

SPIRIT & REASON

THE EMBODIED CHARACTER
OF EZEKIEL'S
SYMBOLIC THINKING

DALE F. LAUNDERVILLE

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BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Waco, Texas 76798

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Cover design by Joan Osth

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Launderville, Dale.

Spirit and reason : the embodied character of Ezekiel's symbolic thinking /
Dale F. Launderville.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-60258-005-3 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Bible. O.T. Ezekiel--Criticism, interpretation, etc. I. Title.

BS1545.52.L38 2007

224'.4064--dc22

2007028563

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper with a minimum of
30% pcw content.

For Jerome P. Theisen, O. S. B.,
Πατήρ ἔν Χριστῷ



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PREFACE

Symbols are integral to the fabric of human life. We get our bearings within the flow of human experience through symbols that point beyond themselves to the larger whole of which they are a part. Furthermore, symbols participate in the larger reality to which they point. Of first rank among these symbols are human beings themselves. The words and actions of humans testify to the way they see themselves fitting into the cosmic hierarchy. This embodied human testimony is most poignant in times of crisis when the credibility of one's symbol system is put to the test. Those individuals whose light shines steadily in a time of darkness are indispensable sources of inspiration and strength. The persona of Ezekiel communicated through the biblical book bearing his name manifests how new life can arise from death, particularly in his moments of irrational rationality. Just as his prophetic word breathes new life into a pile of desiccated bones, so also his embodied witness of commitment to Yhwh in the face of stiff opposition speaks clearly of the abiding presence of Yhwh in the lives of the faithful.

I began this comparative study four years ago with an interest in how the priest-prophet Ezekiel was able to help Judahite deportees retain their identity and reconstruct their community. His eccentric behavior testified how his entire existence was required in order to gain the proper standing place for symbolizing Yhwh's active presence among the exiles. Such irrationality became a prerequisite for rationality in a time of crisis. Building upon my examination of the symbolic character of the king in my book *Piety and Politics: The Dynamics*

of *Royal Authority in Homeric Greece, Biblical Israel, and Old Babylonian Mesopotamia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), I described in “Ezekiel’s Cherub: A Promising Symbol or a Dangerous Idol?” *CBQ* 65 (2003) 165–83 how the royal person is the locus of conflicting, yet creative forces from the divine, animal, and human dimensions of earthly existence. I followed this study with an examination of Ezekiel’s inaugural vision in “Ezekiel’s Throne-Chariot Vision: Spiritualizing the Model of Divine Royal Rule,” *CBQ* (2004) 361–77 to understand how Ezekiel’s looking beyond appearances in his visions bore analogues to the search for the principles of cosmic order by Presocratic Greek thinkers, particularly insofar as each turned aside from an anthropomorphic representation of the ultimate source of order in the world. I am grateful to Joseph Jensen, O.S.B. for permission from the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* to incorporate sections of these studies into the present work. I am particularly indebted to Lawrence Boadt, C.S.P., not only for reading the introduction to this work but also for his insightful criticism of portions of this work presented to the Old Testament Biblical Colloquium, a group of twelve scholars from the Catholic Biblical Association that has met annually at Conception Abbey (Missouri) for more than fifteen years. Drs. Corrine Carvalho, David Vanderhooft, and Eugene Garver have also provided invaluable guidance through their criticism of the introduction. I have presented versions of chapters one, two, three, four, and six to one or more of the following professional groups: the seminar on “Divinity in Ancient Israel and its World” of the Catholic Biblical Association, the meetings of “The Theological Perspectives on the Book of Ezekiel” section of the Society of Biblical Literature, the Old Testament Colloquium, and the Upper Midwest Regional Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. I am also indebted to my confrere, Dennis Beach, O.S.B., for his careful critique of chapter one, particularly in light of its treatment of the Presocratic philosophers, and to my colleague Dr. Miguel Diaz for his assistance in articulating the character of Rahner’s symbolic thinking.

The composition of this book was facilitated by a Lilly Theological Research Grant from the Association of Theological Schools, which made it possible for me to concentrate exclusively on this project during the Fall semester of 2005. I am grateful to Drs. William R. Myers and Daniel Aleshire for their coordination of this grant program and the opportunities it has provided for carrying out this research project. I am indebted to Professor David Noel Freedman for his assistance and for his encouragement that I write a sequel to my first book. Instrumental in arranging research time and in providing stimulating conversation on various topics addressed in this book has been my colleague Dr. William Cahoy, Dean of the School of Theology/Seminary at Saint John’s University (Minnesota). His insights have helped me navigate a number of impasses. Abbot John Klassen, O.S.B. of Saint John’s Abbey (Minnesota) has been an unflagging source of support throughout this project.

I am grateful to Dr. Carey Newman of the Baylor University Press for the interest he has shown in this manuscript and for his numerous suggestions on ways to strengthen it.

The translations of the Hebrew, Greek, and Akkadian texts are my own unless otherwise indicated. The following texts and editions contain primary texts frequently quoted in this study: MESOPOTAMIA: For *Išum and Erra*, the text and edition are Luigi Cagni, *Das Erra-Epos Keilschrifttext* (Studia Pohl; Rome: Papstliches Bibelinstitut, 1970); idem, *L'Épopée de Erra* (Studi Semitici 34; Rome: Università di Roma, 1969). For the *Enūma Eliš*, the edition is Philippe Talon, *Enūma Eliš: The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth* (SAA 4; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Project, 2005). For the Epic of Gilgamesh, the edition is Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic* (vol. 1; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). GREECE: For Hesiod, the editions are Hesiod, *Theogony* (ed. M. L. West; Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) and *Works and Days* (ed. M. L. West; Oxford: Clarendon, 1978). For Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, the edition is *Aeschyli Agamemni* (ed. M. L. West; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1991); *Aeschyli Choephoroe* (ed. M. L. West; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1991); *Aeschyli Eumenides* (ed. M. L. West; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1991). For Sophocles's *Antigone*, the edition is Hugh Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson, *Sophoclis Fabulae* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990). For the Presocratic texts, the edition is Hermann Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (ed. Walther Kranz; vol. 3; Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1951). For Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the editions are David B. Monro and Thomas W. Allen, eds., *Homeri Opera: Iliad I–XII and Iliad XIII–XXIV* (2 vols.; 3rd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1920) and Thomas W. Allen, *Homeri Opera: Odyssey I–XII and Odyssey XIII–XXIV* (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1917, 1919).

The chronologies followed in this book are based on the following sources: Jacques Brunschwig and G. E. R. Lloyd, *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000) 999–1005; E. J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1968) 197–204; John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981) 465–74; Dominique Charpin, “The History of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Overview,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (2 vols.; ed. Jack Sasson; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000) 807–29.

I have dedicated this book to Abbot Primate Jerome P. Theisen, O.S.B.: a man of deep faith and a symbol of Christ. His steadiness in the face of trying circumstances manifested an integration of faith and reason that was truly revelatory of God's presence and care.

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 February 2007



ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABL</i>	R. F. Harper, <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters</i>
<i>BAL</i>	Riekele Borger, <i>Babylonische-assyrische Lesestücke</i>
<i>BWL</i>	W. G. Lambert, <i>Babylonian Wisdom Literature</i> (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960)
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
<i>CANE</i>	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> (2 vols.; ed. Jack Sasson et al.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000)
Cho.	Aeschylus, <i>The Libation Bearers</i>
<i>COS</i>	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> (3 vols.; ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger Jr.; Leiden: Brill, 1997)
<i>CRR</i>	<i>Compte rendu, Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale</i>
<i>DDD</i>	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons</i> (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1995)
<i>EE</i>	<i>The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enūma Eliš</i> (ed. Philippe Talon; SAA 4; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2005)

<i>GDS</i>	Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, <i>Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary</i> (Austin: University of Texas, 1992)
<i>HGP</i>	W. K. C. Guthrie, <i>A History of Greek Philosophy</i> (6 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962)
NA	Neo-Assyrian
NB	Neo-Babylonian
<i>Nbk</i>	Paul-Richard Berger, <i>Die neubabylonische Königsinschriften</i> (AOAT 4/1; Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener Verlag, 1973)
<i>Op.</i>	Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i>
OT	Old Testament
<i>RAcc</i>	François Thureau-Dangin, <i>Rituels accadiens</i> (Paris: Leroux, 1921)
<i>RLA</i>	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i>
Stein Tafel X	Hugo Winckler and E. Böhden, <i>Altbabylonische Keilschrifttexte zum Gebrauch bei Vorlesungen</i> (Leipzig, 1892).
<i>STT</i>	O. R. Gurney, J. J. Finkelstein, and P. Hulin, <i>The Sultantepe Tablets</i>
<i>TûL</i>	E. Ebeling, <i>Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier</i>
<i>VAB 4</i>	Stephen Langdon (ed.), <i>Die Neubabylonische Königsinschriften</i> (trans. R. Zehnpfund; Leipzig: J. C. Heinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1912)
Wâdi Brîsâ	F. H. Weissbach (ed.), <i>Die Inschriften Nebukadnezars II im Wâd'Brîs' und am Nahr el-Kelb</i> (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1906).

For additional abbreviations, see the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* or the journal *Orientalia* for topics on ancient Mesopotamia and *Old Testament Abstracts* or the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* for topics on ancient Israel.

INTRODUCTION

The prophet Ezekiel had to invest his entire self in his mission to the Judahite exiles in Babylon in the early sixth century B.C.E. He had to muster his thoughts, feelings, and actions in his task of persuading the exiles to reenvision their identity and resist assimilation into the culture of their Babylonian overlords. Vision and rhetoric were two primary instruments by which he would urge them to imagine a future in which they would continue to be a people in covenant with Yhwh. Through his elaborate visions, Ezekiel tried to capture the exiles' attention and overwhelm them; through his sharp rhetoric, he startled them and provoked their resistance. He tried to persuade the exiles to invest their entire selves in the covenant relationship, for their distinctiveness as a people and their integrity as individuals would lie in their ongoing mindfulness of Yhwh. He emphasized that their wholehearted commitment to Yhwh would position them to be living symbols of Yhwh in the world. This symbolic function—an internal mindfulness with visible consequences—would be the key to their realizing their distinctiveness as a people, for this inner transformation would result in their making known through their very being that Yhwh was acting in the world and was present among them.

A key phrase within the theology of the book of Ezekiel is “a new heart and a new spirit.” The exiles are exhorted either to receive this new heart and spirit (11:19; 36:27) or to get them (18:31). Thinking, perceiving, willing, and feeling cannot happen apart from the heart. Life itself is impossible without a spirit. The replacement of these central features of the human person would poten-

tially constitute a radical conversion of one's self-understanding and of one's place in the scheme of things. Ezekiel claims that Yhwh is intervening in the life of Israel in this way so that it might uphold its part of the covenant and thereby manifest to the world the presence of Yhwh within it (36:23-24). This symbolic function served by Israel in pointing beyond itself to Yhwh is the distinctive feature of the Israelites' existence. Ezekiel states that Yhwh has determined that only a radical reconstitution of the individuals within the Israelite community can remedy the ongoing infidelity of the generations since it was in Egypt.

This activity of being a symbol does not simply show up in the book of Ezekiel's later formative stages, but instead shows itself to be initiated in the inaugural vision, from which it unfolds throughout the rest of the book.¹ A central argument of this study is that Ezekiel tried to persuade his rebellious exilic audience to get a new heart and spirit (18:30-31) in order to gain a new standing place from which to understand the rationality of Yhwh's governance of history. For many in the traumatized exilic audience, the Yahwistic tradition was close to becoming meaningless. But Ezekiel's strong rhetoric, his reports of startling visions, and his bizarre sign actions were designed to motivate his audience to look beyond appearances toward a deeper world order in which Yhwh was sovereign.² Ezekiel wanted his audience to think symbolically so that they might make decisions that would move their very being into harmony with the world order of Yhwh. To be faithful to Yhwh meant that the exiles not only needed to think beyond appearances to perceive Yhwh's rule but also to embody the spirit of Yhwh's sovereign rule so that their embodied existence testified to the reality of Yhwh as sovereign.

The standing point from which one exercises reason is critical to the goals and expectations that one has for a rational inquiry. Because complete neutrality or freedom from bias is impossible, the identification of presuppositions and of the context in which one exercises reason is crucial to the capacity of reason to approximate objective reality. Within ancient Israelite anthropology, reason was not thematized as a faculty separate from the emotions and the senses. Feeling, perception, and reasoning were capacities localized in the heart. The contemporary English term "reason" derives from the Latin *ratio*, which in turn is translation of the Greek *logos*, "coherent account." The kind of reasoning associated with *logos* is that of discursive or logical reasoning in contrast to the grasp of something that the mind gains by looking at something. Yet such a direct grasp

¹ Thomas Renz (*The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* [VTSup 76; Leiden: Brill, 1999] 55) argues that the book of Ezekiel is more concerned about "the self-understanding and belief-system of the community than with pragmatic or political advice."

² On refugees' strategies for coping with the trauma of exile, see Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 76-83.

of truth—i.e., the act of seeing to the essence of something—was Parmenides' basic understanding of reason (*nous*).³ This "seeing to the heart of the matter" is the kind of rationality that Ezekiel gains through his visions. It seems that this kind of seeing is the gift that the restored exiles will receive when they are given a new heart and a new spirit. This new spirit will participate in the divine Spirit and so will be the key factor in the restored exiles' capacity to perceive the truth about themselves and their place in the scheme of things. This kind of thinking as promoted by Ezekiel is symbolic in character. The distinctive features of Ezekiel's symbolic thinking will be examined by comparing and contrasting it with aspects of symbolic thinking drawn from the traditions of ancient Mesopotamia (750–539 B.C.E.) and Presocratic Greece (750–440 B.C.E.).⁴

The general procedure in this study for developing a picture of the distinctive features of Ezekiel's symbolic thinking will be the selection of a text first from Ezekiel, then texts from Mesopotamia and from Presocratic Greece that address the same aspect of symbolic thinking. The interpretation of these texts will take into account the genre, historical context, and other features of each text so as to honor the context from which each is drawn. For example, on the topic of praying before cultic statues, the first step will be the interpretation of Ezekiel's condemnation of the idolatrous practices of the Jerusalemites in his visionary report in Ezekiel 8, then an examination of excerpts from the Mesopotamian narrative poem *Erra and Išum* and from Homer's *Iliad* and Heraclitus. Through the comparison and contrast of the pictures gained from the Mesopotamian and Greek cities with that of Ezekiel's Jerusalem, it will be demonstrated that, through his diagnosis and prescription for the problem of idolatry, Ezekiel fosters a type of symbolic thinking aimed at shaping the Israelites into living symbols of Yhwh. Comparing and contrasting Ezekiel's symbolic thinking with that found in Mesopotamia and Greece will shed light on the distinctive qualities of Ezekiel's approach. This study does not aim to

³ Kurt von Fritz, "Nous, Noein, and Their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy (Excluding Anaxagoras): Part II. The Post-Parmenidean Period," *Classical Philology* 41 (1946) 12–34, here 12–13.

⁴ The Greek texts for this study are drawn from the period of 750–440 B.C.E. The "Archaic Age" is the label conventionally applied to the period from 700–480 B.C.E. Numerous Greek texts used in this study are from the Presocratic philosophers (and some texts come after the year 480 B.C.E.), so this study refers to the period of 750–440 B.C.E. as "Presocratic Greece." The terminus 440 B.C.E. marks a time close to Socrates' thirtieth birthday (b. 469 B.C.E.). His public influence had not yet impressed itself upon the public's attention, for the oldest writing in which Socrates is mentioned is Aristophanes' *Clouds* in 423 B.C.E. (see Monique Canto-Sperber, "Socrates," 745–61, here 745, in *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge* [ed. J. Brunschwig and G. E. R. Lloyd; Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000]; Ian Story, "The Dates of Aristophanes' *Clouds* II and Eupolis' *Baptai*: A Reply to E. C. Kopff," *American Journal of Philology* 114 [1993] 71–84, here 76).

identify the ideas or practices that Ezekiel and the Israelites borrowed from their neighbors. The primary goal of this study is to understand the meaning-making activity of symbolic thinking in the book of Ezekiel. Cross-cultural comparisons that are analogical rather than genealogical in character will best serve this purpose.

The crisis that engulfed the Judahite exiles in 597 B.C.E. in Babylon was one in a long series of crises that Mesopotamian imperial powers had thrust upon the ancient Near East after 745 B.C.E. The Babylonians, who under Nebuchadrezzar II had conquered Judah, had themselves only recently managed to get out from under the imperial yoke of Assyria. They had struggled with their Assyrian overlords for more than a century. The battle had been not only physical but also ideological and rhetorical.⁵ To understand the trauma of their situation, the Babylonians had looked to their gods and to the traditions that explained how the gods had acted toward them in the past. They also appealed to diviners, prophets, and sages for direction. This Babylonian search for meaning in a world submerged in violence forms an analogue to that of the Judahite exiles who found themselves taking their turn at the suffering associated with dislocation.

The Greek experience from 750 to 440 B.C.E. was a time of rapid social change in which commercial growth and the emergence of city-state governments were two drivers within the new social order.⁶ Civil strife plagued a number of these emerging city-states. For example, Miletus was in turmoil during most of Anaximander's life. Thus the birth of Greek philosophy takes place in a context that is striving for a new equilibrium.⁷ Local narrative traditions were absorbed into the new order of the polis through the creation of the Homeric epics and their recitation in the various city-states, along with Hesiod's poems.⁸ The overseers of the local sanctuaries in the seventh century began to construct temples, which in turn housed cultic statues that were produced increasingly on a monumental scale. By the sixth century, the Ionian rational spirit evident in Homer's *Odyssey* began to take the shape of questions about order in the

⁵ John A. Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747–726 B.C.* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1984) 2, 73; Barbara Nevling Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics: Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon's Babylonian Policy* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1993) 6–7.

⁶ Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 260.

⁷ Gerard Naddaf ("On the Origin of Anaximander's Cosmological Model," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59 [1998] 1–28, here 24) cites Herodotus 5.28–29 and Plutarch *The Greek Questions* 32 = *Moralia* 298c and notes that life in Miletus under the tyrant Thrasybulus (c. 610–590 B.C.E.) was not only a time of prosperity but also of oppression (Herodotus 5.92).

⁸ Glenn W. Most, "The Poetics of Early Greek Philosophy," 332–62, here 333, in *Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (ed. A. A. Long; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

cosmos. These speculations about cosmic order refrained from attributing that order to anthropomorphized invisible beings. Such critical thinking took place within the context of a culture whose traditions were articulated in poetry. The compatibility of poetic expression with prose writing can be seen in the famous fragment of Anaximander in which he described cosmic equilibrium in terms of justice and injustice (*DK* 12B1). Over the course of the next two centuries, the interplay between philosophy and poetry would at times turn into a hostile battle.⁹ Heraclitus's criticism of praying to images might appear to be an attack on traditional religious symbols and practices, but it seems rather to be his way to get the people to engage in a kind of symbolic thinking that was honest. Heraclitus' type of symbolic thinking that criticizes praying before cultic statues forms an analogue to Ezekiel's criticism of the Jerusalemites' worship of idols. The similarities and differences between the symbolic thinking of Ezekiel and that of Heraclitus on the topic of aniconic worship will be examined in chapter 1.

Symbolic thinking is vital in a time of crisis so that the oppressed people might have the chance to see their distress on a broader canvas. A particularly severe form of crisis arises with the deportation of a people by hostile political and economic forces. Such uprooting creates a long-term condition of disorientation that calls into question the people's self-understanding and identity. The people's culture that has grown up over the generations loses its context, and so the people feel that their connections with one another and with their very selves are weakened or distorted. Important realities lost in expulsion from one's homeland include occupation, material goods, and way of life. But perhaps more wrenching is the sense of being violated. Certain places, things, and ways of doing things held sacred are set apart as matters to be maintained and honored. These have symbolic value, for they point to and participate in a larger network of meaning. When these sacred realities in which the people have invested themselves are diminished, the culture undergoes a crisis of meaning that can be much more distressing than the loss of material goods. The Judahite exiles' feeling that sacred areas of their lives had been violated would have found a correlate in Ezekiel's proclamation that Yhwh felt desecrated by the transgressions of the Judahites. In the cultic sphere, the maintenance of the boundary between the sacred and the profane is not only a way of distinguishing the divine from the human; it is also a matter of life and death.

⁹ Edward Hussey, "The Beginnings of Epistemology: From Homer to Philolaus," 11–38, here 11, in *Epistemology: Companions to Ancient Thought* (vol.1; ed. Stephen Everson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Thomas Gould (*The Ancient Quarrel between Poetry and Philosophy* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990] xvi, xviii, 4) explains that Socrates combated the feeling of pathos that audiences felt upon hearing stories of humans subjected to unmerited suffering by the gods and insisted that humans can use reason in order to be happy in spite of unfortunate circumstances.

