently. As a dedication, it would mean: "The Song of Songs which is for Solomon", or it can be "The Song of Songs which is Solomon's". Whether the title is a later addition, it suits the next lines. The beginning is in a feminine voice and clearly begins a love song. The introductive section, where the poet praises the loved one in sensual language, is built of vv. 1-4.

2.1.2. Content and themes

For someone schooled in Arabic studies, the Song 1:1-4 sounds like the first part of a traditional *nasīb*. Hans Wehr has defined it as "an erotic part in the introduction of the ancient Arabic kasida".[15] In the pre-Islamic times (*ǧāhiliyya*) or in the courtly poetry of Umayyad or Abbasid, *nasīb* also had some specific peculiarities that may vary.

But always, the *nasīb* indicates a love story that the poet wishes to continue.[16] The Song 1:1-4 is written in the present tense but refers to a situation that will change later. Language is sensual and refers to luxury – wine, oils, and king's chambers – and sounds first as a courtly poem. For an Arabist, the main themes of the initial section of the Song are similar to the themes of Arabic poetry – *ġazal* (love), *madīḥ* (panegyric), and *ḫamriyya* (wine song). Also, the elements of *ʿuḏrī* courtly love poetry are apparent.

2.1.3. Motifs and keywords

After reading the first part of the Song, it is tempting to suggest that it is dedicated to King Solomon by a woman in love with him. This is why the translation of the title "The Song of Songs, which is for Solomon" should be preferred. In addition, the next colon 2a seems to be part of the dedication because of the suffix of the third person. Furthermore, the reason lies in vv. 1-4, where it seems that the woman is praising him as a lover. So, it is obviously a love song *ġazal* with panegyrical elements *madīḥ*. In Arabic (or Persian) poetry, *ġazal* is either a separate short love poem, having approximately five to fifteen bayts, or part of a long *qaṣīda*; in the latter, it is mostly known from its introduction part of *nasīb.* However, *ġazal* can also be a theme in other sections, not just in the introduction. The tone is, in most cases, erotic, but other themes, such as wine, spring, and fate, are intertwined, and some scholars suggest that the poet usually mentions his own name.[17] *Uḏrī* poetry, on the other hand, adds to the theme of *ġazal* new luxurious courtly elements.[18]

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[15] Wehr 1979: 1126.
[16] Jacobi 2012.
[17] Meisami 1990: 125
[18] Blachère 2012

In the Song 1:1-4, the poet has a feminine voice, but there is no mention of her name, although the name Solomon is mentioned in the title and the word *šēm* ("name" or "fame") is used in v. 3b. Stylistically, it is similar to the rhetorical device of *ʿuḏrī* poetry.[19] Referring to one's fame or name is an option to show his pride. Also, the words about the king and his chambers in 1:4b refer to elements of luxury and court that are present in *ʿuḏrī* love poetry.

Pope has explained that the term *šīr* is the generic term for "song", referring to the meaning of a glad song, but may apply to pagan cultic songs in connection with wine drinking.[20]

If I explain the motif in the framework of the Arabic generic theme *ḫamriyya* and with the help of respective keywords, it will make the beginning of the Song even more erotic and filled with metaphors than it may seem at first sight. The verses refer to physical contact and invite the sharing of love in chambers. Kisses and saliva are like wine offered to drink. The verb in 2a from the root *n-š-q* is *yiššāqēnī* and is translated as "let him kiss me."[21] Pope has drawn attention to the fact that some have read *yašqēnī,* meaning "let him make me drink" from the root *š-q-h*.[22] If it would be a *Nifal* verb, the vocals would suit with the word *yiššāqēnī*. I would suggest reading "Let him make me drink from the kisses of his mouth" because of the recognition of the generic element of *ḫamriyya*. A supportive fact from Arabic is the word *saqā* from the root *s-q-y*, which means "to give or make someone drink; to irrigate; to dip, scop, draw (water)".[23]

In colon 2b, love is compared with wine and in 3a, the oils are praised regarding their odour. As an Arabist, I would question the word *rēaḥ* "odour". Both Arabic and Hebrew have the root *r-w-ḥ*. In Arabic, *rīḥ* means "odour", but the word *rāḥ* from the same root means "wine". It is possible to consider that the parallel cola 2b and 3a have synonyms for "wine", or it is just semantically a poetical wordplay, referring both to odour and wine.[24] I have already written in my article about the word *tūraq*, which has always been difficult to translate among scholars.[25] The same root *r-y-q* in Arabic has derivate verbs *rāqa* and *ʾarāqa* "to pour out; spill". The noun *rīq* means "saliva". In *ḫamriyya*, comparing saliva with wine is a usual motif. Also, in Medieval Spanish poetry, which had Hebrew and Arabic influences, verses that related the flow of saliva through kissing and compared it to wine, honey, milk, and various sweet drinks, were used.[26] So, we can translate "poured out oil", knowing that it indicates the saliva during the kissing of a loved one. Phillip P. Kennedy writes:

> In the Jāhiliyya, khamr worked in conjunction with love poetry in two ways. It could either be the fleeting description of the beloved's saliva, which is limited in its resonances, or a boast of hedonistic

[19] Farouch Masarwah has written: "The acquisition of wine was a source of pride and ostentation. The Arabs were willing to spend a great deal of money in order to obtain good wine, bayt ras, andrin and basri… This was the situation in the desert. The circumstances of city dwellers, on the other hand, were such that it was easy for them to hold gatherings for drinking and entertainment, especially the well-to-do, who devoted themselves to such activities and competed with each other over who purchased the most expensive wines". See Masarwah 2019:16 and Al-'Ali 1968: 4:662.

[20] Pope 1977: 293.

[21] Compare with Hirschberg`s analysis and suggestions about translation; See Hirschberg 1961: 377 and Pope 1977: 297.

[22] Pope: ibid.

[23] Wehr 1979: 485; In case of a common word in both Hebrew and Arabic languages, the Hebrew *šīn* usually changes into Arabic *sīn.*

[24] I consider 1:2b and 1:3a as a synonymous bicolon. See also Pope 1977: 229-300.

[25] Volkonski (2024): forthcoming.

