Studia Antiqua

A Student Journal for the Study of the Ancient World

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of the Ancient World
Brigham Young University

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

This issue marks my first issue as sole editor of *Studia Antiqua*. I am deeply grateful for Alan Taylor Farnes, the previous editor, and all the work he did for the journal. I am also indebted to him for training me as his replacement editor. Alan has since moved on to graduate school, and I wish him all the best. I'm sure he will be successful in whatever he does.

This issue also coincides with the first ever Ancient Near Eastern Studies undergraduate essay contest. I am proud to have started the contest, and I expect it to continue annually for many more years to come. I was overwhelmed by the abundance of submissions to the contest, and the quality of the papers was excellent. It was a difficult decision for the contest judges to decide a winner, but the top three papers, published in this issue, are superb.

The winning essay came from David B. Ridge, an article he wrote about 2 Samuel 11 as an inverted betrothal journey narrative. His paper leads off this issue. The second place essay was written by Laura Lingmann Daly and discusses a double-seated house shrine believed by some to have housed Yahweh and his consort, Asherah. The third place essay was written by Joshua M. Matson; it discusses the remains of the opening of the mouth ceremony in the Hebrew Bible.

Following these three articles from the essay contest, we also have two other articles rounding out this issue. The first of these articles comes from professor Kerry Muhlestein and Bethany Jensen. Their piece compiles an exhaustive list of all the mummy portraits which can be connected to Fag el-Gamous, the site of the BYU excavation project. The final article of this issue comes from David M. Calabro, a PhD student at the University of Chicago. David's essay, an outgrowth of his dissertation research, presents ten way to interpret ritual hand gestures. Finally, Daniel Becerra, of Harvard Divinity School, reviews a recent book by Margaret Mitchell about the birth of Christian hermeneutics.

As always, I am deeply grateful to the academic advisors who spur this work onward. Dr. Dana M. Pike continually offers priceless insights and advice. His knowledge of the scholarly community and its issues is greatly needed to publish a work such as this. Also, once again, R. Devan Jensen and his crew of editors at the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University have been invaluable in helping me learn the ropes and teaching me the necessary technology. This issue would not have been possible without the help of Daniel Belnap, Shon D. Hopkin, Eric D. Huntsman, Dana M. Pike, John Thompson, and David Whitchurch for peer reviewing the submitted articles. Their time is always precious, and I am grateful to them for their willingness to assist this publication.

The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship has contributed generously to the publication of this journal, as have Ancient Near Eastern Studies and Classics. We wish to especially thank the Religious Studies Center, which provides the internship that makes it possible for us to dedicate

the time necessary to publish this journal. Finally, Joany O. Pinegar continues to provide invaluable support for the publication of this journal.

As a final note, all citations, formatting, and abbreviations in this journal follow the *SBL handbook of style*. For further information and a guide to the abbreviations, please consult the *SBL handbook*.

Brock M. Mason
Editor in Chief, *Studia Antiqua*

NOT QUITE AT THE WELL: 2 SAMUEL 11 AS AN INVERTED BETROTHAL JOURNEY NARRATIVE

DAVID B. RIDGE

David B. Ridge *is majoring in Ancient Near Eastern Studies with minors in linguistics and modern Hebrew. This paper took first place in the Ancient Near Eastern Studies undergraduate essay contest.*

Second Samuel 11 has elicited a great deal of discussion on its interpretation. The text contains a narrative account of events during the life and reign of King David that, according to the biblical record, directly resulted in the birth of the future monarch Solomon and had a significant impact on the course of the United Monarchy. Biblical scholars have employed a number of different methods to understand the narrative, such as contextual analysis,[1] source critical and genre studies,[2] and a number of studies that utilize literary and textual methodologies.[3]

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1. See Randall C. Bailey, *David in Love and War: The Pursuit of Power in 2 Samuel 10–12* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Structure, Theme, and Motif in the Succession History (2 Samuel 11–20; 1 Kings 1–2) and the History of Human Origins (Genesis 1–11)," in *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 102–19; Richard Gene Bowman, "The Crises of King David: Narrative Structures, Compositional Technique, and the Interpretation of II Samuel 8:15–20:26" (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1981); James W. Flanagan, "Court History or Succession Document? A Study of 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2," *JBL* 91 (1972): 172–81; "Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, "The Difficulty of Ruling Well: King David of Israel" in *Literary Critical Studies of Biblical Texts* (Semeia 8; Missoula, Mont.: University of Montana, 1977), 15–33; Jared J. Jackson, "David's Throne: Patterns in the Succession Story," *CJT* 11 (1965): 183–95; R.N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Samuel 9–20; 1 Kings 1 and 2* (London: SCM Press, 1968); Hans J. L. Jensen, "Desire, Rivalry and Collective Violence in the 'Succession Narrative,'" *JSOT* 55 (1992): 39–59; Leo G. Perdue, "'Is There Anyone Left of the House of Saul . . . ?' Ambiguity and the Characterization of David in the Succession Narrative," *JSOT* 30 (1984): 67–84; George P. Ridout, "Prose Compositional Techniques in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam. 7, 9–20; 1 Kings 1–2)" (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1971).

2. See R. A. Carlson, *David, the Chosen King,* trans. Eric J. Sharpe and Stanley Rudman (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964); D. M. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* (JSOT Supplement Series 6; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982).

3. Alexander Izuchuwuku Abasili, "Was It Rape? The David and Bathsheba Pericope Re-examined," *VT* 61 (2011): 1–15; Mieke Bal, "De-Disciplining the Eye." *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1990): 506–31; J. Chankin-Gould, D'Ror, Derek Hutchinson, David Hilton Jackson, Tyler

In the scholarly community's efforts to interpret this text, no one has focused on the literary relationship between 2 Sam 11 and the betrothal scenes of Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, and Moses and Zipporah found in Gen 24:10–61, Gen 29:1–20 and Exod 2:15b–21. Scholars have regularly noted the structural similarity between these three passages, referring to the similarity as the "at the well" scene,[4] the betrothal type-scene,[5] and the betrothal journey narrative.[6] This study will outline the common structure of these three betrothal journey narratives by examining previous work on the subject and by resolving disagreements through a close analysis of the texts. Then it will show that an inverted form of this narrative structure is present in 2 Sam 11.

This inversion of the narrative structure contrasts David's actions with those of Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Whereas in the typical manifestations of the narrative the positive characteristics of the male characters such as their adherence to rules of hospitality and their willingness to be led by divine will are stressed, the structural inversion in 2 Sam 11 emphasizes David's failure to provide hospitality and his attempt to control the situation and "take" something that is not his to take, contrary to divine will. The literary relationship of the texts and the step-by-step progression of the narrative structural schema emphasize David's errors repeatedly throughout the progression of the

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D. Mayfield, Leah Rediger Schulte, Tammi J. Schneider, and E. Winkelman. "The Sanctified 'Adulteress' and Her Circumstantial Clause: Bathsheba's Bath and Self-Consecration in 2 Samuel 11," *JSOT* 32 (2008): 339–352; Carole Fontaine; "The Bearing of Wisdom on the Shape of 2 Samuel 11–12 and 1 Kings 3," *JSOT* 34 (1986): 61–77; Moshe Garsiel, "The Story of David and Bathsheba: A Different Approach," *CBQ* 55 (1993): 244–62; Steven L. McKenzie "Why Did David Stay Home? An Exegetical Study of 2 Samuel 11:1," in *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson* (ed. K. L. Noll and Brooks Schramm; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 149–58; George G. Nicol, "The Alleged Rape of Bathsheba: Some Observations on Ambiguity in Biblical Narrative," *JSOT* 73 (1997): 43–54; Hélène Nutkowicz "Propos autour de la mort d'un enfant: 2 Samuel XI, 2-XIII, 24," *VT* 54 (2004): 104–18; Joel Rosenberg, "The Institutional Matrix of Treachery in 2 Samuel 11" in *Narrative Research on the Hebrew Bible (*ed. George W. Coats and Anne M. Solomon; Semeia 46; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1989), 103–16; Wolfgang Roth, "You Are the Man! Structural Interaction in 2 Samuel 10–12," in *Literary Critical Studies of Biblical Texts* (Semeia 8; Missoula, Mont.: University of Montana, 1977), 1–13; David Wright, "David Autem Remansit in Hierusalem: Felix Coniunctio!" in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 215–30; Gale A Yee, "Fraught with Background: Literary Ambiguity in II Samuel 11," *Int* 42 (1988): 240–53.

4. See Robert C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Semeia 3; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 41–43.

5. Robert Alter, "Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention," *Critical Inquiry* 5 (1978): 355–68.

6. Michael W. Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives," *CBQ* 70 (2008): 505–23. The term "betrothal journey narrative" will be used throughout this paper.

narrative and contrast his negative characterization with the positive portrayal of the Israelite heroes of the other texts.

At the Well

In order to assess 2 Sam 11 as an inverted betrothal journey narrative, it is necessary to have an accurate outline of the elements that constitute the narrative type. To create such an outline, the plot elements suggested in previous studies will be examined and modified to more closely align with the texts themselves. There is a measure of difficulty in establishing parameters for such a schema, particularly because, as Alter and others have argued, variations within the schema can be intentionally employed to communicate something to the audience.[7] It is natural to find some discrepancies between individual accounts. This analysis will include within the schema only those plot elements that that are apparent in a close reading of a majority of the narrative texts identified as containing the schema, those that minimize the textual space between elements within the schema, and elements whose order within the context of the schema are consistent in the majority (two of the three) of the texts. This process will be demonstrated as it is applied below.

In his 1976 monograph *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative*, Robert C. Culley outlines the plot of Gen 24:10–33, Gen 29:1–14, and Exod 2:15–21 and develops an outline composed of the elements common to all three scenes.[8] Culley calls the structure "at the well," as each story contains a meeting at a well which leads to a marriage. His study indicates seven elements common to the three narratives:

1. The religious hero (or representative) enters a distant, foreign land.
2. He stops at a well.
3. The girl(s) come(s) to the well.
4. He does something for the girl(s).
5. The girl(s) return(s) home and report(s) what happened.
6. The stranger is brought to the household of the girl(s).
7. Subsequently, it is reported that a marriage occurs between the stranger at the well (or the person for whom he is acting) and the girl (or one of the girls) at the well.[9]

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7. Alter, "Biblical Type-Scenes," 355–68.
8. Culley, *Hebrew Narrative*, 41–43.
9. Ibid., 42–43.

Culley does not discuss 2 Sam 11. Other than the introductory statement that "the parallels to be used are well known, and fairly few in number,"[10] Culley does not indicate why he chose to include these three stories and not others in his study. He does mention, however, that his work on structural patterns is meant to show the possibility of an oral background for these and other biblical narratives. With this as his main purpose, the examination of inverted narratives is not necessary.

The elements of Culley's schema can be found in the following passages: entering into a foreign land (Gen 24:10; Gen 29:1; Exod 2:15b), stopping at the well (Gen 24:11; Gen 29:2; Gen 2:15b), the girl(s) come(s) to the well (Gen 24:15; Gen 29:6, 9; Exod 2:16), the stranger does something for the girl(s) (Gen 24:22; Gen 29:10; Exod 2:17), the girl(s) return(s) home and report(s) what has happened (Gen 24:28; Gen 29:12; Exod 2:18–19), the stranger is brought to the house of the girl(s) (Gen 24:31–32; Gen 29:13; Exod 2:20–21), and a marriage is reported (Gen 24:67; Gen 29:28; Exod 2:21).

Several years after Culley's work was published, Robert Alter wrote an article entitled "Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention" which acknowledges the value of Culley's observations of common structure but interprets their presence differently.[11] Whereas Culley sees evidence for an oral background to the text, Alter finds a purposefully deployed literary convention which he refers to as a type-scene.[12] According to Alter, a type-scene is a literary convention in which certain types of narrative episodes, such as the birth of a hero, a dying testament, or an initiatory trial, were dependent upon the "manipulation of a fixed constellation of a predetermined set of motifs."[13] Alter suggests that "both [the author] and his audience were aware that the scene had to unfold in particular circumstances, according to a fixed order. If some of those circumstances were altered or suppressed, or if the scene were actually omitted, that communicated something to the audience."[14] Alter dem-

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10. Ibid., 33.

11. Alter, "Biblical Type-Scenes," 355–68. This article was printed with some modifications as the third chapter of Alter's book. See Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 55–78.

12. Alter stated clearly that he was borrowing the concept of a type-scene from scholarship on the ancient Greek literature associated with Homer, but with "a couple of major modifications." See Alter, "Biblical Type-Scenes," 358.

13. Alter, "Biblical Type-Scenes," 359.

14. Ibid. Since Alter, a number of works identifying type-scenes and their patterns in biblical and, in some cases, non-biblical ancient Near Eastern literature have been published. See James Williams, "The Beautiful and the Barren: Conventions in Biblical Type-Scenes," *JSOT* 17 (1980): 107–19; Esther Fuchs, "Structure and Patriarchal Functions in the Biblical Betrothal Type-Scene: Some Preliminary Notes," *JFSR* 3 (1987):7–13; Robert H. O'Connell, "Proverbs 7:16–17: A Case of Fatal Deception in a 'Woman and the Window'

onstrates his thesis in the same three "at the well" narratives Culley examines and identifies five elements which he argues define the narrative structure:

1. The future bridegroom or his surrogate journeys to a foreign land.

2. There he encounters a girl—the term 'na'arah' invariably occurs unless the maiden is identified as so-and-so's daughter—or girls at a well.

3. Someone, either the man or the girl, then draws water from the well.

4. Afterward, the girl or girls rush to bring home the news of the stranger's arrival. The verbs "hurry" and "run" are given recurrent emphasis.

5. Finally, a betrothal is concluded between the stranger and the girl, in the majority of instances, only after he has been invited to a meal.[15]

Alter also does not discuss 2 Sam 11, nor does he discuss the presence of the narrative structure in any texts outside of the three treated by Culley. His article is in part a direct response and correction of several of Culley's assertions, and it is possible that Alter simply analyzes these three texts because Culley does the same. Alter's structure combines several elements that Culley separates (Alter has one element, an encounter at a well, whereas Culley has two—the hero stopping at a well and the girl or girls approaching).

More significantly, Alter's structure specifically indicates the drawing of water as a feature of the narrative structure whereas Culley's outline only specifies the hero doing something for the girl or girls. A close reading reveals that an act of drawing water, by the stranger or by the girl, is indeed specifically included in each text (Gen 24:16, 20; Gen 29:10; Exod 2:17). The drawing of water as an act of hospitality is an important part of the overall structure. One of the parties is hospitably assisting the other by drawing the water and either offering the other a drink or watering their livestock.

Culley's final element is the reporting of an actual marriage, while Alter's element includes a betrothal. When examining the texts, the betrothal element appears in much greater proximity to the rest of the elements in the three narratives[16] than does the reporting of the marriage. In each of the narratives, the reporting of the marriage occurs only much later in the text, after a number of

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Type-scene," *VT* (1991): 235–41; Brian Britt, "Prophetic Concealment in a Biblical Type Scene," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 37–58; Min Suc Kee, "The Heavenly Council and Its Type-scene," *JSOT* 31 (2007): 259–73; Jonathan Kruschwitz, "The Type-Scene Connection between Genesis 38 and the Joseph Story," *JSOT* 36 (2012): 383–410; George Savran, "Theophany as Type Scene," *Prooftexts* 23 (2003): 119–49; Robert Alter, "How Conventions Help Us Read: The Case of the Bible's Annunciation Type-Scene," *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 115–30.

15. Alter, "Biblical Type-Scenes," 359.

16. In Gen 24, the betrothal element appears immediately following the penultimate element, the girl returning home (Gen 24:28–30), separated only by one verse (29) or ten

other events transpire which are not related to the overall narrative structure.[17] Further, Alter omits the element in which the stranger is brought to the house of the girl(s). A close examination of the texts reveals that there is an invitation but no word that can be translated 'to bring' in Gen 24 and that there is only a suggestion of an invitation in Exod 2. Since the element is only present in one of the three narratives, it will not be included in the narrative structural schema. Another significant difference of Alter's work is that key-words are included as part of the common structure (he notes the presence of נערה, רץ, and מהר), where Culley deals only with plot elements. The significance of key-words as a part of the narrative structure will be explored further at the end of this section.

In 1984 Kenneth T. Aitken published an article primarily devoted to establishing the development of the tradition of Gen 24.[18] A portion of his analysis deals with the pattern shared by Gen 24, Gen 29:1–14, and Exod 2:15b–21 in which he identifies nine elements:

1. The protagonist travels to a distant land.
2. He waits by a well.
3. A girl(s) approaches the well.
4. They encounter one another at the well.
5. The identity of the girl is revealed to the protagonist.
6. The girl(s) return(s) home and tell(s) what happened.
7. The householder comes (sends back the girls) to the well.
8. The protagonist is brought to the some of the girl(s).
9. A marriage ensues.

Like Culley and Alter, Aitken does not discuss 2 Sam 11. As to why he analyzes only these three texts, Aitken says only that others have discerned certain similarities in these texts. Aitken's narrative structure schema splits the arrival of the male, the arrival of the female, and the encounter at the well into three separate elements, where Culley has two and Alter only one. A close reading of the text reveals that in each of the three narratives, the male does

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separate words. In Gen 29 and Exod 2 there is no break whatsoever between the girl rushing home and the beginning of the betrothal element (Gen 29:12–13; Gen 2:18–19).

17. In Gen 24 there is a textual space of 24 verses (33–66) or 456 words between Culley's sixth element (stranger brought to the house) and the final reporting of marriage. In Genesis 29 there is a space of 14 verses (14–27) or 159 separate words. In Exodus 2 there is no space; the reporting of the marriage takes place immediately following the bringing of the stranger (Moses) to the house.

18. Kenneth T. Aitken, "The Wooing of Rebekah: A Study in the Development of the Tradition," *JSOT* 30 (1984): 3–23.

wait at the well for some period of time and in fact normally participates in some sort of activity prior to ever meeting the girl or girls (in Gen 24:11–14 the servant of Abraham prays for divine assistance in identifying the correct bride; in Gen 29:4–8 Jacob speaks with shepherds gathered at the well; in Exod 2:15b Moses simply sits down by the well). Further, in each of the three narratives the approach of the female is specifically mentioned separately from the encounter itself (Gen 24:15–16; Gen 29:6, 9; Exod 2:16), justifying the division into three separate plot elements.

Aitken also adds two elements not identified by Culley or Alter. In two of the narratives the identity of the girl is revealed to the protagonist (Gen 24:23; Gen 29:6; Aitken notes that this element is absent in Exod 2).[19] Aitken's addition, however, is not in line with the current data because its presence within the narrative structure varies between the two scenes. In Gen 24, the identity of Rebekah is not revealed to Abraham's servant until he inquires who she is and she answers. This occurs after her approach, their encounter, and her drawing of water for him, each of these actions corresponding to an element of the narrative structure. In Gen 29, Jacob learns Rachel's identity from the shepherds when she approaches, before their encounter and before his drawing of water. Elements of the narrative structure can vary in their precise position within the text, but since this element occurs only in two narratives, it would be implausible to speculate on its proper location or whether it is an actual part of the schema at all. For this reason, it will not be included within the narrative structural schema used in this study.

Aitken's second addition to the narrative structure is an element in which the householder or the girl(s) come(s) back to the well. This is present in two of the narratives (Gen 24:30; Gen 29:13) and strongly implied in the third (Reuel instructs his daughters to invite the man to eat in Exod 2:20). The principles of hospitality are manifest in this feature in the proper treatment of a guest or stranger. Like the element regarding the drawing of water, this feature emphasizes the importance of proper hospitality in the betrothal journey narrative.

The most recent study to address the shared structural elements of these three texts is that of Michael W. Martin in 2008.[20] Quoting Alter extensively, Martin posits the existence of a betrothal type-scene called the "Betrothal Journey Narrative," consisting of twelve elements:

1. The groom-to-be travels to a foreign country, either in flight from or commissioned by his kin.

2. He meets a young woman or young women at a well.

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19. Aitken, "The Wooing of Rebekah," 21.
20. Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives," 505–23.

3. Someone draws water.

4. A gift is given or a service is performed that ingratiates the suitor with the woman and/or her family.

5. The suitor reveals his identity.

6. The young woman/women rush home with news of his arrival.

7. Someone from the family returns to greet and/or invite the suitor.

8. A betrothal is arranged, usually in connection with a meal.

9. The suitor resides with his bride's kin, sometimes begetting children.

10. The suitor returns, usually commissioned by the bride's kin.

11. The suitor is received by his kin at the end of his journey.

12. The suitor resides with his kin, sometimes begetting children.[21]

Martin lays out the presence of the twelve elements of this narrative structure not only in the three narratives treated originally by Culley, but also in the book of Ruth, the narrative of Saul in Zuph (1 Sam 9:1–10:16), the book of Tobit, and the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well in the Gospel of John (John 2:1–4:54).[22]

Martin's schema contains many of the elements previously identified, but he adds several new elements and modifies others. Martin's first element involves traveling to a foreign land, but he adds that this journey is either in flight from or commissioned by his kin. Abraham's servant is commissioned by Abraham to find a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:2–9), Jacob is sent on his journey by Isaac to find a wife for himself, although this detail is much earlier in the text (Gen 28:1–5), and Moses flees Egypt from both his adopted brother and his true kin, the Hebrews (Exod 2:14–15a). This condition of the journey element is found in all three narratives. In two of the narratives it minimizes the textual space between the other elements. It will be included within the narrative structural schema of this study.[23] Martin also includes an element containing a gift or service that ingratiates the suitor with the woman or her family. This is found in all three narrative texts (Abraham's servant gives Rebekah gifts in Gen 24:22; Jacob moves the stone which covers the well in Gen 29:10a; Moses helps the daughters of Reuel when the shepherds drive them away in

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21. Ibid., 508–9.

22. For the purposes of this study, only the three original narratives (Genesis 24, Genesis 29 and Exodus 2) and the surrounding text will be analyzed.

23. In Gen 24 and Exodus 2, the condition relating to the commission or flight from kin is found immediately preceding the journey itself. In the narrative of Gen 29 the details on the commission occur much earlier, there is a textual space of seventeen verses (28:6–22) and 252 separate words exists between the commission and the journey element itself, however, since this occurs in only one of the narratives the variation can be viewed as purposeful.

Exod 2:2:17b). Its position within the context of the overall schema is constant in two of the narratives (it occurs after the meeting or encounter and before the drawing of water in Gen 29 and Exod 2), which suggests it is a legitimate part of the narrative structure. Martin also adds an element in which the suitor reveals his identity: Abraham's servant reveals his identity in a prayer uttered within Rebekah's presence (Gen 24:27) and Jacob reveals his identity as a kinsman in a scene of joy (Gen 29:11–12a). This revelation of identity, however, is entirely absent from Exod 2. Martin states that this variation of the narrative structural schema is "a deliberate omission, serving as commentary on the larger problem that has arisen in the story of the exodus, the failure of Moses' own people to recognize him as one of their own and therefore as their deliverer."[24] Because this element is present in the other two narrative texts it will be included.