The people deported into a region also has an impact on the indigenous people and their culture. Even though the long-term residents and their way of life may be dominant, these entrenched residents need to make accommodations to the immigrant peoples and their ways. The immigrants will bring greater diversity to the local culture; but, at the same time, this will raise questions about the legitimacy of long-standing practices. Local residents may discover that things that they have held sacred and unchangeable are now subject to change. Just as the deported peoples in the Assyrian empire (in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.) as subjects of the Assyrian crown came into conflict with local peoples, so also it would seem that Judahite exiles would have experienced hostility from local Babylonians. In the Greek city-states in the eighth through the fifth centuries B.C.E., the demands of the growing urban culture and the development of colonies put pressure on families to adapt their traditional ways. For a dislocated people, the basic physical necessities of life can be identified, but the need for meaning has an ambiguous dimension that often eludes diagnosis and prescription. These crises of meaning were primarily crises of symbols.

The Distinctive Role of the Symbol in the Creation of Meaning

Ricoeur contends that the term “symbol” should be reserved for those expressions that are plurivocal in meaning.¹⁰ When a term is used in a univocal way, the intended meaning is clear; Ricoeur labels this term a “sign.” Here the interpreter does not need to return to the signifier to puzzle over how it relates to the signified. By contrast with the symbol, even though the connection between the signifier and the signified communicates a meaning, there is a surplus of meaning in a symbol that remains to be addressed. In the symbol, there is an opacity or mystery to the signified that resists the designation proposed by the signifier. The ambiguity, ambivalence, or irony of an expression points to the surplus of meaning carried by a symbol. Therefore, Ricoeur would limit the term “symbol” to those terms in which there is a double relation between signifier and signified: at level one, there is the surface meaning between the signifier and signified; at level two, the deeper meaning of the signifier and signified is explored. If this deeper meaning is not an issue, then the relation between signifier and signified is simply that of a sign.¹¹

¹⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) 11. Ricoeur’s definition of a symbol as plurivocal is in accord with the romantic theorists of the nineteenth century including Moritz, Goethe and Schelling who opposed the symbol to the allegory: the inexpressible to the decipherable; see Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of Symbol* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 199–204.

¹¹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 11–13; Todorov, *Theories of Symbol*, 201; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975) 65–66.

Tillich notes that “both signs and symbols point beyond themselves to something else.”¹² An example of a sign would be the red light of a traffic signal: it points beyond itself to the necessity that drivers must not cross the intersection. The red light has fulfilled its function in sending this message to the drivers, but it has no further function in their thought. By contrast, a symbol participates in the reality to which it points. For example, “the flag participates in the power of the king or the nation for which it stands and which it symbolizes.”¹³ Symbols are integral to poetry, music, and the visual arts because they open up levels of reality that signs or words with a univocal meaning cannot access. A musical piece can touch levels of the soul that cannot be touched by words or pictures. The reality communicated by the musical piece has touched earth but still remains heavenly, and so is inexpressible in its essence.¹⁴

The way in which one understands a religious symbol to participate in the reality of God is vitally important. To claim that a symbol is God would be to make the symbol into an idol—what is less than ultimate reality has been equated with it. To distinguish a religious symbol from an idol, Tillich urges one to follow the logic of such a symbol: its *raison d’être* is to point beyond itself to a higher, more perfect reality. Tillich, in line with Barth’s view of the radical difference between God and humans, claims that statements identifying attributes of God (e.g., “God is love” or “God is wise”) must be seen as metaphors.¹⁵

Rahner believes that all beings have an inherent dynamic to express themselves such that they cannot be who they are unless they do so.¹⁶ This self-expression produces an “other,” of which an essential aspect of its being is to participate in the being from which it has arisen. The other is a symbol of the being from which it arises. The other must, by its very being, refer back to the being from which it has arisen in order for the first being to become manifest.¹⁷

¹² Paul Tillich, “Religious Language as Symbolic,” 435–41, here 435, in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings* (ed. Michael Peterson et al.; 3d ed.; New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹³ Tillich, “Religious Language as Symbolic,” 436.

¹⁴ Donald Dreisbach (“Being and Symbol, Symbol and Word,” 150–60, here 153, in *Being versus Word in Paul Tillich’s Theology? / Sein versus Word in Paul Tillichs Theologie?: Proceedings for the Seventh International Paul Tillich Symposium held in Frankfurt/Main 1998* [Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999]) claims that Tillich reserved the term “symbol” for things or entities, for these realities would participate in what they point to more concretely than mere words.

¹⁵ Tillich, “Religious Language as Symbolic,” 439.

¹⁶ Karl Rahner, “The Theology of Symbol,” 221–52, here 224, in *More Recent Writings* (trans. Kevin Smyth; vol. 4 of *Theological Investigations*; Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966). Stephen Fields, SJ (*Being as Symbol: On the Origins and Development of Karl Rahner’s Metaphysics* [Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2000] 2–4) labels this definition of a symbol by Rahner “a real symbol.”

¹⁷ Rahner, “The Theology of Symbol,” 221–52, here 230, 234, in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4.

If the loop is not completed, the manifestation of the reality of the first being is diminished.¹⁸ The other also does not realize its being unless it refers back to the being from which it has arisen. This dynamic between a being and its other describes the way in which a symbol functions: the signifier creates the signified such that the signified points back to the signifier. In plurivocal signs, this back-and-forth between the signifier and the signified occurs more than once, such that it takes on a dialectical character, because the surplus of meaning between the signifier and the signified is not exhausted.¹⁹

In Rahner's view of the real symbol, the initiative for the creation of the symbol arises from Being. The symbol is a manifestation of the reality within a being. It is the participation by a particular being in Being itself that brings about the birth of the real symbol.²⁰ In the category of signs, Rahner places human creations such as traffic lights or flags. Even though a flag participates in the larger political entity to which it points, Rahner, unlike Tillich, does not regard the flag as a symbol; it is pointer or signal within a human construction that does not arise by necessity from Being. Rahner reserves the symbolic function proper for the real symbol: a dynamic suffusing all of reality in which particular beings constitute themselves by expressing themselves through the other.²¹

Rahner sees a continuity between infinite and finite modes of Being in terms of this symbolic dynamic. However, he respects the transcendence of God and avoids idolatry by claiming that our statements about God's being and attributes are analogous in character.²² For Rahner, to say that God is love is to say that something like our experience of love is part of God's being. God's love is of a different order of reality than human love but yet is continuous with it. In contrast, Tillich and Barth emphasize the different character of God's love and claim that God's transcendence is more properly respected by speaking of God's love as a metaphorical statement about God's attributes rather than as an analogical statement.

Rahner's view of Being as real symbol is in accord with the Christian Neoplatonic view that all reality emanates from and returns to God. Although we can only speak of God by analogy, Rahner sees God realizing himself by expressing himself in the other. This symbolic mode of Being is "necessary" for God

¹⁸ Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 6.

¹⁹ Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 9–13.

²⁰ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 221–52, here 229, in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4.

²¹ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 221–52, here 230–31, in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4; Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 7, 13–14. By contrast, Hegel argued that a sign was not conditioned by space and time like a symbol; therefore, he held that a sign was of a higher order of rationality—i.e., a higher order of Being (see Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 89).

²² Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 75.

and humans alike; this activity of self-expression is constitutive of Being itself.²³ Beings that constitute themselves through self-expression are “real symbols.”

These interpretive approaches to symbol will draw attention to the internal transformation of the Judahite exilic community through the advent of God’s Spirit. Through their exclusive devotion to Yhwh, the exiles would interpret and be mindful of the symbols of Yhwh’s presence among them and thereby manifest that presence through their lives. How Ezekiel’s audience attended to this symbolic dynamic in their embodied communal existence will be a guiding issue in this comparative study.

Spirit and Reason: Vital Capacities of Humans as Living Symbols

If humans are regarded as symbolic beings who constitute themselves by expressing themselves in “the other” and responding to the presence of “the other” in themselves, then the means by which such interpersonal communication occurs will be vital to the sense of wholeness or integration that these humans experience.²⁴ Such communicative acts occur not only among humans but also between humans and God or the gods. Two important human capacities that shape this communication are the “spirit” and the “reason” of a person. These two capacities are central to this study in light of Ezekiel’s theologoumenon of “a new heart and a new spirit” (11:19; 18:31; 36:26). The dynamic, ambiguous character of these human capacities indicates that they will resist a static definition and will need to be understood in the context of the time and place in which they are referenced. Such contextualization of these terms is particularly important within a comparative study.

“Reason” is a term for which English-speakers have a working knowledge. It could refer to a form of practical reason (e.g., prudence) or of theoretical reason (e.g., mathematics). There is a multivalence to the term because the exercise of reason assumes a particular shape according to the object toward which it is directed. The question of method or the way the faculty of reason is exercised is important for defining reason. This was true not only for Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century C.E. but also for Homer in the eighth century B.C.E., who used more than one term for the rational faculty. For example in Homer, the term *phrēn*, or “mind,” could refer to “the emotional, volitional, and intellectual elements in the attitude of a person . . . and was connected with the potential or actual beginning of an action.” However, *nous*, or “intellect,” in Homer referred to direct intellectual perception or intuition and not a reasoning process as in

²³ Rahner, “The Theology of Symbol,” 221–52, here 235–38, in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4; Fields, *Being as Symbol*, 4–6.

²⁴ Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (trans. K. Blamey; Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 1–3.

deduction.²⁵ The multivalence of the term “reason” indicates its potential to operate in more than one narrow semantic field; thus, it is a term that can bring together the intellectual, volitional, and emotional aspects of a person. In the Semitic world, the Hebrew term *leb*, *lebāb* and the Akkadian term *libbu*, translated as “heart,” refer to noetic and affective activity alike. But for the Hebrew *leb*, most of its uses in the OT refer to intellectual, rational functions.²⁶ Depending on the context, the term *leb* can be translated as “understanding, mind, reason.” It can also refer to decisions of the will such as planning, deciding, intending.²⁷ The Akkadian *libbu* has a semantic range and usage similar to that of the Hebrew *leb*.²⁸ The interplay of the noetic and affective activities of the human person as designated by the Hebrew *leb* and the Akkadian *libbu* and the identification of the noetic faculty by the Greek *nous* point to the potential of these faculties to function symbolically.²⁹

“Spirit” (*rûah*) is a term more frequently used of God than of humans in the Old Testament.³⁰ The proper translation of this term *rûah*, which can mean “wind” or “breath” as well as “spirit,” must be determined on a case by case basis. Boadt has demonstrated how the ten uses of the term *rûah* in Ezekiel 37:1-14 highlight the remaking of the covenant relationship by moving from mere “life spirit” in vv. 1-8 to “the Spirit” (Spirit from God’s sphere) in vv. 9-10 to “my own Spirit” (Yhwh’s Spirit) in vv. 11-14.³¹ There is no Akkadian cognate for the Hebrew *rûah*. However, the term *šāru*, “wind,” does refer at times to a cosmic power and not just to a meteorological phenomenon.³² It may also refer to prophetic inspiration in the prophets.³³ In the Greek sphere, Hesiod refers to inspiration by using the verb denominated from *pneuma*, “spirit, breath” (*Theog.*

²⁵ Kurt von Fritz, “*Nous, Noein, and Their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy (Excluding Anaxagoras): Part I. From the Beginnings to Parmenides,*” *Classical Philology* 40 (1945): 223–42, here 229.

²⁶ Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 46.

²⁷ Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 46–55.

²⁸ CAD 50, 169–70; Fabry, “*leb, lebāb,*” *TDOT* 7 (1995) 399–437, here 403.

²⁹ Ernst Cassirer (*Essay on Man* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944] 26) argues that it is more accurate to define a human as *animal symbolicum* than as *animal rationale* because this symbolic activity aims to bring together the intellectual, volitional, and emotional and not simply to determine what is real on the basis of discursive reason.

³⁰ Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 32, 40.

³¹ Lawrence Boadt, “The Dramatic Structure of Ezekiel 37, 1-4,” 191–205, here 203–5, in *Palabra, Prodigio, Poesía: In Memoriam P. Luis Alonso Schökel, S.J.* (AnBib 151; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2003).

³² Tengström, “*rûah,*” *TDOT* 13 (2004) 365–96, here 369–70.

³³ Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (SAA 9; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997)

31). But among the Presocratic philosophers, the term *pneuma* is rarely used.³⁴ The functions that the spirit carries out in the book of Ezekiel are distinctive: a point made clearer through an examination of the empowering and integrative functions of the human and divine spirits in alternative forms in the Mesopotamian and Greek traditions. Articulating these points of difference will help to clarify the uniqueness of the Spirit's activity in shaping Israel into living symbols of Yhwh.

The Prophet Ezekiel within the Book of Ezekiel

The Ezekiel presented in the forty-eight chapters of the book of Ezekiel is a symbolic figure. It is not his performance of symbolic acts that earns this literary persona the descriptor symbolic. Rather it is the fact that the person presented as Ezekiel in the book of Ezekiel is a real being who is continuous with and represents the historical Ezekiel who inspired followers and the subsequent tradition through his connection with an inexpressible Reality.³⁵ The Ezekiel presented in the book of Ezekiel is fully human yet he embodies another dimension of reality in his person. Self-expression is integral to the realization of each individual existent.³⁶ This symbolic character of Being that Ezekiel shares with all beings takes on a particular form through the character Ezekiel who continues to engage readers with his vision of who Yhwh is for Israel in the events surrounding the destruction of the Temple and the monarchy. This symbolic Ezekiel took on a form through the written word different from, yet continuous with that of his earthly life. Our access to this symbolic Ezekiel is through the book of Ezekiel, as it has been for the past 2,500 years. Extrabiblical texts and archaeological texts help to re-create the context within which Ezekiel lived, but it is the text of the book of Ezekiel that provides us with the picture of the real Ezekiel.³⁷ The real Ezekiel is the symbolic Ezekiel, who is more than the historical Ezekiel. The search for the symbolic Ezekiel demands an approach to the text that is attuned not simply to its symbolic structure but even more so to its symbolic dynamic.³⁸ How do the texts show Ezekiel thinking beyond

³⁴ *Pneuma* is not listed in the "Wortindex," of Hermann Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (vol. 3; Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1952). *Psychē*, "soul," may have been equated with *pneuma* in Xenophanes (*DK* 21 A1.27–28).

³⁵ On the interpretation of Ezekiel as a "character within the prophetic narrative," see Corrine Patton, "Priest, Prophet, and Exile: Ezekiel as a Literary Construct," 73–89, here 73–74, in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World* (SBLSS 31; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

³⁶ Cf. Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 221–52, here 224, in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4.

³⁷ Corrine Patton, "Priest, Prophet and Exile: Ezekiel as a Literary Construct," 700–27, in *Society of Biblical Literature: 2000 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 39; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature).

³⁸ Renz (*The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, 15) claims that the book of Ezekiel was not intended to be a mere archive but rather to engage its readers as an audience.

appearances and encouraging others—the exiles and generations of readers—to do likewise?

Ezekiel's prophetic ministry began in 593 B.C.E. and ended in approximately 571 B.C.E. The beginning of his ministry may have marked the thirtieth year after Josiah's reform of Judahite cultic observance in 622 B.C.E., or alternatively it may simply have begun when he was thirty years old.³⁹ Ezekiel may have written down and perhaps even edited some of his oracles.⁴⁰ His consumption of a scroll from the hand of Yhwh makes the point that the written message will have a distinctive authority (Ezek 3:3). It is unlikely that Ezekiel wrote all of the words in the book of Ezekiel. But the extent to which and the time at which editors made additions has been a matter of much controversy over the past century.⁴¹ Some argue that this editorial activity was minimal and had been completed by about 540 B.C.E., and it is this position that is adopted in this study.⁴² Others argue that more extensive editorial work was performed and that the Book of Ezekiel might not have reached its form in the Masoretic Text (MT) until as late as the beginning of the third century C.E.⁴³

Most of the dramatic sign-acts of Ezekiel, which have been characterized by Lang as a form of street theater, have not been examined in this study (3:16 + 4:1-3; 3:22-27 + 33:21-22; 4:4-8; 4:9-17; 5:1-17; 12:1-15; 12:17-20; 21:11-

³⁹ Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 1, *Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 80–82.

⁴⁰ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 26; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 22. Menahem Haran ("Observations on Ezekiel as a Book Prophet," 3–19, in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* [ed. R. Troxel, K. Friebel, D. Magary; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005]) argues that Ezekiel was prophet who communicated primarily through writing.

⁴¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 3–8; Lawrence Boadt, "Ezekiel," *ABD* 2:715.

⁴² Lawrence Boadt ("Mythological Themes and the Unity of Ezekiel," 211–31, here 213–16, in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* [ed. L. de Regt, J. de Waard, J.P. Fokkelman; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996] argues for an editing of the final form prior to 520 B.C.E. and notes these points: (1) no mention of Babylon's fate, which would be expected from editors after 539 B.C.E.; (2) the dates in the book stop at 571 B.C.E., which accord with the picture in the book that Babylon is the world ruler at this time; (3) incorrect prophecies are not corrected: concerning Tyre in chapters 26–28, concerning Egypt in 30:20-26, about Sodom's restoration in 16:53-55.

⁴³ J. Lust, "Ezekiel 36–40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript," *CBQ* 43 (1981) 517–33, here 532; idem, "Major Divergences between LXX and MT in Ezekiel," 83–92, here 206–8, in J. Lust, *Messianism and the Septuagint: Collected Essays* (ed. K. Hauspie; BETL 178; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004); Silvio Sergio Scatolini Apóstolo, "Ezek 36, 37, 38 and 39 in Papyrus 967," 331–57, here 338–40, 355, in *Interpreting Translation: Studies on the LXX and Ezekiel in Honour of Johan Lust* (ed. F. Martínez and M. Vervenne; BETL 192; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005).

12; 21:23-29; 24:1-14; 24:15-24; 37:15-28).⁴⁴ The performance in which Ezekiel was commanded to lay on his left side for 390 days and on his right side for forty days are given an explanation in Ezekiel 4:4-6: by these sign-acts, Ezekiel is bearing the punishment (*nāsā' 'āwōn*) of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah. This action complemented that of the *ḥattāt*: whereas the *ḥattāt* aimed to eliminate impurities, the *nāsā' 'āwōn* aimed to remove unexpiated communal sins. Both actions were necessary for the purification of Jerusalem. The *ḥattāt*, as echoed in the cauldron vision (Ezek 24:1-14),⁴⁵ explained the experience of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the *nāsā' 'āwōn* explained the experience of the exiles.⁴⁶ On Yom Kippur, both the *ḥattāt* sacrifices and the scapegoat ritual were necessary for the restoration of Israel's relationship with Yhwh (Lev 16:1-28).⁴⁷ As such, this sign action shows how Ezekiel in his person and actions points beyond himself to his connections with the northern Israelites, the Jerusalemites, and the exiles (cf. Ezek 37:15-23). Such "pointing beyond" through his person is an example of how Ezekiel himself functions as a symbol. Instead of explicating this group of sign-acts listed by Lang, I have chosen to focus upon how symbolic thinking operates at a more fundamental level throughout the book of Ezekiel.

The richness of the symbolic character of the historical Ezekiel and his message allowed for further elaboration by his disciples such that they could legitimately claim that Ezekiel had spoken the passages they added to the written text. Even if the book of Ezekiel in the MT was essentially composed by 540 B.C.E., the subsequent additions by redactors could legitimately be ascribed to Ezekiel according to the ancient view of authorship: a view that embraces the symbolic character of the text. This view of authorship is operative in most of the other prophetic books. It is also to be found in Archaic Greek culture in which the notion of the individual author is beginning to emerge alongside that of collective authorship.⁴⁸ Homer is projected to be the rhapsode who composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, whereas it seems that numerous rhapsodes

⁴⁴ Bernhard Lang, "Street Theater, Raising the Dead, and the Zoroastrian Connection in Ezekiel's Prophecy," 297-316, here 299-307, in *Ezekiel and His Book* (ed. J. Lust; BETL 74; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986).

⁴⁵ See pp. 118-20, 279.

⁴⁶ Marvin Sweeney ("Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile," 728-51, here 732, in *SBL Seminar Papers 2000* [Atlanta: Scholars, 2000] 732, 741-42) claims that Ezekiel functions as a priest by bearing the guilt of the people and by portraying the destruction of Jerusalem as a purificatory sacrifice.

⁴⁷ Baruch Schwartz, "The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature," 3-21, here 19-21, in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. Jacob Milgrom et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995); Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990) 35.

⁴⁸ Gregory Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin: University of Texas, 1996) 92; id., *Poetry as Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996) 61.

contributed to its composition.⁴⁹ Within the Pythagorean tradition, the same tactic of attributing the various compositions of the members of the Pythagorean communities through the generations of the sixth through fifth centuries B.C.E. to the founder was employed.⁵⁰ Therefore, with regard to Ezekiel, I contend that even if data from Papyrus 967 were to be embraced, which argues that Ezekiel 36:23b-38 was composed around 200 C.E.,⁵¹ this move would not discount Ezekiel 36:23b-38 as an authentic voice of the Ezekielian tradition because this passage summarizes an essential dynamic throughout Ezekiel 1–48: as living symbols of Yhwh, the Israelites' acceptance of Yhwh's presence is vital to avoiding idolatry and maintaining the integrity of their lives as representatives of Yhwh.