[26] Ibid.; Japhet and Walfish 2017: 28.

pleasure directed expressly at the beloved. The poet attempted to console despondent love in self-vaunting manner; there are numerous examples.[27]

Ḫamriyya in Arabic poetry may reveal different approaches. Only one possibility is making the language sensual and indicating a love affair. In pre-Islamic poetry, a good life consisted of enjoying women, wine and perfume.[28] The Song 1-4, with some other parallel verses, is an example of it in Biblical poetry. However, the speaker, in this case, is a female, and the loved one is male. The poet is praising the love and her loved one, inviting him to show his passion in "his chambers" *ḥadārāw*. Even if 4b talks about "his chambers", Michael V. Fox indicates that in Hebrew, it is possible to apply the third person as a respectful way of addressing superiors.[29]

2.1.4. Stylistic features

Even if the title in colon 1 is not considered as a part of the Song but rather a later addition, mainly because of the word *ʾašer*, while everywhere else, *še* is used, poetically, it suits perfectly with the next colon 2a. The rhyme is *šī/še/ša*. The cola 1 and 2a have a repeating structure: "The Song of Songs" (*šīr haššīrīm*) and "Let him kiss me with the kisses" (*yiššāqēnī minnəšīqōt*). In the title, the root *šīr* is repeated, and in 2a, we can notice the effect of onomatopoeia: *šāq* and *šīq*. The words "for Solomon" (*lišəlomō*) and "his mouth" (*pihu*) in the next colon refer to the third person. As previously mentioned, it is possible to apply the third person as a respectful way of addressing superiors. The end rhyme of the cola 1 and 2a are "o" and "u". In vv. 2b to 4, the poet addresses the second person as masculine.

Traditionally, 2b and 3a are not read as a bicolon,[30] however, the synonymous parallelism and the chiastic pattern can be detected because of word pairs and meaning. A word *ṭōḇīm* "good" is repeated, and if the word *rēaḥ* is really semantically synonym to *yāyin*, meaning "wine", the parallelism would be convincing. Through the suffix of the second masculine *-ḵā*, "your love" *dodēḵā* and "your oils" *dodēḵā* are parallel, attesting to the end rhyme.

The cola 3b and 3c make up an extrapolative bicolon.[31] The only repeating element is the suffix *-ḵā* at the end of both cola.

Bicola 4a-4b and 4c-4d are two synonymous bicola. Verse 4e is a monocolon that finishes the first part as a conclusion. The bicolon 4a-4b is synonymous because of the words *mašəḵēnī* "draw me", *nārūṣā* "let's haste", and *heḇīʾ anī* "take me", speaking to the other person in the second person masculine. "The king" *hammeleḵ* leaves the possibility to address superiorly "his chambers", still referring to the second masculine "you". The cola end with *-ā* and *-āw*, which sound similar.

In the bicolon 4c-4d, three synonymous verbs are applied: *nāgīlā* "let us be glad", *wəniśməḥā* "let us rejoice", and *nāzkīrā* "let's praise". The cola begin with the alliteration *-nā* and the end rhyme *-ā* is dominating. The cola 2b and 4d have the phrase *dodēḵā miyyāyin* that frames the strophe 2b-4d.

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[27] Kennedy 1997: 19-20.
[28] Masarwah 2019: 16.
[29] Fox 1985: 266.
[30] Pope 1977: 299-300.
[31] This terminology is from Nõmmik 2012: 406-407. Extrapolative means, among other things, both synthetic verse and enjambment.

2.2. The Chain 1-7[32]

1. The palm of my eye **made me drink the wine of love**
   And my glass was(/had) a face of one who is above the beauty

   saqatnī ḥumayyā l-ḥubbi rāḥatu muqlatī
   wa-kaʾsī muḥayyā manʿani l-ḥusni ǧallati

2. **I made my companions to believe that by drinking their wine**
   My heart rejoiced in joy – with my glance

   *Fa-ʾawhamtu **ṣaḥbī** ʾanna **šurba** šarābihim*
   *bi-hi **surra sirrī fī ntišāʾī** bi-naẓratī*

3. By the dark pupils of the eyes, I was able to keep away from my glass and
   From the eyes' fine qualities, not cool **wine**, came my intoxication

   Wa-bi-l-ḥadaqi staġnaytuʿan qadaḥī wa-man
   *šamāʾilihā lā min **šamūliya** našwatī*

4. So, in the tavern was the **time of my thanks** to **brave young men**
   For despite my **infamy**, I completely hid **my love** with them

   *Wa-fī **ḥāni sukrī** ḥāna šukrī li-**fityatin***
   *bi-him tamma lī katmu **l-hawā** maʿa **šuhratī***

5. Then, when sobriety ceased, **I sought union with her**
   Shame's grip did not seize me as **I stretched out for her**

   *Wa-lammā nqaḍā ṣaḥwī **taqāḍaytu waṣlahā***
   *wa-lam yaġšanī fī **basṭihā qabḍu ḫašyatī***

6. There was no one present with me there – no persistent spy of fortune
   In the seclusion of the bridal chamber where I revealed my all to her

   *Wa-ʾabṯaṯtuhā mā bī wa-lam yaku **ḥāḍirī***
   raqību** baqā ḥaẓẓin **bi-ḥalwati ǧalwati

7. With my state as witness **to rushing love** – my finding effacing me
   Losing her transfixing me – I said:

   *Fa-qultu wa-ḥālī bi-ṣ-**ṣabābati** šāhidun*
   wa-waǧdī bihā māḥiyya wa-l-faqdu muṯbitī

2.2.1. Section in the introduction, the Chain 1-7

Homerin has written: "Ibn al-Fāriḍ opens his *Poem of the Sufi Way* in the tavern, but the focus of this ode is not heavenly wine of love, but the lover's life of deprivation, transformation, and eventual union."[33] First verses 1-7 from all 761 bayts depict the first time the poet meets his loved one and is intoxicated by her beauty and his love for her. The poet has a masculine voice,

[32] Arabic translation from now and on by Homerin and Arberry, modified.
[33] Homerin 2007: 67.

and the loved one is female. But allegorically, the poem is speaking about "The Pilgrim's Path to God", as Homerin named the commentary she wrote.[34] In verses 1-7, the poet is speaking about her loved one in the third person feminine.

2.2.2. Content and themes

From the introduction part *nasīb* of this love poem *ġazal*, the theme of a wine song *ḫamriyya* is recognisable. The poem contains Sufi symbolism, but my analysis can only refer to it occasionally. The main aim is to notice traditional motives in *nasīb* of *ġazal* and *ḫamriyya* in the new context of Sufi poetry.

2.2.3. Motifs and keywords

The *qaṣīda* starts with the suffixed verb *saqatnī* "she made me drink", and there are many synonyms for wine in *bayt*s 1-3: *ḥumayyā* (the real meaning is "intoxication of wine", but the word refers to wine), *šarāb* and *šamūl*. Hence, the poem starts with *ḫamriyya*. When in pre-Islamic times, "wine" could also refer to blood and the powers of life and death, and as Homerin wrote "related themes of loss have also blended with this verse as the beloved's lips promise an intoxicating kiss, while her sudden departure calls for wine's consolation," then Sufi poetry added to the symbolism of wine the eternal love flowing between God and His worshipers.[35] It is also possible that allegorically, the glass may have the meaning of body, and the wine means soul or spirit.[36] In this case, the glass is the face of the beloved whose face the poet praises to be the most beautiful – "and my glass had a face of one who is above the beauty" (*wa-kaʾsī muḥayyā manʿani l-ḥusni ğallati*). Wine is the lover's spirit that has an intoxicating effect on the poet.