Martin identifies four additional elements at the end of the narrative structural schema. In these features the suitor resides with his bride's kin, sometimes begetting children (Gen 24:54b; Gen 29:14–30:24; Exod 2:21–22); the suitor then returns, usually commissioned by the bride's kin (Gen 24:56–61; Gen 30:25–31:55; Exod 4:18–26); the suitor is received by his kin at the end of his journey (Gen 24:62–66; Gen 33:1–16; Exod 4:27); then the suitor resides with his kin, sometimes begetting children (Gen 24:67; Gen 33:17–18; Exod 4:28–31). In the narrative of Abraham's servant and Rebekah, there is no textual space between the schema and these elements. In the narrative of Jacob and Rachel and that of Moses and Zipporah, there is significant textual space between these elements and the rest of the narrative structure. [25] Nonetheless, since there is enough textual continuity connecting the elements, they will be included within the narrative structural schema of this study.

In their studies, Culley, Aitken, and Martin include narrative plot elements in their discussion of the similarities between these three texts. Alter also includes certain key words which, he argued, contributed to the overall type-scene. In two of the three narratives, the physical appearance of the woman is described with some variant of the phrase טובת מראה מאד. Rebekah is described at the moment of her approach to the well as טבת מראה מאד (Gen

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24. Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives," 520.

25. In Exodus, the textual space between Martin's element of the suitor's residing with his bride's family and the element of the suitor's return by his kin is 42 verses (Exod 2:23–4:17) and 690 separate words. But there is no space between these elements in the narrative of Jacob and Rachel or in the narrative of Abraham's servant and Rebekah. Similarly, there is a large textual space between the element of the suitors return and the element of the suitor's reception in the narrative of Jacob and Rachel, 33 verses and 453 separate words, but there is no textual space between the same elements in Exodus.

24:16), and the same root is used with the addition of יפה to describe Rachel (Gen 29:17).[26] Further, Alter points out the supposed significance of the identification of the woman in which "the term 'na'arah' invariably occurs unless the maiden is identified as so-and-so's daughter."[27] The term "na'arah" occurs in only one of the three texts (the description of Rebekah in Gen 24:16), and so will not be included as part of the narrative structural schema of this study. The identification of the girl as someone's daughter occurs in the identification of Rebekah as the daughter of Bethuel (Gen 24:15), the identification of Rachel as the daughter of Laban (Gen 29:5–6, 10), and the identification of Zipporah as a daughter of the priest of Midian (Exod 2:16). Alter also identifies two key-words, מהר "hurry" and רץ "run," which occur when the girl or girls go home to tell of the strangers arrival and are seen with Rebekah (מהר in Gen 24:18, 20 and רץ in 24:28), with Rachel (רץ in Gen 29:12), and with the daughters of Reuel (מהר in Exod 2:18).

Several other key-words not discussed by Alter can be included in the schema. Another key-word is שקה "to draw." This key-word occurs within the element where water is drawn to care for animals in all three narratives (Gen 24:18; Gen 29:10; Exod 2:17). The root אכל "to eat" appears when Abraham's servant eats with Rebekah's family (Gen 24:33) and when Reuel tells his daughters to invite Moses back for a meal (Exod 2:20). The root שתה "to drink" appears when Rebekah gives the servant of Abraham water to drink (Gen 24:18) and for the משתה "feast" that is prepared for Jacob before his first wedding (Gen 29:22). Each time this root appears it is in a portion of the text when people are preparing for a betrothal or marriage. In addition, the verb הרה "to conceive" describes the conception and pregnancy of Rebekah (Gen 24:21), Leah (four times in Gen 29:32–35), Bilhah (twice in Gen 30:5, 7), and finally Rachel (Gen 30:23). That הרה describes the conceptions of Leah and Bilhah before that of Rachel, who as the girl at the well would be the one expected to conceive according to the conventions of the narrative structural schema, emphasizes Rachel's infertility.

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26. The key words are suppressed in the scene of Moses and Zipporah. This is done to diminish the personal involvement and feeling of Moses, which reinforces what Alter pointed out was the tendency to hold "Moses the man and his personal involvement at a distance." The suppression also reinforces the lack of interest in Zipporah in the narrative in general. Alter noted that Zipporah's "independent character and her relationship with Moses will play no significant role in the subsequent narrative." On both points, see Alter, "Biblical Type-Scenes," 364. George W. Coats also points out that the narrative focuses more on the development of a relationship between Moses and his father-in-law than Moses and his wife. See George W. Coats, *Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God* (JSOTSup 57; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 49–53.

27. Alter, "Biblical Type-Scenes," 359.

This study's evaluation of the plot elements and key-words identified both in previous discussions and its own research suggests the following elements for the narrative structural schema of the betrothal journey narrative:

1. The groom-to-be travels to a foreign country, either in flight from or commissioned by his kin.

2. He waits by a well, normally participating in some sort of activity.

3. A girl (or girls) approaches the well; her physical appearance will be described using some form of the key phrase טובת מראה מאד.

4. They encounter one another at the well; the maiden is identified as so-and-so's daughter.

5. Someone, either the man or the girl, then draws water from the well.

6. A gift is given or a service is performed that ingratiates the suitor with the woman or her family. The key-word שקה is used.

7. The suitor reveals his identity.

8. Afterward the girl or girls rush home to bring the news of the stranger's arrival. The verbs מהר "hurry" and רץ "run" are given recurrent emphasis.

9. Someone from the family returns to greet and/or invite the suitor.

10. A betrothal is concluded between the stranger and the girl, in the majority of instances, only after he has been invited to a meal. The description of the meal may include the roots אכל 'to eat' and שתה 'to drink.'

11. The suitor resides with his bride's kin, sometimes begetting children. The verb הרה often appears around or following this element.

12. The suitor returns, usually commissioned by the bride's kin.

13. The suitor is received by his kin at the end of his journey.

14. The suitor resides with his kin, sometimes begetting children.

The Inverted Narrative Structural Schema in 2 Sam 11

This study will demonstrate that an inverted form of this narrative structural schema exists within 2 Sam 11. This phenomenon is not without precedent in the Hebrew Bible. Uwe F.W. Bauer discusses the possibility that "already existing literary genres were transformed in order to generate a new literary product, resulting in a generic inversion."[28] Bauer shows in her article how three of the six typical elements of the Hebrew Bible "spy story" identi-

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28. Uwe F.W. Bauer, "Judges 18 as an Anti-Spy Story in the Context of an Anti-Conquest Story: The Creative Usage of Literary Genres," *JSOT* 88 (2000): 37–47. For a discussion on the possibility of an anti-type of hospitality related to Genesis 19 in Judges 19, see Stuart Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World," *JSOT* 29 (1984): 37–59; and for a discussion on the possibility of an anti-type of Abraham's

fied by Siegfried Wagner[29] are used atypically in Judg 18. In order to attain a correct understanding of Judg 18, according to Bauer, the potential for the creation of an anti-story must be recognized. Bauer's anti-story is a narrative that invokes plot elements and circumstances typical of a certain story type where crucial features of the story are changed giving the story an inverted meaning. This section of the study will utilize a technique similar to Bauer's by searching 2 Sam 11 for atypical manifestations of the elements of the betrothal journey narrative identified above. By showing that a majority of the elements and key-words are present in an atypical or inverted manner or are deliberately suppressed as part of the text's communication to the audience, this study will argue that 2 Sam 11 is an anti-betrothal story or an inverted betrothal journey narrative.

Inversion of Elements

The meaning of the first few lines in 2 Sam 11 is much debated. It is not clear whether the temporal clause ויהי לתשובת השנה לעת צאת המלאכים in 11:1 should be understood as a remark on the typical practice of kings going out to war at a certain time period or simply stating that a year had passed since the marshaling of the Aramean kings in 2 Sam 10.[30] The issue is further complicated by the question of which reading, המלכים or המלאכים ought to be preferred.[31] These semantic issues will not be treated in this study, because they are not necessary for the purposes of identifying elements of the narrative structural schema. These opening lines are the first step in structural inversion. They recall the idea of a journey, which is the opening element of the betrothal journey narrative. But it is significant that David does not go on a journey as the narrative structural schema would suggest; instead, it is emphasized that David did not go anywhere: ודוד יושב בירושלם. This inversion is further

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career in Genesis 14 in Isaiah 41, see Gwilym H. Jones, "Abraham and Cyrus: Type and Anti-Type?" *VT* 22 (1972): 304–19.

29. Siegfried Wagner, "Die Kundschaftergesichten im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 76 (1964): 255–69.

30. See Garsiel, "The Story of David and Bathsheba: A Different Approach," 244–62; McKenzie, "Why Did David Stay Home: An Exegetical Study of 2 Samuel 11:1," in Noll and Schramm, *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete*, 149–58. McKenzie is citing P. Kyle McCarter, who summarizes the varying interpretations and states that the evidence best fits the reading indicating it had been a year since the Aramean kings had marched out to the aid of the Ammonites. See P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel* (AB 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 279, 284–85.

31. For more on this, see J. P. Fokkelman, *King David* (Vol 1 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 50. See also Joel Rosenberg, "The Institutional Matrix of Treachery," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 103–16.

stressed by the text when it describes others who journeyed at this time, including Joab and כל־ישראל.

In typical betrothal narratives, the male waits by a well, normally participating in some sort of activity. David arises and goes out onto his roof and "paces back and forth" יתהלך (11:2). He is not at a well. The lack of the well and its replacement with another water feature is part of the inversion as will be shown. David is pacing, an activity that could be associated with restlessness or waiting. When the female approaches, according to the next element, it is not done intentionally. Rather it is the image of the woman, bathing, that captures the gaze of David. He finds himself voyeuristically gazing upon an unnamed woman in a moment of intimacy, and the image of a well is replaced with a different water source, a bath.

The encounter between the male and female appears, but it is not the familiar meeting at a well that includes the pleasant hospitality of one party drawing water for another, the element typical of betrothal narratives. This encounter is not a familiar meeting at a well that includes the pleasant hospitality of one party drawing water for another as the narrative structural normally includes. This scene contains the jarring picture of a king invading the privacy of one of his subjects using water in the private setting of a bath, a marked disruption of hospitality on David's part.[32] Water is drawn, but not to serve the other party or to feed flocks. The woman is bathing herself, and if she is indeed washing after her menstrual period, then, as J. Cheryl Exum suggests, "We can guess where she is touching."[33] The text depicts the woman in an intimate and normally private act, and David's interruption of that privacy is an act of inhospitality and a significant departure from the expected drawing of water as a gesture of hospitality, continuing the inversion of the narrative structural schema.

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32. Some scholars contend that Bathsheba was on the roof as part of an attempt to seduce David or otherwise was complicit in the affair. For proponents of this view see Bailey, *David in Love and War*, 83–88; Abasili, "Was It Rape? The David and Bathsheba Pericope Re-Examined," 1–15; Nicol, "The Alleged Rape of Bathsheba," 43–54. For those who support the idea that the intercourse was rape or Bathsheba was not complicit in the affair, see Richard M. Davidson, "Did King David Rape Bathsheba?: A Case Study in Narrative Theology," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17 (2006):81–95; Garsiel, "The Story of David and Bathsheba," 244–62; K. L. Noll, *The Faces of David* (JSOTSup 242; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 59; Trevor Dennis, *Sarah Laughed: Women's Voices in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abdingon Press, 1994), 140–55; J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1993), 170–76.

33. Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 175.

In other manifestations of the betrothal journey narrative the suitor reveals his identity after conversing with the female.[34] David, on the other hand, reveals his identity in a completely different manner. He cannot do so as part of a normal interaction or exchange of hospitality because no such thing has taken place. The woman is not aware of any interaction at all. She has not seen nor talked with David. Instead, the revelation of identity must occur in some other way. David sends messengers who bring Bathsheba to the palace. David reveals his identity to Bathsheba (11:4).[35] But this is not one member of a conversation revealing his identity to the other. Instead, we have a voyeur revealing his identity and desires to the object of his gaze. Furthermore, whereas the meeting normally takes place incidentally, this meeting is forced by David. The motif of David forcing his will or his "taking" in this pericope is a major part of the negative characterization of David's actions in the text and will be more directly emphasized by Nathan in his rebuke of David in 2 Sam 12.[36] The contrast of David's taking with the passive obedience of the Israelite patriarchs and Moses further emphasizes David's inappropriate behavior.

After David reveals his identity to Bathsheba, the text states that ותבוא אליו וישכב עמה (11:4). Scholars have disputed whether this means that Bathsheba was the victim of forcible rape or that the intercourse was consensual.[37] This is followed by the simple clause ותשב אל־ביתה "and she returned to her house" (11:4). Here is what Alter would call the deliberate suppression of an element. There is no rushing home, no appearance of the key-words מהר "hurry" nor רץ "run," that appear in the other three narratives.[38] For what cause does Bathsheba have to run home? This is not a young woman rushing to her guardian to tell of a meeting with an interesting stranger who turns out to be a prospective husband. This is a married woman returning to her home after either willfully committing adultery or being raped. Her husband is not home because he is at war. There is no one to tell about the meeting even if Bathsheba has some motivation to do so. This element of the schema is normally associated with

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34. This element is suppressed in the Exodus narrative because it fits with the idea that Moses is not identified by his own people, as their deliverer. See Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives," 512–14.

35. The prior relationship between David and Bathsheba is not explicitly indicated in the text. The revelation of identity here is not necessarily the revelation of a stranger to another, but rather the revelation of David as an individual who has been watching the woman; the revelation that she has had an "encounter" with someone though she was unaware.

36. David Janzen, "The Condemnation of David's 'Taking' in 2 Samuel 12:1–14," *JBL* 131 (2012): 209–20.

37. See note 28.

38. Alter, "Biblical Type-Scenes," 359.

excitement and a desire to share what has transpired. In 2 Sam 11 both are absent. Bathsheba is conspicuously silent and the typical structure is inverted.

At this point, the expected element of the schema is the return of a family member to speak to the suitor. Sometimes the girl or girls are instructed by the father to return, as in Exod 2, but more often the father or male family member comes himself. In this narrative, it is not Bathsheba's father who comes to greet a potential suitor for his daughter, but Bathsheba's husband, summoned from the front lines of war against the Ammonites, that returns to Jerusalem to speak with David (11:7). This is another reminder of the impropriety of David's encounter and relationship with Bathsheba. The presence of Bathsheba's husband underlines that the woman is already married. Uriah comes not because he has heard about a suitor or an act of hospitality, but rather because he is summoned by David. The cause of the summons is ostensibly to report on the war, but more realistically to cover up David's illicit sexual relations by obscuring the parentage of Bathsheba's unborn child. That David summons Uriah contrasts with the typical voluntary return of the girl or family member, further emphasizing that David is forcing the situation and "taking," rather than accepting what God is willing to give him.

In the typical texts, the next element of the narrative structural schema is the arrangement of a betrothal between the woman and the male suitor accompanied by a meal. In 2 Sam 11, it is David who seeks to arrange for Uriah to have sexual intercourse with his wife, a false shadow of a betrothal, in order to remove suspicion about the parentage of the child. At first, David simply tells Uriah to רד לביתך ורחץ רגליך (11:8). The phrase רחץ רגליך can be seen as a euphemism for sexual intercourse. It also signifies hospitality, as in the story of Lot extending hospitality to the messengers in Gen 19:2 by telling them to spend the night and ורחצו רגליכם. David does not offer Uriah hospitality at his own house, but he inhospitably expects Uriah to take care of himself.

As noted earlier, hospitality is a prevalent idea within betrothal journey narratives. The drawing of water found in each scene contains a strong idea of hospitality towards an unknown stranger. Genesis 24:32 emphasizes this further when Laban provides for Abraham's servant to wash his feet. David's lack of hospitality first in his intrusion upon Bathsheba's privacy and throughout the narrative is emphasized by his failure to show hospitality to Uriah. Even in the narrative structural element regarding the gift, in which David sends a משאת to Uriah,[39] David is not motivated by hospitality but by an attempt to manipulate Uriah, signifying a lack of hospitality (11:8). The purpose of

39. The appearance of the element is later than might be expected, but Martin noted that this element seems to be more flexible in its appearance. It varied in position in the

David's gift is not to help the woman or her family as in the case of Jacob open-
ing the well for Rachel or Moses driving off the shepherds on behalf of the
daughters of Reuel, nor is it a response to hospitality such as the gift of jewelry
to Rebekah from Abraham's servant. David's "hospitality" is a part of his plot
to cover up his actions by manipulating Uriah into having sex with Bathsheba.

In the next narrative structural element, the suitor resides with his bride's
kin. Abraham's servant stays in the house of Laban for one night before re-
turning to his master with Rebekah in the morning (Gen 24:54); Jacob served
and lived with Laban for fourteen years and a longer unspecified time (Gen
29–30); and Moses resides with Reuel (Exodus 2:21). This element is inverted
when Uriah does not go down to his own house as David instructed; he sleeps
at the palace, in David's house וישכב אוריה פתח בית המלך את כל־עבדי אדניו, for three
nights (11:9–13). Instead of the prospective groom, David, staying in the home
of his bride's family, a family member of the bride, her husband Uriah, resides
in the home of the prospective groom, David's palace.

Betrothal type-scenes normally describe the suitor, having completed the
betrothal, returning to the place where he resided before his journey and being
received there by his kin. In this text it is not the suitor, David, but the fam-
ily member who returns to where he resided before his journey when Uriah
is ordered to return to the battlefront. Uriah is commissioned to return by
the suitor, David, in order to carry a letter that gives instructions for his own
death. At the end of his journey, Uriah is received by Joab when he delivers
the letter (11:14–15). There is no mention of a kinship relationship between
Joab and Uriah, but both were high-ranking officers in the military of David's
kingdom (see Uriah's inclusion on a list of David's mighty men in 2 Sam 23:39
and 1 Chr 11:41) and may have known each other. P. Kyle McCarter has noted
that 4QSamᵃ adds that Uriah the Hittite is "Joab's weapon-bearer." This read-
ing was known to Josephus and, if accepted, would strengthen the inversion
of this element.[40]

After Uriah's death, David takes Bathsheba as a wife and she bears him a
son (11:27). This narrative structural element is inverted by the text's obtrusive
statement, in which the marriage and family of David and Bathsheba are cast
in a negative light, "The thing which David had done was unpleasant in the
eyes of the LORD (11:27)."

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narratives he examined, although he suggests that this element and the drawing of water are
linked, which is not the case here. See Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives," 508.

    40. See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 279.

Presence of Key-words

The first key-word of the betrothal journey narrative to appear in 2 Sam 11 is the term מראה טבת, which describes the beauty of the woman. The key-word appears in the narrative of David and Bathsheba to describe the woman when first seen by David, טובת מראה מאד. Whereas in the other narratives this word is given after the identification and description of the woman, in 2 Sam 11 it occurs as soon as David sees her bathing. Bathsheba's beauty is her first characteristic described, as opposed to Rebekah and Rachel who were first identified as kinswomen and therefore an appropriate wife for the suitors. This characterization emphasizes that it is lust and not a more appropriate factor which attracts David to her.

The key-word שקה is suppressed completely in this narrative. שקה is a marker of the hospitality typically shown by the male, female, and the female's family; its absence in this narrative underscores the lack of hospitality shown by David and his inability to force hospitality as he has forced so many other things in this text. In response to the query regarding the identity of the woman, it is stated: "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (11:4). Whether this utterance was spoken by David or someone else, it is reflective of a key-word of the narrative structural schema identified by Alter in which the woman is identified as someone's daughter. Bathsheba is identified not only as the daughter of Eliam, but also as the wife of Uriah the Hittite. The convention of identifying a woman by her nearest male relative here further inverts the scene. This is not an unmarried woman suitable for courtship and betrothal as in other scenes. Bathsheba is married, and this will lead to great consequences for David and his kingdom.

Another key word of the scene appears after Bathsheba returns home: ותהר האשה (11:5). The verb הרה appears in Gen 24:21 and Gen 29:32,[41] but the key-word appears earlier than normal in this narrative. The premature appearance of the key-word emphasizes that the conception was before marriage. It further illustrates the adulterous and inappropriate nature of David and Bathsheba's relationship. When David's initial attempt to manipulate Uriah into going home and having sex with his wife is ineffective, David increases his efforts and the two share a meal. Both eat and drink, and Uriah becomes drunk: ויאכל לפניו וישת וישכרהו. The roots אכל "to eat" and שתה "to drink" are key-words of the betrothal type-scene, appearing in each of the other three narratives.[42]

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41. The key word is absent in Exodus 2. Instead Zipporah ילד "bears" a son for Moses, which decreases the focus upon Zipporah as noted in footnote 26.

42. אכל is found in Gen 24:33 and Ex 2:20. שתה is found in Gen 24:18 and Gen 29:22. In both cases, the words are in a section of the narrative where the suitor is eating with the

Their appearance here reinforces the idea that David is attempting to arrange a union between Uriah and Bathsheba, reminiscent of the betrothal normally arranged in the presence of eating and drinking, so that Bathsheba's pregnancy does not arouse suspicion.

This study has analyzed 2 Sam 11 in light of a refined narrative structural schema of the betrothal journey narrative found in the accounts of the betrothals of Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, and Moses and Zipporah. The major studies that have addressed the structure of these narratives were critically analyzed and a comprehensive narrative structural schema composed of plot elements and key-words was established. These elements and key-words were then identified in their inverted manner in 2 Sam 11.

The identification of the inverted betrothal journey narrative within 2 Sam 11 should be taken into consideration when discussing the textual history, political context and theological stance of the Book of Samuel, the question of the Succession Narrative, and 2 Sam 11 on its own. The presence of the inverted narrative structure brings the narrative in 2 Sam 11 alongside the narrative accounts of Isaac, Jacob, and Moses and contrasts David and his behavior with the persons and actions of these great Israelite figures. The contrast between David and the patriarchs suggested by the text itself casts David's actions and character in a negative light and emphasizes David's failure to adhere to hospitality and his attempts to control the situation in defiance of divine intent. Whereas Isaac, Jacob, and Moses acquire wives through obedience to the will of their God and allowing his will to manifest itself in their situations, David's gains his wife by "taking" Bathsheba in an act of rebellion against the will of Deity. By framing 2 Sam 11 within the same narrative structure as the other betrothal journey narratives, yet illustrating that David's actions are in complete inversion and opposition to what was done by the patriarchs and Moses, the text emphasizes David's sin repeatedly. As the text moves to each new element of the narrative structure, the audience is reminded again and again that David's actions are inappropriate.

The presence of the betrothal journey narrative structural schema within Gen 24, Gen 29, Exod 2, and 2 Sam 11 is suggestive of a textual relationship of some kind among these texts that would benefit from further examination as to their history and the question of their literary interdependence or dependence on a common source as the root of the shared structure. Investigations into this relationship will illustrate more clearly the cultural, scribal, and literary attitudes that affected the creation of the text of the Hebrew Bible.

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woman's family in preparation for a marriage.

THE CASE FOR DEVER'S DOUBLE-SEATED HOUSE SHRINE

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The discovery of numerous new artifacts in the past few decades has caused Israelite religion to become something of a hot topic, prompting questions about whether Asherah was worshipped by the Israelites—an idea vehemently opposed by the redactors of the biblical text. However, archaeological remains have caused scholars to question the accuracy of the Bible in portraying popular Israelite religion. Many scholars are beginning to accept the idea that some Israelites actually worshipped the goddess Asherah—whether officially sanctioned or not—possibly even alongside their primary deity, Yahweh.