The narrative of Ezekiel 1–48 attests to the advent of Yhwh's Spirit in the lives of the Israelites so as to purify and sanctify them. The implied author of this narrative is the symbolic Ezekiel who serves as a paradigm for the exiles. The implied audience—exiles and generations of readers—is summoned to enter into the visionary reality pointed to and sketched in halting terms by Ezekiel.⁵² The purpose of the narrative of Ezekiel 1–48 is to summon the audience to a decision to enter into a visionary reality that is manifest in, but yet goes beyond appearances (3:21; 11:14-20; 34:25-27). The outcome that Ezekiel seeks from the audience is that they “get a new heart and a new spirit” (18:31), which means that they are entering into a way of symbolic thinking that is embodied. The heart transplant and the infusion of the spirit, which according to 36:27 and 37:14 is the Spirit of Yhwh, means that the reconstituted exiles are participating in the reality to which they point. They had previously been called upon to do this by obedience to Yhwh's statutes and ordinances (20:11-12, 19-20), but now such obedience will be focused upon the *decision* of getting a new heart and a new spirit. Ezekiel's life is a model for the Israelites of what it would look like to change the alignment and functioning of one's perceptual capacities so as to incorporate into one's life a reality beyond appearances.

The need for a new heart and a new spirit is presented in each of the three major sections of the book of Ezekiel. In chapters 1–24, where Ezekiel contends that the judgment against Jerusalem and Judah is justified, he alerts them to the need for a radical reorientation of their thinking and perceiving and thus of their sense of self in 11:19 and 18:31. In chapters 25–32, where Ezekiel

⁴⁹ G. S. Kirk, “The Making of the *Iliad*: Preliminary Considerations,” 1–16, here 12–13, in *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 1, *Books 1–4* (ed. G. S. Kirk; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Nagy, *Poetry as Performance*, 110.

⁵⁰ Gregory Nagy, “An Evolutionary Model for the Making of Homeric Poetry: Comparative Perspectives,” 163–79, here 165, 174, in *To the Ages of Homer* (ed. Jane Carter et al.; Austin: University of Texas, 1995).

⁵¹ Lust, “Ezekiel 36–40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript,” 517–19.

⁵² Cf. Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, 19–20.

proclaims Yhwh's judgment against the surrounding nations, he emphasizes in the person of the prince of Tyre how their heart is in the wrong place (28:2, 5). In chapters 33–48, where Ezekiel proclaims the restoration of the exiles to the land under the sovereignty of Yhwh, he envisions a new life in the land in which Yhwh's Spirit dwells externally in the temple (43:5) and internally in the hearts of the Israelites (36:26-27).

The visionary reality that Yhwh invites Ezekiel and the Israelites to enter into and embody symbolically is presented in its inexpressible complexity in the inaugural vision of 1:4-28. Its dense, dynamic imagery calls for a form of interpretation whose goal is an ongoing engagement that resists closure. The structure of Ezekiel 1–48 shows that the repeated, dialectical engagement with this vision is not simply cyclical but has a linear dimension as Ezekiel explains the deeper causes leading to the destruction of the temple in 586. The heavenly visions in Ezekiel 8:1–11:25 and in 40:1–43:5 show the movement of Yhwh enthroned on the cherubim from his location within Solomon's temple to exile with the Israelites as a "little sanctuary" (*miqdaš mē'āt*, 11:16) to his return to the new temple on the mountains of Israel (43:1-5). This movement of Yhwh on the symbolic cherubim (1:4-25; 10:1-22) shows the potential and the danger of beings whose position as thronebearers calls them to point beyond themselves as they operate within the same sphere of activity as Yhwh. The destruction of the king of Tyre as a cherub of Yhwh alludes to the destruction of the cherubs in Solomon's temple which had become ends in themselves like their Phoenician model, the king of Tyre (28:14). The demise of the cultic establishment in Jerusalem in 586 marked a point of sharp discontinuity between that idolatrous form of cult with the one that was to be reestablished in the future in the purified land of Israel. The destruction of the cherub of Tyre shows that any human creature that does not acknowledge Yhwh's sovereign rule and sets up an alternative symbol system will be destroyed (28:16). The primary thread of the argument in chapters 1–3 of this study is that the sovereignty of Yhwh who transcends all images (chapter 1) has been diminished in its impact by the idolatrous cultic activity at the Jerusalem temple and must be purged through burning (chapter 2). This usurpation of Yhwh's sovereignty was carried out not only by the idolatrous cults in Jerusalem but also by the idolatrous rule of the prince of Tyre, who also receives the sentence of burning by fire (28:18). The unfolding of the glorious, yet ominous vision of Ezekiel 1:4-28 in the narrative of Ezekiel 1–48 shows that Yhwh seeks a relationship with Israel in which the Israelites symbolically reveal his glory. When the symbol is tarnished into an idol, it must be purified or destroyed.

Ezekiel was sent to the exiles to deliver Yhwh's message of "lamentation, mourning, and woe" (2:10) and to urge them to repent (3:16-21). He was to engage them that they might choose to get a new heart and spirit (3:16-21; 18:30-31; 33:1-20). The book of Ezekiel reports only one instance of what

the exiles said to Ezekiel (24:19), and this comes right before the destruction of Jerusalem—the time at which his judgment oracles cease.⁵³ Otherwise, the words of the people that initiate disputations (e.g., 11:1-13) are quoted to Ezekiel by Yhwh (11:2). But then Ezekiel is given a word of Yhwh to speak to the exiles that counters their views (11:5-12), which they are expected to think about and seemingly dispute among themselves. Such disputation in response to Ezekiel's oracles is narrated as a preface to Ezekiel's judgment against false male and female prophets (12:21-28). In their false claims to pay attention to the divine will in their proclaiming oracles of peace, the false prophets construct a wall between the covenant community and Yhwh (13:10-16). This urging of the exiles to be skeptical of claims to true knowledge indicates that a form of critical rationality was prized by Ezekiel. As the discussion of this topic in chapter 4 will show, this critical rationality cannot be autonomous but must be guided by a larger vision of truth.

The deceit of the false prophets to this larger vision of reality is only one instance of rebelliousness in the Israelite community. Ezekiel captured the widespread corruption of Jerusalem when he referred to it as the "bloody city" (Ezek 22:2; 24:6). Blood was the symbol of life. But when human blood was shed or animal blood was improperly disposed of, it created a situation that cried out for retribution. When humans treated one another as predatory animals (cf. 19:1-14; 22:6-12), forces more powerful than reason, it seems, were required in order to respond to the victim's sense of being violated (22:17-22; 24:6-13). The logic of talion was to limit death-dealing violence between humans by shedding blood for blood, like for like. This way of dealing with "savage energies" in humans in the ethico-juridical sphere was paralleled by the shedding of animal blood in the cultic sphere.⁵⁴ Blood as a symbol of life and death had the capacity to operate in both spheres and thus was an important ritual substance for reestablishing boundaries. Chapter 5 describes how Ezekiel tries to persuade his audience that bloodshed and other forms of violence in Jerusalem could only be purged through the violence of the destruction of Jerusalem as wrought by Yhwh.

The extreme violence associated with the deportation of the Judahites and the destruction of Jerusalem most likely gave rise to lamentation. But Ezekiel did not use the lament genre (except to make a parody of it in 19:1-14), and he explicitly forbade the exiles to lament the fall of Jerusalem (24:15-27). Lament implies confusion over the cause and extent of suffering. But Ezekiel did not accept any confusion on the part of the exiles concerning their deportation and the impending destruction of Jerusalem; he was intent on having them accept

⁵³ Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, 17.

⁵⁴ For the phrase "savage energies" in the context of blood sacrifice, see Walter Burkert, *Savage Energies: Lessons of Myth and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (trans. P. Bing; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

responsibility for their plight (33:1-33).⁵⁵ The “death” of Jerusalem was essential for creating the circumstances in which Israel might once again live in the land and reflect the reality of Yhwh among them (36:24-30). The removal of the king of Tyre and Pharaoh to the Netherworld (26:19-21; 28:8-10; 31:15-18; 32:18-32) and the annihilation of the forces of Gog (38:1-39:24) point to the new situation in which the reconstituted community might live. The new life of the members of the reconstituted community will be an embodied life analogous to that experienced in their previous life. In the vision of the dry bones coming to life, the exiles were challenged to let go of their lamentation over their plight and accept the new life given them by Yhwh’s Spirit. Chapter 6 discusses how Ezekiel urges the exiles to accept the death of Jerusalem and to rise to a new life in the land through the power of Yhwh’s Spirit mediated by the prophetic word.

In 36:22-23, Ezekiel shows how Yhwh’s name had been desecrated by Israel’s rebelliousness and by their subsequent exile as a punishment. To reveal the true reality of Yhwh to Israel and the nations, Yhwh planned to restore Israel to the land. The theme of judgment in chapters 1–24 is answered by the oracles of salvation in 36:22-36. Yhwh had linked his reputation with Israel by entering into covenant with them (20:6, 9,14). Yhwh would demonstrate his fidelity to his word, which meant that Israel by its collective existence in the land would be a refurbished living symbol of Yhwh. Ezek 36:16-32 responds to Ezek 20:1-44 not only by recapitulating how Israel was to acknowledge its history of sin in successive generations as the cause of the judgment (20:1-39; 36:16-22) but also by promising restoration to the land (36:23-32) that echoes the oracle of salvation in 20:40-49, which speaks of the presentation of the repentant exiles on the mountains of Israel as a “sweet-smelling offering” to Yhwh (20:41). Although the temple and its rituals would be restored to the Israelites in the land (40:1–46:24), the goal of this institution was to assist the people in their all-important task of pointing beyond themselves by their embodied communal existence to the reality of Yhwh.

The Thematic-Analogical Approach of This Comparative Study

Each culture has its own integrity. To disrespect the boundaries that demarcate the distinctiveness of a particular culture is to do an injustice to that culture, and if the boundary violated is a sacred one, to desecrate that culture. Nevertheless, the identity of any individual or community necessarily includes its relationship to “the other.” For all of us, the other is part of our world and we are part of

⁵⁵ Lawrence Boadt, “The Salvation Oracles in Ezekiel,” *HAR* 12 (1990) 1–21, here 7. Ezekiel did not allow the exiles to believe that they were victims: an emotion drawn forth in a Greek tragedy (see Gould, *The Ancient Quarrel between Poetry and Philosophy*, xviii).

the other's world before we are consciously aware of it.⁵⁶ This point is made in Rahner's real symbol in which a particular being expresses himself in the other in order to realize himself.⁵⁷ Who or what this "other" is admits of many possibilities, but the relationship to the "other" is necessary and is constitutive of a particular being. The process of differentiating oneself from the other will involve identifying similarities and differences.⁵⁸ If the other being is of a different order of being (e.g., divine versus human), then analogy would be a valid way of making a comparison. To describe the identity of an individual or a community only in terms of its own traditions and values would be an artificial overlay on the fundamental ontological structure of beings that include attention to the other. Therefore, in this study—which aims to describe the ways in which Ezekiel's symbolic thinking facilitates the creation of clear boundaries between the sacred and the profane and between Israel and the nations through the placement of Yhwh's Spirit within the exiles—the comparison of the ways in which Ezekiel's symbolic thinking creates boundaries with the ways in which symbolic thinking in Mesopotamia and Presocratic Greece creates boundaries in its communities will form a context within which the role of the "other" in the formation of the identity of the exiles can be more fully explored. The three-way comparison of texts on a particular theme pushes the investigation toward an articulation of similarities and differences that is more abstract than a simple enumeration of particular characteristics of each culture, but at the same time the abstract concept uniting the three instances remains answerable to the particularities of each text. This exercise in articulating the "one over the many" is analogous to the way the early Milesians tried to understand the order of the cosmos.

Every act of reading takes place within the hermeneutic circle. The selection of texts for this study has been directed by the purpose of this study and by the nature of the material available from the cultures of ancient Israel, Mesopotamia, and Presocratic Greece. The first step was to select texts from the book of Ezekiel that illustrate the type of symbolic thinking that raises fundamental questions about "who" Israel is in light of the exile. The following Ezekielian texts serve as points of focus for each of the chapters of this comparative thematic study:

- Chapter 1—Ezek 1:4–3:27 (inaugural vision of Yhwh enthroned above the cherubim and Ezekiel's call);
- Chapter 2—8:1–11:25 (vision of the destruction of the temple by fire and Yhwh's departure on the cherubim);

⁵⁶ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 161, 180–93.

⁵⁷ Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 221–52, here 224, in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4; Miguel Diaz, *On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001) 92–93, 132–33.

⁵⁸ Ricoeur (*Oneself as Another*, 116) argues that the self establishes its identity by dialectically distinguishing "sameness" (*idem*) from "selfhood" (*ipse*).

- Chapter 3—27:3-11 (description of Tyre as a luxurious ship) + 28:1-19 (judgment of the king of Tyre as an idolatrous cherub);
- Chapter 4—12:21–13:23 (disputation with rebellious Israelites and judgment on false prophets);
- Chapter 5—22:1-31 (judgment of corrupt Jerusalem) + 19: 1-14 (judgment on treaty-violators) + 24:1-14 (judgment calling for the purification of Jerusalem through cleansing heat);
- Chapter 6—25:15-24 (symbolic act of refraining from mourning the death of a wife and a city) + 26:19-21; 30:20-26; 31:1-18 (the description of the descent of Tyre and of the Egyptian Pharaoh to the Netherworld) + 32:17-32 (the description of rank in the Netherworld) + 38:1–39:29 (description of the defeat of Gog and his allies and the purification of the land) + 37:1-14 (vision of the dry bones);
- Chapter 7—Ezek 36:16-32 (oracle of salvation concerning the return of reconstituted Israel to the land) + 20:39-44 (oracle of salvation on the purified exiles' return to the holy mountain).

The texts dealing with the cherubim in Ezekiel 1–3, 8–11, and 28 address the tension between an idolatrous and a proper interpretation of symbols. This theme threads its way through the thematically organized discussions of the first three chapters. The subsequent three chapters focus upon key forces that have the potential to tarnish symbols and lead to idolatry: chapter 4 addresses the issue of the collusion between false prophecy and symbols in Ezekiel 12:21–13:23; chapter 5 deals with the issue of violence as ameliorated or intensified through symbols in Ezekiel 22 and 24; and chapter 6 deals with the question of how death is symbolically mediated in Ezekiel 26:19-21; 27:26-36; 31:10-18; 32:17-32; 37:1-14; 38:1–39:24. The final chapter draws together the findings of the study in light of Ezekiel 36:16-32 and 20:40-44, which claim that the restored Israel will be a symbol of Yhwh to the nations.

With the themes raised by the texts from Ezekiel setting the agenda, texts were then selected from the traditions of Mesopotamia (745–539 B.C.E.) and Presocratic Greece (750–440 B.C.E.). The term “tradition” is used to refer to the *traditio* and *tradtum* within each culture that produced the texts that have been preserved. This tradition is neither monolithic nor fully known, but the texts selected for this study are identifiable either as traditional compositions handed down through numerous generations or, in a few cases, as autographed copies of texts that incorporate traditions from the culture. In retrospect, one sees that a “stream of tradition” emerged in Mesopotamia that is distinct from that in Israel and Greece.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964) 13.

The comparative approach of this study sets these three traditions in parallel. The perspective gained by viewing a landscape from a high place allows one to see connections and relationships between things that are not possible when surveying from the surface. But at the same time, one does not see details of particular things at such a height. This study aims to interpret the selected texts within the larger framework of the tradition of each culture. How each text fits into the whole of the tradition is a more important question in this study than the questions of where the text began and how it grew. The holistic perspective and the genetic perspective are complementary, but different. In other words, this study prioritizes the perspective of how each aspect of symbolic thinking fits into the pattern of symbolic thinking evidenced in the texts of its culture over that perspective that tries to find out what caused a particular aspect of symbolic thinking to appear. Discovering how an aspect of symbolic thinking *functions* in its cultural context is a higher priority than finding out the origin of this aspect. Stated in Aristotelian terms, this study prioritizes the final cause over the instrumental cause. Just as final causes are known through a combination of experience and intuition, so also the recovery of the picture of the tradition of each culture is a construction based on data and intuition. The teleological perspective affords a more holistic context within which to examine the dynamics of symbolic thinking than that provided by an instrumental, genetic explanation. Nevertheless, these two perspectives can be complementary rather than mutually exclusive—such was the way that Aristotle originally conceived them (*Physics* 2.1–3).⁶⁰

Genres are an important dimension of oral and written speech that alert the listener or the reader to the intention of the speaker or author. These typical forms (e.g., laments, laws, proverbs) provide clues as to how to contextualize the words of the speaker. Information on the genre assists in the production of a responsible interpretation of a text. The generic category is not the same as the grammatical category; the former adapts to the particularities of a text whereas the latter remains a fixed category to which the particularities of a text must adapt. Genres are dynamic, relational linguistic entities and are not unchanging, transcendent forms that become embodied in particular texts.⁶¹ For example, the genre of the prophetic judgment speech exists only in particular texts. As instantiated, a judgment speech like that of Ezekiel 32:17–32 does not form a silo that prevents it from being compared to a mythopoetic narrative describing the Netherworld in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (12:102–16) to see what these

⁶⁰ Aristotle, *Physics* (2 vols.; ed. Philip Wicksteed and Francis Cornford; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963) 1:106–38.

⁶¹ Marvin Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, “Introduction,” 1–11, here 9–10, in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-first Century* (ed. M. Sweeney and E. Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

two texts reveal about how ancients might have imagined human existence after death. Genre is an important factor in comparing two texts, but difference in genre is not a barrier that precludes the comparison of texts. A genre imprints a speech type on an oral or written text so that it can communicate a distinctive message within a diversity of speech forms. The issue with genre in a comparative study is not that it predetermines what kind of texts can be compared; rather, the issue is whether or not the characteristics and intention of the genre of particular texts have been attended to adequately in the interpretation of the texts.⁶²

The theme-driven agenda of this study privileges a holistic interpretation of the final form of the texts over a historical search for sources. However, the historical interpretation of the texts is an indispensable aspect of this study, even if it is not the governing interpretive approach. The description of ideas and their interrelationship in a particular text is predominantly a synchronic exercise, but the ideational activity witnessed in these texts did not take place in a timeless realm—although Parmenides would want his readers to believe that his text was forged in the heavenly sphere. Therefore, the diachronic dimension of the textual witnesses must be addressed. The agenda of this study—that of describing how spirit and reason interact to promote authentic symbolic thinking—is a synchronic task undergirded by diachronic efforts, rather than vice versa. This distinction is particularly important when comparing texts according to an analogical rather than a genealogical model. To illustrate this thematic-analogical model, I will provide an overview of the topics and themes according to which the texts and materials from each of the three cultures have been selected and arranged.

In chapter 1, after a brief word study of the Hebrew, Akkadian, and Greek terms for “spirit,” “heart,” and “reason,” I address the question raised by Ezekiel’s inaugural vision about the “who” that exercises sovereignty over heaven and earth. Ezekiel’s daring ascription of anthropomorphic traits to Yhwh in this vision remains within the aniconic ethos of the Israelite tradition as expressed in Deuteronomy 4:15-20. In Mesopotamia, the gods are symbolically represented by material statues, yet narratives such as the *Enūma Eliš* portray the statue-like Marduk in terms that accent his sovereignty over natural forces and historical events. In Presocratic Greece, the Milesian efforts to define the ordering principle (*archē*) of the cosmos in material terms (e.g., water, air, fire) and to refrain from depicting it anthropomorphically led to a movement toward abstract thinking about first principles that later assumed the name of *philosophy*. This abstinence from representational thinking about ultimate reality bears some resemblance to the kind of aniconic thinking spawned by the first commandment of the Decalogue: neither type of thinking can countenance an image

⁶² Roy F. Melugin, “Recent Form Criticism Revisited in an Age of Reader Response,” 46–64, here 47–52, in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-first Century*.

of ultimate reality. The dynamics of the symbolic thinking fostered by Israelite aniconism, Mesopotamian iconism, and incipient Presocratic philosophical thinking will be compared and contrasted within their sociopolitical contexts. A final theme addressed in chapter 1 is the communication of transcendent truth through the infusion of a divine spirit. After the overwhelming inaugural vision (1:4-28), the Spirit lifted Ezekiel back onto his feet and gave him a scroll to consume (2:1-10). Analogously, the infusion of a divine spirit and communication of a divine message to be written down later were given to prophets of Ištar in seventh-century Assyria and to the poet Hesiod in eighth-century Greece to guide his composition and performance of the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*.