Already in pre-Islamic times, *ġazal* had some specific elements, such as the weeping over the remnants of the encampment (*al-bukāʾu ʿalā l-ʾaṭlāl*), the vision of beloved in a dream (*ṭayf al-ḫayāl*), the obstacles to love such as the reproacher (*ʿāḏil*), the jealous one (*ḥasūd*), the watchman (*rāqib*, Hebr. *ṣofer*), the secret hater (*kāšiḥ*) and the slanderer (*wāšī*).[37] In the Chain 1-7, the introduction part *nasīb* contains the first declaration of love, though secretly, with the words in *bayt* 5: "I sought union with her" (*taqāḍaytu waṣlahā*), "I stretched out for her" **(***taqāḍaytu waṣlahā*); and in *bayt* 7 "to rushing love" (*bi-ṣ-ṣabābati*); in *bayt* 6 "in the seclusion of the bridal chamber" (*bi-ḫalwati ğalwati*). Also, "the watchman" or "the spy" (*rāqib*) is mentioned in *bayt* 6 as one of the elements of *ġazal*. Homerin has written in her commentary more precisely about this notion:

> In courtly love poetry the spy guards the beloved, and the term may refer to the continual presence of society's restrictions on love and relationships, though several commentators have interpreted the spy here (*rāqibu baqā ḥaẓẓin*) as the poet's former narcissistic self-regard.[38]

There is no other part similar to hamriyya in the whole Chane.The wine and drunkenness are hereinafter mentioned only in different contexts in Sufi tradition – "ecstatic intoxication (*sukr/sakra*) is followed by a superior enlightened sobriety (*ṣaḥw*)." [39]

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid: 41-42.
[36] Schippers 1994: 316.
[37] Ibid: 317.
[38] Homerin 2007: 74.
[39] Ibid: 134.

2.3. Comparison

Since I argued that the title of the Song suits poetically and grammatically with the next colon 2a, in this paragraph, I will give attention to a few further thoughts. Even if the titles of both poems are traditionally not considered part of the poems themselves, it is something that is interesting to take note of. Among some other scholars, Ibn Ezra and David Qimḥi have construed the expression *šīr haššīrīm ʾašer lišəlomō* rather partitive, not superlative – "a song of the songs of Solomon" meaning only one of Solomon's songs. Kleuker instead suggested reading the word *šēr* instead of *šīr*, which means "the chain of songs", probably relying on an idea from translating Greek *seira* that means "chain".[40] These ideas have not received any scientific support, and I do not agree with this expound either. But my attention was drawn by the fact that it is possible to read differently and what could be influences of this interpretation in different times and places. In Western literature, Ibn al-Fārḍ's the Chain is mostly referred to as "The Sufi Way". However, it is a rather simplified approach to relate it more to Sufism. According to Wehr, we can translate *naẓm* as "stinging (of pearls); composition (of a poem, of verses); poetry, versification, versifying; arrangement, order; organisation; system".[41] *Sulūk* means "behaviour, comportment, demeanour, manners; conduct, deportment attitude."[42] William Lane adds the possibility to translate it as "thread, or string with which one sews," or "upon which beads are strung; [but] not having beads upon it."[43] So, we can translate it differently, even "the chain of chains" would be correct. The question is, could the misreading or interpreting Hebrew *šīr haššīrīm ʾašer lišəlomō* have an influence on creating a headline *naẓm as-sulūk.*

More than just a guess, we notice the same tradition at the beginning of both poems. Both poems are love songs, Arabic *ġazal*'s, both have elements of *nasīb*, and the tradition of *ḫamriyya* is obvious.

2.3.1. Motifs and keywords

Similarities in the poetry of the Song and the Chain are not so obvious at first glance. However, similar keywords combined with the same motifs are an example of the possibility of bringing together traditions of almost 15 centuries. Both poems begin with verses consisting of the verb "to make/let someone drink" – in the Song, *yiššāqēnī* (root *š-q-y*) "let him make me drink" and in the Chain, *saqatnī* (root *s-q-y*) "she made me drink". It is not a commonly approved translation for the Song – the traditional translation is "let him kiss me" with the verb "kiss". Praising one's love by comparing it with the wine *kī-ṭōḇīm dodēḵā miyyāyin* "For your love is better than wine", or praising one's beauty by comparing it with the glass of wine *wa-kaʾsī muḥayyā man ʿani l-ḥusni ǧallati* "and my glass was(/had) a face of one who is above the beauty" follow within the next verses of both poems. Of course, the words that refer to wine are mentioned in both poems – in the Song, *yāyin* and in the Chain, *ḥumayyā, šurba and šamūl.* After these verses, the keywords *šəmeḵā* "your name" (Song 3b) and *šuhratī* "my fame" (Chain 4) occur. Hebrew *šem* can also mean "fame".

In the same cola/*bayts* we find the words "maidens" *ʿalāmōt* (Song 3c) and "young men" *fitya* (Chain 4). The motif of searching an answer to one's passion comes next – in the Song 4a, *mašəḵēnī ʾaḥarēḵā nārūṣā* "draw me after you, let's haste", and in 4b, *heḇīʾ anī hammeleḵ ḥadārāw* "Take me, the king, to his chambers"; in the Chain 5, *taqāḍaytu waṣlahā* "I sought union with her" and *basṭihā qabḍu* "I stretched out for her". So, as a place for love is already

[40] Pope 1977: 294.
[41] Wehr 1979: 1147.
[42] Ibid: 495.
[43] Lane 1863: 1422.

mentioned in the Song 4b (*ḥadārāw* "his chambers"), in the Chain, the counterpart it is *bi-ḥalwati ğalwati* "in bridal chamber".

3. The Song 1:5-8 and the Chain 91-96

3.1. The Song 1:5-8

5a	**Black am I and/but beautiful**,	***šəḥōrā ʾanī wənāʾwā***
b	O Jerusalem girls,	*bənōṯ yərūšālām*
c	Like the **tents** of Qedar	*kəʾ**åholē** qēdār*
d	Like the pavilions of **Salma**[44]	*kīrīʿōt šalmā*
6a	Stare not at me that **I am swart**	*ʾal-tirʾūnī šeʾanī šə**ḥarḥoreṯ***
b	That the sun has **blackened me**.	*še**ššezāpaṯnī** haššāmeš*
c	My mother's sons were incensed at me,	*bənē ʾimmī niḥarū-ḇī*
d	They made me a **vineyard guard**;	*śāmunī **noṭērā ʾet-hakkərāmīm***
e	My own **vineyard** I did not **guard**	***karmī šellī loʾ nāṭārtī***
7a	Tell me, my true love,	*haggīdā lī šeʾāhaḇā napšī*
b	**Where do you pasture?**	*ʾēḵā tirʿē*
c	**Where do you fold at noon?**	*ʾēḵā tarbīṣ baṣṣåhorāyim*
d	Lest I be **as one veiled**	*šallāmā ʾehyē **kəʿoṭyā***
e	Among your comrades' flocks.	*ʿal ʿeḏrē ḥaḇērēḵā*
8a	If you do not know	*ʾim-loʾ ṯēḏʿī lāḵ*
b	O fairest of women	*hayyāp ā bannāšīm*
c	**Follow the sheep tracks**,	***ṣəʾī-lāḵ bəʿiqḇē haṣṣōn***
d	**And gaze your kids**	***ūrəʿī ʾet-gəḏiyyoṯayiḵ***
e	**Close to the shepherds' huts.**	***ʿal miškənōṯ hāroʿīm***