One prominent scholar in this school of thought is William G. Dever, whose recent publication in *BAR*, "A Temple Built for Two: Did Yahweh Share a Throne with His Consort Asherah?" has attracted even more attention on this issue.[1] In his article, Dever describes a house figurine acquired on the antiquities market that contains the unique feature of what he claims is a "double throne," or a seat intended for a deity and his consort. Furthermore, he conjectures that, because there are no figurines included on the throne, it is an aniconistic depiction of Yahweh.

While Dever would happily draw the conclusion that this is evidence of Yahweh being worshipped along with his consort Asherah, a more thorough investigation of this house shrine is necessary in order to substantiate such a claim. The questions which need to be asked include (1) are there other house shrines similar to the *BAR* shrine which can tell us more about its cultic/cultural affiliation, (2) is this really evidence of aniconistic worship, and (3) are Yahweh and Asherah ever depicted together in anthropomorphic form? Based on a comparison of archaeological material including other house shrines

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1. William G. Dever, "A Temple Built for Two: Did Yahweh Share a Throne with His Consort Asherah?" *BAR* 34 (2008): 55–62.

from Israelite and non-Israelite contexts, the cult stand from Taanach, and the temple at Arad, as well as the textual material at Kuntillet Ajrud and Biblical references, it is more likely that this shrine was solely dedicated to Asherah than Yahweh and a consort. After answering these questions, if it is not a completely unique artifact unlike any other house shrine, it will be necessary to determine where it fits into the broader scheme of house shrines based on iconography and as much supposition can be made concerning location and dating.

Before embarking on this analysis, it is necessary to point out some of the limitations of this study. First of all, this analysis is not an attempt to conclusively prove or disprove the worship of Asherah as a consort of Yahweh. This controversial issue has been debated extensively, and unless considerations are immediately beneficial to the study of the house shrine, they will not be explored in this paper.[2] As previously stated, the purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate whether the double-throne shrine can or should be associated with Yahweh and Asherah. This can be achieved by analyzing the archaeological and textual evidence directly associated with these house shrines.

Another limitation to take into consideration is the preference of archaeological material over textual material. While some biblical and non-biblical texts are analyzed in order to further illustrate the possible circumstances and context of house shrines, the majority of this analysis will be spent on other similar shrines in order to determine how the *BAR* house shrine fits in based on iconography, location, and dating. Due to the large number of shrines which have been identified in the past few decades, the shrines which have been reviewed in this study are those which were the most similar iconographically to the *BAR* house shrine, or shrines which will help us to determine whether or not the *BAR* shrine could be Yahwistic. Although the majority of the most distinctive house shrines will be discussed, not every house shrine has been included in this study. Because the *BAR* house shrine was not acquired in context, similar iconography will be a primary factor to determine its possible origin and dating. This preference to archaeological material is partly due to the fact that the references to house shrines are very scarce in the biblical text as well as non-Israelite inscriptions, making it very difficult to determine context and cultic practices for the shrine in question.

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2. For a thorough treatment of the main arguments surrounding Asherah as the consort of Yahweh, as well as a comprehensive list of references to other works on the subject, see Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 47–54.

In the past few decades, an increasing amount of attention has been turned to Canaanite and Israelite worship in domestic settings, including the use of miniature house shrines. These figurines are likely patterned after the temples typical of the ancient Near East, consisting of an entryway leading into a main inner chamber and iconography associated with the god/gods being worshipped. They have been attested up until the Iron I period in Israel and Judah, as well as many shrines also discovered in Phoenicia. While it is difficult to connect many artifacts with cultic activities, house shrines are a clear representation of cultic activity because of their association with the temple.

Common features of house shrines include: (1) two pillars at the front of the structure before the cubiculum; and (2) a broad entablature which rests upon the pillars, often containing symbols of the deity the shrine represents.[3] It is unclear what miniature figurines were used for, other than to extend the holy space of the temple to another location so that worship could take place at a distance.[4]

Some scholars believe that the cubiculum, or main empty chamber inside the box, housed either a figurine of some kind or an offering to the deity. The only exceptions are the house shrines discovered at Tell Qasile, where the figurine inside the cubiculum is attached to the structure, as well as figurines discovered from the Gaza region.[5] Most of the sites where house shrines have been discovered are either from large cultic centers or domestic cult sites.[6] It is with these features in mind that we will proceed to analyze various groups of shrines, based on their similar characteristics and attempt to determine how and if the *BAR* house shrine fits in.

Beginning with the "double seat" shrine in question, it seems that apart from its distinctive throne feature, its other characteristics are fairly typical. It exhibits the two main features commonly found on house shrines, including two stylized pillars and a broad entablature. The pillars have been crafted with palm leaves curling from the top, which Dever points out is a common element in temple architecture by referencing the opinion of archaeologist

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3. Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London, England: Continuum, 2001), 329. Due to the surprising scarcity of scholarly material on house shrines, I frequently reference Zevit's work, which seems to be the first considerable attempt to compile a comprehensive analysis of house shrines in their respective contexts.

4. The temple-like structure of house shrines is also reflected in other temples in the ancient Near East, such as the temple at Arad where the main sacred space is guarded by two pillars.

5. Rainer Albertz and Rudiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 68.

6. Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 67.

Yigal Shiloh. Although these stylized columns seem to bear a similarity to the proto-aeolic capitals seen at Ramat Rahel associated with the Israelite monarchy, Shiloh believes they are significantly different.[7] While most scholars attribute tree imagery to the goddess Asherah, some scholars such as Steven Wiggins disagree on the grounds that there is no clear evidence that Asherah was directly associated with the tree symbol.[8] While Wiggins brings up an interesting point to consider, it seems more plausible to assume that the goddess is often represented by a tree symbol due to the numerous associations in the biblical text with erecting poles for the worship of Asherah.[9]

Underneath the pillars of the *BAR* house shrine are two lions, and at the top and center of the entablature is a dove. Imagery associated with doves is often thought to refer to Astarte, and may have later evolved into an association with Asherah as the goddesses are nearly indistinguishable by the beginning of the Iron Age.[10] Inside the cubiculum is an empty throne that is stylized with two back panels, leaving an open space where the deity is assumed to have resided either figuratively or as represented by a cultic object. Dever has put forth an appraisal of the figurine that has gone largely unchallenged, dating the *BAR* house shrine to the eighth or ninth century B.C.E. in the Iron II period. This dating is based on its striking similarity to the Moussaieff Collection, which although it is unprovenanced is believed to date to the eighth or ninth century B.C.E. from Ammonite or Moabite territory. Dever even proposes that the *BAR* shrine and the Moussaieff Collection may have originally come from the same site.[11]

The iconography of this shrine appears to be consistent with Asherah symbols, including the dove, tree-like stylized pillars, and lions. However, the empty throne inside the cubiculum is somewhat ambiguous and could have been a spot reserved for the figurine of any deity, possibly even a deity and his consort. Dever argues in his article that the throne was intended for the worship of Yahweh and a consort, which was probably Asherah. While this hypothesis is a possibility, the lack of evidence or iconography referring to

7. Yigal Shiloh, "The Proto-Aeolic Capital and Israelite Ashlar Masonry," *Qedem* 11 (1979).

8. Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of Asherah: With Further Considerations of the Goddess* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007).

9. Ruth Hestrin, "Understanding Asherah: Exploring Semitic Iconography," *BAR* 17 (1991): 52. Hestrin categorizes references to Asherah in the biblical text into three groups: as an image (herself), a green tree, and a tree trunk. Asherah is referred to eighteen times as a tree trunk. Tree trunks are usually placed beside standing stones or pillars. Verbs used in connection with these references to Asherah include *cutting*, *burning*, and *rooting out*, which all bring to mind the image of a tree and not stone.

10. J. Fossum, "Dove," *DDD* 1:500–3.

11. Dever, "A Temple Built for Two," 56.

Yahweh makes it a difficult claim to justify. A further analysis of other Israelite shrines may shed some light on the cultural and religious identity of the *BAR* house shrine and whether or not it can reasonably be identified with them.

One figurine among the Israelite shrines that looks very similar to the *BAR* shrine was discovered at Tell el-Far'ah, formerly the Israelite capital of Tirzah. It has been dated from the ninth to eighth century B.C.E. (putting it around the same estimated timeframe as the *BAR* shrine), and it was discovered in a pit near the city gate.[12] The shrine reflects the typical one-room style with an empty cubiculum and iconography on the façade, but there are some significant differences with the symbols.

 Two pillars flank either side of the doorway, but the top of the column is styled in upturned volutes instead of the drooping petals on the *BAR* shrine. This scroll-type design seems more similar to the Israelite proto-aeolic capitals typical of the First Temple period; however, the volutes scroll inward instead of outward. It is also missing the central triangle, which is typical of proto-aeolic capital. In either case, the pillars seem to represent stylized palm trees, as noted by Othmar Keel. Keel further conjectures that these columns may have originally been a representation of goddesses flanking the doorway, as seen on other house shrines, which will be discussed later. It may also indicate a shift away from anthropomorphism, transitioning sacred tree imagery into an acceptable form of Yahwistic worship.[13]

Another noticeable feature is a crescent moon symbol at the center of the entablature typically associated with Astarte. In addition to the nearly complete shrine, other fragments of house shrines were discovered that seem to originate from two or three other shrines. One fragment was assumed to be part of the doorway of another shrine, and contains similar styling to the complete shrine. The second fragment also appears to be the piece of a doorway, but contains petal-style columns instead of the scrolling volutes. Because no other fragments of these shrines have been recovered, it is difficult to determine whether these were a part of the same cache or whether the shrine with petal-style columns may have originated from another area.

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12. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 337.

13. Othmar Keel, "Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible," JSOTSup 261 (1998): 42. Keel describes a shift during the Iron Age I and Iron Age IIA periods from the use of anthropomorphic figures to represent deity to the use of sacred tree symbols. He points out that this does not mean that the deities were disappearing altogether, or that anthropomorphic representations were not used again later, but that the general tendency during this period was to steer away from anthropomorphism. Keel cites the work of Ch. Frevel ["Aschera und der Ausschliesslichkeitsanspruch YHWHs," *BBB* 94 (1995)] but mentions that this point is overstated in his work.

Another Israelite house shrine was discovered at Tel Rekhesh, an area associated with Anaharath mentioned in Joshua 19:19 and attributed to the tribe of Issachar.[14] Dated a few centuries earlier to the Iron I period, this house shrine has the same basic structure as the two previously mentioned shrines, but it has some very unique characteristics, including horns protruding at the top and drilled holes for a door to the cubiculum. A piece is supposedly missing across the midsection of the front, which was thought to have been decorated by a design of clay buttons that carry over to the face of the shrine, and a serpentine pattern is portrayed along the bottom. Instead of the typical pillars flanking the entrance of the shrine, two small, unidentifiable figures (thought to be dogs or lions) sit on either side where the base of the pillars would be.[15]

It is difficult to determine the deity associated with this shrine because of its limited iconography, other than the horns which are a common symbol associated with various deities in the ancient Near East and the serpent design at the bottom. The crouching figurines could reasonably be lions, which is a feature also represented in the *BAR* shrine and probably associated with Asherah.[16] The piece which appears to be missing from the shrine may have contained more iconographic details to associate this shrine with a particular god/goddess.

A third Israelite shrine was recovered from Dan and dates significantly earlier to the twelfth to eleventh centuries B.C.E. The shrine has a somewhat unique structure in the sense that it appears to be made from the top third of a storage jar, including what appear to be handles on either side of the main opening. These handles may have served the same function as the pillars found on nearly all other shrines, carrying the idea of guarding entrance to the sacred space. The shrine was discovered in a domestic context along with other common household artifacts.[17] No other features are distinguishable on the pot-shaped shrine, other than the lid which was placed as a roof on the mouth of the storage jar turned cultic shrine. This is the earliest example of an Israelite house shrine, and it appears to be a somewhat primitive form with

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14. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 336.
15. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 337.
16. Hestrin, "Understanding Asherah," 55–8. Hestrin references a depiction of the goddess Qudshu (the Egyptian equivalent of Asherah) standing on top of a lion, as well as the lions flanking a depiction of the goddess on the Taanach stand. According to Hestrin, these lions act as guardians for the goddess. Emile Puech also supports the connection between lions and Asherah, as well as the Egyptian Qudshu (E. Puech, "Lioness," *DDD* 1:981–983). Some scholars, such as Binger, Tilde Binger, *Asherah* (JSOTSup 232. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 57, disagree that there is a direct connection between Qudshu and Asherah based on a lack of supporting evidence.
17. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 336.

little iconography. Of the four Israelite shrines, it bears the least resemblance to the *BAR* shrine and suggests that the *BAR* shrine probably fits better in a later context closer to the Early Iron Age.[18]

The last Israelite shrine was found at a cave in Jerusalem, and it is the most plain-featured of the four shrines. It is dated by the material remains it was discovered with to be from approximately 700 B.C.E., putting it in the context of the Judahite Kingdom. Its structure is a basic cube shape with no painting, iconography, or noticeable features, except for a large piece on the front which may have functioned as an entablature of sorts. The only other clue about its cultic function is the area on the top-left of the front and the middle of the left side where it appears that something was attached. This house shrine may have originally contained an affixed head as we see on the Megiddo stand, representing the deity being worshipped.[19] However, this is merely speculation, and the simplicity of the shrine leaves scholars guessing which deity it was dedicated to.

It may be reasonable to suggest that this shrine is an example of aniconistic worship taking place in the Judahite Kingdom with its lack of symbols and anthropomorphic representations of deity. Compared to the first shrine in this analysis recovered in ancient Tirzah from only one or two centuries earlier, it is significantly less stylized. It could also be argued that these shrines show that the northern Israelite Kingdom was less hesitant to use symbols and other representations of deity while the Judahite Kingdom was more conservative with their iconography in cultic worship.

It appears that the *BAR* house shrine contains many similar features to the Israelite shrines, but a further analysis of non-Israelite shrines will be helpful to see which of the two it seems more likely to fit in with stylistically and iconographically.

The non-Israelite shrines have been discovered from locations scattered throughout the Levant, exhibiting unsurprisingly diverse features from a wide range of periods and cultures. One shrine in particular, discovered near Mt. Nebo, may indicate what these shrines were used for. Dating to the Iron Age, the shrine was found along with several other ritual pieces, including bowls and small jars with perforation and zoomorphic elements. Some of the bowls have a spout and are supported by three legs, similar to bowls discovered at

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18. With the exception of the Jerusalem Cave house shrine, the styling and iconography employed on house shrines seems to grow more ornate from the Late Bronze period up to the Iron I and II periods. Because of the use of several symbols on the *BAR* shrine, it would make more sense for it to fit into the Early Iron I period.

19. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 338.

Bethsaida.[20] These vessels give us some indication as to ceremonies which may have been part of the use of this cultic figurine, but no such accompanying items have been found in an Israelite context. The structure of the shrine from Mt. Nebo is plain with an oversized façade which is empty of iconography. However, fragments of a second shrine were also discovered from the same site, including two freestanding pillars containing lions resting at the base, probably representative of the goddess Asherah.[21]

A similar non-Israelite shrine purchased by the Rockefeller Museum in the 1940s by J.H. Iliffe consists of the familiar box-type structure and accompanying ritual items.[22] Although its context is uncertain, it is believed to originate from the Transjordan area. The ritual vessels contain the same perforations as the Mount Nebo assemblage, and it may have been used for pouring libations on the shrine. As for the appearance of the shrine itself, it is empty of iconography except for two small faces of goddesses which are probably representative of the guardian goddess of the sacred space. Compared to the *BAR* shrine, it lacks the stylized columns, but this feature may have been substituted by the miniature goddesses above the entryway.[23]

While the Mount Nebo and Transjordan shrines were both discovered with what seem to be accompanying ritual vessels, no such artifacts have been found along with Israelite shrines. This demands the question of whether or not the *BAR* shrine originally had its own collection of ritual bowls and pots that were simply not recovered from the site, or if it truly is an Israelite shrine which seems to lack the accompanying vessels.

Another non-Israelite example of interest in this analysis of the *BAR* shrine is an Iron Age shrine discovered in a tomb near Amman in 1959.[24] While the *BAR* shrine was also claimed to be from Ammonite or Moabite territory, it exhibits few similarities with this shrine which was actually recovered in context. The shrine is a plain box which stands on four knobs protruding at

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20. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 332.

21. Hestrin, "Understanding Asherah," 58. Hestrin analyzes the Egyptian alias of Asherah known as Qudshu—the name being derived from the Hebrew *qodesh* meaning holy. Qudshu is portrayed naked standing in a frontal position in typical Semitic fashion and is standing on top of a lion. In addition to the naked goddess, Hestrin points out that an Egyptian inscription was discovered which uses the name Qudshu along with Astarte and Anat. As demonstrated in her paper, these goddesses can be equated with the biblical references to Asherah.

22. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 332.

23. As explained previously, one of the common features of house shrines are two pillars or figures which flank either side of the doorway. See Keel, *Goddesses and Trees*, 41, where various types of shrines and stands are discussed that contain two figures on either side of the entryway acting as guardians of the sacred space.

24. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 333.

each corner, and it contains no significant iconography or design other than horizontal bands above the entryway. Because the *BAR* shrine was not discovered in context, this shrine throws a connection with Ammonite territory into doubt.

A final category of non-Israelite shrines have been discovered in Cyprus, and they contain some of the most unique features compared to the other shrines. Several have been discovered that contain rows of clay buttons above what appears to be a wide tongue rolling downwards from the cubiculum. The specific number of buttons represented on most of these shrines is six, causing scholars to wonder at their significance. Some consider the possibility that the number of buttons is a divine number and portrays the deity the shrine is meant to be dedicated to.[25] Examples of these shrines can be found in the Cesnola collection and the British Buseum. This style of shrine was not limited to the Cyprus region, however. An example from Achzib just west of the Dead Sea contains the same rows of buttons and tongue extending out of the cubiculum. Instead of the usual six buttons affixed to the Cyprus shrines, this shrine has eight. Pottery from the same stratum dates it to the seventh century B.C.E., and its location in the southern part of Phoenicia makes it a significant discovery because it reveals the use of abstract iconography up to the seventh century in the motherland.[26] While this shrine contains few similarities to the *BAR* shrine, it does indicate that the use of various styles of shrines were spread throughout different areas of the Levant during the seventh century, making it even more difficult to pinpoint a context for the *BAR* shrine.

Israelite and non-Israelite house shrines could be considered part of a broader scheme of cultic objects, including cult stands, which often reflect similar iconography and may be useful in this analysis of the *BAR* house shrine.[27] Although cult stands may have performed a similar conceptual function to the house shrines by creating a connection with deity through a portable object, they are generally more abundant in symbols and iconography with which the worshipped deity can be determined.

One stand in particular discovered at Taanach has caused a great deal of debate because of its association with Asherah and the possible representation

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25. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 335.
26. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 336.
27. Lamoine F. Devries, "Cult Stands: A Bewildering Variety of Shapes and Sizes," *BAR* 13 (1987): 27. Devries suggests a shift away from the label "cult stands" to "offering stands" due to the fact that not all stands performed a religious function. This reasonable distinction verifies the connection between "offering stands" and house shrines, since they both contained offerings to the deity being worshipped. However, the connection is clear under both titles due to the clearly cultic nature of house shrines.

of Yahweh in register two. The first register contains the representation of a nude goddess flanked by two lions, which is most likely Asherah as pointed out previously in the discussion of non-Israelite shrines.[28] This hypothesis can be further confirmed by the pairing of the first and third registers, which apparently represent the same deity with alternate imagery. For example, the third register displays a tree flanked by what appear to be goats, followed by the two guardian lions that tie it back to the first register. Most scholars agree that the first and third registers both portray the goddess Asherah, first as the anthropomorphic goddess and secondly as a sacred life-giving tree.[29] The second register contains two winged sphinxes standing on either side of an empty space, which appears to have been left empty on purpose with no broken edges.

This puzzling vacancy has left scholars to wonder if it could possibly be a representation of Yahweh, based on the aniconic tradition of the Yahwistic cult. The guardian sphinxes flanking the empty space are also reminiscent of Yahwistic worship; for example, the cherubim standing on either side of the empty space attributed to Yahweh as described in the biblical text for the tabernacle and king Solomon's temple. Additional support of this theory is nuanced by the coupling of the empty register with the fourth, which contains a four-legged animal which scholars believe is a calf commonly worshipped in Canaanite religion, in front of a winged sun-disc. The combination of these features strengthens the argument for a representation of Yahweh, beginning with the sun disc which may be representative of the astral characteristics attributed to Yahweh.[30]

The calf is another familiar symbol of the cult and is frequently mentioned in the biblical text (including passages such as Exod 32:20, Ps 106:19, 1 Kgs 12:28, 2 Kgs 17:16). All of these instances refer to the creation of a calf figurine which is worshipped as the representation of a deity—possibly Yahweh. However, this cultic activity was later condemned by the Deuteronomistic Historian who often imposed their ultra-orthodox views on the practices of earlier Israelites when they may have been generally accepted at the time. The bronze calf figurine discovered in the region of Northern Samaria, dated to the Iron Age, further solidifies the idea that some Israelites worshipped the

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28. Hestrin, "Understanding Asherah," 58.

29. Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic Press, 2007), 322. In addition to Hess' argumentat on the Taanach stand, the Kuntillet Ajrud pithoi (discussed in more detail later in this study) confirms the connection between Asherah and lion imagery, as well as a tree flanked by ibexes.

30. Glen J. Taylor, "Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel," JSOTSup 111 (1993): 100–1. Taylor analyzes the appellation "Lord of Hosts" in reference to the Taanach stand, pointing out as stated in Ps 80:1 that Yahweh is described as dwelling among the cherubim.

image of a bull.[31] With these factors in mind, it is reasonable to assume that the Taanach stand contains symbols for both the goddess Asherah and Yahweh. However, these symbols are not the anthropomorphic representations needed to make an accurate comparison to the supposedly missing god and goddess figurines seated in the *BAR* shrine.

In order to provide a more thorough analysis, we will turn from the house shrines and cult stands for a moment to seek textual evidence for the depiction of Yahweh alongside the goddess Asherah. The inscription discovered at Kuntillet Ajrud on a pithos in the Sinai Desert contains an inscription that references Yahweh and "his Asherah." Accompanied by a painted image of three deities with two in the forefront standing side-by-side and a third off to the side, some scholars believe that this is clear evidence for the worship of Yahweh with Asherah as his consort. However, several problems have arisen with a more detailed study of the text. Andre Lemaire points out that in Hebrew, a personal name never carries a suffix, creating a difficulty when "Yahweh and his Asherah" is translated as a goddess possessed by Yahweh. However, if Asherah is a noun which represents the cultic symbol of the Asherah, such as a pole, then this inscription makes more sense.[32] The painting directly below the text also raises questions about the identities of the trio of gods, and scholars have begun to question if they have any connection with the inscription at all. In fact, the painting may have been an earlier or later addition by travelers passing through who felt the need to leave their mark at the site.[33] Ruth Hestrin also points out that the two prominent figures are more likely representations of the Egyptian god Bes with their bent elbow stances and feather headdresses.[34]

Although this painting may not have a connection with the text, an additional painting on the other side of the pithos displays common elements

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31. Amihar Mazar, "The 'Bull Site': An Iron Age I Open Cult Place," *BASOR* 247 (1982): 27–29. Mazar also mentions the common worship of bull imagery in the ancient Near East, including caches of figurines discovered in Egypt and Cyprus and multiple artistic depictions during the Bronze Age. This particular figurine is believed to be the depiction of a deity and not a votive offering based on its size and the use of costly materials such as gems placed in the eye sockets.