In chapter 2, the topic of the absolute opposition between the sacred and the impure is examined in Ezekiel 8–11 and parallels are drawn from the Babylonian poem *Erra and Išum* and from Homer and other Greek texts from the Presocratic period. The sacred and the impure are symbolic realities with a physical-like character. Protection of sacred space against defilement is a common concern among the cults of Israel, Mesopotamia, and Greece. In the book of Ezekiel, the intensity of Yhwh's response to the defilement of idolatry can be traced to the strict monotheism espoused by Ezekiel. The most potent means for the removal of impurities is fire, whose divine-like qualities enjoy diverse expression in the texts of each culture: fire is a metaphor for aspects of Yhwh's being; Marduk incorporates the name of the fire god Girra into his litany of names in the *Enūma Eliš* (VII:115); Hephaestus is the Greek blacksmith god associated with fire at the center of the earth and later is demythologized by the Presocratics into a basic element of the cosmos.⁶³ Water is another ritual detergent commonly employed in each of these cultures. In Ezekiel 36:25, Yhwh promises to sprinkle clean water over the exiles to cleanse them of their impurities. In Mesopotamia, cultic statues underwent mouthwashing rituals as part of their rite of passage into living deities.⁶⁴ In Greece, spring water and seawater were used as purifying agents.⁶⁵ In Ezekiel, ritual means of purification are no longer available to the exiles who have no temple and to the Jerusalemites because their temple is defiled. But the exiles are privileged vis à vis the Jerusalemites in that they can become purified, whereas the Jerusalemites must perish in the demise of Jerusalem (unless they receive the mark in 9:6). Their means of purification in exile are primarily ethical and spiritual rather than ritual in character. Purifi-

⁶³ Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) 281.

⁶⁴ Christopher Walker and Michael Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mis Pi Ritual* (SAALT 1; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001) 233.

⁶⁵ Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) 212.

cation rituals in Mesopotamia included a range of rituals from rites of passage to apotropaic rituals either in times of crisis or at established times of the year. In Presocratic Greece, there are likewise numerous purificatory rituals ranging from those aiming to counteract bloodguilt to those apotropaic rituals designed to deal with collective anxiety (e.g., the *pharmakos* ritual). The significance of sacred space for the exercise of rituals of purification will be examined more closely at the conclusion of chapter 2.

In chapter 3, the topic of distorted self-understanding through arrogance and hubris and the consequent undermining of one's potential as a symbol of Yhwh's presence is addressed. Ezekiel condemned the king of Tyre and his city for the use of their wealth as a form of display. In Mesopotamia and Greece, temple-building was an important means for the city to proclaim its own status at the same time it celebrated the status of its deity. When Ezekiel condemns the king of Tyre as a cherub who has overstepped his boundaries in Ezekiel 28:15, he is pointing out to the king that he operates in the same field of action as Yhwh. However, instead of supporting Yhwh's rule, he has tried to usurp it. This potential for rebellion is strong within the numerous composite figures that function in the mythopoetic narratives of Mesopotamia and Greece.⁶⁶ Such composite figures often draw characteristics from the divine, human, and animal spheres. Neglect of any of these spheres could diminish one's symbolic character as a servant of Yhwh and lead to distorted self-understanding and the use of violence to sustain the illusion. The king of Tyre's power issued primarily from his commercial success (28:16). Control of trade routes had been a source of friction between Assyria and Babylonia in the eighth and seventh centuries and in their ambitions as imperial powers. Likewise in eighth-century Greece a commercial revolution was generating wealth that led to shifts in social status. The shift from gift exchange to commodity exchange and the increasing use of coinage led to the accumulation of wealth, which oftentimes involved the exploitation of others (cf. Solon, fr. 13, lines 7–16).⁶⁷ Problems created by narcissistic greed are evident not only in sixth-century Tyre but also in Mesopotamia during Sennacherib's reign and in Greece at the time of Solon. From Ezekiel's perspective, a symbol system that fails to bring together the divine, the human, and the animal will lead to social and political problems. The Assyrian and Greek thinkers articulated the role of symbols in maintaining social equilibrium according to their cultural models, which also involved the divine, human, and animal spheres.

Chapter 4 examines the place of questioning or skepticism in the reception of messages that purport to be from the divine world. An increase in knowledge

⁶⁶ See pp. 155–59.

⁶⁷ *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum Cantati* (vol. 2; ed. M. L. West; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 127.

about the order of the world can allay one's anxiety over the future. Just as the exiles and Jerusalemites question Ezekiel's message of doom (Ezek 12:21-28), so also Ezekiel questions the message of peace from his prophetic opponents (Ezek 13:1-13). Analogous modes of questioning of prophetic messages are attested in seventh-century Assyria and in the Homeric epics. Prophets may deliver their own thoughts rather than those of a deity. How to receive truths from a divine or transcendent source was a concern not only of Israelite prophets but also of Mesopotamian diviners and poets and of Greek thinkers such as Parmenides and Heraclitus. Divine intermediaries in each of these cultures were tempted to shore up their own self-interests through the messages they delivered. To develop criteria to adjudicate these claims to privileged knowledge, Mesopotamian diviners and exorcists drew upon well-established omen collections and standardized rituals to give prognostications alternative to those of the prophets,⁶⁸ and Greek thinkers began to imagine nature as an entity whose order could largely be explained by causes internal to it rather than appealing to supernatural causes.⁶⁹ The question remains whether these methods of interpretation aimed more at control of the polyvalence and ambiguity of the message or at discernment of its truth.

Contemplation and political action may overlap but do not coincide. Ezekiel searched out the contours of the world order in light of his conviction that Yhwh through his personal power created the order of heaven and earth and adapted it in light of human response to his will. The belief in an objective ethical world order transcending both gods and humans played a significant role in first millennium Mesopotamia and increasingly in Presocratic Greece.⁷⁰ Efforts to manipulate that order through magic played an important role in Mesopotamia from the world-creating devices of Ea and Marduk in the *Enūma Eliš* to the anti-witchcraft rituals of the *Maqlū* tablets.⁷¹ The women prophets in Ezekiel 13:17-23 seem to have been influenced by such magical techniques in their efforts to bring life or death to individual exiles. Magical practices in pre-imperial Greece most notably took the forms of verbal spells, voodoo dolls, and curse tablets.⁷² Tensions between practitioners of medicine and magic attests to

⁶⁸ Marti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Writings from the Ancient World 12; Atlanta: SBL, 2003) 190–91.

⁶⁹ G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience: Studies in the Origin and Development of Greek Science* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 22–26.

⁷⁰ Jack Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium: Toward an Understanding of Šimtu* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994) 7–14, 127–33.

⁷¹ Tzvi Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature* (Ancient Magic and Divination 5; Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2002) 7–16.

⁷² Christopher A. Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 3–32, in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (ed. C. Faraone and D. Obbink;

the strong overlap of interests and techniques of these different paradigms—whereas magic was founded upon the reality of supernatural intervention, Hippocratic medicine avoided it.⁷³ A distinguishing characteristic of magical rituals is their tendency to reduce symbols to instruments.

In chapter 5, the issue of how one makes sense of the irrationality of collective and individual experience is addressed. Navigating the contradictions and aporias of human experience require the use of rituals and narratives that respect the mystery of life. Rituals and narratives demand the engagement of those present; through participation, individuals have the potential to move to a new standing place from which to assess their experience. The shape of divine justice is an issue for the Judahite exiles, for the Babylonian survivors of Sennacherib's devastation of Babylon in 689, and for the fifth-century audience of the Greek tragedy that tried to come to terms with the blindness of finite humans within a conflicted cosmos.

Blood was a potent symbol of life and death. The shedding of blood was a violent means of transferring a living being to the sphere of death. This transgression against the ethical world order required a communal response either to punish the transgressor or to help him alleviate his guilt. Such guilt was not simply an internal psychological experience but a consequence of his conflict with human and cosmic forces. Ezekiel links the bloodshed of the Israelites to the projected bloodshed to come against Jerusalem and asks the exiles to pass judgment in light of the principle of talionic justice (22:2). For Ezekiel, this divine punishment is not arbitrary divine violence. In the poem *Erra and Išum*, the violence of the war god Erra is deemed excessive (V:1–17). In Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, the Furies' focus upon blood vengeance is called into question (*Eum.* 212). The cycle of violence repeatedly sees the hunter become the hunted. However, ritual blood functioned as a symbol that promoted life in the face of death. In Israel, sacrificial blood had to be returned to God but also was used in certain rites of passage and as a ritual detergent (Lev 4:7; 8:23–24). In Mesopotamia, blood symbolized a form of divine life imparted to humans. In archaic Greece, blood was poured out to chthonic deities and served in rituals as an apotropaic device.⁷⁴

Aggressive human energies that frequently surface the unconscious of individuals into their communal interactions require means of channeling that extend beyond rational planning. Rituals and narratives that deal with savage

New York: Oxford, 1991); Daniel Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds," 1–90, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Greece and Rome* (ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999).

⁷³ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 220; Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 47.

⁷⁴ Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 124; Sarah I. Johnston, *The Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 11.

energies address the pressures that can distort a person's judgment. With the cessation of legitimate rituals in the Jerusalem temple, Ezekiel sees the buildup of pressures that will necessitate a catastrophic purging. One source of such pressures according to the poem *Erra and Išum* (1:77, 120; 3D:15; 4:133) and Hesiod's stories about Prometheus (*Theog.* 533–69; *Op.* 47–58) is divine-human rivalry. A significant cause of tension between the human and divine is the humans' tendency to forget about God or the gods. The failure to honor a deity through sacrifices and other symbolic actions in the cult called forth the wrath of the deity.

Key values and sociopolitical processes of a community evolve at a meta-level that reaches the consciousness of the individuals and communities involved only post factum. This can be seen in the conflict between Apollo and the Furies over how to deal with bloodguilt and in Ezekiel's prophetic judgment speeches, which hold the individual responsible before Yhwh who governs cosmic and historical forces. Mythopoetic and tragic narratives frame the contradictions in human experience in a cosmic context so that the audience might grow in self-understanding and perhaps move beyond the conflict.

When sociopolitical pressures in a community are extreme, members of the community may promote forms of human sacrifice as a desperate means for removing the danger from the community. Ezekiel indicates that the Judahites were misguided or deceived themselves in sacrificing their firstborn (20:25-26). In Mesopotamia, the substitute king ritual aimed to protect the king from hostile deities through the death of the substitute. Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia to the goddess Artemis in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* was designed to further the interests of the Achaean forces in their expedition against Troy. A key issue in these debates is the inability of humans to know the intentions of God or the gods and their tendency to project their own anxieties onto the deities. By the horrific example of child sacrifice, Ezekiel showed that idol-making humans end up consuming themselves and their offspring. No sacrificial ritual could salvage the defiled society of Jerusalem, regardless of the level of renunciation the sacrificers believed themselves to be making.

In chapter 6, the topic of the way one comes to terms with the reality of death and its impact on one's self-understanding is examined. Yhwh commanded Ezekiel not to mourn for his wife at her death and the exiles not to mourn for Jerusalem at its fall. A mourning ritual was a rite of passage for the deceased and those associated with the deceased. Proper burial of one's remains was a concern in Israel, Mesopotamia, and Greece alike. The bones of a person were the point of access of the living to the dead. As seen in Achilles' treatment of Hector (*Il.* 22.395–404), defiling a person's corpse still constituted an injury to the person.

The journey to the underworld was one of no return. However, Gilgamesh's journey to Utnapishtim's island (*Gilg.* IX:–XI:6) and Odysseus's going to the

entry of Hades (*Od.* 11.12–50) eventuates in their return to the upper world. Their journeys provide wisdom on the fate of finite humans: the Netherworld was a gloomy prison. However, there were beliefs in the return of the souls to Mesopotamia in the month of Abu (July/August), and in the Greek tragedies (in the fifth to fourth centuries) the movement of souls in and out of the Netherworld was a frequent topic (e.g., *Eum.* 93–139).

The Netherworld would always be a depressing, unhappy place. In Mesopotamia, if one were properly buried, then funerary offerings might increase one's vitality. Analogously, Ezekiel speaks of a higher and lower rank in the Netherworld in reference to Pharaoh's descent (*Ezek* 32:17-31); perhaps Pharaoh and his allies were buried in a mass grave and so were required to descend to the lowest part of the Netherworld. In Greece, in the late sixth century, a belief arose that the just would go to a happy place and the unjust to a place of fiery torment (cf. Pindar, *Olympian Ode* 2.56–73). The stories of the dying and rising of the Greek demigod Heracles (*Od.* 11.602) and of the shaman-like thinker Empedocles supported such speculation on life after death.⁷⁵ To keep order in this place of gloom, a governing structure analogous to that of a city-state was believed by the ancient Mesopotamians and Greeks to be in place. The Mesopotamian goddess Ereškigal (cf. *Descent of Ishtar*) and the Greek goddess Persephone (cf. *Od.* 11.226) wielded power that at times seemed to be more dominant than that of their male counterparts Nergal and Hades.

In Ezekiel, the threat of death from foreign invaders was countered by the proclamation that Yhwh would protect the exiles on their return to the land (38:11; 39:9-10). The story of the defeat of Gog shows that these soldiers would not receive an honorable burial, either through exposure to carrion-eating animals or burial in a mass grave (39:11-15). The Mesopotamian *Cuthean Legend* likewise calls for trust in the sovereign deity Enlil in defeating a terrifying foe from the north.⁷⁶ But such pacifism was ignored by pragmatic Mesopotamian kings such as Assurbanipal who went to the other extreme of exposing enemy corpses to animals and birds.⁷⁷ This practice of exposing the dead and depriving them of an honorable burial formed the central conflict in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Antigone defied Creon's order that her brother Polyneices not be buried, a punishment meted out because of his traitorous actions toward Thebes (*Antigone* 194–208, 245–47). Creon's excessive efforts at controlling the populace rebounded on him as his own family imploded in the midst of this conflict. An important message of this tragedy is that the forces of disorder must be

⁷⁵ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 238–40, 250–53.

⁷⁶ Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *The Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997) 326–31.

⁷⁷ Rykle Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: Die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J and T sowie andere Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996) 44–45, 235; Thorkild Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press) 232.

balanced with those of order in the polis—a concern of the rituals of the cult of Dionysus—for to suppress them in a heavy-handed way would only bring greater trouble.

Speculation on the nature of the Netherworld is a subset of reflection on the issue of life after death. In Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones (37:1-14), the exposure of most of the fallen Israelites and the burial of some of them suggests that the principle of talion is at work: just as Israel was exposed at its death so also will Gog's forces. This especially would be the case if Gog's forces serve as ciphers for Mesopotamian forces in this account. The drama of the dry bones vision centers around the revivification of these remains through the Spirit operative through the prophetic word. The second stage of this revivification in which the Spirit enters into the new bodies of the exiles bears some resemblance to the Mesopotamian ritual act by which a newly crafted cultic statue was brought to life.⁷⁸ In the sixth to fifth centuries Greece, the Eleusinian and Bacchic mysteries drew adherents who felt vulnerable in the new polis society and sought a form of life after death to provide a more adequate context of meaning for their lives. In local Dionysian myths associated with the growth of vines, rituals were enacted in which a male animal was torn and scattered and the scattered parts regathered. This ritual took place just before the opening of the fermented wine in the latter part of the biennial growth cycle. This animal symbolized Dionysus who through his dying and rising promoted the fertility of the vines.⁷⁹ Because of his journeys to the Netherworld and back, Dionysus was revered as one who could guide the soul of the deceased upon its arrival there. Thus golden tablets were buried with the deceased with instructions for what to do upon reaching the gates of Hades. Athenian initiates in the Eleusinian cult drew upon Orphic teachings, while initiates in the Bacchic cults in southern Italy drew upon both Orphic and Pythagorean teachings.⁸⁰ With the higher valuation of the *psychē*, the value of the *sōma* diminished.⁸¹

In chapter 7, the main arguments of the study are summarized in an interpretation of Ezekiel 36:16-32 and 20:40-44, with some attention given to the ways that the promise of restoration will be developed in Ezekiel 40-48. The parallel summaries of the Mesopotamian and Presocratic materials draw together the main points of the texts from each tradition used in this study.

⁷⁸ John Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 67, 102.

⁷⁹ Noel Robertson, "Orphic Mysteries and Dionysiac Ritual," 218-40, here 223-24, in *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults* (ed. Michael B. Cosmopoulos; London/New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁸⁰ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 300.

⁸¹ E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) 52-53.

The Traditions and Texts for This Study

THE TEXT OF EZEKIEL

The book of Ezekiel, whether composed by Ezekiel alone or with the supplementary assistance of redactors, can be categorized as a traditional composition. Ezekiel drew upon the laws and narratives of the Israelite tradition to articulate a vision of the future of the exilic community; memory and anticipation are the key moments in this traditioning process. The repetition of this symbolic traditioning process is integral to the formation of a tradition; such repetition in this diachronic process (*traditio*) creates a continuity that persists through time to create a synchronic dimension to the process (*tradtum*). The synchronic dimension can be lost if an aggressive diachronic analysis fragments the tradition. The diachronic dimension of the text will be lost if no attempt is made to describe the sociopolitical context from which the text emerged.

The primary text representing the Israelite tradition in this study is the book of Ezekiel in its final form as it appears in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). In those instances in which a reading alternative to that of the MT can be established as the better reading, it will be adopted.

A substantial claim that the last additions to the book of Ezekiel took place in the early centuries of the modern era is based on the textual fact that an old Greek papyrus known as Papyrus 967 does not contain Ezekiel 12:26-28; 32:25-26; 36:23b-38.⁸² The passage of 36:23b-38 contains 1,451 letters, which is almost a full page of a codex (1,512 letters). It seems to be too large to be a copying error by a scribe, but it might be that a page was lost from the codex.⁸³ Whatever may have caused the loss of this page may also have led to the rearrangement of chapters 37-39, for chapter 37 follows chapter 39 in Papyrus 967. On the other hand, the text of Papyrus 967 may be based on a different Hebrew Vorlage than the one informing the MT.⁸⁴ If this OG rendering of Ezekiel 36-39 is accepted as superior to that of the MT, then the interpretation of 36:23b-38 will need to take into account the late date of this passage. As a passage summarizing essential points of the theology of the Book of Ezekiel, it could be seen as the work of an editor trying to draw together key theological points in the narrative.⁸⁵

Even if this passage is a composition by an editor, it would seem to date no later than 540 B.C.E. Rendtorff and Boadt have shown rhetorically the strong

⁸² Johan Lust, "Ezekiel 36-40," *CBQ* 43 (1981) 517-33.

⁸³ M. V. Spottorno, "La omisión de Ez. 36,23b-38 y la transposición de capítulos en el papiro 967," *Emerita* 50 (1982) 93-99 [as cited in Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 2, *Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 339-40].

⁸⁴ Lust, "Ezekiel 36-48," 517-33.

⁸⁵ Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 343) notes that such an editor may well have been Ezekiel.

ties of 36:16-38 with preceding passages: particularly with 20:1-44 but also with chapters 8–11.⁸⁶ Block argues that 36:16-23b¹ becomes a fragment when isolated from 36:23c-38 and that 36:33-36, 37-38 has links with chapter 34 and 36:1-15.⁸⁷ The vocabulary link of the same three verbs (*lāqah*, *qibbēs*, *hebī*) between 36:24 and 37:21 may be evidence for the inclusion of 36:23c-38 in its present location in the MT, rather than its omission as Lust claims.⁸⁸

On the other hand, if Ezekiel 36:23b-38 was added to the book of Ezekiel around 200 C.E.,⁸⁹ the summarizing character of the theological ideas of this passage would show that it was not a late appendage to the book but rather a natural outgrowth of its message. The entelechy of 36:23b-38 situates the origin of this passage in the message of the historical Ezekiel even if one could make the case that it was not fully articulated until 200 C.E. Such entelechy is affirmed by the canonical tradition enshrined in the MT, which opts for including 36:23b-38 rather than following the abbreviated reading of Papyrus 967.

MESOPOTAMIAN TEXTS

In the Mesopotamian tradition, as it crystallized in the period from the time of Assyria's westward imperial expansion to the Mediterranean (750 B.C.E.) down to the time of the fall of Babylon (539 B.C.E.), certain time-honored texts (i.e., "canonical") nourished the imaginations of the people on perennial human questions. The following six compositions merit the designation "canonical":⁹⁰

(1) The *Enūma Eliš*—dated by most scholars to the late twelfth century B.C.E., but by others as early as the fourteenth century and as late as the tenth century—provides a religiopolitical explanation of how a world order centered on Babylon emerged from primordial chaos. This seven-tablet narrative of the rise of Marduk to sovereign rule over heaven and earth, with his temple Esagila in Babylon, borrowed motifs from the Anzu myth and synthesized earlier traditions centered upon Eridu (fourth to third millennia B.C.E.) and Nippur (third to second millennia B.C.E.).⁹¹ Vanstiphout has characterized this didactic-epic

⁸⁶ Rolf Rendtorff, "Ez 20 und 36,16ff im Rahmen der Komposition des Buches Ezechiel," 260–65, in *Ezekiel and His Book* (ed. J. Lust; Leuven: University Press, 1986); Lawrence Boadt, "The Function of the Salvation Oracles in Ezekiel 33 to 37," *HAR* 12 (1990) 1–21, here 13–15.

⁸⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 341.

⁸⁸ Lust, "Ezekiel 36–40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript," 526.

⁸⁹ Lust, "Ezekiel 36–40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript," 532.

⁹⁰ William W. Hallo, "The Concept of Canonicity in Cuneiform and Biblical Literature: A Comparative Appraisal," 1–19, in *The Canon in Comparative Perspective* (vol. 4 of *Scripture in Context*; Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 11; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellon Press, 1991).