3.1.1. Section in the introduction, the Song 1:5-8

Introduction *nasīb* continues. In the Hebrew text, it is easier to consider vv. 5-8 a new unit compared to Arabic poetry. According to the latter, vv. 5-8 are very closely related to the previous section vv. 1-4. However, there is some reason to divide vv. 5-8 into two subsections, vv. 5-6 and 7-8. Verses 5-7 have the same voice speaking as in 1-4, but v. 8 addresses the beloved one. If in vv. 5-6, the poet addresses in the second plural feminine (5) and masculine (6), then vv. 7-8 have a dialogue between the lovers.

[44] Or Solomon, in Hebrew *šəlomō*; some scholars read the difficult text as Solomon, some as Salmā.

3.1.2. Content and themes

The Song 1:5-7 still carries some elements of *ḥamriyya* and *ġazal.* New themes are *hiǧāʾ* (lampoon), *ṣabr* (the act of "displaying fortitude")[45] and *faḫr* (self-glorification). Verse 7 poses a question and alludes to the search for the beloved. Verse 8 contains an answer and an introductory allusion to the journey of seeking the one she loves. The speaker and the one to whom the words are addressed have changed.

3.1.3. Motifs and keywords

The themes of *ḥamriyya* and *ġazal* still continue, marked by keywords *noṭērā ʾet-hakkərāmīm* "vineyard guard" in colon 6d and *karmi* "vineyard" and verb *loʾ nāṭārtī* "I did not guard" in colon 6e. In the spectrum of medieval Andalusian poetry, in wine songs, common phrases in Hebrew and Arabic were applied, such as in Hebrew "daughter of the wine tendrils" (*waldat gefanim*), "son of the wine tendrils" (*yelid sorēq*) and "daughter of the vineyard" (*bat kerem*) and "pure Golden juice" (*mē zahab shaḥut*).[46] Guarding the vineyard could also be a motif related to this theme. The obstacles to love in Arabic Bedouin love poetry are shown with words such as "reproacher" (*ʿāḏil*), "jealous one" (*ḥasūd*), "watchman" (*raqīb*; Hebr. *ṣofeh*), "secret hater" (*kāšiḥ*), and "slanderer" (*wāšī*).[47] These words are not exactly mentioned here, but familial or social difficulties apparently obscure the love relationship. Those characteristics are related to the themes of *ġazal*, *nasīb* and *hiǧāʾ*.[48] Verses 5 and 6 describe one's strength, uniqueness and social difficulties.[49] Colon 7d *šallāmā ʾehyē kəʿoṭyā* "Lest I be as one veiled" indicates the necessity to hide oneself, allegorically, to keep a secret. This metaphor is an important motif in Sufi love poetry.

One of the most difficult colons to clarify is 5a *šəḥōrā ʾanī wənāʾwā* "Black am I and/but beautiful". For 23 centuries now, its exact meaning has not been explained. Every tradition – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sefardic, etc. – tries to interpret according to its own convenience and understanding. Othmar Keel has referred to Palestinian love songs, where dark women referred to the Bedouin girls and white women to the city girls, but he confutes this possibility in OT.[50] Yet, this could strengthen the motif of the theme *hiǧāʾ*, where social status is an obstacle to lovers and their dating. Homerin, on the other hand, has described how Sufi poetry in the later tradition has taken the idea from Islam about bright face that may indicate to selfishness with being proud and black face that means humility and true love.[51] We are unsure if this motif originates in Islam or is already an earlier motif and interpretation. At the same, the statement *šəḥōrā ʾanī wənāʾwā* "Black am I and/but beautiful" shows pride and self-praise *faḫr*.

It is interesting that the comparison in 5c and 5d is made with tents of Qedar and with pavilions of Solomon or Salmā. It is not clear whether it is a parallel in the Song, but in Early Arabic love poetry, a certain motif of *nasīb* suggests that the poet arrives at the ruins of the home or the abandoned encampment of his beloved, asks about the one who is missing but does not get an answer. Often, the tribe of the loved one is mentioned. In vv. 7a-7c, the poet asks about the one who is missing *haggīdā lī šeʾāhaḇā napšī/ ʾēḵā tirʿē/ ʾēḵā tarbīṣ baṣṣåhorāyim* "Tell me, my true love, / Where do you pasture?/ Where do you fold at noon?"

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[45] Jones 1996: 2.
[46] Schippers 1994: 316.
[47] Ibid.: 317.
[48] Gelder 1990: XXI;
[49] Zakovitch 2019: 7, 36; Garrett 2014: 132; Noegel and Rendsburg 2009: Jakobi 2012; Volkonski 2024: 180-182.
[50] Keel 1994: 46–47.
[51] Homerin 2007: 100.

Arabic poetical tradition has two different meanings for the name Salmā. One is already known from commentaries of the Song – Salmā is the name of an ancient Arabian tribe.[52] The other meaning is the name of a woman. Annemarie Schimmel has written about the poetical tradition indicating Solomon's name in feminine that began from ibn ʿArabī.[53] In this case, it refers only to the existence of a specific Solomonic tradition of Arabic Sufi poetry. In the Song 7:1, we can see an analogue: *šūḇī šūḇī haššūlammīṯ* "Leap, leap, O Shulamite!". *Šūlammīṯ* is the feminine form of *Šəlomō*. Yet, since the colon 1:5c has the parallel "tents of Qedar" and Qedar is an Arabic tribe[54], *šalmā*[55] could probably also mean a tribe, or it is the name of Solomon, if read with different vocals.

3.1.4. Stylistic features

The extrapolative bicolon 5a-5b begins with speaking to the daughters of Jerusalem. They are mentioned in the second colon. The first colon has end-rhyme *-ā*.

The bicolon 5c-5d is a synonymous one. Rhyming word-pairs are *kəʾåholē* "like tents" and *kīrīʿōt* "like pavilions", with the preposition *kə-* repeated, and *qēdār* and *šalmā* likely as synonyms.