32. Andre Lemaire, "Who or What Was Yahweh's Asherah? Startling New Inscriptions from Two Different Sites Reopen the Debate about the Meaning of Asherah," *BAR* 10 (1984): 47, 50. Lemaire also contends that Asherah could refer to a holy place, such as a sacred cultic site dedicated to Yahweh.

33. Judith M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 57; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Hadley argues that Kuntillet Ajrud was not a cultic site, but more of a "way station" where travelers would stop to water their animals and rest for the night.

34. Hestrin, "Understanding Asherah," 58.

associated with the goddess Asherah. In this painting a tree is flanked by two ibexes, as well as two lions. Hestrin points out that this may not be a depiction of the actual goddess; it represents the cult symbol of Yahweh as mentioned in the text as "his Asherah."[35] Hadley furthers this hypothesis by stating that the Asherah in the inscription is depicted by the lion on the opposite side, and that it is likely that a supplementary god like Bes could be portrayed literally in a painting, while a primary goddess like Asherah could only be represented by the tree, ibex, and lion symbols.[36] While this textual evidence may add to the discussion about Asherah as a consort of Yahweh, the god and goddess are not depicted together anthropomorphically despite the enticing reference in the inscription.

After analyzing a variety of Israelite and non-Israelite house shrines, other cultic stands, and some textual evidence from the Kuntillet Ajrud inscription, it seems that there is no solid ground in which to stake Dever's claims about the *BAR* house shrine as a throne for Yahweh and Asherah. This can be concluded by reviewing the preliminary questions which guided this analysis, including (1) are there other house shrines similar to the *BAR* shrine which can tell us more about its cultic/cultural affiliation; (2) is this really evidence of aniconistic worship; and (3) are Yahweh and Asherah ever depicted together in anthropomorphic form?

When taking into consideration the common motifs and symbols found among these shrines, it seems clear that the *BAR* house shrine is devoted to the goddess Asherah. The tree-stylized columns, lions, and the dove symbol all have been attested in other shrines as symbols of the goddess, and there really are no apparent Yahwistic elements.

Another claim put forth by Dever which is unfounded is that the empty throne in the cubiculum is representative of the aniconistic worship of Yahweh. As has been shown with other house shrines, the cubiculum is often left empty, possibly because the god/goddess figurine was separate or the empty space was used to place offerings to the deity.[37] Another possibility is that the empty space could have been representative of the sky god Baal Shamem, who was known according to Syrian texts to be represented by a "sacred emptiness." Furthermore, the empty space may have been representative of any god/goddess who was depicted through iconography on the façade of the house shrine, and it may not necessarily be limited to the aniconic Yahwistic tradition.[38]

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35. Hestrin, "Understanding Asherah," 57.
36. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah*, 154.
37. Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 68.
38. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 329.

The final leading question of this analysis was to determine whether or not Yahweh has been depicted along with the goddess Asherah as his consort, and the evidence is too weak to support this claim. As shown by the Kuntillet Ajrud inscription, what some scholars have anxiously claimed is a clear representation of Yahweh and Asherah connected to a descriptive text, a closer examination reveals that the painting is not associated with the text. While the inscription seems to explicitly mention an intimate relationship between two deities by stating "Yahweh and *his* Asherah," an understanding of the Hebrew text leads us to believe this reference is not a personal name but probably a cultic symbol or a sacred space associated with Yahweh. In regard to the double-seated throne in the *BAR* shrine, Dever claims that the two back panels are clear evidence that it was intended for a deity and his consort. However, a lack of evidence among other house shrines for this particular type of double-throne makes it very difficult to prove or disprove anything conclusively.

While there are still many unanswered questions about the *BAR* house shrine, it is clear that the evidence used to tie it to the Yahwistic cult is unconvincing, and it would be irresponsible to make such a claim without additional evidence. In the face of the growing excitement about cultic objects used in relation to household Israelite worship, it is becoming increasingly important that scholars take a step back to reassess artifacts and textual materials in order to accurately place it in the context in which it belongs.

IDOL REMAINS: REMNANTS OF THE OPENING OF THE MOUTH RITUAL IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

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The Hebrew Bible has numerous examples of traditions that are supposed to have been syncretized into the ancient Israelite society from the cultures with which they associated. Although this perspective has become dated, value can be drawn from it when viewed in light of specifics that occur within the texts of the Hebrew Bible. One such specific is the worshipping of idols. Unlike other ancient Near Eastern religious cults, the Israelites had within their law had a particular theology that avoided the creation of idols. Because the society itself sought to avoid the worshipping of idols, the study of syncretism within the context of Israelite religion is beneficial as it may explain the reason that the topic of idol worship is so prevalent in the Hebrew Bible. Discussing syrcretism, Frank Moore Cross stated, "If you want syncretism in the Hebrew Bible, there is plenty of material to be found without manufacturing it."[1] Other examples of this syncretism range from the presumed worship of Asherah[2] and Molek[3] to practices related with the cult of the dead.[4] These influences on traditions and practices upon Israel did not come from

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1. Frank Moore Cross, personal correspondence with Mark Smith dated December 7, 1998, cited in *The History of God: Yahweh and Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), xxxii, n. 111.

2. See Smith, *History of God*, 108–18; Steve Wiggins and Susan Ackerman, "Asherah, the West Semitic Goddess of Spinning and Weaving?," *JNES* 67 (2008): 1–18; and Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of Asherah, with Further Considerations of the Goddess* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2007), 239–52.

3. See Smith, *History of God*, 171–81; G. C. Heider, "Molech," in *DDD* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Grand Rapids: Brill, 1999), 581–85; and Emile Puech, "Milcom," in *DDD* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Grand Rapids: Brill, 1999), 575–76.

4. See Smith, *History of God*, 160–71; Richard Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 327–29; and Charles Kennedy, "Dead, Cult of the," in *ABD* 2:101–8.

any one geographic group, but instead were "a syncretism of various religious traditions and practices on the Israelites."[5] Because of their contact with the Israelite people, the influence of Mesopotamia, Ugarit, and Egypt would have been most noticeable. Egyptian and Mesopotamian influences upon Israel are widely attested, primarily because of trade, as the Levantine trade routes served as a bridge between the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians.[6] This constant line of communication, transportation, and travel would have provided the ancient Israelites with access to the thought and culture of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and any other cultural group who did business along these trade routes. This ultimately would have led to the exchange of thoughts and practices across all spectrums of ancient Israelite life.

An aspect of life in ancient Israel that may have been influenced heavily by outside peoples and cultures was the practice of worshipping idols.[7] The use of idols is first purported in the Hebrew Bible in Genesis when Rachel steals her father's *teraphim* (presumably household gods, although this has been debated,[8] in Gen 31:19). This referencing of idols continued through the exodus narrative of the golden calf episode (Exod 32:4), was maintained during the divided kingdom at Dan and Beth-el (2 Kgs 12:28), denounced by prophets in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. (Hab 2:19, Jer 10:5), and highlighted by the author of Daniel as to the event of the king's golden image being presented to the people while Israel was in exile (Dan 3). These examples from the Hebrew Bible, coupled with the dozens of occurrences in the biblical text of the words *pesel*,[9] *elilim*,[10] *shava*,[11] *mishcah*,[12] and *gilul*,[13] which are

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5. Smith, *History of God*, 7.

6. Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 176.

7. Nathaniel Levtow, *Images of Other: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 1.

8. There has yet to be a consensus by scholars on the proper translation of the term *teraphim* from its eight attestations in the Hebrew Bible (see Gene 31:19–35, Judg 17–18, 1 Sam 15:23, 2 Kgs 23:24, Ezek 21:26, Hos 3:4, and Zech 10:2). For a detailed discussion on *teraphim*, see K. van der Toorn, "The Nature of the Biblical Teraphim in Light of the Cuneiform Evidence," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 203–22. Also, see T. J. Lewis, "Teraphim," *DDD* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; New York: Brill, 1995), 1588–1601.

9. See Exod 20:4, Lev 26:1, Deut 5:8, Deut 27:15, Judg 18:14, Isa 44:9–10, Isa 44:15, and Ps 97:7.

10. See Lev 19:4, Isa 2:8, Isa 2:18, Isa 19:3, Ezek 30:13, Hab 2:18, Ps 96:5, Ps 97:7, and 1 Chr 16:26.

11. See Ps 24:4, Ps 26:4, and Ps 119:37.

12. See Exod 32:4, Exod 32:8, Exod 34:17, Lev 19:4, Deut 9:12, Deut 9:16, Deut 27:15, Judg 17:3–4, Judg 18:14, 2 Kgs 17:16, Isa 30:1, Isa 42:17, Hos 13:2, Nah 1:14, Hab 2:18, Ps 106:19, and Neh 9:18.

13. See 2 Kgs 23:24, Jer 50:2, Ezek 6:6, Ezek 8:10, Ezek 16:36, and Ezek 20:7–8.

usually translated as "idol," suggests that there was a predominant focus on the worship of idols in ancient Israel. Due to this preoccupation of thoughts toward idol worship by the authors of the Hebrew Bible, it can be supposed that there was influence from outside cultures on the practices surrounding the worship of these Israelite idols.

The use of idols in ancient Israel is firmly attested.[14] However, what is not fully understood are the practices surrounding the use of such idols. Scholars have suggested various practices that may have existed in connection with the worship of idols in Egypt and Mesopotamia,[15] possibly providing insight into how similar idols may have been used in Israelite worship. One such practice employed upon cultic images in the ancient Near East is the opening of the mouth ritual, which is predominately attested among the Egyptians and Mesopotamians,[16] particularly during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. This ritual could have also existed among the ancient Israelites, and various texts of the Hebrew Bible seem to attest that such was the case. In the worship of idols among the ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians, the opening of the mouth ritual was essential to the validity and reality of the created image. This paper seeks to demonstrate that through the study of a number of biblical passages, it can be concluded that the authors of the Hebrew Bible left remnants of the opening of the mouth ritual in the text, especially in those texts written during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E., when the ritual was at its apex in the region. The purpose of leaving this remnant within the text was an attempt by the biblical authors to provide a parody of the ritual and juxtapose it with the true opening of the mouth performed by YHWH upon his chosen servants and people, showing that the ritual itself was of no use to the images created by

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14. See Lev 27:30, 2 Kgs 17:10–17, Isa 30:22, Isa 62:13, Jer 2:26–28, Ezek 5:11, Ezek 6:19, Hos 11:2, Amos 5:26, Mic 1:7, 2 Chr 15:8, and Zech 13:2.

15. Frederick E. Greenspahn, "Syncretism and Idolatry in the Bible," *VT* 54 (2004): 481; Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* (trans. Moshe Greenberg; New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 20; and Jose Faur, "The Biblical Idea of Idolatry," *JQR* 69 (1978): 6–12.

16. Studies of the opening of the mouth ritual in Mesopotamia and Egypt began in the late nineteenth century by Heinrich Zimmern, who from 1896–1906 published Neo-Assyrian texts on the ritual. Some studies followed, see Aylward M. Blackman, "The Rite of Opening the Mouth in Ancient Egypt and Babylonia," *JEA* 10 (1924): 47–59; and T.C. Baly, "Notes on the Ritual of Opening the Mouth," *JEA* 16 (1930): 173–86. However, major analysis of the ritual was not done until Thorkild Jacobsen's work in "The Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. P. D. Miller Jr., P. D. Henson, and S. D. McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 15–32. See also Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, "The Introduction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian mis pi Ritual," in *Born in Heaven Made on Earth* (ed. Michael B. Dick; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 55–122.

humans, but that YHWH had truly opened the mouth of his prophets and the mouth of Israel to serve as his mouthpiece to the world.

The Opening of the Mouth Ritual

Current scholarship has proposed that the opening of the mouth ritual originated in two forms in the ancient Near East. One form is derived from the Old Kingdom in Egypt and a second comes from the Ur III dynasty in Mesopotamia. In Egypt, the ritual was known as the *wpt-r*, simply translated as "opening of mouth,"[17] which is also what the Akkadian designation for this ritual, *mis pi*, means.[18] Both of these terms are similar to the Hebrew *pithon peh,* used twice in the book of Ezekiel.[19] The ritual seems to develop congruently in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Although there are slight variances in the performance of the ritual between the two cultures, there is a similar structure and style allowing us to study the ritual in generalities.

The first recorded references of the ritual in ancient Mesopotamia come from Sumerian administrative texts dating to the Ur III dynasty (2113–2006 B.C.E.). The opening of the mouth ritual in these texts specifies the use of flour, ritual commodities of various sorts, and a reed hut to be used for the performance of the ceremony.[20] The ritual is not referenced again until the ninth century B.C.E. in a text that dates to the thirty-first year of the reign of Nabu-apal-iddina, the king of Babylon.[21] The majority of the texts containing the *mis pi* ritual that have survived to today were produced during the seventh century B.C.E. in Nineveh and the sixth century B.C.E. in Babylon.[22] The most prominent of these texts from Nineveh dates to the reign of Ashurbanipal in 668 B.C.E. Among such references, the opening of the mouth ritual is among the rituals that are to be performed during the reinstatement of the figure of Marduk to the Babylonian temple.[23]

Comparatively, the first reference to the opening of the mouth ritual in Egypt comes from the fourth dynasty tomb of Methen.[24] Various Pyramid

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17. L. V. Zabkar, "Adaptation of Ancient Egyptian Texts to the Temple Ritual at Philae," *JEA* 66 (1980): 129, especially n. 16.

18. Walker and Dick, "Introduction of the Cult Image," 55.

19. James Kennedy, "Hebrew *pithon peh* in the Book of Ezekiel," *VT* 41 (1991): 233–35.

20. Miguel Civil, "Remarks on 'Sumerian and bilingual Texts,'" *JNES* 26 (1967): 211; P. Steinkeller, "Studies in Third Millennium Paleography, 2: Signs Sen and Alal: Addendum," *OrAnt* 23 (1984): 39–41.

21. E. Weidner, "Die alteren Kassiten-Konige," *AFO* 19 (1959): 138, referenced in Walker, "Introduction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia," 58.

22. Levtow, *Images of Others*, 90.

23. Barbara Nevling Porter, "Symbols of Power: Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon's Babylonian Policy (681–669 BCE)" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1987).

24. Baly, "Notes on the Ritual of Opening the Mouth," 174.

Texts from the Old Kingdom in Egypt preserve the actions of purification, adornment, and the use of instruments to perform the opening of the mouth ritual. Nonetheless, a document referencing the ritual dating to the Middle Kingdom has not yet been discovered. In the nineteenth dynasty, the ritual is again referenced in locations from the Saite period and attestations of the ritual are found down through Roman rule.[25] Because of the lack of examples from the Middle Kingdom, it is difficult to reconstruct the process by which the ritual developed. But through the comparison of texts from the Old Kingdom up to the Roman period, it is evident that the ceremony evolved over time. Although there was a development in the ritual over time, the general components and structure remained intact.[26]

Although the ceremony itself differed in specifics between Mesopotamia and Egypt, the components and structure of the ritual are similar. Three specific components are congruent between the *wpt-r* ritual in Egypt and the *mis pi* ritual in Mesopotamia, namely purification, vivification, and enthronement.[27] Walker points out that these three steps were vital in the creation of an image, and without the precise execution of each step, "the statue was only a dead product of human artisans."[28] To the Egyptians, this ceremony was viewed as essential for the cultic image to obtain the ability to come alive:

> They were not satisfied with just fashioning an image … on the contrary, (these steps) were performed on statues … and as a result of which the work of human hands was thought to come alive. This ceremony of the "opening of the mouth" had the purpose of making all the organs serviceable and so vitalizing the image.[29]

An Akkadian text asserts that these sacred statues, without the performance of the opening of the mouth ritual, "cannot smell incense, cannot eat food, and cannot drink water."[30] The ritual also served as the "dedication of the sacred image for liturgical use, transforming it from a lifeless statue into a sacred image fit for the dwelling of the spirit of the god whom it represented."[31] These three steps of purification, vivification, and enthronement are the outline of

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25. Ibid., 174.

26. Ibid., 174.

27. Walker, "The Mesopotamian *mis pi* Ritual," 114–15 and Levtow, *Images of Others*, 92–100.

28. Ibid., 114.

29. Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 155.

30. Erich Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier* (Berlin: Leipzig, 1931), 155.

31. Kennedy, "Hebrew *pitḥôn peh,*" 233.

the opening of the mouth ritual that sought to accomplish the end of bringing the spirit of the god into the created medium.

Purification

Purification was the beginning step in the process of the opening of the mouth ritual. According to Walker and Dick, the purification of the cultic object consisted of activities such as the calling of qualified individuals as artisans, the selection of pure materials from which the image was to be created (gold, silver, etc.), and a process by which the idol was cleansed.[32] The ancient texts vary in their description of this part of the ritual and some include additional instructions such as setting the image on mats to prevent it from being defiled by the ground, selecting or setting apart a pure place of creation for the image, and as emphasized in Mesopotamian sources, the artisans of the image disassociated themselves from the creation of it, stating that it was actually created by the gods themselves.[33]

At times, the opening of the mouth ritual has been called the washing of the mouth ritual; this is primarily due to references of purification in Egyptian texts.[34] It has become clear now that the washing of the mouth was part of the overall ritual. As Hurowitz has explained:

> [A] separate mouth washing ritual is rare, and since opening the mouth was usually performed along with mouth washing as a complementary act … it may be assumed to have become subsumed in that ritual. In fact, it is hard to imagine that in the case of cult statues the rituals existed independently, as if one could be performed without the other.[35]

The washing of the mouth can be seen as one of the primary elements within the purification stage of the opening of the mouth ritual.

Vivification

The second phase of the opening of the mouth ritual has been described as vivification, or the brining to life or animation of the cultic image.[36] In Baly's study of the ritual, he described that at this point, actions such as the partial opening of the mouth, feeding the image, clothing the image, and anointing the image took place.[37] This vivification was "aimed to invest the statue with

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32. Walker and Dick, "The Mesopotamian *mis pi* Ritual," 114.
33. See quotation of Jacobsen and Dick, "Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth,* 41.
34. Blackman, "Rite of Opening the Mouth," 49.
35. Victor Hurowitz, "The Mesopotamian God Image, From Womb to Tomb," *JAOS* 123 (2003): 147.
36. Walker and Dick, "The Mesopotamian *mis pi* Ritual," 114.
37. Baly, "Ritual of Opening the Mouth," 176.

sensory powers and divine lineage, a kind of heavenly re-birth."[38] This phase has been identified by Angelika Berlejung as the "mouth-opening proper" stage of the ritual.[39] The primary purpose of this stage was to prepare the cultic image for its enthronement the following day.

In Egyptian texts, we find that this phase of the ritual often included the use of various tools to properly open the mouth of the cultic image.[40] These tools were called by various names throughout the history of Egypt, but a tool of particular interest is the *adze* blade, which was used in the ritual to open the mouth of the cultic image so that the statue could receive food, water, and incense. Roth points out that these tools were viewed as sacred and have been found in many locations where texts of the ceremony exist.[41] The use of this certain type of tool is of interest because of the possibility that such a tool may be referenced in the Hebrew Bible in connection with the creation of the golden calf in Exodus 32.

Enthronement

The final phase, and the ultimate end of the ritual, was the enthronement of the cultic image. Levtow points out that the "ultimate goal of the *mis pi* ritual was the enthronement of the image of a given deity within the temple cella. The achievement of this goal depended upon the purification and vivification rites performed in the ritual."[42] This aspect of the ritual was usually performed on the day following the acts of purification and vivification and made, as a primary objective, the presentation of the cultic image at a specific time of day. This usually occurred in the early morning at the rising of the sun.[43] Once the cultic image was placed within its final resting place, in most cases the temple, "a series of offerings, purifications, and incantations initiate the iconic deity's active reign."[44] This phase of enthronement concluded the opening of the mouth ritual and established the deity securely over their temple, lands, or people and accomplished the task of setting the image up to reign over the people as a medium by which the god would communicate with his people.

These three phases of the opening of the mouth ritual (purification, vivification, and enthronement) are well attested in the texts of both the Egyptian

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38. Levtow, *Images of Others*, 92.
39. Angelika Berlejung quoted in Levtow, *Images of Others*, 92, n. 21.
40. Ann Macy Roth, "Fingers, Stars, and the 'Opening of the Mouth': The Nature and Function of the ntrwj-blades," *JEA* 79 (1993): 57.
41. Ann Macy Roth, "The *psš-kf* and the 'Opening of the Mouth' Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth," *JEA* 78 (1992): 113.
42. Levtow, *Images of Others*, 92.
43. Walker and Dick, "The Mesopotamian *mis pi* Ritual," 115.
44. Levtow, *Images of Others*, 98.

and Mesopotamian rituals. Each of these three phases was important and dependent upon the others to ultimately work together as a whole to open the mouth of the cultic object. Although there are specific aspects of each phase of the ritual mentioned here and in other texts, not all examples are attested in ancient documents and need not be for the ritual to be efficacious. The opening of the mouth ritual ultimately provided a structure by which the cultic object of the ancients could be created to be formally prepared to sit enthroned as a medium of communication from the god to the people on earth.

Ritual Parodies

The prevailing tradition of the opening of the mouth ritual in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia is attested in texts dating to the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E., which parallels when many of the Hebrew Bible authors were writing. Having such a predominant ritual taking place in the ruling societies of Egypt and Mesopotamia during the writing of many sections of the Hebrew Bible provokes the question as to how much influence these dominating societies had on the actual text and the lives of common Israelites. Although there is little attestation to the opening of the mouth ritual taking place in other areas of the ancient Near East outside of Egypt and Mesopotamia,[45] the Israelite people were unique in having such a desire to differentiate themselves from the surrounding cultures.[46] Because of this insatiable desire to be different from the rest of the ancient Near East, primarily by the "orthodox" Israelites seeking to strictly observe the Law of Moses, there was more of a desire to separate themselves from the surrounding cultures. This led the Israelites to use the traditions and practices of those surrounding cultures against themselves. This may describe the reason for the remnants of the opening of the mouth ritual in the writings of the Hebrew Bible.

Remnants of the opening of the mouth ritual are found primarily in the form of parodies, aimed at mocking the ritual against the superior and actual communication of the one true and living God (Jer 10:10) and will be discussed here in two forms, namely, Israelite prophetic parodies and Israelite narrative parodies. Israelite prophetic parodies have been discussed in detail;[47]

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45. Phoenician records fail to mention the opening of the mouth ritual. For the Egyptian form texts dating to this time period, see Edouard Lipiński, "Phoenician Cult Expressions in the Persian Period," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina* (ed. William Dever and Seymour Gitin; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 298.