⁹¹ F. A. M. Wiggermann, "Theologies, Priests, and Worship in Ancient Mesopotamia," 1857–70, here 1868–69, in *CANE*.

narrative as “a systematic creed” analogous to a medieval theological tract.⁹² The most recent composite edition is that of Philippe Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth Enūma Eliš* (SAA 4; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2005).

(2) The poem *Erra and Išum* is, according to Cagni, a didactic, sapiential composition with an allegorical tendency associated with the cult that tries to explain the disasters that have overtaken Babylonia in the first half of the first millennium.⁹³ The catastrophe is usually linked with the Aramean and Sutean invasions of Babylonia in the early first millennium B.C.E.⁹⁴ However, Von Soden dated it to 765–763 B.C.E.⁹⁵ Cagni excludes it from the category of “epic” because the main characters are gods (Erra, Išum, the Sebetti) who are engaged in dialogue with one another rather than narrating heroic deeds. The main character Erra has no direct adversary of the same status; rather he fights against lower ranking gods, humans, and other objects.⁹⁶ Because dialogue is a distinguishing feature of this narrative, the title for the work as *Erra and Išum* seems more fitting than one designating it according to genre.⁹⁷ This Neo-Babylonian (NB) work by Kabti-ilāni-Marduk (V:42) may have had a wider circulation than the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in the first millennium B.C.E. It consists of 750 lines occupying five tablets, of which Tablet V is complete, Tablets I and IV are nearly complete, but Tablets II and III have numerous lacunae.⁹⁸

(3) The *Epic of Gilgamesh* reached its form as a twelve-tablet narrative in the standard Babylonian version (ca. 1250 B.C.E.) after a lengthy development from the time of Gilgamesh, king of Uruk at some point between 2800 and 2500 B.C.E. Sumerian tales celebrated the Promethean character of Gilgamesh where not only his physical prowess was accented but also his wisdom and efforts to

⁹² H. L. J. Vanstiphout, “Enuma Elish as a Systematic Creed: An Essay,” *OLP* 23 (1992) 37–61, here 37, 52.

⁹³ Luigi Cagni, *The Poem of Erra* (Sources from the Ancient Near East 1; Malibu: Undena Publications, 1977) 13–14, 20–21.

⁹⁴ Peter Machinist, “Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra,” 221–26, here 221, in *Studies in the Literature from the Ancient Near East: Dedicated to Samuel Noah Kramer* (ed. J. M. Sasson; AOS 65; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1984).

⁹⁵ Wolfram von Soden, “Etemenanki vor Asarhaddon nach der Erzählung vom Turmbau zu Babel und dem Erra-Mythos,” *UF* 3 (1971) 253–63, here 256.

⁹⁶ Cagni, *The Poem of Erra*, 6–11.

⁹⁷ For the title *Erra and Išum*, see Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 2:771; Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 282–84. Cagni (*The Poem of Erra*, 12) defines a “myth” as a story about an originating event that took place in primordial time.

⁹⁸ Cagni, *The Poem of Erra*, 6. The standard edition of the text is that of Luigi Cagni, *L'epopea di Erra* (Studi Semitici 34; Rome: Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente, Università di Roma, 1969).

combat mortality. These oral traditions began to be put in written form around 2150 B.C.E. by court poets at Ur. In the Old Babylonian (OB) period, the story of Gilgamesh was fashioned into an epic form in which the theme of mortality was woven into the earlier Sumerian tales. The standard epic version was edited by Sin-lēqe-unninni in the Kassite period. The addition of the prologue and epilogue frames the traditions so as to accent the wisdom characteristics of Gilgamesh. Also at this time, the flood story (Tablet XI) and the account of Enkidu's descent to the Netherworld (Tablet XII) were added.⁹⁹ Currently 116 pieces of the epic have been recovered, which collectively testify to seventy-three manuscripts. The main manuscripts (thirty-four or thirty-five) were recovered from Kouyunjik (i.e., Nineveh), many of which were written in Assyrian script for Assurbanipal (669–627). They are complemented by thirty Late Babylonian (LB) manuscripts, which attest to the entire standard epic except for Tablets V, VI, and IX. The dates of the seventy-three known manuscripts range from the middle to the end of the first millennium.¹⁰⁰

(4) The story of *Atra-Ḫasīs* is an OB etiological myth that explains the creation of humans as servants of the gods and their fate of death as a consequence of their fecundity and rebellious vitality. Themes from the creation and flood stories are drawn upon to explain how the rivalry between gods then led to rivalry between gods and humans, which served to explain salient features of the human condition. The main edition of *Atra-Ḫasīs*, consisting of three tablets, was copied in the reign of Ammi-saduqa (1646–1626) by the scribe Kuyaya. Most other pieces are written in Assyrian script from 750 to 650 B.C.E. The Assyrian Recension follows the storyline of the OB edition, but there is considerable rewriting of the account in this two-tablet edition. The only other fragments are two LB ones and two Middle Babylonian (MB) texts (from Nippur and Ras Shamra), which differ substantially from the OB version. Lambert and Millard claim that the content of *Atra-Ḫasīs* shows that this poem was composed for oral recitation, and thus its primary communicators would have been illiterate storytellers who had memorized it.¹⁰¹

(5) The Akkadian *Epic of Anzu* was composed in the OB period but drew upon the Sumerian myths celebrating the warrior god Ningirsu/Ninurta in his victory over the forces of chaos symbolized by the thunderbird Anzu. Anzu was the doorkeeper of Enlil's temple at Nippur; he tried to usurp sovereignty by stealing the tablet of destinies. Ningirsu/Ninurta recovered the tablets; this

⁹⁹ A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic* (2 vols.; Oxford/ New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 17–33; Kenton Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005) 276–77.

¹⁰⁰ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 379–82.

¹⁰¹ Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Ḫasīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1999) 5–8.

passage (*Anzu* 1.25–28) clearly has a parallel in the poem *Erra and Išum* (3.137–50). There are also numerous parallels between the *Epic of Anzu* and the *Enūma Eliš* and the Assyrian royal inscriptions, which demonstrate the canonical status of the *Epic of Anzu*.¹⁰² The manuscripts extant for the *Epic of Anzu* are primarily of neo-Assyrian (NA) provenance but supplemented by an important NB source.¹⁰³

(6) *The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld* is an Akkadian version (about 140 lines) of a longer Sumerian original (about 410 lines). The Akkadian version is attested in Late Bronze (LB) Age texts in Babylonia and Assyria and later from Nineveh.¹⁰⁴ The story relates how Ištar was unsuccessful in her attempt to take over rule of the Netherworld from her sister Ereškigal and thus was imprisoned in the Netherworld. Ea intervenes with a strategy for freeing her, but the compromise requires a surrogate (viz., Tammuz, lines 132–38).¹⁰⁵

Texts have been selected from the following ritual texts because they illustrate how voices from the Mesopotamian tradition address particular topics or themes in the book of Ezekiel:

(1) The Mesopotamian *Akītu* festival centered upon the annual procession of the gods to the “*Akītu* house.” A particular god or goddess was honored by other deities who assembled for the occasion. The Babylonians of the first millennium B.C.E. celebrated an *Akītu* of twelve days in the spring (Nisannu 1–12) and in the fall (Tashritu 1–12) at the time of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. The ritual account of days 2 through 5 of the *Akītu* in Nisannu for Marduk at Babylon and the ritual account of days 7 through 11 of the *Akītu* in Tashritu for the god Anu at Uruk are preserved in Seleucid period texts. The ritual in the fall followed the same pattern as that in the spring. The purification of the sanctuary, the recitation of the *Enūma Eliš*, the decreeing of fates for the coming year, and the humiliation of the king are key elements in this ritual marking the beginning of a new year.¹⁰⁶

(2) The *Mīs Pī* (mouthwashing) and *Pīt Pī* (mouth-opening) rituals were stages in the ritual of initiating a new cultic statue or a refurbished one into the life of the temple. The *Mīs Pī*, celebrated on the first day of the ritual of

¹⁰² Amar Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu* (SAA 3; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001) xxxi.

¹⁰³ See the composite text of Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu*, ix, xxxv–xxxviii.

¹⁰⁴ Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 154.

¹⁰⁵ Riecke Borger, *Babylonisch-Assyrische Lesestücke* (2nd ed.; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1979) 2:86–91.

¹⁰⁶ J. A. Black, “The New Year Ceremony in Ancient Babylon: ‘Taking Bel by the Hand’ and a Cultic Picnic,” *Religion* 11 (1981) 39–59; Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 166–67.

induction, removed whatever human residue might adhere to the statue from its time in the workshop. The *Pit Pi*, celebrated on the second day of the ritual, brought the statue to life so that it might participate in the food rituals and hear the hymns of praise. Priestly incantations were an important element of this ritual.¹⁰⁷ The known sources for this ritual (*Mis Pi* + incantations) stem from the NA and NB/LB periods (eighth to fifth centuries). The majority of the texts come from seventh-century Nineveh with many of the colophons of the incantations indicating that they belong to Assurbanipal's library. But there are also tablets from Ashur, Sultantepe, Hama, Babylon, Sippar, Nippur, Nimrud, and Uruk.¹⁰⁸

(3) Two rituals incorporating incantations and designed to protect a person from illness and a wide range of other maleficent influences were the *Šurpû* and *Maqlû* rituals.¹⁰⁹ Figurines or substances designated to absorb the evil causing the patient's suffering were destroyed by burning. Priests and incantation specialists were involved in the *Šurpû* ritual, which was deployed against those evils that eluded diagnosis. By contrast, the *Maqlû* ritual was designed to counteract acts of witchcraft. The most complete version of the *Maqlû* ritual are nine tablets from seventh-century Nineveh with an introductory ritual tablet followed by tablets containing incantations, prayers, and instructions for exorcists. The *Maqlû* ritual was to be performed at night near the end of the month of Abu (July/August). Its opening ritual tablet outlines a lengthy set of incantations and rituals to be performed. Some of these rituals included the application of substances to the patient and the ritual burning of a witch's effigy.¹¹⁰

(4) The *namburbû* rituals were designed to undo an evil that was announced to a person through an evil omen.¹¹¹ These rituals are often found linked with omen texts because they were the prescription for the evil diagnosed or predicted in the omen. Most of the *namburbû* rituals were short rituals; however,

¹⁰⁷ Christopher Walker and Michael Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia* (SAA 1; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001) 8–14; Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 148.

¹⁰⁸ Walker and Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 27–28.

¹⁰⁹ Riekele Borger, "Šurpu II, III, IV, and VIII in 'Partitur,'" 15–90, in *Wisdom, Gods, and Literature* (ed. A. R. George and I. Finkel; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2000); Erica Reiner, *Šurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations* (AFOB 11; Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1958); Gerhard Meier, *Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû* (AFOB 2; Berline: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1937).

¹¹⁰ Tzvi Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature* (Ancient Magic and Divination 5; Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2002) 4–8, 51–55; Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 1179–80.

¹¹¹ Richard Caplice, *The Akkadian Namburbi Texts: An Introduction* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1974) 16; Stefan Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung: eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale* (Namburbi) (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994) 5.

rituals designed to protect the king were elaborate: viz., the Bit Rimki (“house of the ritual bath”) and the Šar Pūhî (substitute king ritual) for purifying and protecting the king after an astronomical omen threatened trouble.¹¹² The texts for the namburbû are small collections and omen series as well as the longer rituals of Bit Rimki and Šar Pūhî.

An important genre of Mesopotamian texts for this comparative study with Ezekiel are the NA prophecies, consisting of eleven texts from the reigns of Esarhaddon (680–669) and Assurbanipal (669–627). There are four collections of oracles (texts 1–4), which Parpola claims were arranged chronologically and perhaps thematically by one scribe during the reign of Esarhaddon:¹¹³ (1) collection 1 (compiled in 679 B.C.E.) contains ten oracles from different prophets encouraging Esarhaddon during the civil war preceding his rise to power in 681 B.C.E.; (2) collection 2 (compiled in 673 B.C.E.) contains oracles aimed at stabilizing Esarhaddon’s rule shortly after his accession (680 B.C.E.) when rebels posed a threat; (3) collection 3 (probably compiled in 681 B.C.E.) contains oracles delivered during Esarhaddon’s coronation ritual (681 B.C.E.) in which Aššur entered into covenant with the dynasty of Esarhaddon; (4) collection 4 contains only two small fragments but seems to deal with matters similar to that in collections 2 and 3 around the year 680 B.C.E.¹¹⁴ These collections (texts 1–4) were written in archival format (*tuppi*)—the letters are written vertically on large tablets in multiple columns. The remaining materials of the NA prophecies (texts 5–11) are reports of oracles composed by different scribes. These reports were written horizontally on small tablets as first drafts, which would later be converted into the archival format. Texts 5–6 are related to collections 1 and 2 during Esarhaddon’s reign; texts 7–11 deal with matters during the first part of Assurbanipal’s reign.¹¹⁵

Mesopotamian historical texts quoted in this study are the NA and NB royal inscriptions and also some material from the Assyrian Annals—a genre that develops from the inscriptions. The NB royal inscriptions of Nabopolassar (625–605), Nebuchadrezzar II (604–562), and Nabonidus (555–539) follow the pattern of the Babylonian tradition that can be traced back to Sumerian royal inscriptions.¹¹⁶ The NB inscriptions consist of three parts: titulary,

¹¹² Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, Part 1: *Texts* (AOAT 5/1; Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener Verlag, 1970) 134–36, 108; Grant Frame, *Babylonia 689–627 B.C.: A Political History* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1992) 91. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 180–81.

¹¹³ Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (SAA 9; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997) lv, lxxiii.

¹¹⁴ Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, lxxiii–lxx.

¹¹⁵ Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, lxx–lxxi.

¹¹⁶ David Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and the Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (HSM 59; Atlanta: Scholars, 1999) 10–11.

report section, and hymn.¹¹⁷ These inscriptions usually describe royal building projects, particularly those in which the king builds or renovates temples. By contrast, most of the NA royal inscriptions are annalistic in character in which the narration of military victories or remarkable deeds of the king are emphasized.¹¹⁸ One frequent form of the structure of NA inscription is (1) the royal name and epithets followed by (2) an annalistic narrative, a description of building activities, and a blessing.¹¹⁹ Quoted in this study are the NA inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727), Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal. The Assyrian Annals, similar to the royal inscription, glorified the king and were either displayed publicly or placed in foundation deposits. The Assyrian Annals began in the reign of Adad-nirari I (1306–1274) and extended until the reign of Assurbanipal.¹²⁰

Two Mesopotamian wisdom compositions drawn upon in this study are “Advice to a Prince” and *Ludlul-bēl-nēmeqi*. Mimicking the casuistic form of omen literature, “Advice to a Prince” warns a future king to honor the exemptions from corvée, taxation, etc., that have been granted to the citizens of Babylon, Nippur, and Sippar from time immemorial.¹²¹ *Ludlul-bēl-nēmeqi*, known as “the Babylonian Job,” is a four-tablet composition from the Kassite period (1595–1158 B.C.E.) in which a sufferer appeals to Marduk to restore his position, wealth, family, and health.¹²²

PRESOCRATIC GREEK TEXTS

Four poetic compositions that shaped the imaginations of the Greek-speaking peoples of the Mediterranean beginning in the late eighth century were Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Hesiod’s *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were oral-formulaic compositions sung by rhapsodes in the various cities that were experiencing a strong growth in population in the late eighth century. These poems consolidated in narrative form many of the local Greek myths and promoted the pantheon of Olympia. The time that these lengthy epic poems were written is a point of controversy: some argue for the writing

¹¹⁷ P.-R. Berger, *Die neubabylonische Königsinschriften: Königsinschriften der ausgehenden babylonischen Reiches (626–539 a. Chr.)* (AOAT 4; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1973).

¹¹⁸ A. Kirk Grayson, “Assyria and Babylonia,” *Or* n.s. 49 (1980) 140–94, here 150–52.

¹¹⁹ Grayson, “Assyria and Babylonia,” 151.

¹²⁰ Text of annals quoted in this study are: Rykle Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: Die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996) 44–45, 235; idem, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* (AfO Beiheft 9; Graz, 1956).

¹²¹ W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960) 110–15; Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 60.

¹²² W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, 21–62; Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 62.

of the *Iliad* around 750 B.C.E. and the *Odyssey* around 700 B.C.E.,¹²³ while others claim that the structure of the narrative remained in oral form until the latter part of the sixth century.¹²⁴ Hesiod, according to M. L. West, wrote his two poems in the late 700s.¹²⁵ West claims that Hesiod, because he was not a rhapsode, would probably have written parts of the poems on wooden tablets prior to delivering them. Later additions (e.g., *Theog.* 720–819) seem to have been made in sixth-century Athens during the rule of Peisistratus.¹²⁶

The thought of the Presocratic philosophers is preserved only in the works of later writers. This evidence takes the form in later writings either of quotations or of paraphrases of the original statement by the Presocratic philosopher. The quotations can range from a single word to more than fifty lines (Parmenides). The later writings containing the Presocratic material date as early as Plato and as late as the tenth century C.E.¹²⁷ Scholars have examined these sources to determine which quotations attributed to a Presocratic are genuine and to assess the historical value of the testimonies. For example, the sole surviving fragment of Anaximander's writing is found in a commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* by Simplicius, a Neoplatonist from the sixth century C.E. Simplicius bases his commentary on the work of Theophrastus, a student of Aristotle. Theophrastus, as Kahn explains, was a critical thinker who approached a topic by discovering what was currently known and believed about it. It was this research of previous thinkers that led Theophrastus to quote the words of earlier thinkers. The confidence that Simplicius has preserved Theophrastus's version are increased by the same quotation of Anaximander by Hippolytus, bishop of Rome in the late second century C.E.¹²⁸ Each fragment must be assessed not only in terms of textual data (the reliability of the source and the number of independent sources)

¹²³ Richard Janko, "The Homeric Poems as Oral Dictated Texts," *Classical Quarterly* 48 (1998) 12, n. 63. Cf. Ian Morris, "The Uses and Abuses of Homer," *Classical Antiquity* 5 (1986) 83–85.

¹²⁴ Gregory Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin: University of Texas, 1996) 92; idem, *Poetry as Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996) 61; John Miles Foley, "Individual Poet and Epic Tradition: Homer as Legendary Singer," *Arethusa* 31 (1998) 149–78, here 149–50.

¹²⁵ M. L. West, ed., *Theogony* by Hesiod (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 40.

¹²⁶ West, ed. *Theogony*, 48–49.

¹²⁷ For an overview of the doxographical material, see Richard D. McKirahan Jr., *Philosophy Before Socrates: An Introduction with Texts and Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994); G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) 1–7. For the citation of secondary sources containing Presocratic materials, I have followed that provided by Robin Waterfield, *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and Sophists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹²⁸ Charles H. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) 14–15.

but also in terms of its content: i.e., whether the concepts of later thinkers like Plato or Aristotle have been read back into the sayings of the earlier Presocratic thinker.¹²⁹

The difficulty of recovering the thought of Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans has been magnified by Pythagoras's mystique as the leader of a movement that combined religious longing with the quest for exact knowledge.¹³⁰ The tradition that grew up around the sixth-century figure of Pythagoras of Samos, who moved to Magna Graecia in southern Italy (ca. 530), contained an ambiguous richness such that the scientist and the mystic alike could appeal to Pythagoras as an authority.¹³¹ The master-disciple or teacher-student relationship was a fundamental factor in the creation of a tradition of philosophical thought in Ionia as well as Magna Graecia. Even though the communal nature of learning was not emphasized in Miletus as it was among the Pythagoreans, there was still the handing on of accumulated knowledge from one generation to the next. Therefore, the traditioning process kept alive sayings and writings whose truth merited repeated reflection. The figure of Pythagoras bore symbolic weight. Therefore, many writings were falsely ascribed. The wisdom attributed to Pythagoras tied him into a larger reality of wisdom to which many could relate.

In addition to Anaximander and Pythagoras, sayings and writings of the following Presocratic philosophers will be quoted in this study: Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, and Philolaus. A brief description of the textual evidence for the thought of each thinker will help create a picture of how the voice of each has echoed in the tradition.

(1) Xenophanes (ca. 570–475 B.C.E.) is remembered in the literary tradition for his criticism of the Olympian deities whom he regarded as human projections, and so he alternatively promoted attention to a cosmic deity who was something akin to intelligence.¹³² More than forty fragments of his thought survive. However, the doxographical tradition did not say much about him because Theophrastus (Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 22.26–30), following Aristotle (*On the Heaven* 3.1 298b14–20), did not believe that Xenophanes contributed much in terms of the study of nature.¹³³ Philosophically, Xenophanes is significant for introducing epistemological questions into the tradition (e.g., What are the limits of human knowledge?).¹³⁴

¹²⁹ McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 2–3.

¹³⁰ Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (trans. E. L. Minar Jr.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972) 11.

¹³¹ Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 9.

¹³² Von Fritz, "Nous, Noein, Part 1," 230; McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 64.

¹³³ McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 59 n. 3.

¹³⁴ Karl Popper, "The Unknown Xenophanes: An Attempt to Establish His Greatness," 33–67, here 43–47, in *The World of Parmenides* (New York/London: Routledge, 1998); McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 68.