The synonymous bicolon 6a-6b is elliptic so that *šeʾanī šəḥarḥoreṯ* "that I am swart" and *šeššezāpaṯnī haššāmeš* "That the sun has blackened me" are synonymous. The vetitive *ʾal-tirʾūnī*, "stare not at me," addresses in the second person masculine. This makes these verses interesting because v. 5 addressed the daughters of Jerusalem. However, cola 5a and 6b frame a strophe with parallel phrases *šəḥōrā ʾanī wənāʾwā* "black am I and/but beautiful," and *šeššezāpaṯnī haššāmeš* "that the sun has blackened me." Both cola are also connected through the alliteration *šə-* and *še-* (in addition to 6a).

Three cola 6c-6e make up an extrapolative tricolon, and in this case, I believe its function is to mark a climax, considering also the theme *hiġāʾ* that it represents. The tricolon has an end-rhyme *-ī* and an alliteration of *ni-, no-* and *nā-*. Cola 6c and 6d tell about *bənē ʾimmī* "my mother's sons," who *niḥarū-ḇī* "incensed at me", and *śāmunī* "they made me". Cola 6d and 6e repeat phrases *noṭērā ʾet-hakkərāmīm* "a vineyard guard" and *karmī šellī loʾ nāṭārtī* "My own vineyard I did not guard".

Cola 7a-7c belong to a further extrapolative tricolon where 7b and 7c are parallel: *ʾēḵā tirʿē* "Where do you pasture" and *ʾēḵā tarbīṣ* "where do you fold", with alliterative *tir-* and *tar-*, but provide a kind of reversed ellipse, with a time specification at the end. The questions are asked in the second person singular masculine, and 7a applies an end-rhyme *-ī* and *-ā*.

The extrapolative bicolon 7d-7e continues the previous tricolon with its second-person singular masculine. The bicolon is dominated by the end-rhyme *-ā* and *-ē*.

Verse 8 answers the previous speaker – in the second person singular feminine. Cola 8a-8b make up an extrapolative bicolon and 8c-8e an extrapolative tricolon. In v. 8, the rhymes are not so obvious.

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[52] Pope 1977: 320.

[53] Schimmel wrote: And thus, the feminine name Salma is explained as an allusion to a Solomonian ecstasy (*ḥāla sulaymāniyya*) which descended upon the author by virtue of a prophetic heritage from the station of Solomon, and the simple phrase "They journeyed continuously" means: "Since the object sought is infinite, the return from it is also a journey towards it. There is no migration except from one Divine Name to another."; see Schimmel 1982: 40

[54] Pope 1977: 319.

[55] In Hebrew, the transcription is *šalmā*, but in Arabic, the letter *šīn* becomes *sīn* and the tribe's name is *Salmā*.

3.2. The Chain 91-96

91. You went to **tents** not to be entered from the back
Their doors shut to the knocking of one like you
ʾatayta ***buyūtan*** *lam tunal min ẓuhūrihā*
wa-ʾabwābuhā ʿan qarʿi miṯlika suddati

92. And before confiding **love's secret**
You offered Golden lies, graving an impossible glory
wa-bayna yaday nağwāka ***qaddamta zuḫrutan***
tarūmu bihi ʿizzan marāmīhi ʿazzati

93. You came **bright-faced[56], proud,** without a blemish
In this Word of the next, to woo my purity
wa-ğiʾta ***bi-wağhin abyaḍin*** *ġayra musqitin*
li-ğāhika fī dārayka ḫāṭiba ṣafwatī

94. But had you been with me like the line beneath the dot of B
You would have risen up to where no scheme could ever take you
*wa-law kunta bī nuqṭati l-****bāʾi*** *ḫafḍatan*
rufiʿta ʾilā mā lam tanalhu bi-ḥīlati

95. **Where you could see that you will not see what you have counted on**
And that your big plans were poor provisions
bi-ḥayṯu tarā ʾan lā tarā mā ʿadadtahu
wa-ʾanna l-laḍī ʾaʿdadtahu ġayru ʿuddati

96. **The open road to me is plain to see for one right-guided**
But commonly lust blinds and leads astray
wa-nahğu sabīlī waḍiḥun li-mani htadā
wa-lākinnahā l-ʾahwāʾu ʿammat fa-ʾaʿmati

3.2.1. Section of the Chain 91-96

Bayts 91-96 are a section in the Chain 84-102 that represents the themes of *hiğāʾ* and *faḫr*. Bayts 8-83 form a lament *riṯāʾ*, which's main message is suffering. The latter is caused by the separateness from the loved one, whereby slanderers and blamers try to hinder his wish to get united with the beloved again.[57] In the Chain 84-102, the voice is feminine, and the loved one claims that he is not loving her but love itself.

3.2.2. Content and themes

The Chain 91-96 contain the theme of *hiğāʾ*. The woman whom the poet loves talks to him, accuses him of being too selfish and suggests he become humbler.

3.2.3. Motifs and keywords

The main keywords of the section are *buyūtan* "tents" and *bi-wağhin* "bright-faced". Homerin refers to Qur'an 2:189, where Muslims are forbidden to enter their tents through the back after

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[56] *ʾabyaḍ* can be translated bright or white
[57] Homerin 2007: 88.

returning from a pilgrimage, as was the custom in pre-Islamic times: "In the context of the beloved's rebuke, this Qurʾānic reference may be accusing the pre-sumptuous lover of trying to meet with her by deception and stealth, and of being unworthy of her, just as pagans were not worthy to enter the tents of Muslims".[58] As I mentioned in 3.1.3, the bright face may indicate selfishness and the black face humility.

Bayt 93 says: "You came bright-faced, proud, without a blemish," and 94: "But had you been with me like the line beneath the dot of B (ﺑ) /You would have risen up to where no scheme could ever take you". Bayt 94 shows the way to humility, which is a virtue. Another interesting coincidence is that the Hebrew letter בּ (*bayt*) can be translated as "tent".

Bayt 96 tells about the right journey in seeking one's beloved: "The open road to me is plain to see for one right-guided/ But commonly lust blinds and leads astray". Another key phrase is *qaddamta zuḫrutan* "a love's secret." In Sufism, keeping the secret about love is mandatory.

3.3.1. Comparison

The Song 5-8 and the Chain 91-96 represent the theme of *hiǧāʾ*. Since technically both poems can be compared to "chains", motifs and themes are intertwined, so that sometimes, even if the content would allow a division of the text into sections, there are always some keywords which build up a chain and hold several motifs together.

3.3.2. Motifs and keywords

There are still some motifs in the Song 1:5-8 that are linked to the Chain's *bayts* 1-7. They refer to the theme of *ḫamriyya*. In this case, and a few other Arabic love poems, an involvement of some "others" in the lovers' relationship appears. In the Song 1:5b, *bənōṯ yərūšālām* "daughters of Jerusalem," and in the Chain 2, *ṣaḥbī* "my companions" are mentioned.

The tricolon in the Song 5c-5e refers to the "guarding of the vineyard"; the motif of guarding and the keyword *noṭērā* "guard" is inherent to *ḫamriyya*. In the Chain 6, "a spy" *raqību* can be translated as "guard" as well.