46. Smith, *History of God*, 7–8.

47. Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 1; Levtow, *Images of Others*, 86.

however, a discussion of narratives serving as parodies has not. The ultimate focus of these parodies is an attempt by the authors of the text to emphasize the principle that the God of Israel speaks through his prophets. By degrading a false principle related to it, specifically the opening of the mouth ritual that is viewed as the means by which the deity was able to take up residence within the cultic image, the authors of the biblical texts could further their position against the surrounding cultures.[48]

Israelite Prophetic Parodies of Idols

There are various texts throughout the Hebrew Bible that have been classified as idol parodies.[49] Michael Dick points out that these are "mainly, but not exclusively, restricted to the so-called Exilic and post-Exilic prophets."[50] For this purpose, scholars have also entitled this literary motif as prophetic parodies.[51] For a number of reasons, these parodies are specifically referencing the opening of the mouth ritual. A first reason for these parodies referencing the opening of the ritual is that the apex of attestation of known texts for the ritual in the ancient Near East date to the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. More specifically, these attestations come among the Assyrians and Babylonians who, at this time, were in the process of taking over the Levantine region. As stated above, most of the texts found that preserve the opening of the mouth ritual date to the rule of these two empires. Although no Akkadian texts preserving the ritual have been found in Israel, the influence of the ritual would have been felt in ancient Israel because of the influx of Assyrian and Babylonian peoples who, making the Levant their new home, would have brought their traditions with them. These traditions, including the opening of the mouth ritual, would not have been new to the Israelites because of past exposure to cultic image practices in their history with Egypt and their history with those traveling through the region and still participating in their religious practices. Combined, it can be assumed that the Israelites were presented with the opening of the mouth ritual in a number of ways.

A second possibility of how the Israelites were influenced by the opening of the mouth ritual comes during the reign of Ashurbanipal, from whose reign the most extensive example of the opening of the mouth ritual in Akkadian is found. Along with the opening of the mouth ritual, Ashurbanipal may have influenced the writing of Ps 2, which has similar characteristics to Belit's Oracle

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48. Greenspahn, "Syncretism and Idolatry," 482.
49. See Ps 135:15–18, Hab 2:19, Ps 115:4–6, Jer 10:3–5, Jer 10:14, and Jer 51:17
50. Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 1.
51. Ibid., 1, especially n. 1.

for Ashurbanipal.[52] Although not a prophetic parody, this possible influence upon the texts of the Hebrew Bible during the reign of Ashurbanipal suggests that there could have been similar influences of thought in other texts, such as the parodies of the opening of the mouth ritual.

Although not conclusive, from these two examples of syncretism of the ancient Near Eastern belief in the opening of the mouth ritual upon Israelites and the number of references to the worship of idols throughout the biblical text,[53] the general consensus has been that there was an influence of the opening of the mouth ritual upon the prophets and their scribes who were writing the Biblical texts in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. This allows us to conclude that the prophets and the people of Israel were well aware of not only the existence of the opening of the mouth ritual, but specific elements of it, allowing the ritual to be used and referenced to their advantage to proclaim YHWH as the only true and living god.

Because of the knowledge and influence of the opening of the mouth ritual upon the people of Israel, we can begin to analyze parody texts. One of the earliest examples of prophetic parody comes from Ps 135. Here the psalmist proclaims the inability of cultic images to perform any of the basic functions of a living being.

עצבי הגוים כסף וזהב מעשה ידי אדם פה־להם ולא ידברו עינים להם ולא יראו אזנים להם ולא יאזינו אף אין־יש־רוח בפיהם כמוהם יהיו עשיהם כל אשר־בטח בהם

"The idols of the nations are *but* silver and gold, the work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; They have eyes, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear, *Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.* Those who make them will be like them, *Yes,* everyone who trusts in them."[54] (emphasis added; Ps 135:15–18)

From this text we are presented with an attack on the ultimate goal of the opening of the mouth ritual: the ability for the cultic image to be able to have breath so that it was a living object. Specifying that the images have a mouth but they cannot speak and their mouths have no breath in them, the author of the text is referencing the opening of the mouth ritual with the intention of degrading the purpose of the ritual—providing breath and life to the image. The author states that the idol had the essential characteristic of a deified image, specifically

52. Helmer Ringgren, "Psalm 2 and Belit's Oracle for Ashurbanipal," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of his Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. Carol Meyers et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 91.

53. See Lev 26:30, 2 Kgs 17:10–17, Isa 30:22, Isa 57:13, Jer 2:26–28, Jer 3:9, Ezek 5:11, Ezek 6:9–13, Ezek 20:24, Ezek 22:3, Ezek 23:37–39, Hos 6:2, Amos 5:26, Mic 1:7, Zech 13:2.

54. All translations come from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise stated.

a mouth by which to speak and to breath presumably obtained by having undergone the opening of the mouth ritual. However, the psalmist mocks this image by stating that the ritual did not accomplish its primary task to bring the idol to life[55] and instead was lifeless, issuing a warning that the same fate was reserved for those humans who trusted in cultic images, creating parody.

A second example of prophetic parody comes from the writings of Habakkuk, specifically chapter 2 verse 19.

הוי אמר לעץ הקיצה עורי לאבן דומם הוא יורה הנה־הוא תפוש זהב וכסף וכל־רוח אין בקרבו

"Woe to him who says to a *piece of* wood, 'Awake!' to a mute stone, 'Arise!' *And* that is *your* teacher? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and *there is no breath at all inside it.*"

The author of this text is parodying the vivification phase of the opening of the opening of the mouth ritual. Emphasized here are the words that are said by the artisans creating the cultic idol that it is to "arise" and "awake", thus vivificating the image and invoking the powers of movement upon the statue.[56] Habakkuk draws upon similar verbiage used by the psalmist in stating that there is no breath inside the cultic image at all, ridiculing the thoughts of the people that such a ritual would work on mute stone.

A final example of the prophetic parodies comes from the writings of Jeremiah, chapter 10 verses 3–5:

כי־חקות העמים הבל הוא כי־עץ מיער כרתו מעשה ידי־חרש במעצד בכסף ובזהב ייפיו במסמרות ובמקבות יחזקום ולוא יפיק כתמר מקשה המה ולא ידברו נשוא ינשוא כי לא יצעדו אל־תיראו מהם כי־לא ירעו וגם־היטיב אין אותם

"For the customs of the peoples are delusion; because it is wood cut from the forest, the work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. They decorate *it* with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers so that it will not totter. Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, and *they cannot speak*; they must be carried, because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, for they can do no harm, nor can they do any good."

Here Jeremiah expounds even further than the psalmist or Habakkuk by walking through the process of the opening of the mouth ritual. He begins by mocking the actions of the people in performing the opening of the mouth ritual because of "customs" and "delusion." This direct attack upon the ritual as not being effective is emphasized before the ritual and the parody of the

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55. Levtow, *Images of Others*, 98.
56. Ibid., 98.

outcome is mentioned. Highlighting aspects of the ritual, Jeremiah first mentions the craftsman using a cutting tool to cover the image with silver and gold, employing examples of the phase of purification. Like the psalmist, Jeremiah then attacks the ends of the ritual, the fact that there is nothing that the cultic image can do, specifically because the statue cannot speak nor walk.[57]

These three examples provide the essence of the parody that was highlighted by the authors of the prophetic texts in the Hebrew Bible. These authors were well aware of the opening of the mouth ritual and were specific in pointing out, not to the Assyrians or the Egyptians, but to the Israelites, that the opening of the mouth ritual was of little avail to them and their cultic images. Whether these images were large or small, the purpose of the parodies was to remind the people of Israel that their cultic images were nothing more than images and that the opening of the mouth ritual had little efficacy upon them.

The disapproval by the authors of the Biblical texts concerning the opening of the mouth ritual is consistent throughout the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. as these references show. The references by these authors were not aimed at disproving the ritual by each phase, or extensively discussing its practice, but instead they focused on disproving the ultimate end of the ritual, the bringing to life of the cultic image. In comparison, other authors at this time in Israel used narratives to juxtapose the opening of the mouth ritual with images by using the same tripartite pattern in their narratives of the granting of the spirit and breath of God upon his chosen people and servants.

Israelite Narrative Parodies of Idols

Not only did the writers in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. denounce and write against the opening of the mouth ritual, but they used it to further their doctrines and teachings. The pattern of purification, vivification, and enthronement were preserved in a couple of forms in the Hebrew Bible as ways of describing the calling of prophets and their mission to be the mouth piece of the Lord. Although there are examples of this usage throughout the Hebrew Bible, particularly among the writings of the exilic prophets, one example will be drawn from Exodus, an account that could have been redacted in the seventh or sixth centuries B.C.E.[58]

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57. Walker and Dick, "The Mesopotamian *mis pi* Ritual," 115.

58. Dates for the composition range from the ninth to eighth century B.C.E. (see Erik Waaler, "A Revised Date for the Pentateuchal Texts," *Tyndale Bulletin* 53 (2002): 29–55), to somewhere between 235–65 B.C.E. (see Russell E. Gmirkin, *Berossus and Genesis, Menetho and Exodus: Hellenistic Histories and the Date of the Pentateuch* [New York: Oxford, 2006]). However, most scholarship suggests that the text was compiled, written, or redacted during the seventh to sixth centuries B.C.E. when much of the Hebrew Bible was being written.

The redactor(s) of Exodus may have been fully aware of the opening of the mouth ritual and used it to their advantage following the tripartite pattern of purification, vivification, and enthronement in two recorded episodes, emphasizing the ineffectiveness of the opening of the mouth ritual on the golden calf at Sinai in Exod 32 with the effectiveness of the calling of Moses in Exodus 3–4. By comparing the tripartite elements of the opening of the mouth ritual from both accounts, it can be concluded that the writer of Exodus meant to use these two episodes as an example of the validity of Moses as the medium by which God would converse with Israel against the invalidity of the use of cultic images, such as the golden calf. The following chart outlines the structure of the narrative parody in Exodus:

Exodus Narrative Parodies

The Golden Calf: Exod 32:1–6	Moses Called as Prophet: Exod 3
Purification	*Purification*
v. 1 Aaron Called	v. 10 Moses Called
וירא העם כי־בשש משה לרדת מן־ההר ויקהל העם על־אהרן ויאמרו אליו קום עשה־לנו אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו כי־זה משה האיש אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים לא ידענו מה־היה לו	ועתה לכה ואשלחך אל־פרעה והוצא את־עמי בני־ישראל ממצרים
v. 3 Gold/Precious Metal	v. 5 Remove Shoes
ויתפרקו כל־העם את־נזמי הזהב אשר באזניהם ויביאו אל־אהרן	ויאמר אל־תקרב הלם של־נעליך מעל רגליך כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת־קדש הוא
Vivification	*Vivification*
v. 4 Use of a tool	v. 12 "I am with thee"
ויצר אתו בחרט	ויאמר כי־אהיה עמך וזה־לך האות כי אנכי שלחתיך בהוציאך את־העם ממצרים תעבדון את־האלהים על ההר הזה
Enthronement	*Enthronement*
v. 4 Out of Egypt	v. 8 Out of Egypt
אלה אלהיך ישראל אשר העלוך מארץ מצרים	וארד להצילו מיד מצרים

The Golden Calf: Exod 32:1–6	Moses Called as Prophet: Exod 3
v. 5 Feast Instituted	v. 16 Gather all together
וירא אהרן ויבן מזבח לפניו	לך ואספת את־זקני ישראל
ויקרא אהרן ויאמר חג ליהוה מחר	ואמרת אלהם יהוה אלהי
v. 6 Sacrifices Offered	v. 18 Offer Sacrifices
וישכימו ממחרת ויעלו עלת	ועתה נלכה־נא דרך שלשת
ויגשו שלמים וישב העם לאכל ושתו ויקמו	ימים במדבר ונזבחה ליהוה אלהינו
לצחק	
	v. 18 Israel Hearkens to your voice
	ושמעו לקלך

As demonstrated in the corresponding chart, the similarities between the two accounts follow the tripartite structure of the opening of the mouth ritual closely.

In the phase of purification, God calling Moses out of the burning bush in Exod 3:10 bears certain similarities to Aaron being called by the people in Exod 32:1. The selection of a qualified "artisan" appears in the texts of the opening of the mouth ritual and describes that only the most worthy were selected to create images of their cultic deities. Moses is told that he is to be the one whom the Lord will send to Pharaoh to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Similarly, Aaron is chosen from all the children of Israel to be the artisan that fashions the golden calf, a representation of what had led the Israelites out of Egypt. The use of pure materials in the fashioning of the golden calf resembles the purification phase from the opening of the mouth ritual. Clearly referenced is a purity scene in the calling of Moses as he is told to take the sandals off of his feet because the ground that he stood on was holy (Exod 3:5).

Ann Macy Roth's work on the use of tools in the Egyptian *wpt-r* ritual is interesting when viewed in light of the Exod 32 account of the creation of the golden calf. The account specifies that Aaron used a tool (*běḥereṭ*) to fashion the calf together. The term *běḥereṭ* appears only one other time in the Hebrew Bible, in Isa 8:1 where it is translated as a writing stylus which resembles the *adze* blade used in the *wpt-r* ritual in Egypt.[59] This tool was used exclusively for the vivification of the images in Egypt and a similar tool could have been created and used by Aaron. Aaron may have had experiences in Egypt that exposed him to cultic image creation in this manner. A connection is made with

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59. Roth, "Fingers, Stars, and the Opening of the Mouth," 58.

vivification in Exod 3 as Moses is instructed that ʏʜᴡʜ is with him. A similar promise is given in the text of Exod 4:12, where Moses is instructed that ʏʜᴡʜ will be "with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say." This exemplifies the desired outcome of the opening of the mouth ritual that the medium is able to speak on behalf of the deity.[60]

The enthronement instruction that is preserved in the texts of Exod 3 and 32 are quite similar as well. Both Moses and the golden calf are attributed with leading the children of Israel from Egypt (Exod 32:4; Exod 3:8). Similarly, both narratives specify that there was to be sacrifices offered to God following their escape from Egypt (Exod 32:6; Exod 3:18), presumably in celebration to their liberation. The presentation of Moses to the elders of Israel (Exod 3:16) was similar to the presentation of the calf when Aaron proclaims, "behold thy gods" (Exod 32:4). These parallels highlight that the purpose of the account of Moses' calling was reworded after the opening of the mouth ritual to perpetuate his validity as the mouthpiece for the Lord. Conversely, the failure of the golden calf to last more than a few days is evidence for the inability it had to perform the exodus from Egypt for the people of Israel. According to the story, after Moses returns, the people knew of their wickedness; should the Exodus story have been orally transmitted prior to its redaction later, the preservation of the story as an oral history suggests that the average Israelite would have been aware of the purpose and aspects of the story discussed here.

A Second example of narrative used to parody the opening of the mouth ritual in the Hebrew Bible comes from the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel. Different from the prophetic parodies discussed above that only hinted at the opening of the mouth ritual by highlighting aspects of it, Ezekiel will parody the tripartite structure in whole to prove the supremacy of the acts of ʏʜᴡʜ over the acts of man.

Purification

v. 24 Israel taken away from the "heathen" nations

ולקחתי אתכם מן־הגוים וקבצתי אתכם מכל־הארצות

v. 25 Israel to be sprinkled with clean water and cleansed from filthiness

וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל טמאותיכם

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60. Levtow, *Images of Others*, 92.

Vivification

> v. 26–27 Israel to receive a new heart and new spirit, the spirit of the Lord

> ונתתי לכם לב חדש ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם והסרתי את־לב האבן מבשרכם ונתתי לכם לב בשר

> ואת־רוחי אתן בקרבכם

> v. 27 Israel will be able to walk in the statutes of God

> ועשיתי את אשר־בחקי תלכו

Enthronement

> v. 28 Israel set to prosper in the land

> וישבתם בארץ אשר נתתי לאבתיכם

As outlined above, the renewal of Israel in Ezekiel mirrors the tripartite structure of the opening of the mouth ritual. After discussing the fact that Israel had become corrupt (presumably because of the exile), YHWH is going to cleanse his people. Examples of the opening of the mouth ritual being performed on previously used cultic images that became defiled are evident in both Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts as such renewals authorized re-use after defilement.[61]

The author of Ezekiel proceeds methodically through the steps of the opening of the mouth ritual, first stating that Israel had become defiled and that because of their defilement there was a need for renewal (Ezek 36:21–23). To describe the purification phase of the opening of the mouth ritual, the author emphasizes that Israel would be gathered, separated, and brought to their own land (Ezek 36:24). This separation parallels the opening of the mouth ritual when the cultic image would be taken to a purified location, away from the profane world that defiled it. Purification is further described as Israel was to be "sprinkled with clean water" to be "cleansed from all (its) filthiness" (Ezek 36:25). Israel was to become clean so that it could again fulfill its purpose of serving as a medium for YHWH to speak to the world. It is of interest that the author specifically notes that Israel is to be cleansed from "all of your (Israel's) idols" (Ezek 36:26). This specific mention of idolatry highlights the worship of idols as a sin to be cleansed from, furthering the emphasis against the opening of the mouth ritual being performed on cultic images.

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61. H. te Velde, "Egyptian Hieroglyphs as Signs, Symbols, and Gods," *Visible Religion: Annual for Religious Iconography* 4–5 (1986): 66.

Vivification and enthronement are both emphasized in the following verses as Israel is to receive a "new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek 36:26). This reception by Israel of new inward parts mirrors the working inwards that the cultic image would take on in the vivification stage of the opening of the mouth ritual. The "new spirit" that was to be received is further explained in verse 27 when YHWH states that he will put his spirit within Israel (Ezek 36:27). Israel will become the medium by which the spirit of YHWH should dwell among the world, this being comparable to the spirit of the gods that were to inhabit the cultic images as a representation of themselves to the world. Israel is also blessed with the ability to walk after the statutes of YHWH, wording that is similar to the idea that vivification allowed a cultic image to walk and act as though alive, something Israel is given the ability to do. The enthronement of Israel is stated in the bestowal of a place to dwell when YHWH grants that they are to "live in the land that I gave to your forefathers" (Ezek 36:28). These phases joined together to complete the process outlined for the proper reception of the spirit of a deity because of the opening of the mouth ritual. This written example of parody still aims at the ultimate work of mocking the ritual performed by man by showing that a true ritual that accomplishes the putting of the word and spirit of the deity among a people can only be done by that deity, and not by the hands of man.

Similar to the comparison of the story of Moses with the golden calf and the narrative in Ezekiel about the children of Israel receiving the spirit and life of YHWH, there are a number of other instances where wording from the opening of the mouth ritual appear in narrative texts. Other prophets also receive a promise from YHWH that they would have his words in their mouths. Ezekiel received a promise that he was to "open his mouth and eat what I (YHWH) am giving you" (Ezek 2:8). Moses was promised that a future prophet would have YHWH "put (his) words in his mouth" (Deut 18:18). Similar promises were made to Isaiah (Isa 51:16) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:19) that they would have the words of YHWH put into their mouths. The authors of these texts are seeking to tell the people, who were aware of the ritual of the opening of the mouth, that the only placing of the spirit of the deity or the word of God into any object is YHWH himself and the only people to whom this act is performed are his called prophets, not images created by the hands of man. These examples from the Hebrew Bible share not only a similar outlined process, but also share similar wording that accomplishes the end goal of having the words and spirit of YHWH within them. Similar to the cultic images of surrounding cultures, the people of Israel and their prophets were to serve as a medium of communication for YHWH to the world.

Conclusion

In the worship of idols among the ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians, the opening of the mouth ritual was essential to the validity and reality of the created image. Through the study of a number of biblical passages, it is concluded that the authors of the Hebrew Bible left remnants of the opening of the mouth ritual in the text, especially in those texts written during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E., when the ritual was at its apex in the ancient Near East. The purpose of including allusions to this ritual within the text was an attempt by the authors to provide a parody of the ritual and juxtapose it with the true opening of the mouth performed by YHWH upon his chosen servants and people, showing that the ritual itself was of no use to the images created by man. Instead, YHWH had truly opened the mouth of his prophets and the mouth of Israel to serve as his mouthpiece to the world.

THE MUMMY PORTRAITS OF FAG EL-GAMOUS

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The necropolis of Fag el-Gamous has been under excavation by Brigham Young University for more than thirty years. In those thirty years, more than 1700 burials[1] have been excavated by Brigham Young University. In all of those years of excavation, not a single mummy portrait has been found, even though many of the mummies were interred during the era when some people from this area were having mummy portraits created for their burial. Despite this fact, our research has shown that Fag el-Gamous is the source of at least seven mummy portraits unearthed at the turn of the 20th century. Although only two of these portraits are explicitly said to come from Fag el-Gamous, the evidence from previous excavators and certain inferences allow us to assign at least five others to this site. While others have identified various individual portraits to this cemetery, the entire Fag el-Gamous collection has never been pulled together and described in one place. Doing so provides a more balanced view of the population that was buried at Fag el-Gamous by providing information about the wealthier part of the cemetery's population. Thus, identifying mummy portraits from the area and noting the characteristics of the total known collection is integral to understanding the cultural composition and history of the area.

There are some obstacles to properly identifying the portraits under study. One of these is that through the years, archaeologists have used a variety of labels to describe the area surrounding Fag el-Gamous, making it difficult to precisely determine the provenance of some specific objects. This labeling

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1. Many of the burials were in such disarticulated condition that no good record of the burial could be made. We have good information for well over 1,000 burials, but the excavation director kept careful count each year of how many burials were discovered, and his count exceeds 1,700.

confusion is partially the result of a large cemetery providing burial grounds for multiple villages, including the settlements of Manishinshana and Seila.[2] To further complicate the issue, Manishinshana is sometimes referred to by the names of Tanis or Kom in excavation reports or artifact registries, as will be seen below. Thus, excavators would refer to an object found in the cemetery as coming from Fag el-Gamous, Seila, Manishinshana, Tanis, or Kom.[3] In addition, some archaeologists were very imprecise when labeling the origins of their findings. Some excavators originally spoke of an object as coming from Manishinshana and then later referred to that same object as coming from the cemetery, or used a different name for the village. Furthermore, early excavators were not as careful as would have been ideal when they recorded provenances, while museum labels or registers, which can contain the only written provenance of some objects, were sometimes created years after the actual excavation.[4]

In addition to these naming complexities, many excavators report finding mummies in the villages and settlements surrounding the necropolis. Despite their reports, we assume that all mummies came from the cemetery, not the settlements, even if the reports say otherwise. The practice of burying the dead within village boundaries did not exist in this area at this time and we are not aware of any exceptions to this. It is more likely that the reports intend to indicate that the mummies were found from the necropolis of the village they mention.

All of these factors combine to make it difficult to determine which artifacts and mummies came from the Fag el-Gamous cemetery. Thus, in this study, we have made special efforts to make sense of the provenance labeling system used in early excavation reports and museum registries. In our efforts to identify Fag el-Gamous mummy portraits and fit them into the history of the region, we have attempted to understand and thus overcome these limitations.

The History of Mummy Portraits

In order to appreciate how mummy portraits cast light on the cultural history of the area around Fag el-Gamous, including their place in the midst of a

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2. While one can never say with certainty that no other cemeteries exist for these settlements, to date neither archaeology nor texts have provided evidence for any other possible burial place. For more information about settlements in the Fayoum, see http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251.