(2) Heraclitus (ca. 545–480) is remembered as a haughty, aloof aristocrat who communicated his thought through his writing. He apparently deposited his book in the Artemision in Ephesus. His enigmatic, aphoristic style had an impact on Democritus and the Hippocratic author of *On Regimen*. Proponents of his thought were identified as Heracliteans in the fifth century (e.g., Cratylus of the Platonic dialogues) and the Stoics beginning in the third century B.C.E. Kahn claims that his work had achieved the status of a literary classic by the fourth century B.C.E. The remnants of the book, which Kahn reconstructs into a book on the basis of the logic of the sayings themselves, were handed on—apart from the writings of Plato and Aristotle—in a commentary of Theophrastus (ca. 320 B.C.E.), of which remnants exist in writings of Diogenes Laertius (200 C.E.). Kahn speculates that the relatively accurate quotations of Heraclitus by Clement of Alexandria (180 C.E.) and Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 190 C.E.) may have been from copies of Heraclitus' book extant in their time.¹³⁵

(3) Parmenides (490 B.C.E.) from Elea in Magna Graecia of southern Italy apparently wrote only one poem. He composed it in the archaic hexameters of the Greek epic tradition and perhaps wished to portray himself as a new Odysseus who ventured into the intellectual world rather than into the dreamworld of the *Odyssey*.¹³⁶ One-third of the original poem (150 lines) is extant. Fragment 8 (61 lines) was preserved by Simplicius; fragment 1, the proem (32 lines) has survived via the writings of the Pyrronic skeptic Sextus Empiricus (second century C.E.). Of the remaining seventeen fragments, questions remain about how accurately they reflect the original and how they fit together in the poem. However, a workable reconstruction has been achieved.¹³⁷

(4) Empedocles (492–432) was from Acragas in Sicily. He was involved in politics and was known as a physician and magician. He wrote in the archaic hexameter of Greek epic as Parmenides had.¹³⁸ According to Alcidamas (fourth century B.C.E.), Empedocles was a student of Parmenides at the same time as Zeno. Empedocles wrote a book with two parts: "Physics" (*peri physeōs*) and the "Purifications" (*hoi katharmoi*).¹³⁹ According to M. R. Wright, the "Physics" consisted of 2,000 lines and the "Purifications" of 2,500 to 3,000 lines, of

¹³⁵ Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 6–9; see also Hermann Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962) 370.

¹³⁶ Eric Havelock, "Parmenides and Odysseus," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 (1958) 133–43, here 136; David Gallop, "Introduction," 3–40, here 5, in Parmenides of Elea, *Fragments: A Text and Translation* (trans. D. Gallop; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

¹³⁷ Gallop, "Introduction," 3–40, here 5, in Parmenides of Elea, *Fragments*.

¹³⁸ McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 255–56.

¹³⁹ M. R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven: Yale, 1981) 20–21.

which the extant fragments amount to 16 to 20 percent of the total.¹⁴⁰ Aristotle discusses the doctrines of Empedocles at some length. Thus, the doxographical tradition from Theophrastus to Simplicius frequently refers to his writings. Also, Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus of Rome quote him numerous times. Burkert notes that the “Purifications” of Empedocles are usually regarded as the most authentic witness to Pythagoreanism.¹⁴¹

(5) Philolaus (ca. 470–385), an early contemporary of Socrates, was a Pythagorean from Croton in southern Italy. He claimed that reflective activity is localized in the brain and separated from the heart (*DK* 44, B13, 1–6). Burkert argues that this fragment is an authentic saying of Philolaus.¹⁴² The process of distinguishing spurious from genuine sayings in Pythagorean circles is much more difficult than among the other Presocratics because of the Pythagoreans’ practice of attributing their own writings to Pythagoras. Cognizant of these difficulties, Burkert presents his case that Philolaus produced a book that was known in the fourth century B.C.E., for it is alluded to by Aristotle’s student Menon in a papyrus recovered in the last century. If Aristotle knew Philolaus’ book, he probably used its presentation of Pythagoreanism to inform his criticism of the Platonized Pythagoreanism current at his time. The key difference between the views of Philolaus and those of a Platonized Pythagorean is that Philolaus maintained the polar opposition between *peras* (limit) and *apeiron* (unlimited) without ontologizing it into a relation between *hen aoristos duas* (the one and an unlimited duality).¹⁴³

Another group of Greek texts quoted in this study are from the statesman-poet Solon and the tragedians Aeschylus and Sophocles. Solon (594 B.C.E.) introduced critical reforms into Athenian society in the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E. Fragments 4 and 13 present key concepts on the collective responsibility of the citizenry in a time when new commercial opportunities fueled a form of individualistic greed that threatened to fragment the polis. These fragments are preserved in the tradition by Demosthenes (19.254ff) and Stobaeus (3.9.23).¹⁴⁴

Aeschylus (525–456) regularly won the tragic competition at the annual festival of the Great Dionysia in Athens after his first success in 484.¹⁴⁵ Of his eighty plays, seven have been transmitted to the present. The *Persians* (472), the

¹⁴⁰ Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 21.

¹⁴¹ Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 220.

¹⁴² Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 269–70.

¹⁴³ Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 227–34.

¹⁴⁴ *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum Cantati* (vol. 2; ed. M. L. West; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 121–22, 127–30.

¹⁴⁵ Bernhard Zimmermann, *Greek Tragedy: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) 26.

Seven against Thebes (467), and *Prometheus Bound* (ca. 460) are well attested in manuscripts dating from the tenth to sixteenth centuries C.E.¹⁴⁶ But for the remaining four plays—from which excerpts will be drawn for this study—the manuscript evidence is more complicated. *The Libation Bearers* (458) and the *Suppliants* (463) have been transmitted primarily by one reliable manuscript (M and its copies). For the *Eumenides* (458) and part of the *Agamemnon* (458), there are a few manuscripts that form a witness independent of M. The remainder of the *Agamemnon* is not contained in M and has inferior sources for its reconstruction.¹⁴⁷ Aeschylus's presentation of the clash between blood vengeance and justice secured by a civic trial will be of particular importance in chapter 5 of this study.

Sophocles (497–406) composed thirty tetralogies (a tetralogy = trilogy and a satyr play), of which eighteen won the prize at the Great Dionysia. Of his plays, only the *Antigone* (ca. 440) will be drawn upon in this study to address the issue of the honorable burial of the dead.¹⁴⁸ The action of the *Antigone* begins with events one day after those narrated in Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes*: the brothers Eteocles and Polyneices have died in battle and the new king Creon forbids the burial of the traitor Polyneices. The texts of Sophocles's plays are contained in about two hundred manuscripts, of which, according to H. Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson, four families (l, r, a, z) can be turned to for significant readings. Lloyd-Jones and Wilson note that the z family contains important readings for *Antigone*, but these manuscripts have not been thoroughly studied.¹⁴⁹

A final group of sources that need to be mentioned here briefly are the Greek curse tablets, which address the topic of magic in chapter 4, and the golden tablets from Orphic and Bacchic circles, which address the topic of burial and afterlife in chapter 6. The Greek curse tablets (*katadesmoi* or *defixiones*), dating from the early fifth century B.C.E. into the imperial period, were written on lead and deposited in graves or wells, from which place they were expected to exert magical force on their victims.¹⁵⁰ The “golden tablets” is a designation used for more than forty gold tablets that have been recovered from burial places since 1835. These tablets bear inscriptions giving directions for the deceased

¹⁴⁶ Martin L. West, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 1; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1990) 319.

¹⁴⁷ West, *Studies in Aeschylus*, 329; R. D. Dawe, *The Collation and Investigation of Aeschylus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964) 12.

¹⁴⁸ William Blake Tyrrell and Larry J. Bennett (*Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone* [Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998] 3–4) argue for a date of 438 B.C.E. for the performance of *Antigone*.

¹⁴⁹ Hugh Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson, “Preface,” v–xvi, here vi–xi, in *Sophocles Fabulae* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

¹⁵⁰ Ogden, “Binding Spells,” 1–90, here 10–12.

when he or she would arrive in the Netherworld.¹⁵¹ One text from Hipponion in southern Italy in the late fifth century B.C.E. is quoted in chapter 6.

With this establishment of the method and the texts, this comparative study will explore those characteristics that make Ezekiel's symbolic thinking distinctive and thus capable of helping the Judahite exiles find meaning in the midst of crisis.

¹⁵¹ Susan Cole, "Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields," 193–217, here 200, in *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults* (ed. Michael Cosmopoulos; London/New York: Routledge, 2003).

THE RIGHT ORDERING OF PERCEPTION THROUGH THE INTERPLAY OF SPIRIT AND REASON

New ways of knowing and acting that emerge after a traumatic experience can begin the process of reconstructing the self-understanding of the individual and the community. For the prophet Ezekiel, Yhwh intervened in Judah in the sixth century B.C.E. to bring about both the destruction of an old world and the reconstruction of a new one. Although Nebuchadrezzar and his army were the historical agents that devastated Judah and Jerusalem, the true executive force of this event, according to Ezekiel, was Yhwh. That Yhwh was bringing devastation to Judah and Jerusalem triggered a crisis of symbols for the populace: a crisis not only of faith but also of epistemology. Both the Jerusalemites and the exiles had to use their heart (i.e., reason) and spirit to try to make sense out of this traumatic experience. They needed to find a new vision of life that would help them adapt to a world without a temple and a king. Ezekiel became a model among the exiles for the reshaping of the symbolic world of the house of Israel.

This chapter examines how Ezekiel comes to a new way of knowing Yhwh through his inaugural vision and prophetic call (1:1–3:15) and how this way of knowing ultimate reality compares with analogous efforts in Mesopotamia and Greece. To understand how this vision and call was a force integrating mind and heart in Ezekiel, the distinctiveness of Ezekiel's use of the terms "spirit" (*rûah*) and "reason" (*lêb*) within the wider context of parallel Akkadian and Greek terms will be identified. The spirit and the heart are capacities that must be properly employed if one is to perceive the truth in the human, natural, and

divine dimensions of the reality encompassing one. Next, the chapter examines how Ezekiel's perception was reoriented by his inaugural vision such that his point of reference became a transcendent Deity that exceeded his capacity to comprehend but yet was a Reality beyond appearances from which he had to get his bearings. An examination follows of how Marduk was conceived as a sovereign deity according to an anthropomorphic model both iconographically and narratologically. From the Presocratic Greek materials, the viewpoints of Anaximander and Heraclitus are drawn upon to illustrate the emerging Ionian rationalistic spirit at that time that sought an explanation of the ruling forces of the cosmos in depersonalized terms. A key concern will be the extent to which their thoughts testify to a drive to look beyond appearances and to criticize the use of images analogous to that found in Ezekiel. Finally, the chapter examines the other part of Ezekiel's call to prophesy, which describes the impact of the inaugural vision and the advent of the divine Spirit on his person and his capacity to perceive. To highlight the distinctiveness of Ezekiel's visionary experience, Mesopotamian and Greek texts are employed to illustrate how the inspiration of prophets and poets was understood within their traditions.

Spirit and Heart: The Convergence of Thinking and Sensing

The term *rûah*, "wind, breath, spirit," occurs fifty-two times in the book of Ezekiel, which leads Block to characterize Ezekiel as "the prophet of the spirit."¹ The term refers primarily to meteorological, physiological, and spiritual realities. Clusters of the term *rûah* occur at strategic points in the final form of the book of Ezekiel: chapters 1–3, 8–11, and 36–37. In these sections, the divine Spirit animated and directed the throne-chariot (1:20; 10:17), the prophet (2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5), and the exilic community (11:19; 36:26; 37:5–10). The Spirit's control of the fundamental forces of nature and history is revealed through the way the Spirit entered into the person of Ezekiel (2:2; 3:24) and operated in his visions (1:20; 3:12; 11:5; 37:5–10). The dramatic ways in which the spirit of Ezekiel was altered by the presence of the divine Spirit are evident not only in Ezekiel's call but also in his visions of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the reconstitution of the Israelite community from the exiles. The Spirit acted upon the thoughts (3:14; 11:5; 20:32) and feelings (3:14; cf. 21:12) of Ezekiel. The point of these visions is that Ezekiel was given a privileged view of the inner workings of reality. These visions brought him into communion with a deeper prophetic truth.

When Ezekiel was called upon as a person to make a fundamental decision, he used the term *lêb*, "heart." *Lêb* refers "to all aspects of a person: vital,

¹ Daniel Block, "The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of *RWH* in the Book of Ezekiel," *JETS* 32 (1989) 27–49, here 28.

² Fabry, "*lêb, lêbâb*," *TDOT* 7 (1995) 399–437, here 412.

affective, noetic, and volunative.”² The *lēb* is the point at which thoughts and feelings converge to shape a person’s attitude toward life.³ The *lēb* is a dynamic reality fully enmeshed in the conflicts and harmonies of the person’s body and interpersonal relationships. So while it cannot be localized in the chest cavity, it also would be a distortion to abstract the heart from the force fields of tangible physical realities.⁴ The Lord called on Ezekiel to invest his entire person in the mission he received: “Mortal, receive in your heart (*qah bilbābēkā*) all my words that I will speak to you; listen with your ears” (Ezek 3:10). He was called upon to pay heed to data given to him through his senses. This noetic and sensory activity was the basis on which he could make a commitment of his person. Such noetic activity is also evident in the response that Ezekiel was called to make at the outset of the vision of the new temple: “The man addressed me: ‘Mortal, look with your eyes and listen with your ears, and focus your attention (*šim libbēkā*) on all that I am going to show you, for you were brought here to allow you to see it. Report to the house of Israel all that you are about to see” (Ezek 40:4). As an affective and vital center, the *lēb* is also an important term used in one of Ezekiel’s sign-actions when he was commanded to indicate through his person the overwhelming nature of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem:

As for you, mortal, groan! With a broken back, groan bitterly before them. And when they ask you, “Why are you groaning?”, you shall respond: Because of a report; when it comes, every heart (*kol-lēb*) shall melt, every hand shall drop, every spirit shall weaken, and every knee shall run with water. Here it comes; it has happened!—oracle of the Lord God.” (Ezek 21:11-12)

The melting heart and the weak spirit signal the loss of rational and emotional control, which manifests itself in the lack of bodily control. There will be no means of resisting the reported hostile force that is about to beset Jerusalem.

Ezekiel addresses several ways in which a person’s perception of reality becomes distorted through errant decisions arising from the heart. When a person’s *lēb* has separated itself from Yhwh and stands under judgment, Ezekiel refers to that person as “hard-hearted” (*hizqē lēb*, 2:4). Such a person refuses to deal with the data that comes to him through his senses. In terms of both thoughts and feelings, he refuses to pay heed. An arrogant person (*gābah libbēkā*, “your heart has become high,” 28:2), like the king of Tyre, is narcissistic. His sense of personal identity is distorted because his heart is not in the right place within the cosmic hierarchy: i.e., he regards himself as god. Another person

³ Michael Carasik (*Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel* [Studies in Biblical Literature 85; New York: Peter, Lang, 2006] 105–6) refers to the heart as “the organ of knowledge and understanding” that “integrates the perceptions of eye and ear to create an understanding of the world.”

⁴ Fabry, *lēb, lēbāb*,” 411.

whose heart has gone astray is the deceitful prophet. In Ezekiel 13:2, Yhwh refers to such persons as “prophets [who speak] from their own heart” (*nēbi’ē millēbām*). They pretend to be true messengers from Yhwh, but actually speak what arises from their own persons. If any Israelite secretly worships idols and comes before Yhwh’s prophet for instruction, Yhwh says that he himself will confront that prophet directly (Ezek 14:4). His purpose in doing so is “to take hold of Israel in their heart” (*tēpōs ’et-bêt-yisrā’el bēlibbām*, 14:5). Here again the *lēb* is the noetic and affective center that directs the person’s way of life.

In Mesopotamia, the Akkadian cognate term *libbu* is the seat of the emotions, feelings, and thought.⁵ *Libbu* designated a place in which controllable emotions were directed (e.g., desire, love, friendship, mercy), but it could also designate consciousness, wisdom, and understanding.⁶ The use of *libbu* as “mind” is evident in the following passage from *Ludlul bēl Nēmeqi* in which the author questions divine justice in his experience: “What is bad to one’s own mind (*libbišu*) seems to be good to one’s god” (II:35).⁷ The word *karšu*, sometimes used as a parallel to *libbu*, occurs in the *Enūma Eliš* with reference to the distress that the brother gods—who were rivals to Enki/Ea—stirred up:

A company of the gods gathered together; they bewildered Tiāmat; their uproar surged up and down; they upset Tiāmat’s stomach (*libbu [ŠÁ] tiāmat kārassa*); their sport perplexed (the gods) in their heavenly dwelling. (*EE* I:21–24)⁸

Later, when Marduk antagonized Tiāmat and his whose agitation robbed the gods of their rest, the gods are depicted as using their *karšu* as a “place”⁹ for devising a response: “They designed evil plots in their hearts” (*karšūšunu*, I:111). Another Akkadian term whose meaning overlaps with *libbu* is *kabattu*, “liver.”¹⁰ In the following example from *The Babylonian Theodicy*, *kabattu* refers to a place of thinking or deliberation: “You desired in your heart not to observe the divine ordinances” (80).¹¹ Thus, *libbu*, *karšu*, and *kabattu* refer to the locus within a person in which thought and feelings are reflected upon to shape actions and attitudes.

⁵ CAD L, 169–72

⁶ Fabry, “*lēb, lēbāb*,” 403.

⁷ Lambert, *BWL*, 40–41.

⁸ Text and edition from Philippe Talon, *Enūma Eliš: The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth* (SAA 4; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Project, 2005) 3, 34; cf. René Labat, *Le Poème babylonien de la création* (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient, 1935) 78. Also see Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (2 vols.; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 1.355.

⁹ “Place” here refers to that which is inside the person but does not localize the noetic and affective activities within a particular internal organ. In the Greek tradition, such localization within a bodily organ first occurs with the Pythagorean Philolaus (see *DK* 44, B13, 1–6).

¹⁰ CAD K, 11–14.

¹¹ Edition: Lambert, *BWL*, 77.

The noetic component of the human person is also expressed by the term *tēmu*. In the well-known account of the creation of the first human being from a mixture of clay and the blood from a slain god in the *Atrahasis* poem, the god Enki addresses the divine assembly:

On the first, seventh, and fifteenth days of the month, I will establish the purification bath. Let one god be slaughtered and let the gods cleanse themselves through immersion. With his flesh (*širu*) and blood (*dāmu*), let Nintu mix clay (*tiṭtu*). Let god and human be completely mixed together in the clay. That we might hear the drum (*uppu*) in future days, let there be a spirit (*eṭemmu*) from the god's flesh (*šir ili*). Let it make known the living one as its sign. Let there be a spirit (*eṭemmu*) so that this not be forgotten. . . . Wê-ila, who was able to plan (*tēmu*), was slaughtered in their assembly. With his flesh and blood, Nintu mixed clay. (I, iv.206–17, 223–26)¹²

This scene in which humans are created to serve the gods by building and provisioning their sanctuaries shows humans as beings composed of a material and a divine component. When humans die, they return to clay, but the *eṭemmu*, “the ghost,” lives on in the grave.¹³ The blood of the slain god communicates life to humans on earth and a ghostly existence when dead. Abusch argues that the blood symbolizes the ability to plan and is the source of the idea of the personal god of a family that is passed from one generation to the next.¹⁴ He also calls attention to a wordplay on *eṭemmu* in this passage from the combination of the Wê of the god's name and his *tēmu*: i.e., (*w*)ê + *tēmu* = *eṭemmu*.¹⁵ The vivification of the human in this account does not refer to infusing the breath of life into the clay, as in Genesis 2:7. Rather the life of the creature comes from the blood (cf. Lev 17:11).

The Akkadian equivalent for *rûah*, “wind, breath, spirit,” is *šāru*. In his role as a storm god, Marduk is characterized in the *Enūma Eliš* as “the god of favorable wind” (VII:20). He is the god who uses the winds as his weapons in his battle with Tiamat: “He made ill wind, whirlwind, cyclone, four-ways wind, seven-ways wind, destructive wind, irresistible wind” (IV:45–46).¹⁶

¹² W. G. Lambert, and A. R. Millard, *Atra-Ḥasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1999) 58–59.

¹³ Lambert, Millard, *Atra-Ḥasis*, 22.

¹⁴ Tzvi Abusch, “Sacrifice in Mesopotamia,” 39–48, here 45, in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience* (Studies in the History of Religions 97; ed. Albert I. Baumgarten; Leiden: Brill, 2002).

¹⁵ Tzvi Abusch, “eṭemmu,” *DDD*, 588; cf. Bendt Alster, “ilū awilum: we-e i-la, ‘Gods: Men’ versus ‘Man: God’: Punning and the Reversal of Patterns in the Atrahasis Epic,” 35–40, in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen* (ed. T. Abusch; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2002); William L. Moran, “The Creation of Man in Atrahasis I192–248,” 75–86, here 80–81, in *The Most Magic Word* (ed. R. S. Hendel; CBQMS 35; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 2002).