In the Song 5-8 and the Chain 91-96, the main motifs to compare are related to the keyword "tents", *ʾåholē* in the Song 1:5 and *buyūt* in the Chain 91, together with being "black" *šəḥōrā* in the Song 5 and "bright-faced" *bi-waǧhin abyaḍin* in the Chain 93. As said above, the latter motif refers to being humble or proud. The Song 1:5 has, at the same time, some elements of the theme of *faḫr*, of self-praising. So, being proud is such a case.

Keeping a love affair in secret is a motif in both texts: Song 1:7d "being as veiled" *kəʿoṭyā* and the Chain 92 "love's secret" *qaddamta zuḫrutan.* In Sufism, the veil marks a secret. The Song and the Chain both indicate the right journey to find the beloved one: in the Song 1:8, it is "Follow the sheep tracks,/ And gaze your kids/ Close to the shepherds' huts," and in the Chain 96, it is "The open road to me is plain to see for one right-guided".

4. Conclusion

This analysis was only a brief example and an introduction to comparing themes, motifs and keywords in two texts created at different times and contexts but connected by their genre of love poetry and Semitic background.

The Song and the Chain have similar keywords and motifs that are comparable. The coherence of the motifs and themes needs further attention. For instance, in the case of the theme *ḫamriyya*, the phrases "to make someone drink", "wine", "name/celebrity", "young men/maidens", and "celebrating one's love in chambers" appear in both poetic texts I studied.

[58] Ibid.:100.

In the other theme of *hiǧāʾ*, we find words and motifs, such as "tents", "shining/black (face)", "secret/veil", "others" and "telling the right way to find a lost lover".

I find strong arguments for continuing to explore the Semitic love song tradition. A systematic categorisation of the motifs is still missing and needs to be done. Thereby, examples of the pre-Islamic and *ʿuḏrī* love poetry *ġazal* are obligatory. However, since ʿUmar ibn al-Fāriḍ was influenced by a tradition that goes back nearly two millennia, his poetry is a good starting point. Let us remember that Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall called the *Nazm as-Sulūk* in his commentary, an Arabic Song of Songs.

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From Judah and back again: Judean royal family in exile

This paper is a research summary of a sub-project within the broader study "Divergent Views of Diaspora in Ancient Judaism," which examines diaspora issues from 597 to 331 BCE. The project aims to identify and map the various representations of early Jewish diaspora communities, proposing a new model to understand the divergent views of homeland and diaspora and their impact on Judean identity during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods.

The paper specifically focuses on the forced migration of Judeans to Babylonia following the Neo-Babylonian conquest of Judah and their return to Judah at the beginning of the Persian period. A key aspect of the study is the role of the Judean king and royal court in exile. In pre-586 Judah, kingship was central to the politics and society of the region, as it was across the Levant and the Ancient Near East. The paper examines the king's situation in Babylon, the court-in-exile, their relationship with the Judean community in Babylonia, and the impact of forced and return migration on the royal family.

The scholarship has largely overlooked the issue of Judean kingship in the context of forced migration, despite some recent studies by Silverman (2019) and Alstola (2020). The paper aims to address this gap by discussing the royal court in exile and the return migration of the royal descendants. The first part of the paper analyzes the evolution of the royal court's functions in Babylon and the resulting consequences for the king's status, using comparative and sociological studies. The second part explores how the king mitigated his diminished status in exile and the effects on the Judean diaspora in Babylonia. The final part addresses the return migration of royal descendants, focusing on Zerubbabel.

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Preface

This paper is a research summary of a sub-project within the project 'Divergent Views of Diaspora in Ancient Judaism'. The project investigates diaspora issues in ancient Judaism (597 - 331 BCE). It focuses on identifying and mapping different representations of the earliest Jewish diaspora communities. It aims to present a new model of the divergent views of homeland and diaspora that shed light on the dynamics of conflicting opinions in Judean identity in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods.

The paper is a study of Judean court-in-exile in the context of Judean forced migration in Babylonia. Any feedback is welcome, but I would like you to focus on the use of sociological and anthropological theory - do you find it convincing and helpful to analyze the material? Is there anything I could add here?

Thank you for reading!

From Judah and back again: Judean royal family in exile

In the paper, I will focus on the forced migration of Judeans to Babylonia after the Neo-Babylonian conquest of Judah and the return migration from Babylonia to Judah at the beginning of the Persian period. I will focus on a small but significant segment of the Judean community in Babylonia - the king and the royal court.

In the pre-586 Judah - as elsewhere in the Levant and the Ancient Near East - kingship and king were fundamental for the politics and society of the country. For this reason, I believe it is worth taking a closer look at the king in Babylon, the court-in-exile, their possible relations with Judeans in Babylonia and the effects of forced migration and return migration on the king/descendants of the royal family.

In the Hebrew Bible, the displacement of King Jehoiachin following the Neo-Babylonian siege in 597 is mentioned in 2 Kings 24 and 2 Chronicles 36. The narrative about Jehoiachin's release from custody at the Neo-Babylonian court appears in the last verses of 2 Kings and Jeremiah. The return circumstances relevant to Zerubbabel, Jehoiachin's grandson, are mentioned in Ezra 1-6, Zechariah 4:6-14 and Haggai 2:23.

We also have extrabiblical cuneiform sources regarding King Jehoiachin, his sons, and other Judeans in Babylon. These are so-called Jehoiachin Ration Tablets published by Weidner in 1939 (Weidner 1939). They are part of the Palace Archive of Nebuchadnezzar II, excavated *in situ* in Babylon. The texts contain lists of monthly rations of food items deliveries (barley, dates, sesame oil) for different individuals and groups of people from various countries. Four lists dated to 591 BCE mention Judeans – namely King Jehoiachin, called 'king of the land of Judah' and his sons, and the amount of rations they received. Lists also mention other Judeans, including those close to the royal family, which gives an impression of a limited king's court in exile.

Despite the role played by the king in Judah and the mention of the Judean royal family in exile, the problem of the Judean kingship in the context of forced migration has received limited attention in the scholarship. Two recent studies mentioning this problem (Silverman 2019; Alstola 2020) are a step forward, but further research is needed.

I will discuss concepts of the royal court, the Judean royal court in exile, and the issue of return migration of the descendants of the royal family. The first part focuses on the most manifest aspect of royal rule - the Judean royal court - the problem of how its functions evolved due to the resettlement to Babylon and the consequences for the king's status. Here, I will present comparative and sociological studies relating to the royal court. In the second part, I will focus on how the king could mitigate the diminishing of his status in exile and how it affected the Judean diaspora community in Babylonia. The issue of return migration on descendants of the royal family, namely Zerubabbel, will be the topic of the last part.

The royal court

The issue of the royal court and the court society has been the focus of many studies. There are some studies on courts in the ancient world (e.g. Spawforth 2007). In order to understand the transformation of status and functions of the Judean court-in-exile, I was looking for a study describing the functions of the court and the court as a political, social and cultural phenomenon. Most of such studies concern the courts of medieval or early modern European monarchs.