3. For details, examples, and references for all of the concepts discussed in this introductory section, see the detailed descriptions of mummy portraits below.

4. For example, the Brussels mummy discussed below was received by the museum there in 1902 but registered in 1913.

larger culture that was experiencing a great amount of international cultural exchange, we must first understand what a mummy portrait is. Pietrodella Valle, an Italian traveler, discovered the first mummy portraits in 1615 at Saqqara. In the early 19th century, several more mummy portraits were discovered by British and French excavators, and by the end of the 19th century that number greatly expanded. In 1887, a major cemetery near er-Rubayat was discovered which contained dozens of mummy portraits. Around the same time, Flinders Petrie found a major Roman cemetery at Hawara containing further examples.[5] Since that time, mummy portraits have been discovered throughout the majority of Egypt. Although these portraits are sometimes called the "Fayoum portraits," they have been found in a variety of places, from Upper Egypt to the Mediterranean coast west of Alexandria.[6] As such, they seem to be a widespread phenomenon in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Klaus Parlasca compiled a catalogue of all known mummy portraits in his work, *Ritratti di Mummie*, which records more than one thousand portraits which have been discovered.

The first known mummy portraits arose about 30–40 C.E. and lasted until the mid 3rd century.[7] Due to the time period, the portraits are a blend of two traditions: Graeco-Roman portrait painting and the Egyptian mummification processes.[8] One of the benefits of a mummy portrait was that it recorded how the deceased looked in life,[9] which fit well with the Egyptian desire for the *ka* to be able to locate the body to which it was attached. The influence of Roman artistic culture is evident in these portraits. The clothing, hairstyles, and jewelry reflect styles that were the norm in the imperial court.[10]

Early History of Excavation at the Site

Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt excavated in Egypt for many years in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They first began working together in the 1895–1896 season investigating Graeco-Roman sites in the Fayoum.[11] Between the years 1895 and 1903, Grenfell and Hunt found many mummy portraits in the

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5. Morris Bierbrier, "The Discovery of the Mummy Portraits," in *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (ed. Susan Walker; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 32.

6. R. S. Bagnall, "The Fayum and Its People," in *Ancient Faces*, 26.

7. Susan Walker, "A Note on the Dating of the Mummy Portraits," in *Ancient Faces*, 36.

8. Kurt Gschwantler, "Graeco-Roman Portraiture," in *Ancient Faces*, 21.

9. Susan Walker, "Mummy Portraits and Roman Portraiture," in *Ancient Faces*, 23.

10. Susan E. C. Walker, "Mummy Portraits in Their Roman Context," in *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt* (ed. M. L. Bierbrier; London: British Museum Press, 1997), 4.

11. J. G. Milne, "Bernard Pyne Grenfell: b. 16 Dec. 1869. d. 18 May 1926," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 12 (1926): 285.

Fayoum.[12] In 1902, they found some of these portraits at Fag el-Gamous. Many of their field notebooks have vanished over the years,[13] and their publication of the finds leaves much to be desired. Thankfully, the Egypt Exploration Society has preserved some glass-plate negatives from their excavations. Morris Bierbrier, formerly the Assistant Keeper of the Department of Antiquities, British Museum, used these plates along with the Archaeological Reports of the Graeco-Roman Branch of the Egyptian Exploration Fund to determine that some of the mummy portraits featured in the photographs came from Fag el-Gamous. Three of the negatives depict mummy portraits from the 1901–1902 excavation season.[14] In the 1900–1901 Archaeological Report, Grenfell and Hunt report finding a Ptolemaic cemetery at Manashinshana.[15] The following season they reported that they excavated near Seila but didn't find anything, so they returned to "Manashinshana." This time Manashinshana was much more productive for them and they discovered several portraits.[16] There is a lot of confusion about the names involved with this site; Tanis, Manashinshana, Fag el-Gamous, and Sela are all used in reference to the necropolis. The nature of the site and the reason for the confusion will be discussed below.

About the Site

Fag el-Gamous is a very large necropolis located on the eastern edge of the Fayoum. When Grenfell and Hunt excavated there, the site was referred to as Manashinshana, the necropolis of Tanis.[17] "The site of the necropolis is by Fagg el Gamus, the name of the road leading from the Fayum across the desert to Riqqa in the Nile Valley."[18] Later in the same source, they refer to Tanis as "probably identical with the ruins of an ancient village called Manashinshana about five miles south of Rubayyat, the cemetery of it being at Fagg el Gamus, where a desert road crosses over into the Nile valley."[19] Looking at a map from

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12. M. L. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," in *Portraits and Masks*, 16.

13. Susan Walker, "Mummy Portraits," 24.

14. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 16.

15. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum," in *Archaeological Report: 1900–1901* (ed. F. Ll. Griffith; London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1901), 6.

16. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum and at El Hibeh," in *Archaeological Report: 1901–1902*, 3.

17. The Tanis they are referring to is located in the Eastern Fayoum. This is not the same Tanis that is located in the Nile Delta where Petrie worked.

18. Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt, and Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Tebtunis Papyri: Part II*, vol. 52 of *Graeco-Roman Memoirs* (1907; repr., London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1970), 345.

19. Grenfell, Hunt, and Goodspeed, *The Tebtunis Papyri*, 403.

Grenfell and Hunt, we can see that the road to Riqqa runs through BYU's current excavation site. They also placed a few tomb locations on the map which are within the concession area. To be even more specific about identifying where they excavated within modern Fag el-Gamous, Grenfell and Hunt tell us that they excavated "at a cemetery in the Fayum on the edge of the desert about halfway between Manashinshana and the Sela railway station, somewhat south of the 'pyramid' of Sela (an Old Empire mastaba)."[20] The Seila pyramid is north of the Fag el-Gamous necropolis and is close enough to the cemetery that it is included in the same concession from the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

The site of Manashinshana has also been identified with Petrie's Kom 2.[21] Kom 2 is a Roman village north of the railway. Petrie says that the mastaba is a major landmark in this area and his account gives an almost exact description of the Seila pyramid.[22] Given this description, we can conclude that the mastaba indicated on his map is the pyramid of Seila. This also helps to further associate Kom 2 with Manashinshana due to their similar locations in relation to the pyramid.

The exact location of Manashinshana as found by Grenfell and Hunt is no longer known, which makes the exact location of the mummy portraits found there hard to determine, a problem that is exacerbated by their alternating between terms such as "Ptolemaic cemetery," "Manashinshana," "Tanis," and "Fagg el Gamus." While the village names sometimes refer to the villages themselves, all of these terms seem to sometimes refer to the Fag el-Gamous cemetery. The ruins of Tell Shinshana, a site located several hundred meters from the edge of the Fayoum, are likely to be the same location as Grenfell and Hunt's Manashinshana based on its location and name tradition. The ruins of the village are also identified as Kom 2.[23] Thus, when early reports speak of finding a mummy at either Manasinshana, Kom 2, or Tanis, they are referring to the Fag el-Gamous cemetery.

Seila is another site in the Fayoum that may be tied to the necropolis of Fag el-Gamous. Because Egyptian cemeteries were located outside of the settlement areas, and because the site of Seila is inside the cultivated land of the Fayoum, its cemetery would have to be in the desert on the outer edge of the Fayoum. Seila is southwest of Manashinshana and is close enough to be tied

20. Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum and at El Hibeh," 2.

21. Paola Davoli, *L'archeologia urbana nel Fayyum di età ellenistica e romana* (Napoli: G. Procaccini, 1998), 165.

22. W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Illahun, Kahun, and Gurob* (1891; repr., Encino, CA: Joel L. Malter & CO, 1974), 31.

23. Paola Davoli, *L'archeologia*, 165.

to the same cemetery. Because of this and because of the lack of alternative cemeteries, the Grenfell and Hunt excavations at Seila and the funerary artifacts found there are quite probably from Fag el-Gamous. They may have used these differing labels according to where their camp was or to indicate differing parts of the huge cemetery (which covers hundreds of acres).

Artifacts

In the 1900–1901 excavation season, Grenfell and Hunt found a large Ptolemaic cemetery near Manashinshana. Here they found many mummies with papyrus cartonnage that were in good or fair condition. They also obtained a large quantity of Greek and Demotic papyri, most of which dates to the third century B.C.E.[24] Unfortunately, the report does not say how many mummies with papyrus cartonnage were found or whether those mummies had portraits or not.

During the following season (1901–1902), Grenfell and Hunt returned to "Manashinshana" after some unproductive excavations in the area around the Seila railway station. At "Manashinshana," they found several "papyrus mummies." The Roman and Byzantine tombs that they found contained well-preserved portraits on wood, glass vases, and many other small objects. A "handsomely decorated stucco mummy" was also found there, but it was retained by the Cairo Museum.[25] Interestingly, this mummy may be referred to in a catalogue from the Egypt Exploration Fund's (EEF's) annual exhibition in 1902, where its description is similar and is listed as coming from Seila.[26] Again, because funerary objects would not have come from the village of Seila, it is almost certain that the other items in the catalogue that are listed as coming from Seila are also from Fag el-Gamous. These other items include cartonnage of early Ptolemaic mummies (3rd–2nd centuries B.C.E) and "objects of the Roman and Byzantine periods . . . including three well-preserved mummy portraits."[27] A difficulty arises when comparing the excavation notes and the catalogue items. Manashinshana is the only place that Grenfell and Hunt said they found portraits in 1902, but the catalogue describes Seila as the provenance of these mummies. This is likely the result of using these names

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24. Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum," 7.

25. Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum and at El Hibeh," 3.

26. B. Grenfell and A. Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch," in *Catalogue of Egyptian antiquities, found by Prof. Flinders Petrie at Abydos and Drs. Grenfell and Hunt in the Fayum (Egypt Exploration Fund) and drawings from the temple of the kings (Sety I), (Egyptian Research Account) 1902: exhibited at University College, Gower Street, London . . . July 1st to 26th*, by W. M. Petrie and Egypt Exploration Fund (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1902), 8.

27. Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch," 8.

almost interchangeably when really referring to their common cemetery: Fag el-Gamous.

Distribution lists from the EEF record that portraits were sent to Boston, Chicago, Brussels, and Oxford in 1902 from Grenfell's 1901–1902 excavation.[28] The three portraits mentioned in the catalogue may be the portraits that are currently in Chicago, Boston, and Oxford,[29] each of which have portraits that have been attributed to Fag el-Gamous.

Other objects recorded with the portraits are not explicitly detailed, but it can be inferred that included with the portraits were glass vases, jewelry, beads, and other objects that are commonly found at Manashinshana.[30] These glass vases may help us to further solidify the location of the site. In the report of the 1901–1902 season, the only location that Grenfell and Hunt report where glass vases were found is Manashinshana. In a catalogue for the Cairo Museum about Graeco-Egyptian glass, there are several vases that come from Fag el-Gamous and one from Seila. In the introduction to the catalogue, some vases said to come from Seila in the catalogue introduction are later listed as coming from Fag el-Gamous. The vases that are listed in the contents of the catalogue from Fag el-Gamous were found by Grenfell and Hunt in 1902. This indicates that the vases found at Manashinshana in 1902 are actually from Fag el-Gamous. Given this information, the portraits found with the glass vases would be attributed to the same location—Fag el-Gamous. This further confirms the evidence that this is their true provenance as well as reinforcing the idea that funerary finds from Manashinshana and Seila really from Fag el-Gamous.[31]

Another catalogue of the Cairo Museum (Graeco-Egyptian Coffins) gives us the record of two mummy portraits in the museum. No(s) 33283 and 33284 are listed as coming from Fag el-Gamous after being found by Grenfell and Hunt.[32] We cannot determine which excavation season yielded these finds. Both of these portraits are said to be in very poor condition, which is probably why they were not taken back to England with Grenfell and Hunt.

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28. EEF Distribution Lists.

29. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and their Portraits," 17.

30. Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch," 8–9.

31. M. C. C. Edgar, *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire 32401–32800, Graeco-Egyptian Glass* (1905; repr., Osnabrück, DE: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1974), iii.

32. M. C. C. Edgar, *Catalogue général des antiquitéségyptiennes du Musée du Caire 33101-33285, Graeco-Egyptian Coffins* (1905; repr., Osnabrück, DE: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1977), 131.

Catalogue Portraits and Descriptions

We have some details for the two Cairo Museum mummies. Grenfell and Hunt describe no. 33283 as a portrait of a young man, the angle of the painting showing more of the right side of his face. The man has a short beard and moustache similar in style to many other portraits. He also has a gilded wreath in his hair. The background of the painting was white when first painted, but it was gilded after the portrait was fixed in place. Wax colors were used to paint the portrait. At the time the catalogue was put together, the portrait was said to be in "very bad condition," and the coloring and detail were unrecognizable. The wood was broken and eaten "all round," the preserved portion was full of holes, the surface was badly damaged and discolored, and the back was coated with cloth and pitch.[33]

No. 33284 is also described as being in "very bad condition." It was broken "all round," and most of the left side of the face was broken off. There is an impression of cloth on the surface, the back is coated with cloth and pitch, and the item is very fragile. The portrait features the head of a bearded man straight on, but shows slightly more of the right side. "There is a strip of white with a lilac border across the front of the neck" which may be the top of a chiton. The man has thick, wavy hair that covers much of his forehead. His beard is also thick and wavy. He has "rather Jewish features," a "fair, ruddy complexion, dark hair, and brown eyes." The forehead is wrinkled; there are "vertical lines above the nose and a strongly marked line below the inner corner of the eye." His eyebrows are thick and arched. He has a hooked nose and his lips curve downward in the middle. The portrait is painted on a white background. It was painted with wax colors and there are marks of a hard point (especially on the forehead). There is "strong light on the nose, forehead, and cheek, shading on the left side of the nose" (the deeper shading is a yellowish brown color); his "hair was rendered by curving black strokes on a brown ground; brown strokes round the outside."[34] It is impressive that we can get such a detailed description of a very badly damaged portrait. The pictures that we have been able to locate of these portraits are indeed in poor condition, but the portions that survive depict very detailed paintings.

Brussels

One portrait from Fag el-Gamous is in the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels, Belgium. E 4859 was sent to Brussels by the Egypt

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33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 131–32.

Exploration Fund in 1902 but wasn't registered until 1913.[35] While the re-cords in Brussels and the EEF give no indication of its provenance, Adolphe Reinach reported in 1914 that at least one portrait that went to Brussels was from Manashinshana.[36] There seems to be a great deal of disagreement about the origin of the portrait; one source argues that the portrait is from Tanis, another from Manashinshana, and another from Fag el-Gamous.[37] Given that these places are all roughly the same location, the portrait is probably from the same site as the other portraits listed as coming from any of these areas: Fag el-Gamous. Distribution lists show that this portrait was found at the same time as a few other portraits attributed to Fag el-Gamous.[38] This fragmentary portrait depicts a middle-aged man that is slightly turned to the right. The right half of his head is broken off. He wears a short beard on his chin and cheeks and has a short moustache. He has dark curly hair and dark eyes. He is wearing a white tunic with a dark trim around his wide neck. The portrait is painted on a white background.[39]

Oxford

Located in the Ashmolean Museum, E 3755 has been attributed to Fag el-Gamous by Morris Bierbrier. The portrait was registered in 1908 with no surviving contemporary note of its provenance. When it was registered later, it was said to come from Tanis (Manashinshana).[40] This portrait was photo-graphed by Hunt during the 1901–1902 excavations. Hunt no. 126 is a pho-tograph of a portrait of a young man. The young man has dark, seemingly straight hair; dark, thick eyebrows; dark eyes; and a long, thin nose. He has a short, thin beard on his cheeks and chin and a thin moustache. He appears to be wearing a red and yellow garment. The background of the portrait is white. This portrait went on display in the Ashmolean Museum in October 2011.

35. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 17.

36. Adolphe Reinach, "Les portraits gréco-égyptiens," *Revue archéologique*, 4th ser., XXIV (1914): 32.

37. Harco Willems and Willy Clarysse, *Keizersaan de Nijl* (Leuven, BE: Peeters, 1999), 209.; Muséed'archéologieméditerranéenne (Marseille, FR), *Egypte romaine: l'autreEgypte* (Marseille, FR: Musées de Marseille, 1997), 156; *The Global Egyptian Museum* (International Committee for Egyptology), s.v. "Mummy portrait," accessed March 12, 2012, http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/detail.aspx?id=711.

38. EES distribution list.

39. Willems and Clarysse, *Keizersaan de Nijl*, 209.; Muséed'archéologieméditerranée nne (Marseille, FR), *Egypte romaine: l'autreEgypte*, 156.

40. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 17.

Stucco Mummy

The Stucco Mummy was found at Manashinshana in the 1901–1902 ex-cavation season.[41] In a later exhibition catalogue, another stucco mummy is included in the exhibition but was said to come from Seila.[42] The descriptions of the two items are so similar that they are most likely the same mummy whose location label was confused, rather than two different mummies. Two photographs from the EES archives are from Grenfell and Hunt's expedition in 1901–1902. Hunt no(s). 128 and 129 are photographs of a stucco mummy from Seila. The coffin is currently being housed in the Egyptian Museum (Cairo Inv. 17|10/16|1). The provenance of the mummy was unknown until Bierbrier brought to light the photographs that showed that this was, in fact, the piece found in 1902 from Fag el-Gamous.[43]

Lorelei Corcoran discussed this mummy in her catalogue of portrait mummies in Egyptian museums. The portrait probably dates from 330–350 c.e. The mummy is covered in a layer of stucco around the head, along the front, and around the footcase. Where actual feet would be on the mummy, there are feet modeled at the bottom of the wrappings. Above the feet are three sections on the front of the body that depict mythological scenes. The first scene is a depiction of the purification of the deceased by Thoth and another deity. The second scene depicts the ram of Mendes above the body of a female mummy, a scene of procreative power and revivification. The top scene is a depiction of the conception of Horus, child of Osiris. The upper torso of the mummy is a portrait of the deceased, an adult woman. Parts of the portrait are modeled in stucco giving a three-dimensional appearance. These elements include a crown of leaves inlaid with "gems" and a star medallion, a medallion necklace, the breasts, and a small vessel in the right hand. She appears to be wearing a red chiton with black clavi. She is also wearing many bracelets and rings. The portrait is painted directly onto the linen and is surrounded by a stucco frame inlaid with stucco "gems."[44]

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41. Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum and at El Hibeh," 3.

42. Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch," 8.

43. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 17.

44. Lorelei H. Corcoran, "Stucco Mummy No. 22," in *Portrait Mummies from Roman Egypt (I–IV Centuries A.D.) with a Catalog of Portrait Mummies in Egyptian Museums*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 56 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1995), 194–202.

Boston/Chicago

Two other portraits have been attributed to Fag el-Gamous through a series of inductions. Since Hunt no(s). 126 and 128–129, photographs from the excavations, depict mummy portraits that came from Fag el-Gamous, it is highly likely that no. 127 (from Seila) is also from Fag el-Gamous, yet again reconfirming the idea that funerary objects from Seila are really from its cemetery, Fag el-Gamous. Hunt no. 127, a photograph, depicts two mummy portraits. One of these portraits is in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (02.825). This portrait was acquired from the EEF in 1902 and is said to come from er-Rubayat.[45] The museum currently lists the portrait's provenance as el-Rubayat in 1902 and says that it was excavated by W.F. Petrie for the Egypt Exploration Fund.[46] However, this cannot be correct. Petrie never excavated in el-Rubayat and in 1902 he was in Abydos, where he worked from 1899 to 1904.[47] The portrait depicts a middle-aged man with a short beard and moustache. He has dark hair that hangs over his ears and forehead. The eyebrows are thick and dark and come together above the bridge of the nose. The man is wearing a white chiton and a gray mantle over his left shoulder. The background of the portrait is gray.[48]

The other portrait in this photograph is now in the Oriental Institute in Chicago (2053). This portrait is said to have been acquired in 1897 from Hawara. Given the fact that this portrait is in the same picture as the previous portrait, it is not possible that they were found at two different times in two different locations—especially since the picture (Hunt no. 127) is labeled as coming from Seila.[49] Another problem is that there were not excavations in Hawara in 1897. The closest time period was in 1892 when three portraits were found, none of which match in description of this portrait.[50] This portrait depicts a young man. He has dark, curly hair, a short, curly beard, and a moustache. He has a very Greek looking nose and dark, thick eyebrows. He is

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45. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 17.

46. "Funerary portrait of a man," Museum of Fine Arts Boston, accessed March 20, 2012, http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/funerary-portrait-of-a-man-131643.

47. "The Archaeological Record: Flinders Petrie in Egypt," Digital Egypt for Universities, accessed March 12, 2012, last modified 2002, http://www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/petriedigsindex.html.

48. "Funerary portrait of a man," Museum of Fine Arts Boston, accessed March 20, 2012, http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/funerary-portrait-of-a-man-131643.

49. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 17.

50. A. L. Frothingham Jr., "Archaeological News: Summary of Recent Discoveries and Investigations," *American Journal of Archaeology and the History of the Fine Arts* 8, no. 1 (January-February 1893): 103.

wearing a red garment with what appears to be white trim or a white under-garment around the neck. The background is beige.

Additional Portraits

In Parlasca's *Ritratti di Mummie*, Parlasca attributes nine other por-traits to Fag el-Gamous that currently reside in the Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology in Berkeley, California. These portraits are actually from Tebtunis. The Berkeley association with their provenance is very clear on this point.[51] The Egypt Exploration Fund reports that in the 1899–1900 season, Grenfell and Hunt were working for the University of California excavating at Umm-el-Baragat, the site of ancient Tebtunis. While there, they worked with several groups of tombs, including a Ptolemaic cemetery. While the report from the EEF does not say whether any portraits were found here, it does say that they found "mummy-cases constructed of papyrus in the same manner as those discovered by Petrie in Gurob."[52] The fact that these portraits are in Berkeley and the fact that Parlasca says they were discovered in 1899–1900[53] indicates that these portraits must have come from the excavations at Tebtunis. As previously stated, Grenfell and Hunt did not find portraits in Fag el-Gamous until 1902.

The Place of the Portraits within the Excavation Project

While other mummy portraits may have been found at Fag el-Gamous, these are all that we are able to ascertain currently. Tracking down these por-traits has been an important part of our excavation research, because one of our aims as a research team is to try to understand more about the culture and society of the people who are represented in the cemetery. There are some obstacles to this goal. One of the largest is that we find little in the way of elite burials. We have been able to uncover the remains of a few elite persons.[54] However, most of these were excavated a century ago. Consequently, we have a large data set for the average citizens in the cemetery, yet we know little of the more wealthy and prestigious. Since the mummy portraits represent a wealthy part of the population, studying them affords us the opportunity to learn more concerning a part of the demographic about which we have little informa-

51. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 16.
52. F. G. Kenyon, "Graeco-Roman Egypt," in *Archaeological Report 1899–1900* (ed. F. Ll. Griffith; London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1900), 44.
53. Parlasca, *Ritratti di Mummie*, 76.
54. See, for example, Wilfred Griggs, "General Archaeological and Historical Report of 1987 and 1988 Seasons at Fag el Gamous," in *Actes du IVᵉ Congrès Copte: Louvain-la-Neuve, 5–10 septembre 1988* (ed. Marguerite Rassart-Debergh and Julien Ries; Vol. I. Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 40 Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters Press, 1992), 195–202.

tion from elsewhere in our excavation. This allows us to develop a more well-rounded picture of this specific regional society.