¹⁶ Edition: Talon, *Enūma Eliš*, 15–15, 52; Labat, *Le Poème babylonien de la création*, 124; translation: Foster, *Before the Muses*, 1.373.

Parpola claims that the goddess Ištar is the divine spirit suffusing her prophets, for she “is the emotion (*libbu*) moving the prophet, the breath (*šāru*) issuing from his or her ‘heart’, and the voice (*rigmu*) and words (*dibbu*) emerging from his or her mouth.”¹⁷

The Greek word *pneuma* means “wind, breath, soul, spirit.” The wind is a dynamic reality. By inhaling and exhaling, a human or an animal draws upon this natural force to sustain or increase its vitality. This action of breathing in an external power was a way of describing the phenomenon of inspiration. At the beginning of Hesiod’s *Theogony* (late eighth century B.C.E.), the poet explains the divine source of his knowledge:

As the eloquent daughters of great Zeus spoke, they gave me a staff plucked from a luxuriant laurel branch, a wondrous thing. They breathed (*enepneusan*) into me an inspired voice so that I might tell of things to come and of things that have happened. Also they exhorted me to sing of the race of the blessed, everlasting gods; but always to put them both at the beginning and the end (29–34).¹⁸

This metaphorical way of speaking about the reception of divine knowledge about the past and the future emphasizes the invisible yet tangible character of the transmission. However, the Presocratic philosophers seem to avoid the use of the term *pneuma* to describe a form of divine inspiration.¹⁹ To communicate the sense of a pervasive natural and divine power enveloping and suffusing individuals, the Milesian thinker Anaximenes (550 B.C.E.) uses the term *aēr*, “air.” He claims that air is the *archē*, “the first principle,” which has given rise to nature and holds it together. Aëtius, a writer in the second century C.E., reports that Anaximenes perceived a direct analogy between *aēr*, “air,” and *psychē*, “soul”:

Anaximenes of Miletus, son of Eurystratus, plainly declared that the principle (*archē*) of things is air (*aēr*) because all things come to be from it and return back to it. He says that just as the soul (*hē psychē*), which is our air (*aēr*), keeps us intact, so also wind (*pneuma*) and air (*aēr*) surround the whole cosmos (*kosmos*, DK 13B2).²⁰

¹⁷ Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (SAA 9; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997), xxvi. See SAA 9 1.6 iii 7– iv 4) on pp. 7–8. For *šāru*, the synonyms *šēhu* (CAD Š II, 266) and *zaqīqu* (CAD Z 58–60) were used to designate “spirit, ghost” (*pace*, Tengström, “*rūaḥ*,” TDOT 13 [2004] 365–96, here 369–70).

¹⁸ Hesiod, *Theogony* (ed. M. L. West; Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 112; Hesiod, *The Works and Days*, *Theogony*, *Shield of Herakles* (trans. Richmond Lattimore; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1959) 124.

¹⁹ *Pneuma* is not listed in the “Wortindex,” of Hermann Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (vol. 3; Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1952).

²⁰ See also Robin Waterfield, trans., *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and Sophists* (New York: Oxford, 2000) 18.

Although the use of *pneuma* as a designation of a sphere of air encompassing the cosmos is perhaps an addition by the doxographers,²¹ Anaximenes' view of *aēr* as a living reality (*psychē*) suffusing the cosmos is the distinguishing characteristic of his thought.²² For Anaximenes, the perceptible character of air made it a more likely candidate for the *archē* from which all things proceed than the *apeiron*, "the boundless," of Anaximander, for the latter term was abstract and the truth claims about it could not be empirically validated.²³ Xenophanes (530 B.C.E.), according to the doxographers, was the first to identify *psychē*, "soul," with *pneuma*.²⁴ Heraclitus (ca. 545–480) interpreted the *psychē* as "air, vapor" and so reflected, according to Kahn, the early Greek view that the soul of a person is like air inhaled at birth and exhaled at death.²⁵ Later, the Hippocratic doctor (ca. 460–377), in accord with the spirit of Ionian rationalism, regarded the *pneuma* as air that is brought into an organism not only by respiration but also by ingestion of food and drink (*De flatibus* 7).²⁶ Once the air is within the organism, it is transformed into psychical *pneuma* that then travels to the brain and is distributed to the whole organism, endowing it with consciousness.²⁷ These examples of *pneuma* as a material element accent its tangible and real character rather than reducing it to a figurative form of speech with no bodily manifestation.²⁸

The metaphorical meaning of *pneuma* as "spirit" capitalizes on the pervasive, invisible force of the tangible wind. The interplay between the literal meaning "wind" and the figurative meaning "spirit" is apparent in the following

²¹ Baumgärtel, "Pneuma, pneumatikos," *TDNT* 6, 332–68, here 352. However, Guthrie sees no reason to dismiss it as inauthentic (Guthrie, "The Milesians," 1.39–145, here 1.131, in *HGP*). The Pythagoreans also regarded the cosmos as an animal-like entity that inhaled air from the surrounding sphere of *aithēr* (Guthrie, "Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans," 1.146–340, here 1.277–81, in *HGP*). See Plato, *Timaeus* 34C–37C in *Plato* (vol. 7; ed. R. G. Bury; New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1929). G. S. Kirk (ed.) (*Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954] 314) argues that the term "cosmos" meaning "world order" was introduced by Empedocles, Diogenes, and perhaps Philolaus.

²² Cf. Karl Popper, "Comments on the Prehistoric Discovery of the Self and on the Mind-Body Problem in Ancient Greek Philosophy," 223–50, here 233, in *The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998).

²³ David Roochnik, *Retrieving the Ancients: An Introduction to Greek Philosophy* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2004) 25.

²⁴ *DK* 21 A1.27–28, p. 113; Baumgärtel, "Pneuma, pneumatikos," *TDNT* 6, 332–68, here 353.

²⁵ Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 240.

²⁶ *Hippocrate: Tome V, Ire Partie* (ed. Jacques Jouanna; Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1988) 110–12.

²⁷ Baumgärtel, "Pneuma, pneumatikos," *TDNT* 6, 332–68, here 353.

²⁸ Cf. Guthrie, "Anaxagoras," 2.266–338, here 2.278 n. 1, in *HGP*.

passage from Aeschylus's *Suppliants* in which young women, who have fled from Egypt, plead for refuge in Argos:

O city, o land, and shining water; o highest gods and most exacting Netherworld gods who hold fast the graves; and thirdly, o Zeus the savior, guardian of the homes of the pious. Receive as suppliants this group of women with the reverential spirit of the land (*aidoiō pneumati chōras*, *Suppl.* 23–29).²⁹

In their appeal to both natural and divine forces, the women emphasize how both spiritual and material realities are necessary components of a homeland. The concreteness of the literal meaning of *pneumati chōras* as “the breath of the land” makes more vivid the figurative meaning of “the spirit of the land.”³⁰

In comparison to the dynamic way of perceiving associated with *pneuma*, which draws together noetic, affective, and somatic dimensions of perception, the *nous*, “mind, mental capacity,” is more static, for the basic operation of the *nous* is to be attentive to things in one's environment.³¹ The attention of the *nous* is characterized by its intuitive grasp of the reality of what is observed. When Odysseus encountered Athena on his return to Ithaca, he challenged her, saying:

Since the time when we ravaged the high-standing city of Priam and departed in our ships and a god scattered the Achaeans, I have not seen you, daughter of Zeus, and have not recognized (*enoēsa*) you boarding my ship that you might protect me from distress (*Od.* 13.316–19).

The capacity to perceive the presence of a deity demanded attentiveness to signs and looking beyond the appearances communicated by the senses. Xenophanes claimed that *nous* belongs most properly to God; humans exercise only a lower form of *nous* on exceptional occasions.³² He claimed that humans cannot have knowledge of the universe as a whole. The quest for knowledge should start with individual phenomena, accumulate over time, and not go beyond what is observable (*DK* 21B34, B35, B18).³³

²⁹ Gilbert Murray, ed., *Aeschylus: Septem Quae Suersunt Tragoediae* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937) 4.

³⁰ Baumgärtel, “*Pneuma, pneumatikos*,” *TDNT* 6, here 337. M. L. West (*The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1997] 549–50) notes that “wind of God” and “wind” occurs a number of times in the tragedies as an agent of fortune (Aeschylus, *Sept.* 705–8; *Cho.* 775).

³¹ Baumgärtel, “*Pneuma, pneumatikos*,” *TDNT* 6, here 338.

³² Von Fritz, “*Nous, Noein*, and Their Derivatives in Presocratic Philosophy (Excluding Anaxagoras): Part I: From the Beginnings to Parmenides,” 223–42, here 230.

³³ Edward Hussey, “The Beginnings of Epistemology: from Homer to Philolaus,” 11–38, here 26, in *Epistemology: Companions to Ancient Thought* (vol. 1; ed. Stephen Everson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); cf. Karl Popper, “The Unknown Xenophanes: An Attempt to Establish His Greatness,” 33–67, here 43–47, in *The World of Parmenides*.

In Homer, three terms denoting mind are *psychē*, *nous*, and *thymos*. The *psychē* is the life force which departs from the person at death (*Il.* 9.409). The *nous* refers to the capacity that generates ideas and images (*Il.* 5.590; 23.730), whereas the *thymos* causes motion or emotion (e.g., *Il.* 2.409; cf. Soph. *Antig.* 718).³⁴ Snell argues that in the Homeric world there was no sense of a unified body but rather a looser sense of the sum total of the parts.³⁵ There was a distinction between the affective and noetic activities, but no localization in the heart and brain as would happen later with Philolaus.

From the Greek colonies of southern Italy, Parmenides (490 B.C.E.) championed the view that knowledge is gained intuitively. He argued that the senses cannot grasp what is truly real:³⁶

It is not customary for being (*to eon*) to be incomplete. For there is nothing lacking to it. If there were, then being would lack everything. The same is the case for thinking (*noein*) and what gives rise to thinking (*noēma*). For you will not find thinking (*to noein*) without being, for it is spoken through it. For nothing else is or will be apart from being, since fate determined it to be a changeless whole and to be stationary. Therefore, as much as mortals put in place, believing them to be true (*alēthē*)—coming into being and perishing, being and not-being, and changing place and altering bright coloring—it is all (merely) names. (*DK* 28 B8, 32–41)

Parmenides claims that thinking only occurs when the mind reflects upon an unchanging reality, for anything that changes is, in his estimation, an illusion. The measured deliberations of the *nous* reflect the stable, unchanging character of reality. If error occurs, it is the result of a misstep by *nous* and not the senses.³⁷ Parmenides adds the notion of discursive reason to *noein*, which had since the time of Homer referred to what is intuitively or directly perceived. The Homeric *nous* did not err.³⁸ For Parmenides, to exercise one's *nous* was not only to intuit "what is" but also to unfold this intuition through a line of argument.³⁹ Thought was distinguished from and elevated to a higher plane than sense perception, but paradoxically could not be completely separated from the senses.⁴⁰

³⁴ Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind in Greek Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Dover, 1982) 9. Liddell, Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 810.

³⁵ Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind*, 5–8; see also Jan Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 57.

³⁶ Von Fritz, "Nous, Noein, Part I," 223–42, 240; idem, "Nous, Noein, Part II," *Classical Philology* 41 (1946) 12–34, here 12.

³⁷ Hussey, "The Beginnings of Epistemology: from Homer to Philolaus," 36. Von Fritz ("Nous, Noein, Part II," 12–13), notes that Melissus and Zenon identify the erring faculty as the senses in contrast to Parmenides who sees the *nous* to be wayward in its judgments.

³⁸ Von Fritz, "Nous, Noein, Part I," 223–42, here 225–26.

³⁹ Von Fritz, "Nous, Noein, Part I," 223–42, here 241–42.

⁴⁰ Gregory Vlastos, "Parmenides' Theory of Knowledge," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 77 (1946) 66–77, here 70–73; Karl Popper, "How Shall the Moon Throw Some of Her Light," 68–78, here 75, in *The World of Parmenides*.

Parmenides articulates what in the subsequent philosophical tradition will be a perennial issue: the status of a priori knowledge over against that of empirical knowledge.⁴¹

Heraclitus urged reflection on one's experience of the world in order to perceive its underlying reality. He is reported to have said: "Nature (*physis*) loves to hide itself" (*DK* 22 B123). For him, the human *psychē*—a material reality to be identified with air or vapor and to be seen as "primarily a principle of rational cognition"⁴² (cf. *DK* 22B45)—is privileged to be able to perceive the tension between hot and cold, warm and moist.⁴³ He does not discount knowledge gained from the senses, but he claims that few people perceive what is real.⁴⁴ According to Pseudo-Plutarch ("On Superstition," 166C): "Heraclitus says that the cosmos is one and common for those who are awake; but when they are sleeping, each turns back into his own world" (*DK* 22 B89). Heraclitus prioritizes insight and reflection, but he does not separate knowledge gained by reason from that gained by the senses.⁴⁵

The term *kardia* (Homer, *kradiē*), "heart," designated the physical organ (e.g., *Il.* 10.94; Aesch. *Eum.* 861), but also the seat of emotions (*Il.* 9.646; *Od.* 4.548; Aesch. *Supp.* 785), the locus of the capacity to think (*Il.* 21.441), and the seat of the will (*Il.* 10.244; Soph. *Antig.* 1105).⁴⁶ The affective and noetic uses of *kardia* are largely absent from the Presocratic philosophers, except for Empedocles (450 B.C.E.) who put some emphasis on the heart because of his identification of "blood" as the instrument of thinking (*DK* 31B105). Nevertheless, it is the blood around the heart and its mixture of the four elemental roots (air, *aithēr*/fire, water, earth) and not the heart itself, that gives rise to thought.⁴⁷ That sensation is a physical activity can be seen in Empedocles' understanding of the eyes and the way sight occurs: effluences from objects enter the pores of the eyes and fire within the eye goes forth toward the object such that both meet to produce sight (*DK* 31B84).⁴⁸ The *nous* is linked with but different from the senses in that it receives data through the various senses—particularly

⁴¹ J. H. Lesher, "Early Interest in Knowledge," 225–49, here 241, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (ed. A. A. Long; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴² Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 127, 239.

⁴³ André Laks, "Soul, Sensation, and Thought," 250–70, here 254, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (ed. A. A. Long; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴⁴ Von Fritz, "*Nous, Noein*, Part I," 223–42, here 235–36; cf. Vlastos, "Parmenides' Theory of Knowledge," 66–77, here 69.

⁴⁵ Von Fritz, "*Nous, Noein*, Part I," 223–42, here 235–36.

⁴⁶ Liddell, Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 877; Behm, "*kardia*," *TDNT* 3, 608.

⁴⁷ M. R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 250–52.

⁴⁸ Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 240–43; Guthrie, 2:228, in *HGP*.

sight and touch—and synthesizes such data with the goal of seeing the bigger picture (*DK* 31B2).⁴⁹ Empedocles saw the cosmos as ruled by Love and Strife (*DK* 31B35). The *nous* perceives love and hate in other humans and in the cosmos—these qualities cannot be perceived by a sense organ like the eye or the ear (*DK* 31B17, line 21).⁵⁰ The principle of “like perceived by like” is operative here (*DK* 31B109). Therefore, Von Fritz claims that for Empedocles and his predecessors the cosmic force of love was not regarded as a metaphor but as a direct perception of an elemental cosmic force by the *nous*. The thinking of the *nous* in Empedocles is a coordinating of the data of direct perception and is not a process of reasoning.⁵¹

A few decades later in the fifth century, a significant separation of noetic from affective activities is articulated in the thought of the Pythagorean Philolaus (430 B.C.E.). He regarded reflective activity as localized in the brain and separated from the heart, which alternatively then was seen as the locus for sense knowledge and emotions. Philolaus maps out the bodily location for these activities of thought and sensation as recorded in the following:

There are four principles (*archai*) of the rational animal—just as Philolaus in “Concerning Nature” says: brain, heart, navel, genitals. The brain is (the principle) of reason (*nous*), the heart of the soul (*psychē*) and of perception; the navel of the beginning of life and the continuing growth of the embryo; the genitals of the laying down of seed and of producing. (*DK* 44, B13, 1-6, in *Theol. Arithm.*, 25, 17 de Falco)

These distinctions paved the way for Plato’s divisions of the kinds of perceiving and knowing on the divided line: *eikasia* (“image”), *pistis* (“belief”), *dianoia* (“understanding”), *noēsis* (“pure reason”), *Republic* VI, 509D–511E.

Parmenides had promoted a type of thinking (*noein*) that freed itself from the distortions of the senses. However, he did not dismiss sense data; he called for moving beyond it.⁵² Among the diverse writings of the Presocratics prior to Philolaus, the *nous* is seen in the Homeric world to operate within the orbit of intuitive knowledge in which a person tries to discern how deeper levels of reality become manifest in his experience. Laks argues that the distinctive activity of the *nous* is not that it is a unique way of perceiving but rather a mental way of organizing and deliberating about reality.⁵³ Here he seems to side more with

⁴⁹ *DK* 31B3.5–8; Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 23, 157; Von Fritz, “*Nous, Noein*, Part II,” 15, 17.

⁵⁰ Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 170.

⁵¹ Von Fritz, “*Nous, Noein*, Part II,” 12–34, here 20.

⁵² Vlastos, “Parmenides’ Theory of Knowledge,” 69; James B. Wilbur and Harold J. Allen, *The Worlds of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1979) 112.

⁵³ Laks, “Soul, Sensation, Thought,” 260.

Parmenides's way of logically organizing knowledge rather than with the more intuitive Heraclitus where the tension between opposites in experience reveals a deeper underlying reality to those who would perceive it.⁵⁴

The LXX translators tended not to follow the lead of Philolaus who had located noetic activity in the brain and the seat of emotions and sensations in the heart. Rather, as Behm notes, they followed the Old Testament view (Isa 32:6; 44:18; Prov 16:23) of the locus of thinking by often identifying "the organ of *noein*" as the *kardia*.⁵⁵

According to the foregoing examples, the Presocratic philosophers were attentive to the distinctive character of noetic activity, but they did not separate it from sensations. Most Presocratics thought that some knowledge could be attained apart from the senses (*DK* 28B8; *DK* 22B89; *DK* 31B133), and some were skeptical of the data communicated by the senses (*DK* 21B34; *DK* 21B107; *DK* 28B6).⁵⁶ Parmenides paved the way for such a separation, but did not effect it as seen by his attention to opinions (*doxa*) in the second part of his poem.⁵⁷ The interplay between sensation and thought does not reveal a governing human capacity as much as it does an attentiveness to being (*to eon*) and truth (*alētheia*). How to bring thought and sensation together so as to live in harmony with the cosmos was fraught with paradox, but one that called for developing a vision of the structure and dynamics of the cosmos.

An important objective of this comparative study is to see how Ezekiel and representative thinkers and poets from Mesopotamia of the first millennium and from Presocratic Greece integrated thought and sensation in light of the cosmic context in which they found themselves. The heart is the point of integration of thoughts and feelings in Mesopotamia (*libbu*) and Israel (*lēb*). The affective dimension of the person in Presocratic Greece is communicated by *thymos* and less frequently by *kardia*. However, the LXX uses *kardia* to translate *lēb*. Focus upon the noetic activity of the person is evident in the use of the term *tēmu* in Mesopotamia and *nous* in Presocratic Greece. In Hebrew, there is no separate term for noetic activity; reason is located in the *lēb*, "heart," the locus in which noetic and affective activities converge.⁵⁸ The Hebrew *rûah*, "wind,

⁵⁴ For the view that Heraclitus and the Stoics contain the seeds of the symbolic of Being in their notion of "the sympathy of the whole," see Stephen Fields, SJ, *Being as Symbol: On the Origins and Development of Karl Rahner's Metaphysics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000) 21.

⁵⁵ Behm, "Noein," *TDNT* 4, 949.

⁵⁶ M. R. Wright, "Presocratic Minds," 207–25, here 212–13, in *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy* (ed. Christopher Gill; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

⁵⁷ Vlastos, "Parmenides' Theory of Knowledge," 73–74; Karl Popper, "The World of Parmenides: Notes on Parmenides' Poem and its Origin in Early Greek Cosmology," 105–45, here 120–21, in *The World of Parmenides*.

⁵⁸ Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 51.

breath, spirit," is perhaps approximated in some cases in Mesopotamia in the use of *šāru* (e.g., in the Assyrian prophecies). The Greek term *pneuma*, "wind, breath, spirit," is attested in poetic texts such as Hesiod but is minimally attested in the philosophical fragments of the Presocratics. The empowering, guiding, and integrating effected by the Spirit in Ezekiel is alternatively provided in Heraclitus by the *logos* (*DK* 22B1) and in Parmenides by being (*to eon*, *DK* 28B8.24–25). How this Presocratic attention to the ways that being and *logos* bring harmony to individuals in a community compares with Ezekiel's attention to the word and Spirit of the Lord will be an important question in this study. The depersonalization of the governing forces of the cosmos by the Presocratic philosophers has shaped the ways that Western civilization has tried to come to terms with the forces of nature and cosmos as communicated through thoughts and sensations. How this Greek movement toward a more abstract understanding of the sovereign rule of the cosmos compares with that in Ezekiel and Mesopotamian sources will be examined in the following interpretation of Ezekiel 1–3 and parallels from Mesopotamia and Greece.