The most widely known sociological study of the court and the die *höfische Gesellschaft* is *The Court Society* by Norbert Elias. The study focuses on the royal court and the social transformations of early modern Europe. Elias argues that the court was the king's field of domination, and "the public manifestation and symbolic representation of his power was a value in itself" (Elias 1985:139).

The role of the court is crucial for Werner Paravicini, who, in his study on the Late-Medieval Burgundy society distinguished five functions of the court: organizing daily life; ensuring ruler's safety; maintaining his prestige; integration of elites; and providing government and administration in the country (Paravicini 1998).

There are also studies relating specifically to the courts of deposed monarchs. Mansell and Riotte argued that the royal court and kings in exile, in the prospect of return, often patronized art, literature and historiography so that 'their public image had to reflect their royal status' (Mansell and Riotte 2011:8). More recently, Robert Aldrich pointed out that deposed African and Asian monarchs in the nineteenth century also sought to maintain their status, which was allowed by provisions received from British and French colonial rulers (Aldrich 2020).

There is, of course, the problem of anachronism, as the above-mentioned authors draw their material from later periods. However, one may argue that the royal court understood as a ruler's entourage and the centre of his rule, retains some constant features throughout centuries. Thus, the comparative studies may help analyze changes that occurred at the Judean court-in-exile following its uprooting to Babylon.

The starting point is the Judean kingship before the Neo-Babylonian conquest. The Judean kingship shared features with other monarchical traditions of the Levant and the Ancient Near East (Müller 2017; Levin 2017. A king, standing at the head of the patrimonial society, was perceived to be divinely elected, and thus legitimized. Other warrants of his rule were divine anointing during the enthronement, the construction/renovation of places of worship, military victories, and - last, but not least - claiming to descend from David and being a member of the dynasty of the House of David. His rule centred at the royal court in Jerusalem, the locus of power, bringing together his entourage, including officials, scribes and religious specialists (prophets and priests).

It leaves no doubt that the situation changed upon Jehoiachin's deposition and exile to Babylon in 597 BCE. In the following, I will use Paravicini's five functions to outline changes caused by forced migration.

1 The first function is about organizing daily life – providing food, drink, accommodation, health care, entertainment, etc.

In pre-exilic Judah, this was an essential function of the court. All that required administration extraction of resources from the country, and one may assume that part of Judah's agricultural output went to the needs of the royal court (footnote), linking the administration with the court and king. As the Jehoiachin Ration Tablets point out, the situation in Babylon was very different, and the Neo-Babylonian administration was responsible for providing food for Jehoiachin and his sons. Although the amount of food given to the ruler was substantial - even six times larger than the standard in the Ration Tablets (Alstola 2020:69), it does not seem that the king of Judah had anything to say about its volume. Thus, concerning his alimentation and accommodation, he depended on the Neo-Babylonian administration.

2 The second function is ensuring the ruler's safety – defending access to his person.

In Judah, the king's safety depended on the guard protecting his person and rule, a motif mentioned throughout the Hebrew Bible (1 Kings 14:27; Jer 52:19-21; 2 Kings 11:4, 25:15).

It is not clear how the king was guarded or supervised in Babylon. Alstola argued that even though Ration Tablets mention 'prison wardens', 'it is difficult to maintain that the prison wardens were responsible for guarding the Judean royalty or other people listed above' (Alstola 2020:71). Although the king was not incarcerated, one should expect that his and his family's safety depended on the Neo-Babylonian hosts. This would involve a guard provided by the Babylonians.

3 The third function concerns the ruler's prestige - impressing rivals and subjects – organizing grand entries, wedding ceremonies, banquets, funerals etc.

In pre-exilic Judah, this function concerned ceremonies such as enthronement, royal weddings, and the celebration of some festivals presided over by the king. Such situations allowed for a display of wealth and could also serve as a means of exerting political influence. Thus, the court could serve as a king's field of dominance (Elias 1985:115-154) All this required courtiers and various professionals at the court.

Nothing of that kind is mentioned in the Babylonian context. There is no indication that the king had any means to impress any potential guests who visited him in Babylon.

4 The fourth function pertains to the integration of elites by creating positions and participating in culture and rituals.

In pre-exilic Judah, this function was allowed by the king's resources and the capability to patronize and gather the elites of Judah at his court. The question I will address shortly is to what extent it could continue in exile.

5 **The last function involves government and administration – the court and its officials as the centre of political decision-making.**

It requires little comment on the pre-exilic period when the court in Jerusalem was the political centre of Judah. One may wonder whether some officials remained with the king in exile. This is suggested in Second Kings 24:15 where “king's officials” taken along Jehoiachin to Babylon. The Ration Tablets mention certain Qana-Yama, who was apparently an overseer and servant of Judean princes. Another Judean scribe was responsible for delivering food for Cilician captives. Judean courtiers working in the palace are also mentioned (Alstola 2020:64-5). Thus, the Ration Tablets indicate the presence of Judean professionals in Babylon, but only one had duties explicitly connected to the upkeep or daily functioning of the royal family.

To sum up, the deposed king of Judah in Babylon lost his prerogatives and previous roles, and his court-in-exile was a mere shadow of what it had been back in Jerusalem. Such a change could not remain without consequences for the king's status and, ultimately, the loss of royal status in the eyes of the Judean diaspora community. But, could Jehoiachin and his entourage try to upkeep some of its functions in the hope of a return to Judah and restoration? Alstola argued, that one of the reasons Neo-Babylonians kept deposed monarchs from the conquered territories at their court in Babylon was "to prepare a new generation of pro-Babylonian vassal kings to rule over Judah" (Alstola 2020:76). If that was the case, and Jehoiachin (or his sons) with their courtiers hoped to return one day, we may argue they tried to maintain in some way royal status.

Court-in-exile and Judean diaspora community in Babylonia

If so, was there anything the deposed king could do/was allowed to do? Mansell and Riotte argued the royal court and kings in exile show that in the prospect of return deposed monarchs often patronised art, literature and historiography so that "their public image had to reflect their royal status" (Mansell and Riotte 2011:8). In the present case, the king in exile could foster maintaining Judean literary traditions relating to Judean kingship (e.g. royal chronicles or royal psalms). That would require Judean scribes versed in Judean literary traditions. The Ration Tablets mention only one Judean scribe who performed administrative duties for the Neo-Babylonian administration. However, it points to the presence of Judean scribes at the Neo-Babylonian court.

But, did Jehoiachin (or his descendants) possess the means to support anybody?

A possible clue may be the amount of food rations he received (six times larger than usual). Alstola argued that "this amount would have been too much for his own personal needs, the rations were perhaps meant to be redistributed to his family members and other dependants" (Alstola 2020:69). This would mean that some of them went to the people in his court (scribes) to give them leisure indispensable for other activities. Moreover, the people in the deposed king's entourage may also have had their income transferred to them by the Neo-Babylonian administration.