One area of particular interest is the cross-cultural interaction in this area. Because the cemetery's use extended at least into the 6th century c.e., it witnessed the conversion of much of its population to Christianity, which is attested in finds such as jewelry in the form of crosses. As we attempt to understand the social factors that led to this conversion, and also more about the timing of the conversion, learning more about the Roman-influenced population is important. For example, as we attempt to gain a clearer picture of the conversion to Christianity, one portrait is of particular interest because of the apparent Jewish features represented on the mummy. While the accuracy of this description is far from certain, the possible presence of a wealthy Jew at Fag el-Gamous is a single datum that adds to a larger picture of a Jewish presence in the area.[55] Knowing more about the local Jewish population, such as the fact that at least one (possible) Jew was prominent in the area, and that there was a sizable Jewish population,[56] is important because Christianity was first preached among Jewish populations and then spread to the Gentile (non-Jewish) inhabitants of the same area.[57]

Another value has been added to our research as we have attempted to find the mummy portraits that come from Fag el-Gamous. One of the research questions we have long been trying to answer is this: Where did the people who are buried at Fag el-Gamous live? The size and burial density of the cemetery suggests a larger population than is readily apparent today. Fortunately, the process of identifying which mummy portraits came from our site has also helped us to identify some of the villages that the portraits came from. It has also helped steer us towards the pertinent, earlier excavation reports. Some of these reports are crucial because earlier archaeologists excavated in places we no longer can since current residents have expanded onto ancient settlement sites. Modern real estate conditions prevent excavation, but fortunately our knowledge from early excavation reports gives us increased understanding of the ancient settlements and their inhabitants now buried in Fag el-Gamous.

Another boon that comes from identifying the mummy portraits that came from Fag el-Gamous is that knowing which portraits come from there helps us understand the larger cultural phenomenon of Roman portraiture in Egyptian embalming practice in general. This cross-cultural interaction is

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55. See Kerry Muhlestein and Courtney Innes, "Synagogues and Cemeteries: Evidence for a Jewish presence in the Fayum," in *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 4, no. 2 (2012): 53–59.

56. Ibid.

57. See Acts 3:26; 13:14–52; 19:8–10; Romans 1:16; 2:9.

a fascinating area of study, and all researchers can be more accurate in their analysis of this practice since we now know more about which mummies come from what area of the country. Publishing these findings enables others to make more accurate assessments as well. A fuller picture allows the entire academic community to be more well-rounded in its research.

An exciting development from this research is that, as we learned which Fayoum Portrait Mummies came from our site, we also learned more about where in our site some of them came from, based on maps and excavation descriptions. They seem to have been found in an area south of where we have spent most of our excavation efforts. Thus, we now know that we should do some exploratory surveys in this southern area to see if there are more remains from upper class citizens awaiting discovery. We expect that this research will have a domino effect. Not only will it help us understand our current finds better, but that enhanced understanding will serve as a better guide to finding more significant information and informative artifacts.

The discovery that these portraits belong to Fag el-Gamous is an exciting development that enriches the history of the necropolis. Clearly the villages around Fag el-Gamous were inhabited by people that were experiencing a number of influences from Mediterranean culture. Particularly, Roman influences, and perhaps a Jewish presence, are evident in the portraits. At this same time, Christianity was spreading throughout the village populations, as witnessed by the cemetery. The artifacts from Fag el-Gamous also evidence that even though these were small villages that were out of the way, they were becoming part of a larger culture centered around the Mediterranean Sea. After millennia of being more of a cultural donor than borrower, Fayoum residents were finding their roles reversed. While the pottery assemblage has suggested Roman influence in the surrounding communities, the presence of so many Roman mummy portraits has shown us that Rome was having more of a cultural impact than was previously demonstrated. In the light of these discoveries, we will be better guided in our interpretation of existing artifacts and in our discovery of more.

TEN WAYS TO INTERPRET RITUAL HAND GESTURES

DAVID M. CALABRO

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Hand gestures play an important part in the rituals of many of the world's religions, both past and present. One may think of the Roman Catholic "sign of the cross"; the Jewish priestly blessing gesture, a one-handed version of which was made famous by Leonard Nimoy in his role as the Vulcan Spock in *Star Trek*; and the "laying on of hands" used to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost, confer the priesthood, ordain to an office, set apart for a calling, or bestow a priesthood blessing in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[1] There are also many examples outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition; a Google search on "ritual hand gestures" yields pages of links to discussions of Wiccan and Hindu religions. Hinduism, in particular, has developed a large body of hand gestures, called *mudra* (Sanskrit for "seal"), which appear in mythology, ritual, art, and dance, and are among the many legacies of Hinduism inherited by other Asian religions, including Buddhism.[2] Further, the ritual use of hand gestures has a long documented

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1. See Betty J. Bäuml and Franz H. Bäuml, *Dictionary of Worldwide Gestures*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 261–63. A good description of the sign of the cross and its significance is found in John F. Sullivan, *The Visible Church*, 3rd ed. (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1922), 119–20. The priestly blessing gesture is discussed by Louis Jacobs in "The Body in Jewish Worship: Three Rituals Examined," in *Religion and the Body* (ed. Sarah Coakley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 84–86. The Latter-day Saint gesture of the laying on of hands is mentioned in Latter-day Saint scripture (see, for example, Articles of Faith 1:4–5; Doctrine and Covenants 42:44) and in many manuals published by the Church.

2. Ernest Dale Saunders, *Mudrā: A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960). For more on Hindu mudras, see Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya, *The Mirror of Gesture: Being the Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikesvara* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1936); La Meri, *The Gesture Language of the Hindu Dance* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964); Federico Squarcini, "Gesture Language as a Vehicle in the Expression of Emotion: A Phenomenological

history, being found in ancient Near Eastern texts and art going back thousands of years, perhaps most famously the art of ancient Egypt.

Since 2008, I have been engaged in dissertation research on the use of ritual hand gestures in ancient Levantine literature and art. One of the most complex and interesting issues I have encountered in my research is the diversity of interpretations surrounding what may appear, at first glance, to be very simple gestures. For example, the raising of the hand with the palm outward, which is performed by deities and mortals in many contexts in ancient Levantine art, has been described by various interpreters as a gesture of greeting, of blessing, and of adoration.[3] Of course, greeting, blessing, and adoration are very different concepts; they may be seen as interrelated and are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but each carries different implications for the interpretation of the ritual as a whole.

In the case of ancient Levantine ritual gestures, there is no continuous tradition of interpretation, which encourages speculation and diversity of interpretation based on hints found in the surviving sources. The situation is different, for example, with the Hindu mudras, whose interpretation is supported by a large body of native literature and by a living tradition of instruction and use. However, even with the mudras, there is plenty of room for diverse conclusions as to meaning and function: some describe their function in terms of their supernatural power to transform the person performing the gesture or to affect circumstances, while others see them as a symbolic system whose primary function is to communicate ideas.[4] Further, since one of the main aspects of ritual is that it is "not encoded by the performers,"[5] one may question whether a native tradition or informant has any special status above that of a perceptive outside researcher in interpreting

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Investigation of the Use of Non-Verbal Expression in Monotheistic Gaudiya Vaisnava Tradition," *Social Compass* 42/4 (1995): 451–60.

3. Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 206, 329; Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 169; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999), 216–21. In the latter, Klingbeil consistently describes the gesture as a "gesture of blessing" when performed by a deity and as a "gesture of adoration" when performed by a human, although he does not provide arguments for his use of these terms. See also the discussion in section 3.2 below.

4. Saunders, *Mudrā*, 28–38; La Meri, *Gesture Language*, xiv–xvi; John Lundquist, "Fundamentals of Temple Ideology from Eastern Traditions," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen* (ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks; Provo: FARMS, 2002), 687–89.

5. Roy Rappaport, "The Obvious Aspects of Ritual," in *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion* (Richmond, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1979), 175, 179. Cf. Frits Staal, "The Meaninglessness of Ritual," *Numen* 26/1 (1979): 2–22.

ritual hand gestures. While the form of ritual gestures is established and consistent, their interpretations can be wide-ranging, even within the culture in which they are used.

It is surprising, therefore, that currently there does not exist a unified schema or typology for identifying and classifying diverse interpretations of ritual hand gestures. The lack of such a schema or typology puts the researcher at a disadvantage, as is painfully evident in the dozens of studies that seem to assume that there can be only one correct interpretation for a given ritual gesture. Studies such as these either neglect to account for other interpretations that are different from their own, or they argue for one interpretation over against others that are, in fact, equally valid.[6] These studies end up adding to the literature without providing a complete, satisfying account of the gesture's meaning. A schema or typology for classifying interpretations of ritual gestures would make it easier for researchers to recognize and confront the richness of diverse interpretations and would, I believe, lead to more satisfying analyses of these gestures.

The intent of this article is to present a schema which may be used both to classify previous interpretations of ritual hand gestures and to generate new possible interpretations.[7] This schema should be viewed as a heuristic tool for those who wish to research ritual hand gestures, including philologists and art historians as well as anthropologists studying modern cultures. In what follows, I begin by describing the theoretical basis of this schema, including the relevant technical terms and conceptual categories. I then outline and discuss the schema itself, which consists of ten ways of interpreting ritual hand gestures based on the different ways in which they might function as signs. I then conclude by giving several examples of how these ten ways of interpreting have been and can be applied to actual gestures. Since the purpose of this article is to facilitate future research rather than to present a specific research narrative, the examples given do not amount to a foolproof or even a unified argument but are meant instead to be suggestive and illustrative. The majority of examples are taken from my research in ancient Levantine ritual hand gestures; although these examples are particularly interesting to me because of their long history and their presence in biblical literature, examples from any culture presumably could have served equally well for my purpose.

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6. For examples of both of these tendencies, see sections 3.1 to 3.3 below.

7. This is not the first time that an attempt has been made to collect and organize ways of interpreting ritual action. Cf., for example, Ronald Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, rev. ed. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 36–39. The present study differs from that of Grimes in focusing on hand gestures and in being based on semiotic categories.

1. Terms and Categories

One of the luminaries of modern semiotics, the study of the interpretation of signs, is Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce developed a tripartite classification of signs that is still widely followed and that forms the basis of my approach to ritual gestures. According to Peirce, a sign can function as a *symbol*, an *icon*, or an *index*.[8] A *symbol* is a sign that means what it means because a group of people agrees that that is what it means. An example of this is the letters of the alphabet. They are abstract signs that stand for sounds only because those who write and read with that alphabet agree on what the letters stand for; the relationship the letters bear to the sounds they "make" is called *symbolic*.[9] An *icon* is a sign that stands for something because it resembles that thing. A picture, for example, bears an *iconic* relationship to the thing it depicts.[10] An *index* is a sign that signifies something because of an actual causal relationship, or, to put it another way, because it was at some time in contact, or contiguity, with that something (either directly or by means of an intermediary). For example, a death mask is an index of a dead man's face because the mask was physically molded around the face (the mask also resembles the face and is thus an icon in addition to being an index). In like manner, a nail hole is an index of a nail, and coughing can be an index of a virus. The death mask, the nail hole, and the symptom of coughing are said to bear an *indexical* relationship to, or to *index*, the face, the nail, and the virus respectively.[11] These categories of symbol, icon, and index are not mutually exclusive; most signs have symbolic, iconic, and indexical properties at the same time. However, one or another property may be more obvious than the others or may predominate in our analysis of a sign.

Michael Silverstein, drawing on the work of Peirce and others, has developed a paradigm for analyzing the semiotic properties of language and of other cultural phenomena.[12] Speaking of language, Silverstein discusses the *referential* property whereby language is used to make propositions or "predications descriptive of states of affairs."[13] These propositions are built mainly on symbolic associations between words and the concepts they

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8. Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 2:156–73.

9. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 2:172–73.

10. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 2:157–58.

11. Cf. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 2:170–72.

12. Michael Silverstein, "Shifters, Linguistic Categories and Cultural Description," in *Meaning in Anthropology* (ed. Keith H. Basso and Henry A. Selby; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 11–55.

13. Silverstein, "Shifters," 14.

stand for, although iconic associations may also come into play. Examples of such propositions include the sentences "time flies when you're having fun," which is a predication about time, and "bees buzz because of natural frequency," which is a predication about the sound made by bees in flight (the latter example includes an iconic association, the onomatopoeic word *buzz*).[14] Language also has *indexical* properties, according to Silverstein, by which it presupposes and creates aspects of the context in which it is used.[15] These indexical properties are built not on symbolic associations but on patterns of use. An example of an indexical property of English is the use of the archaic pronouns *thou* and *thee* instead of *you* in prayer. This is not a kind of proposition but rather a response to the ritual setting of prayer and the fact that the one being addressed is God; in a sense, the choice to use the archaic pronouns also defines these aspects of context. The significance of the choice of pronouns depends on patterns of use: the word *thou* stands referentially for the same thing as the word *you*, but the two pronouns are differentiated by the contexts in which they are typically used. The choice of pronouns in this example may be said to *index* the ritual setting of prayer and the divine nature of the addressee. Silverstein's distinction between referential and indexical properties of language may also be applied to gestures, as I seek to demonstrate in the remainder of this article.

2. Ten Ways of Interpreting

Hand gestures, like language, have symbolic, iconic, and indexical properties.[16] Further, any gesture used in a specific context can be analyzed both in terms of what it references through symbolic or iconic association and in terms of how it indexes—that is, presupposes or creates—aspects of the ritual context. The referential properties of ritual gestures can be subdivided by the aspect of the gesture about which the proposition is made, such as the hand itself, the shape of the hand, the motion or pose of the hand, the body including the gesturing hand, or the physical setting in which the gesture takes place. The indexical properties of ritual gestures can be subdivided by the aspect of context that is indexed, such as the bodies of participants, the physical states of participants and of objects, the social roles of participants, the ritual progression, or the ritual setting.

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14. The latter sentence was found at http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Why_do_flying_bees_buzz, accessed 9 January 2013.

15. Silverstein, "Shifters," 23–43.

16. Cf. John Haviland, "Gesture," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9 (2000): 89–90.

The resulting subdivisions of ways to interpret gestures can be outlined as in the chart below, which is explained in sections 2.1 to 2.10. In this chart, the "equals" sign (=) is used to indicate symbolic relationships. A subscript "c" to the right of the "equals" sign stands for a purely conventional (that is, arbitrary) symbolic relationship, and a subscript "i" to the right of the "equals" sign stands for a symbolic relationship that has iconic properties. A "less than" sign followed immediately by a "greater than" sign (<>) indicates an indexical relationship. The "less than" sign by itself (<) stands for "presupposes," and a "greater than" sign by itself (>) stands for "creates." The term "hand" as used herein should be understood as a catch-all term for the hand and/or its associated body parts, including the arm, palm, and finger(s).

Referential Interpretations
1. hand = concept (usually: hand $=_c$ abstract idea)
2. hand shape = concept
    2a. hand shape $=_i$ person, animal, place, or thing
    2b. hand shape $=_c$ person, animal, thing, or abstract idea
3. hand motion or pose = concept (usually: motion or pose $=_c$ abstract idea)
4. hand + body = concept (usually: hand + body $=_i$ person, animal, or thing)
5. setting = concept$_1$ (usually: setting $=_i$ place), thus hand + body = concept$_2$

Indexical Interpretations
6. gesture <> body of first- and second-person participant(s)
    6a. gesture < emotion of person doing gesture
    6b. gesture > physiological disposition of participant(s)
    6c. gesture > change in emotional state of participant(s)
7. gesture <> physical state of animate or inanimate participant(s)
8. gesture <> social status of participant(s)
    8a. gesture < relative social roles and status of participants
    8b. gesture > change in status or relationship of participants
9. gesture <> ritual progression
    9a. gesture < previous rituals, learning, or authorization
    9b. gesture > access to further rituals or ritual stages
10. gesture <> ritual setting
    10a. gesture < ritual setting: temple, judgment hall, etc.
    10b. gesture > ritual locations and boundaries

I would note that the ten ways of interpreting enumerated here do not exhaust the possible interpretations of gestures. The list may be expanded simply by finding additional aspects of the context that might be drawn into a symbolic or indexical relationship with the gesture. Nor does my break-down of the notion of "context" lay any claim to unimpeachable truth; I have limited myself to those aspects of context that have been identified and made the object of focus in the interpretations of gestures with which I am familiar. However, as any sign can theoretically be broken down into symbolic, iconic, and indexical functions, the main categories outlined above should be ser-viceable as a basic model for practically any analysis of gestures.

2.1. Referential Interpretation: Hand = Concept

I will now describe each of these ways of interpreting in more detail. We begin with referential ways of interpreting, which seem to be the most com-monly employed in studies of ancient Near Eastern texts and iconography. As already mentioned, these ways of interpreting base the meaning of the gesture on a proposition or gloss. This proposition or gloss can be formulated in a variety of ways: "x is y," "x means y," "x represents y," etc. The letter "y" in these formulae stands for a "concept"—that is, a place, person, relation-ship, material thing, or abstract idea that is conceived of in the mind of an interpreter.[17]

The hand, arm, etc., may be equated with abstract concepts. For ex-ample, the proposition may be "the hand represents power," "the hand sym-bolizes authority," "the hand is a symbol of life," or "the hand stands, by syn-ecdoche, for the whole person." Once such a proposition is made, it implies that what happens to or by means of the hand happens to or by means of the person's power, authority, life, or whole self. Thus, for example, raising the hand could mean "displaying one's authority" or "pledging one's life."[18] In this way of interpreting, it is helpful to describe the symbolic categories in terms

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17. My term *concept* corresponds roughly to Peirce's term *object*. In contrast to Peirce, I use the term *object* herein to denote a material thing that may be held in the hand.

18. Cf. Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, new and revised edition (New York: Gordian Press, 1975), 428: "their allusion to El's extended hand refers to his far-reaching power; this is a regular Semitic idiom (cp. Arabic *t-w-l y-d*, and the antithetical Hebrew 'short hand' [e.g., Numbers 11.23; Isaiah 59:1] in the sense of 'powerlessness'), and in Oriental iconography, kings and emperors are often portrayed with outstretched arms in token of their power." Also cf. Lewis Dayton Burdick, *The Hand: A Survey of Facts, Legends, and Beliefs Pertaining to Manual Ceremonies, Covenants, and Symbols* (Oxford, New York: The Irving Company, 1905), 130: "the key for the interpretation of some of the ceremonies in which the hand plays a conspicuous part might be found in the recognition by the ancient Egyptians of the arms and hands as the

of the language spoken by the people who practice the ritual. Questions to ask in this way of interpreting are: what does the hand represent by cultural convention? What does the gesture then imply?

2.2. Hand Shape = Concept

The hand shape, either as a pose or in motion, can be equated with a concept. Gestures interpreted in this way are characteristic of Polynesian dance and, to a limited extent, of Hindu dance. There are two varieties of this way of interpreting; the main distinction between the varieties is whether the interpretation is based on resemblance (iconic) or an arbitrary correlation (conventional or purely symbolic). In the first variety (2a), the hand shape may be taken to resemble something (as an iconic symbol). The thing can be from daily life (such as a tool) or from mythology (such as a sacred mountain). In the second variety (2b), the hand shape represents a thing by convention, like an abstract concept, a deity, etc.

2.3. Hand Motion or Pose = Concept

The motion or positioning of the hand can also be equated with a concept. This way of interpreting, along with interpretation number 2 above (hand shape = concept), is very common; numbers 2 and 3 are perhaps the easiest ways of interpreting, since they operate on the level of the gesture itself, so that the meaning of the gesture does not have to be derived from other equations. What distinguishes number 3 from number 2 is that number 3 focuses on movement and positioning of the hand, not on the shape made with the hand. In this way of interpreting, the proposition involves verbs instead of nouns: not "shape x means y," but "to do x means to do y." Statements like "the goddess on the stela raises her hand in a gesture of blessing" or "the lifting of the hands signifies prayer" employ this variety of referential interpretation, whether consciously or unconsciously.

2.4. Hand + Body = Concept

The gesture can be said to resemble and represent the motion of somebody doing an action. This conception of gestures is sometimes referred to as "mime" or "acting." Again, the action can be from daily life or from mythology. There are two main differences between this way of interpreting and numbers 2 and 3 above: (1) The hand represents a hand, not something else. (2) The whole body is involved, even if only by implication. Gestures

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visible representative of the vital principle . . . The life of the attestor was pledged in covenant with the divine spark of the Pharaoh."

interpreted in this way are characteristic of a large part of Hindu dance; this symbolic involvement of the whole body is one feature that distinguishes Hindu dance from Polynesian dance.[19]

2.5. Setting = Concept$_1$, Thus Hand + Body = Concept$_2$

Just as the meaning of a gesture can be derived from a proposition about the whole body, the meaning can be derived from a proposition about an even larger category, the setting in which the gesture occurs. The setting can be said to resemble another from daily life or mythology; therefore the gesture has symbolic significance based on analogy. For example, the proposition could be, "the temple is the house of God," suggesting that the actions of people in the temple derive meaning from analogous hospitality rites and other domestic actions.[20]

2.6. Indexical Interpretation: Gesture <> Body of Participant(s)

Next, we move to indexical ways of interpreting. These are especially interesting for their potential to uncover aspects of culture and religious practice, aspects that may be hidden even from those who belong to the culture. These ways of interpreting are usually relatively unexplored compared to referential interpretations. In essence, they involve asking not "what does this gesture mean?" but rather "what causes this gesture?" and "what does this gesture do?"

Gestures, being directly connected to the one performing them and sometimes to another person as well (in the case of gestures involving physical contact between two people), can index the bodies of these participants. Paying attention to these phenomena yields one kind of indexical interpretation, what could be called "physiological" interpretation, of which there are three varieties. The first variety has a long history among scholars of gesture, beginning with the work of Charles Darwin and repackaged and applied to ancient material by Mayer Gruber, Othmar Keel, and others.[21] It involves investigating what emotional state might give rise to a gesture, either in the immediate moment when the gesture is performed or in the historical origin of the gesture. For example, putting up the hands in front of the face

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19. Adrienne L. Kaeppler, *Polynesian Dance, with a Selection for Contemporary Performances* (Honolulu: Edward Enterprises, 1983), 8.

20. See David Calabro, "The Lord of Hosts and His Guests: Hospitality on Sacred Space in Exodus 29 and 1 Samuel 1," *Proceedings of the Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies* 27 (2007): 19–29.

21. See Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*. Gruber explicitly acknowledges his indebtedness to Darwin on pp. 1–3.

with the palms outward, a gesture commonly seen in Egyptian art, has been viewed as originating from a fear reaction, an attempt to avert numinous and potentially dangerous powers.[22] The second variety focuses on how the gesture disposes the body to certain actions or imposes limitations on action. For example, when raising both hands during prayer, the hands and vitals are vulnerable, and one cannot secretly hold or easily reach a weapon; thus one can interpret the gesture as a form of surrender. In the third variety, one focuses on the emotional states that the gesture induces. This way of interpreting is represented by Christine Morris's studies of gestures depicted on Minoan stamp seals.[23] This way of interpreting starts by asking the question, "how does this gesture make you feel when you do it?" This variety reverses the first variety's path of inquiry, examining the creative rather than the presupposing role of gestures relative to emotional states.