How might this situation have affected the other Judeans in Babylon? Were there any Judeans for whom native literature was still relevant, and who could be potential partners of the royal court efforts to upkeep the literature and culture? Documents from Al-Yahudu and Murasu archive indicate the bulk of resettled Judeans lived in the countryside and provided labour within a land-for-service system (Pearce 2016). Such a situation certainly limited their mobility and leisure. However, we know about Judeans whose social standing was very different. The merchant family from Sippar lived in the context of the wealthy urban class with links to Babylon. Their profession as royal merchants would mean they were highly mobile and could travel to different places in the country, including Babylon (Bloch 2014). Moreover, other Judeans appear in the documents within the Babylonian elite milieus. The Ration Tablets also mention Judeans among royal officials of foreign origin (Alstola 2020:64-6). Such wealthy people, moving freely among Babylonian elites, could have interest and leisure, thus being addresses of the royal patronage of literature.

If the native culture retained relevancy for some Judeans, was any communication between the diaspora community and the king possible? The context of the Neo-Babylonian court and king is helpful here, as studies show that people from upper administrative and economic strata - including those from the province and merchants - not being part of the palace's inner circle could access the king (Jursa 2010:94). The situation of the forcibly resettled rulers (including the king of Judah) was probably different from that of the Neo-Babylonian king. One may argue that despite the control, some access to the king and his court-in-exile was possible for well-connected Judeans.

Thus, the possible royal patronage of Judean literature and the court's contact with the diaspora community make us ask about its relevancy for the Judean diaspora community in Babylonia and how it affected its status.

Forced migration often results in changes in the leadership and hierarchy of the subject community. Daniel Smith-Christopher in his pioneering sociological study of the Babylonian exile pointed to the changes in the resettled community caused by forced migration, arguing that it may prompt a creative response to the resettlement and "not merely the desperate struggle of a culture in decline". He pointed to four social and socio-psychological behaviour patterns occurring in these situations and counted among them “structural adaptation, including changes in the leadership and authority patterns” and “split in leadership between new leaders who arise to replace the old, defeated leaders who are unable to rule the minority group directly” (Smith-Christopher 1989:10).

In the context of the exile, that would mean that due to the fundamental importance that the monarchy had in pre-exilic Judah, the king would still be relevant for the Judean diaspora community. On the other hand, changes in his status caused by the forced migration to Babylon would lead to questioning his role as a leader of the Judean diaspora community.

Biblical scholars have long pointed out that prophetic visions of the Cedar Sprig (Ezek. 17:22-24) and Dirge over the Vine (19:10-14) are the result of post-587 discussions concerning Jehoiachin, Judean kingship, and its relevancy to the community in Babylonia (Block 2014:45-73; Patton 2017:90-127).

The "change in leadership and authority patterns" - to quote Smith-Christopher again - is evident in Deuteroisaiah whose authors transfer the features and prerogatives of Judean kingship to Cyrus (Fried 2002; Silverman 2019:48-51). The fact that a foreign ruler is presented as Yahweh's chosen one means that, at least in the eyes of some of the Judeans in Babylonia, the house of David has lost its royal legitimacy.

Return to Yehud

The last issue is what the return migration to the province of Yehud after the Persian conquest of Babylon in 539 meant to the status and position of the descendants of the royal family within the community of returnees. Although we ignore the circumstances of the return migration (what the journey itself looked like), it required the consent and support of the Persian administration. In this context, one should look at the royal figures in Yehud Province. The role played by Jehoiachin's grandson, Zerubbabel, his royal origins and prophetic messages of Zechariah and Haggai were widely debated, with authors mainly discussing his potential, but ultimately unsuccessful restoration as king of Judah, and messianic tendencies in Yehud, which were supposed to favour the return of the Davidic line in the province (see e.g. Albertz 2003).

However, in light of the exile and the changes that have occurred, we may look at it differently.

First, we are dealing with the willingness of the Judean Babylonian diaspora to transfer Judean kingship to a foreign ruler. One may wonder whether the royal court took part in these processes and whether its members - especially those born already in Babylon - would not consider themselves playing a different role upon the return in Yehud than their ancestors. If there had been contact between the court and other Judeans, the royal dynasty's entourage may have responded positively, or at least accepted the reconceptualization of Judean kingship.

Such changes would have consequences in the wake of the Persian conquest and the readiness of Judean elites to collaborate with new overlords (see Silverman 2019). For the descendants of the royal family, that would mean relinquishing kingship and accepting the status in the province as leaders of the community of returnees as a part of the elites of the province of Yehud.

The different question is whether the descendants of the royal family's relevancy could continue in the following decades of the Persian period. Scholars have argued that the list of descendants of David in 1 Chronicles 3, going down to five generations from Zerubabbel, may indicate their relevancy in the Persian period Yehud and even for authorizing their position if a chance ever occurred to regain the rule (Fulton 232). But, was it the case? Or, does it just point to the inclusion of Zerubbabel's progeny in the ranks of elites of Yehud?

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In this short paper, I have tried to argue that the Judean royal court and Judean kingship constituted a significant segment of the diaspora community in Babylonia. I also wanted to show that forced migration is a context in which the changes in the importance of the king and

his descendants should be examined. Since the issue of 'exile and restoration' has been one of the main topics discussed in biblical scholarship and it is banal to say that exile and return was a milestone, it asks for a more comprehensive examination of the royal role in these processes.

I started with the Judean court-in-exile arguing, that even though the king and his limited court could not preserve most of their functions, we should assume that the king and his entourage tried somehow to maintain their status and relevance as much as possible. Since the functions of the royal court and related royal prerogatives played were paramount in the legitimisation of royal power, their limitation could not remain without consequences for the king and the kingship. We lack sources for most of the sixth century, but the decline visible in the Jehoiachin's Ration Tablets meant that the position of the members of the House of David as kings of Judah began to be put into question and, as a result, undermined, which is visible in Deuteroisaiah.

I argued – though it is impossible to prove – that the king and court-in-exile could communicate with other Judeans in Babylonia. If that were the case, it could have consequences for the circumstances of delegitimizing the House of David. Certainly, further study is necessary on the Judean diaspora community in Babylonia and its segments that were involved in the maintaining of Judean literature.

The circumstances and the role of a descendant of the royal family upon return migration may point to Judean elites' structural adaptation under which they cooperated with the Persian Empire in Babylonia and the province of Yehud. Delegitimization does not necessarily mean the loss of relevance for the returnee community, as it could be maintained under changed roles. Thus, Zerubabbel, Jehoiachin's grandson, in his role as provincial governor became an imperial agent and part of the Judean elites in the province of Yehud. Although some Judeans may have perceived him as a 'potential' king, his performing functions as the governor invites to reconsider his governorship as the adaptation of a descendant of the royal family to the new situation that began with its uprooting from Judah.

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