2.7. Gesture <> Physical State of Participant(s)

Somewhat different from the function of indexing the bodies of participants is the function of changing the physical states of participants, including inanimate participants. This category applies especially to so-called "magical" gestures that exert supernatural power on an addressee, like the gesture Moses uses to turn the river to blood and to part the sea. This way of interpreting was in vogue during the first half of the twentieth century, when scholars like Heinrich Vorwahl interpreted many gestures as ways of channeling *mana* (supernatural power) to the body of the one performing it or to an addressee, for good or ill.[24] Although certain aspects of Vorwahl's approach have been criticized,[25] and although modern interpretation of biblical gestures has moved on to accommodate current issues, it should be emphasized that Vorwahl's general interpretation of hand gestures still works to explain the biblical data just as well as the equally subjective interpretations of his successors.

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22. Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 312–13.

23. Christine Morris, "The Language of Gesture in Minoan Religion," *Aegaeum* 22 (2001): 245–51; Christine Morris and Alan Peatfield, "Feeling through the Body: Gesture in Cretan Bronze Age Religion," in *Thinking through the Body: Archaeologies of Corporeality* (ed. Yannis Hamilakis, Mark Pluciennik, and Sarah Tarlow; New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2002), 105–20. Cf. Ronald Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, 6–7.

24. Heinrich Vorwahl, *Die Gebärdensprache im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1932).

25. See Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 13–14.

2.8. Gesture <> Social Status of Participant(s)

Apart from the physical plane, gestures can operate on the social plane. They can index the social roles of the participants (their status relative to one another, their gender, their profession, etc.). One variety of this way of interpreting examines what the gesture presupposes about the social roles of the participants. Looking at as many examples of the gesture as possible, one asks: who does the gesture to whom? Is it the kind of gesture one performs to a social superior or to a social inferior, to one of the same gender or to one of the opposite gender? Is the gesture only performed by priests, by kings, by women, by deities, or by a specific deity? This variety of interpretation can do much to shed light on aspects of the social structure in the culture that the ritual represents, even aspects that may not be consciously understood by the participants themselves. Another variety of this way of interpreting focuses on what effect the gesture has on the social roles of the participants. After the gesture is performed, is the addressee under some obligation to the one performing the gesture, or vice versa? Has a new relationship, such as husband-wife, master-servant, or a surrogate kinship relationship been formed? I would note that, when applying this kind of interpretation, one must be careful to pay attention to any speech that might accompany the gesture, since the function of changing social roles might be shared by verbal and nonverbal components of the ritual.

2.9. Gesture <> Ritual Progression

A ninth aspect of the context that gestures can index is the progression of the one performing them within ritual time and space. Every ritual gesture implies that the one performing it has somewhere learned the gesture and somehow been authorized to perform it. If the context in which people can obtain knowledge of the gesture is restricted, and if this is known to the addressee, the gesture might act as a sort of password or as an indicator of one's stage of progression within the ritual.[26] The idea that such-and-such actions are required by God of those who approach him, even though the actions may be devoid of any other function or of any referential meaning known to

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26. Nibley, "On the Sacred and the Symbolic," 557–59; Todd Compton, "The Handclasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition," in *By Study and also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday* (ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 1:611–42.

the worshippers, is evident in many rituals from the Near East and elsewhere, and this also falls under this type of interpretation.[27]

2.10. Gesture <> Ritual Setting

Finally, a gesture can index the temporal and spatial setting of the gesture. In one variety of this way of interpreting, one focuses on how the gesture might presuppose a certain ritual setting. For example, do people do this gesture only in a temple ceremony, or only on a certain holiday, or primarily in a courtroom during a legal proceeding? The gesture may thus act as a reminder of the ritual setting and may even constitute the ritual setting. This leads to the second variety of this way of interpreting, focusing on how gestures, through their performative function or through regular practice over time, create ritual locations. Ritual gestures can define ritual areas and boundaries by varying according to place in the ritual and by being distributed according to groups that are separated in space. This form of interpretation features prominently in the work of Jonathan Z. Smith.[28]

3. Examples

I will now show some examples of how these interpretive categories can be applied to actual gestures attested in iconographic and textual sources. Given the enormous amount of relevant primary and secondary sources, I can only give a brief sampling in this paper, touching on a few gestures and highlighting only those interpretations that are most interesting in my subjective estimation.

3.1. Upraised Fist

I begin with the gesture of raising the arm to the square, the hand making a fist and sometimes (but not always) holding a weapon. This gesture is performed by deities and mortals in ancient Levantine statuary and relief.[29]

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27. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 370–71; Frits Staal, "The Meaninglessness of Ritual," *Numen* 26/1 (1979): 2–22; cf. Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–22.

28. Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

29. The major studies of this motif are Robert Houston Smith, "Near Eastern Forerunners of the Striding Zeus," *Archaeology* 15/3 (1962): 176–83; Dominique Collon, "The Smiting God: A Study of a Bronze in the Pomerance Collection in New York," *Levant* 4 (1972): 111–34; Ora Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal: An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Institute of Archaeology, 1976); Helga Seeden, *The Standing Armed Figurines in the Levant* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1980); and Izak Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Baal* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 140; Fribourg: University Press,

The motif employing this gesture in combination with a striding pose is known as the "smiting god" motif (despite the fact that it is not only deities who perform the gesture). In the Hebrew Bible, some phrases referring to God or his human representative extending or raising the hand to enact large-scale divine judgments may describe this gesture or one like it.[30]

One recent line of interpretation has suggested that the smiting god motif points to a ritual enacted in the temple, in which a king or prophet impersonates the god in his victory over chaos by smiting enemies who have been captured in battle.[31] This would be an example of interpretation number 4: the king or prophet represents the god, thus the ritual performance of the smiting gesture (whether or not it is directed at a real human) represents the god in the act of smiting. In the first half of the twentieth century, Heinrich Vorwahl saw this gesture as described in the Bible as a means of exerting supernatural power. In this interpretation (number 7), the raised-hand gesture is a way of channeling divine power against an enemy, thus magically smiting the enemy without the need for physical contact.[32] This interpretation, if applied to examples of the "smiting god" motif in art, would fit very well with recent studies on the performative function of Near Eastern art.[33] A third line of interpretation might be to understand the hand and arm as symbols of power or might, so that raising the hand symbolizes the manifestation of divine power (interpretation number 1). This interpretation differs from number 7 in that the purpose of the gesture would be to communicate

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1994). Examples of the motif in which a mortal rather than a deity is depicted performing the gesture are rare, but they do occur. Warriors of uncertain rank (perhaps kings?) are depicted in this pose in siege scenes and in the "Ape Hunt" narrative on Phoenician metal bowls; see Glenn Markoe, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), nos. Cy4, Cy7, E2, and G4. A Middle Bronze Age plaque of "Hyksos" type (which is primarily Semitic in motif and style) shows a deity in smiting pose on one side and two "dancing worshippers," one of whom is "performing the same gesture as the god," on the other; see Othmar Keel, Hildi Keel-Leu, and Silvia Schroer, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel*, vol. 2 (Fribourg and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 264, 266 (no. 73); Cornelius, *Iconography of the Canaanite Gods*, 257, fig. 63.

30. See David Calabro, "'When You Spread Your Palms, I Will Hide My Eyes': The Symbolism of Body Gestures in Isaiah," *Studia Antiqua* 9 (2011): 19–20, 22 and the sources cited there.

31. Nicolas Wyatt, "Arms and the King," in *"Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf": Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient, Festschrift für Oswald Loretz zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres mit Beiträgen von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen* (ed. Manfried Dietrich and Ingo Kottsieper; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 833–82.

32. Heinrich Vorwahl, *Die Gebärdensprache im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1932).

33. Zainab Bahrani, *Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 50–55.

the notion of the deity manifesting power (a notion which could be realized in a number of ways independent of the gesture itself), while the purpose in number 7 would be to actually exert power.

3.2. *Raising Hand with Palm Outward*

Another gesture commonly found in art is that of raising the hand in front with the palm facing outward and the elbow approximately to the square in the shape of a wide "V." Most treatments of this gesture belong to interpretation number 3, labeling the pose as a "gesture of greeting or blessing." In fact, this label has been applied to this gesture so often, and almost always without argumentation, that it has become a cliché. The label may be traceable to a 1941 study of a stela from Byblos by Maurice Dunand, in which he refers to studies by Landsberger and Langdon on a Mesopotamian gesture associated with greeting and blessing; however, Dunand neglects to note that the Mesopotamian gesture referred to in those two studies is actually a different gesture, in which the palm faces inward, not outward.[34] Despite this, there are some good reasons for interpreting the Levantine palm-outward gesture referentially as a form of greeting or blessing, at least in some cases. Yet there are other ways to analyze it. Several phrases used in literature that refer to raising or putting forth the hand may be linked with this artistic motif; these phrases occur in a range of ceremonial contexts, including the presentation of offerings, the swearing of oaths, and the pledging of allegiance.[35] Each of these concepts could furnish a referential interpretation of the gesture, i.e., as offering, accepting an obligation, or expressing allegiance. Referential interpretations of type 1 are also possible; the hand could be seen as a symbol of authority, for example, and putting it forward could thus be a way of presenting one's authority.

Because this gesture lacks a distinctive finger articulation and does not resemble any task-oriented gesture from daily life, referential interpretations would tend to be limited to numbers 1 and 3. However, indexical avenues of interpretation for this gesture, especially numbers 8–10, are especially

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34. Maurice Dunand, "Encore la stèle de Yahavmilk, roi de Byblos," *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 5 (1941): 72; Stephen Langdon, "Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer: A Study in Babylonian and Assyrian Archaeology," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1919: 531–37; Benno Landsberger, "Das 'Gute Wort,'" *Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft* 4 (1930): 294–98.

35. See Calabro, "When You Spread Your Palms," 22; P. R. Ackroyd, "*yād*," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 5:411.

promising and largely unexplored.[36] As this would be a topic for a whole paper, or perhaps even a book, I will simply suggest some questions that could be applied to the contexts in which this palm-out gesture occurs.

8a. Who performs this gesture, and to whom? Does the height at which the hand is held, the distance between participants, or some other aspect of the gesture consistently vary according to the relative social status of the participants?

8b. What kinds of changes in the status of participants result from the performance of this gesture? What do these changes have in common, and what might this indicate about the core function of the gesture? (Textual sources would be especially helpful in answering these questions.)

9a–b. In cases where a sequence of acts is evident, what acts or locations precede and follow the performance of this gesture? Can any patterns be identified?

10a. Where is the gesture performed? (Reference could be made to textual sources, iconographic indicators such as stylized borders representing locations, and archaeological context.)

10b. How might the gesture serve to demarcate groups in the ritual? Are multiple members of a group shown performing the gesture simultaneously, or does one person do it on behalf of the whole group? When two participants perform the gesture facing each other, is there an object, boundary, or empty space between these participants? Is the object associated with one or the other participant, either symbolically or through physical contact? Does the gesture serve to focus attention on the object?

A full answer to these questions must await further research. It should be apparent by now that much can be done to expand our understanding of this

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36. A recent move in the direction of indexical interpretation of ancient Mesopotamian lifted-hand gestures has been made by Christopher Frechette in his book, *Mesopotamian Ritual-Prayers of "Hand-Lifting" (Akkadian Shuillas)* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 11–106.

palm-out gesture, as well as of other gestures for which previous interpretation has focused on the referential to the exclusion of the indexical.

3.3. *Hand in Horn Shape*

We now move to a gesture that is especially interesting because it involves a special finger articulation. The gesture is made by extending the thumb and little finger and folding the other fingers. It is found in Egyptian art, in which foreigners, including Semites, perform the gesture as they are under attack or about to be smitten.[37] Some have linked this gesture to the southern European gesture known as the *mano cornuta* or "horn-shaped hand," attested from the Middle Ages to the present.[38] The modern form of the gesture uses the index and little fingers and has them pointed horizontally, which is slightly different from the ancient form, but this does not rule out the connection, since the form of the gesture may have evolved. The connection would imply that the ancient gesture, like the modern southern European one, is apotropaic (i.e., having the purpose of warding off evil); this would be a type 3 interpretation.

However, the finger articulation suggests other interpretations belonging to types 2a and 2b. In particular, the hand shape resembles the horns and head of a bull (2a), a fact that has not been lost on interpreters of the modern gesture. Whereas some interpretations of the modern gesture link the horns with the devil or with a general notion of strength and fertility, the storm god Adad (also known as Baal) was symbolically associated with horns and with the bull in the ancient Near East, so the gesture could represent the deity himself (2b).[39]

These connections, in turn, yield yet other interpretations belonging to type 3. Making the gesture could be understood as a symbol or substitute for offering a bull as a sacrifice, which could in turn lead to connotations of peace and reconciliation, directed either toward the deity or toward the attacking enemy. Another option is to interpret the bull's horns as a sign of victory. This is suggested by several biblical passages that mention "exalting the horn" and "hewing off the horn," which expressions seem to be symbolic

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37. G. A. Wainwright, "The Earliest Use of the Mano Cornuta," *Folklore* 72 (1961): 492–95.

38. Wainwright, "Mano Cornuta"; Desmond Morris et al., *Gestures: Their Origins and Distribution* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 119–46.

39. This deity was known throughout the ancient Near East. Although he was primarily a Semitic deity, he was also worshipped in Egypt, where he was associated with the Pharaoh, during the New Kingdom. Thus the interpretation of the horned-hand gesture as being associated with Baal does not depend on the gesture being specifically Semitic.

of victory and defeat respectively.[40] None of these interpretations is mutually exclusive; raising a sign of Baal could, for example, signify that the god is or will be triumphant. By exploring multiple avenues of interpretation, we find the possible significance of the gesture growing ever richer.

These referential interpretations, once again, do not exhaust our understanding of the "horned hand" gesture. Indexical interpretations are also possible, even though they are not as well represented. Particularly suggestive is the tension between facing an attacker while making this gesture and the indications we have from textual sources that it accompanied a prayer to deity. One wonders whether the gesture is directed more toward the deity or toward the attacker (8a), and what exactly it was meant to accomplish (7, 8b). It is also interesting that separating the fingers in this manner renders the hand comparatively brittle and vulnerable in the face of an attacker (6b), which seems to conflict with the symbolism of the powerful bull's horns. I have also wondered whether slight variations in finger articulation can be detected, and if so, whether they correspond to differences in nationality or to different functions or contexts.

4. Conclusion

It should be evident from this brief foray that ritual hand gestures are incredibly rich in their potential to signify. Diversity of interpretation is not something to be avoided; indeed, collecting and classifying previous interpretations and supplementing these with new possibilities should be the first step in the analysis of a ritual gesture. What I have presented here may be a useful aid in this regard. This schema is by no means exhaustive, but it may serve as a heuristic tool, helping to expose connections and possibilities that may not have been apparent otherwise. Further, it points out some neglected and potentially fruitful areas for future research, such as the indexical functioning of ritual gestures. My purpose has not been to probe these areas in depth, but merely to point them out and chart a more inclusive path for future research.

In summary, ritual hand gestures have both referential and indexical properties. The referential properties can be classified by the particular aspect of the gesture (the hand itself, the shape, or the larger entity of which the gesturing hand is a part) that forms the basis for the referential connection, and the indexical properties can be classified by the aspect of context that the gesture presupposes or creates. A gesture may have multiple referential and

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40. See 1 Sam 2:1, 10; 2 Sam 22:3; Jer 48:25; Ps 75:5–6, 11; 89:18, 25; 92:11; 112:9; 148:14; Job 16:15; Lame 2:3; 1 Chr 25:5.

indexical paths of signification, and these are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The specific examples that I have discussed show that different parts of my schema may be particularly suitable to a given gesture. They also show that, in these cases (and likely in other cases as well), much work needs to be done to provide an adequate account of the vast complexity of meaning surrounding ritual hand gestures.

BOOK REVIEWS

MITCHELL, MARGARET M. *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. 194. Paperback. ISBN: 978-1107407077.

Margaret Mitchell is dean and professor of New Testament and early Christian literature at the University of Chicago Divinity School. In *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, Mitchell addresses the impact of Paul's Corinthian letters on early Christian exegesis, demonstrating not so much how early Christian authors commented on the texts but how they commented with them.[1] She argues that Paul inaugurated the Christian use of what she terms "the agonistic paradigm of interpretation," in which the goal of biblical interpretation is "utility to the purpose at hand, however contextually defined."[2] Paul's attempt to clarify the meaning of his letters to the Corinthians was an "inner-biblical process that fashioned a store house of hermeneutical principles from which his devoted followers in years to come would justify their own interpretive feats."[3] Thus the Corinthian correspondence became the hermeneutical *diolkos*[4] of early Christian biblical interpretation.

The book is addressed to an audience with some background knowledge of ancient hermeneutics in scholarly discourse and is intended to complicate as well as redraw the map of patristic exegesis. Margaret Mitchell's style is

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1. Margaret Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ix.
2. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, x.
3. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, x.
4. The *diolkos* was a well-worn pathway in ancient Corinth, which was intended for the transportation of goods from the Aegean to the Adriatic and from Asia to Italy. See Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 4.

straightforward, and she divides the book into six chapters that build off one another. In each chapter she demonstrates the problem that occasioned Paul's particular hermeneutical techniques, details the execution of these techniques, and then shows how later Christian authors imitated Paul via the Corinthian correspondence.

Chapter 1 argues that the Corinthian correspondence was occasioned and spurred on by misunderstanding and conflict. In the back-and-forth between Paul and his community, the apostle "negotiated and renegotiated the meanings of his prior utterances."[5] By so doing, Paul drew a map of tactical hermeneutics. Thus, Mitchell concludes, "The Corinthian correspondence is the *diolkos*, carrying the cargo of hermeneutical tools from one end of the empire to another, from the first through the fourth centuries."[6]

Chapter 2 argues that the exegesis of Paul and subsequent early Christian authors was heavily rooted in ancient rhetorical training.[7] Students of rhetoric in antiquity were taught to be skilled users of a set of commonplace techniques, which could be employed on both sides of an argument to determine the meaning of a text.[8] Paul, Theodoret, Athanasius, and Origen all show familiarity with these techniques, and Mitchell terms their scriptural interpretation the "agonistic paradigm of exegesis."[9]

Chapter 3 treats Paul's anthropological hermeneutics, or the taxonomy he creates in the terms "spiritual" (*pneumatikoi*), "physical" (*psychikoi*), and "fleshy" (*sarkikoi*).[10] The meaning of a text is accessed in accordance with the elements of which the reader is composed. Some individuals are more perceptive to the true meanings of scripture because they are more spiritual and less fleshy. Ignatius, Irenaeus, and Origen employ and expound upon this anthropological schema, which according to Mitchell, is "one of the most influential pieces of hermeneutical cargo to pass across the Corinthian *diolkos*."[11]

Chapter 4 introduces the Pauline visual metaphors of the "mirror" and the "veil." The mirror is a metaphor Paul invokes to refer to those passages which offer a partial glimpse or indistinct perception of divine realities, while the veil alludes to the covering or hiding of certain truths (1 Cor 13:12; 2 Cor 4:3–4).[12] These two images comprise what Mitchell calls the "veil scale," which describes

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5. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 8.
6. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 9.
7. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 22.
8. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 22.
9. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 24.
10. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 41.
11. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 51.
12. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 59, 72.

the strategic calibration between the perfectly clear and the utterly obscure meaning of a text, "depending on the hermeneutical, rhetorical and theological needs of the case at hand."[13] Paul and later authors (via Paul) steered the meaning of texts in particular directions, either by declaring that the text is completely clear as it stands or by exploiting its ambiguity.[14]

Chapter 5 addresses Paul's use of "visible signs" and "multiple witnesses" in order to demonstrate the truth of his claims.[15] In Paul's agonistic context, "self testimony was inadmissible and singular testimony was insufficient."[16] Therefore, Paul rhetorically introduces the witnesses of the "fool" and "a man I know" as forensic proof for the legitimacy of his apostolate (Deut 19:15; 2 Cor 11:1–12:13). In like manner, he invokes the visible sign of his "thorn in the flesh" in order to show that he has the true signs of an apostle (2 Cor 12:7–10).[17] Athanasius, John Chrysostom, and Origen later employed the same techniques, using various texts and characters as witnesses.

Finally, chapter 6 addresses Paul's conception of the ends of interpretation. Paul and others appeal to the spirit of his words versus the words themselves, his intent when he wrote them, and the effect they had on the community in order to show that "what matters in textual interpretation is not the words as mere significations."[18] The proper goal or end of interpretation is often the actions and effects it produces.

I found Margaret Mitchell's study to be both interesting and illuminating. The importance of the Corinthian correspondence for the study of early Christian hermeneutics cannot be overstated. These texts contain the very first examples of a Christian author both interpreting his own writings and citing or alluding to (mis)interpretations of his previous letters. Thus one catches a glimpse at Paul's formation of self-identity, early conceptions of authorial intent, and the influence that ancient secondary education and literary practices had on the composition and interpretation of Christian documents. However, I felt that Mitchell's handling of Paul's engagement with ancient rhetorical training[19] was not brought adequately to its logical conclusion. That is to say, I would have appreciated a more explicit and detailed treatment of how early Christianity not only developed from its cultural context but also took common practices and adapted them to its own particular needs. This adaptation

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13. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 59, 77.
14. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 77.
15. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 79–80.
16. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 80.
17. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 89.
18. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 105.
19. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 22–24.

created, in essence, a new type of literary/interpretive culture, founded largely in Greco-Roman rhetorical training but filtered through and perpetuated by Paul's letters.

Mitchell's study also has implications on our conception of how some early Christian authors viewed the "meaning" of a text. According to the hermeneutical practices of Paul and others, meaning was not inherent in the text itself. Rather, it depended on the thesis of one's argument. And while I do not think that Paul and others would have ever said this explicitly, their hermeneutics reflect this mentality. Agonistic Christian hermeneutics suggests that the effects of interpretation are just as significant as interpretation itself. Paul negotiated the meaning of his words (interpretation itself) in order to preserve his authoritative identity in the community, to maintain his intimate relationship with the Corinthians, and to evoke a penitent and corrective response in those who needed to repent (effects of interpretation). Thus Mitchell exposes the many levels of significance in early Christian hermeneutics.

Finally, Margaret Mitchell successfully continues the work of Averil Cameron, Francis Young, and Elizabeth Clark in redrawing the map of patristic exegesis. She calls upon biblical scholarship both to steer away from the inveterate dichotomy of Alexandrian allegorists versus Antiochene literalists and also to account for the manner in which early Christians strategically incorporated textual evidence for their arguments. In this respect, it might be said that Paul's Corinthian correspondence also serves as the *diolkos* in the formation of a new conceptual agonistic paradigm of interpretation in biblical and patristic studies. As Mitchell writes, "Students were not trained to become allegorists or literalists but rather to adapt evidence to the case at hand."[20] All in all, Margaret Mitchell's book is a competent treatment of the hermeneutical impact of Paul's Corinthian letters on early Christian exegesis.

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20. Mitchell, *Birth of Christian Hermeneutics*, 170.