Ezekiel's Throne Chariot Vision: The Universal Scope of Yhwh's Invisible Rule

Ezekiel was deported to Babylonia along with other priests, government officials, and skilled workers in 597 (Ezek 1:1-3; 2 Kgs 24:8-17). Nebuchadrezzar II (604–562) deported conquered peoples not only to prevent rebellions but also to bring skilled workers and officials to Babylonia to support imperial programs.⁵⁹ Ezekiel, who most likely served as a priest in the Jerusalem temple prior to 597, found himself with his urban compatriots in an agricultural region along the River Chebar near the city of Nippur. In the third and second millennia B.C.E., Nippur was one of the most important Babylonian cities since the temple of Enlil, the king of the gods, was located there. From the late eighth to the late sixth century B.C.E., Nippur was occupied by Assyrians who maintained a strong military garrison there.⁶⁰ It appears that the native Babylonian population was sparse during these centuries of Assyrian occupation. In light of onomastic data gleaned from various cuneiform sources, it is possible that

⁵⁹ D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 42.

⁶⁰ Grant Frame, *Babylonia, 689–627 B.C.: A Political History* (Uitgaven Van Het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 69; Istanbul/Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1992) 193; cf. Amelie Kuhrt, "Nabonidus and the Babylonian Priesthood," 119–55, here 147, in Mary Beard and John A. North, *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Steven Holloway, *Aššur Is King! Aššur Is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 367, 371.

descendants of Israelite deportees in the eighth century had been relocated in the vicinity of Nippur.⁶¹ So when the Neo-Babylonian king Nabopolassar (625–605) regained this area, it was in need of new inhabitants to cultivate the land and rebuild various structures.⁶² When Nebuchadrezzar located groups of Judahite deportees in this region, the groups had the advantage of gathering as a community and commiserating with one another—and perhaps there were descendants of Israelites present who could assist in their adjustment to the land.⁶³ So even though the exiles were traumatized by the massive displacement they had suffered, some important factors existed that would enable them to maintain their Judahite and Yahwistic identity.⁶⁴ Ezekiel was an important leader who would point the way forward through his visions, teachings, and example.

Ezekiel received his call in 593 B.C.E. in Babylonia. Near the River Chebar, he looked and saw a heavenly vision of a storm cloud approaching from the north. He noticed that the cloud had four living creatures at its corners. These creatures were composite beings whose basic form was humanoid, but each had four faces and four wings (1:4-6). The faces were those of a human, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (1:10). Their legs and feet resembled those of a calf; the soles of their feet gleamed like burnished bronze (1:7). The straightness of their legs seemed to capture the motion of an extended leg as it was about to push the creature into flight.⁶⁵ The inner wings of the creatures were extended to touch one another: an action resembling that of the cherubim in the inner chamber of the Jerusalem temple whose extended wings formed the seat upon which the invisible Yhwh was enthroned (1 Kgs 8:6-7). These composite living creatures, who are explicitly identified as cherubim in Ezekiel 10:20, are the thronebearers for Yhwh.⁶⁶ Above their heads was a crystalline slab and upon this was situated a

⁶¹ Bustenay Oded, "The Settlements of the Israelite and the Judean Exiles in Mesopotamia in the Eighth-Sixth Centuries BCE," 99–101, in *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography Presented to Zecharia Kallai* (ed. G. Galil and M. Weinfeld; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

⁶² Frame, *Babylonia, 689–627 B.C.*, 197. David Vanderhooft (*The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* [HSM 59; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1999] 27) refers to Naaman's argument that Nabopolassar only succeeded in conquering Nippur and Uruk from the Assyrians in 620 B.C.E.

⁶³ Oded, "The Settlements of the Israelite and the Judean Exiles in Mesopotamia in the Eighth-Sixth Centuries BCE," 98–99; Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 100.

⁶⁴ Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 68.

⁶⁵ W. Boyd Barrick, "The Straight-Legged Cherubim of Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision (Ezekiel 1:7a)," *CBQ* 44 (1982) 543–50, here 547.

⁶⁶ Othmar Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen Und Siegelkunst: Eine Neue Deutung Der Majestätsschilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 84/85; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977) 191, 321.

sapphire throne on which a fiery, human-like figure was seated.⁶⁷ From his loins upward, this figure seemed like glowing electrum; from his loins downward, he appeared like fire (1:26-27). The splendor of this vision was overwhelming, and Ezekiel fell to the ground (1:28).

This vision is complex and difficult to visualize. The cherubim in the Jerusalem temple were two, rather than four, in number and had the body of an animal (a bull or a lion) with the wings of an eagle and a human head.⁶⁸ In Ezekiel's vision, each of the living creatures are "skybearers" (*kusarikkū* figures that are human from the waist up and bull from the waist down) and have four faces.⁶⁹ Individual examples of such four-faced creatures are rare; they have been found in a few places in Syro-Mesopotamia in the fifteenth century B.C.E., but only in Ezekiel does each creature have four different faces.⁷⁰ This fourfold duplication of creatures and faces signifies the universal range of movement of these creatures. Not only can they cover the four cardinal points of the compass, but they can do so with the swiftness of the eagle, the ferocity of the lion, the strength of the ox, and the intelligence of the human.⁷¹ To communicate the sense that this cloud is a mobile chariot, the vision indicates that there is a large wheel next to each of the four creatures; the rims of each wheel were filled with eyes.⁷²

⁶⁷ Baruch Halpern ("The Assyrian Astronomy of Genesis 1 and the Birth of Milesian Philosophy," 74–83, here 75–76, 78, in *Hayim and Miriam Tadmor Memorial Volume* [ed. I. Eph'al, A. Ben-Tor, P. Machinist; Eretz Israel 27; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2003] describes the *rāqîá'* as a "plate" that separates the lower "biosphere" from the upper "realm of pure elemental composition," a picture of the cosmos with analogies to the Milesians.

⁶⁸ Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (trans. T. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 168–69.

⁶⁹ Christoph Uehlinger and Susan Müller-Trufaut ("Ezekiel 1, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography: Attempts at Further Refinement" *TZ* 57 [2001] 140–71, here 153) note that the Mesopotamian *kusarikkū* figures always appear as pairs for they mark the east and west points on the horizon where heavenly bodies appear and disappear. However, the cherubim in Ezekiel 1 refer to the four horizons or four quarters of the cosmos. West (*The East Face of Helicon*, 580) draws a parallel between the cherub and the griffin, which is a winged lion with the head of an eagle. See also John Pairman Brown, *Israel and Hellas* (3 vols.; BZAW 231, 276, 299; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995–2001) 2.91.

⁷⁰ Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen Und Siegelkunst*, 271; Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (WBC 28; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1994) 27–31.

⁷¹ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 1, *Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 96; Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (WBC 28; Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1994) 31.

⁷² Halpern ("The Assyrian Astronomy of Genesis 1 and the Birth of Milesian Philosophy," 78) interprets these "eyes" as membranes between the fiery Yhwh enthroned above and the earthly atmosphere and draws a parallel with Anaximander's stars, which are holes on the rim of a cosmic wheel through which cosmic fire enters the earthly atmosphere when cloaking moisture evaporates. Alternatively, Uehlinger and Trufaut ("Ezekiel 1, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography," 150, 154), regard 1:18 and 10:12 as products of a redactor's efforts (fourth century B.C.E. or later) at harmonization and link the cherubim—whose body,

These static, statuelike thronebearers can be visualized when sufficient attention is given to the details of the vision report. However, Ezekiel's description is complicated by those sections in which he tries to describe these creatures as if they were in motion.⁷³ Ezekiel notes that the faces of the creatures stare straight ahead. Individually each of the faces can contribute to the navigation of the creature only if it is coordinated with the other three faces; then each of the four creatures must be coordinated with one another. This coordinating function is carried out by the *rûah*, "wind, spirit." If the *rûah* is understood as the wind, then the power of the storm suffuses the creatures and the chariot and governs its motion. However, if *rûah* is understood as the spirit, then the force guiding the chariot appears to be a form of divine intelligence and power.⁷⁴ This spirit was also within the wheels (*ôpannim*, 1:20; cf. 1:16, 19) next to each creature so that the motion of the chariot was coordinated. No one of the creatures and no one of the faces can act autonomously if the chariot is to function properly.⁷⁵ The spirit is essential to the navigation of the chariot. However, this picture of harmonious, coordinated movement is contradicted by a section in the middle of Ezekiel's description of the vision that speaks of the lightninglike movement of the creatures:

The appearance of the creatures was something like flaming coals, burning like torches; it was moving back-and-forth among the creatures. The fire was brilliant; and from the fire, lightning was going forth. The living creatures were darting⁷⁶ back and forth like lightning⁷⁷ (1:13-14).

The rapid, fiery movement of the creatures is consonant with the fact that they are part of the storm cloud. However, the explosive motion of a storm does not fit together with the static pose of a statuelike creature. The most notable obscurities in Ezekiel's vision arise from his efforts to describe these creatures as beings-in-motion. This anthropomorphizing and theriomorphizing of the storm cloud attempts to domesticate the wildness of the numinous storm. However, the lightninglike, back-and-forth motion of the creatures within the storm stands in tension with the coordinated movement of the static thronebearers of the

back, hands, and wings are covered with eyes—with Egypto-Phoenician *Mischwesen* like the *Bes pantheos* type.

⁷³ Trygve N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (ConBOT 18; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982) 32, 36.

⁷⁴ On Ezekiel's use of the term *rûah*, see Lawrence Boadt, "The Dramatic Structure of Ezekiel 37,1-14," in *Palabra, Prodigio, Poesía: In Memoriam P. Luis Alonso Schökel, SJ* (AnBib 151; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2003) 191–205, here 204–5.

⁷⁵ Uehlinger and Trufaut ("Ezekiel 1, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography," 155) note that the mechanics of this chariot elude explanation because the imagery does not admit of such analysis.

⁷⁶ Read *rās*.

⁷⁷ Read *habbārāq* with Vg., Targ., Sym.

chariot through the power of the *rūah*, which results in the paradoxical picture of the thronebearers as visionary creatures participating in a dynamic stasis. The complexity of the resulting picture of the throne chariot communicates a sense of the incomparability and transcendence of the figure enthroned above it.

The most daring part of Ezekiel's vision is his attempt to describe Yhwh as enthroned above the creatures. Yhwh is clearly pictured as a powerful king who is fully in charge of his realm. His fiery appearance from the waist down and glowing electrum from the waist up show that his nature transcends that of a human body (1:27). Ezekiel goes beyond other OT throne vision accounts by venturing a description of the enthroned figure: Exodus 24:9-11 only described the pavement below the throne while Isaiah 6:1 mentions that the train of Yhwh's garment fills the temple. It seems that Ezekiel takes the step of describing the enthroned Yhwh in order to make clear to the exiles that Yhwh has not abdicated his throne.⁷⁸ Because the Jerusalem temple was still standing in 593 B.C.E., the vision of Ezekiel 1 makes clear that Yhwh is not confined to the inner chamber of the temple but can move wherever he chooses. Ezekiel risks a near anthropomorphic portrayal of Yhwh, like those of Mesopotamian deities that regularly occurred in Babylonian documents, in order to emphasize Yhwh's unshakeable power and presence.⁷⁹

Ezekiel's main explanation for the exile is the sin of idolatry that had been committed repeatedly through the generations by the people of Israel and Judah (6:7; 20:8, 31, 32, 39). Their worship of idols included not only bowing down to other gods (8:16) but also fabricating images of them (7:20; 8:5, 10). Some of these images may then have been identified with Yhwh. When properly understood, a cultic statue in the ancient Near East served as a symbol of the divine presence. Such a statue was regarded as embodying the presence of the deity in a sacramental sense: the presence was real, yet partial.⁸⁰ The Mesopotamian "mouth-opening" rituals attest to their belief that the cult statue came alive with the divine presence and was not merely an artifact of wood and precious metals and stones.⁸¹

Despite his description of the enthroned Yhwh, Ezekiel defends the aniconic worship of Yhwh. As Kutsko has argued on the basis of Genesis 1:26-28,

⁷⁸ John Strong, "God's Kabod: The Presence of Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (ed. Margaret Odell and John Strong; SBL SymS9; Atlanta: Scholars, 2000) 69-95, esp. 73.

⁷⁹ Cf. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth*, 25.

⁸⁰ Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," 15-32, here 16-20, in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. P. D. Miller Jr., P. Hanson, S. D. McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

⁸¹ Christopher Walker and Michael Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mīs Pī Ritual* (SAALT 1; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001) 14.

the privileged image of God on earth among the exiles educated by priestly circles was the community of human beings consisting of male and female.⁸² On the assumption that Ezekiel was aware of Genesis 1:26-28, he probably would have explained Yhwh's exercise of royal power as a force that fostered human community and stewardship. Such a relational understanding of the way that the actions of Yhwh and humans are alike offers a more dynamic anthropomorphic portrayal of Yhwh than that conveyed by a static statue or icon. Thus, Ezekiel's picture of the fiery, humanlike enthroned Yhwh can be seen as both anthropomorphic and aniconic.⁸³ The tension between these two terms reflects the difficulty of describing how a transcendent God can become immanent.

Ezekiel's vision of Yhwh enthroned above the four living creatures emphasizes the gulf that separates a humanly fabricated image from the living God. The manufactured image can become an end in itself and fail to point beyond itself to Yhwh. The danger of using images in Yahwistic worship was considered too great by those who belonged to the Deuteronomistic movement. They insisted that no images of Yhwh could be made in anthropomorphic, theriomorphic, or astral forms (Deut 4:15-19). Their movement fueled the purge of idolatrous cults from Judah and Israel under Josiah in the late seventh century B.C.E.⁸⁴ Their aniconic ethos fostered an approach to Yhwh that placed limits on the ways in which Yhwh can be imagined. Their *modus operandi* opposed the creation of a static picture of Yhwh but promoted dialogue with Yhwh that would build one's relationship with him. Practices that strengthened the relationship with Yhwh included prayer, sacrifice, obedience to Yhwh's commands, and care for others (e.g., Deut 6:1-9; 12:5-12; 15:1-18). An aniconic type of relationship with Yhwh emphasized trust and obedience, whereas an iconic-type of relationship emphasized the articulation of concrete, tangible details.⁸⁵ The strength of the iconic-type is its potential to function as a symbol of Yhwh's presence, but this potential is also its weakness because there is a risk that this symbol can be coopted. An authentic symbol sustains the dialectic between itself and its interpretation, but a broken symbol has lost this dialectic of engagement and only pretends to function symbolically (cf. Ezek 13:10-14).⁸⁶

Ezekiel railed against the idolatrous practices that he had seen in Jerusalem (e.g., 6:2-14; 8:1-18). Sacrifices on high places (6:6) and secret worship of

⁸² John Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Biblical and Judaic Studies 7; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 67, 102.

⁸³ Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth*, 25.

⁸⁴ Benjamin Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 90.

⁸⁵ Cf. Eric Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar," 3-23, here 23, in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

⁸⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) 11; Robert Cummings Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1996) 47.

images in the temple (8:7-13) were actions that took sacred space from Yhwh and handed it over to deities whose appearance was more visible and whose rituals were more tangible. Even though most of Ezekiel's audience would probably have recalled the worship practices in Jerusalem, they had lost everything in the exile except their families and their own lives. Many of them seem to have strongly questioned the justice of Yhwh's punishment of them (Ezek 18:2).

The Babylonian milieu challenged those exiles committed to worshipping Yhwh alone. With its many temples and religious practices, Babylonia offered numerous avenues for communication with the divine world. Yet with all of its gods and rituals, Babylonia had also suffered major setbacks in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. at the hands of the Assyrians that confused them about the justice of their gods. To understand how the Babylonians struggled with the theodicy question will assist us in understanding why Ezekiel refused to entertain questions about the justice of Yhwh's rule.

The Babylonians' Search for Just Divine Rule

The deportation of conquered peoples had been practiced for many centuries in the ancient Near East prior to the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire. In the epilogue to the *Code of Hammurapi* (CH, eighteenth century B.C.E.), the following curse is enjoined against any future king who might dare to change any of the laws written in this corpus: "May [Inanna] deliver that one into the hands of his enemy, and may they lead him away bound into a hostile land" (CH LI:19-23). The removal of the king probably meant that many others would have been taken prisoner with him, as was the case with Jehoiachin and the Judahite exiles in 597.⁸⁷ One of the curses threatened against King Baal of Tyre if he broke his treaty with the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680-669) was the deportation of his people.⁸⁸ The Assyrians became well-known for their systematic exchange of peoples between the eastern and western parts of their empire.⁸⁹ The deportation of a large segment of the civilian population was a practice known to have occurred at times in Egypt, the Hittite Empire, and Mesopotamia.⁹⁰

Nebuchadrezzar needed laborers for his public works projects in Babylonia.⁹¹ The wars in which Nabopolassar had driven the Assyrians from Babylonia.

⁸⁷ Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005) 364. The first deportation to Babylon occurred on the second of Adar (March 16/17) 597.

⁸⁸ Riecke Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* (AfO B 9; Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1956) 109 n. 69, IV:14-15.

⁸⁹ Bustenay Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1979) 46.

⁹⁰ Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees*, 2; A. K. Grayson, "Assyria: Tiglath-Pileser III to Sargon II (744-705 B.C.)," 71-102, here 90, in *CAH* vol. 3, part 2.

⁹¹ Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 42.

nia took their toll on the land and called for major reconstruction projects.⁹² Therefore, Nebuchadrezzar deported to Babylonia those workers who would be able to assist on these projects. Most of the Judahite exiles were apparently settled either upon agricultural land charged with provisioning the temples or near major cities whose temples needed repair.⁹³ Nebuchadrezzar legitimated his imperial project as an effort to honor Marduk and his capital.⁹⁴

Nebuchadrezzar also wanted to minimize the potential for rebellion by conquered peoples. Therefore, he took away their leaders and officials who would be skilled in mobilizing the people against their new rulers. Nebuchadrezzar could have employed these educated elite from Judah in his growing imperial bureaucracy, which would have conducted most of its business in Aramaic, a language whose script was more closely related to Hebrew than Akkadian.⁹⁵ However, the need for agricultural laborers seems to have led Nebuchadrezzar to locate the city dwellers from Jerusalem on agricultural land.⁹⁶ Thus, he would have departed from the Assyrian practice of trying to capitalize on the skills of the deportees. In the eighth to seventh century, the Israelites deported by the Assyrians seem to have initially been treated as slaves but were given more opportunities over time to the point that they eventually could own land⁹⁷—a strategy apparently aimed at incorporating them into the Assyrian cultural sphere.⁹⁸

The educated elite from Judah relocated near Nippur would have recognized the marks of Babylonia's one hundred years of subjection to Assyrian rule. Even though Babylonia as a whole prospered economically and culturally under Assyrian rule, Nippur was notorious as a rebellious area and so an Assyrian garrison was stationed there.⁹⁹ With the exception of Sennacherib, the Assyrian kings of the eighth-seventh centuries respected the Babylonian gods and their temple institutions.¹⁰⁰ Other than in times of revolt by the Babylonians, the

⁹² Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 365. The topos of corvée labor runs through Babylonian royal inscriptions of the second and first millennia B.C.E. and, as noted earlier, received classic expression in the *Atrahasis* story in which the claim was made that humans were created to build and provision temples (*Atrahasis* I:189–97).

⁹³ Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 76; Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, 65.

⁹⁴ Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 41.

⁹⁵ Frame, *Babylonia, 689–627 B.C.*, 48.

⁹⁶ Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 16; Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 365–66.

⁹⁷ Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees*, 98–99, 115.

⁹⁸ Cf. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 41; Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 360.

⁹⁹ John A. Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747–726 B.C.* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1984) 107, 123; Frame, *Babylonia, 689–627 B.C.*, 193.

¹⁰⁰ Frame, *Babylonia, 689–627 B.C.*, 35.

Assyrian kings supported the celebration of the Babylonian New Year festival with its grand processions of Marduk and Nabû, at which time was recited the story of Marduk's rise to power in the pantheon as related in the *Enūma Eliš*. The catastrophes that beset Babylonia through the Assyrian invasions could find a traditional explanation in the poem *Erra and Išum*: it was because of Marduk's absence from his temple Esagila.¹⁰¹ The *Enūma Eliš* and the poem *Erra and Išum* provide a picture of how the Babylonians understood the rise and fall of their fortunes as a consequence of Marduk's presence or absence in their land.

The *Enūma Eliš* was recited on the fourth day of the New Year festival at Marduk's temple of Esagila in Babylon.¹⁰² This story relates how the warrior god Marduk had defeated the forces of chaos under the leadership of Tiāmat and her general Kingu. The younger gods had been troubling Tiāmat and her lover Apsû. When Apsû pleaded with Tiāmat to accept his plan for eliminating the rebellious younger offspring to whom they had given birth, she reluctantly allowed Apsû to proceed (I:41–47). However, Ea, the god of wisdom and magic, became aware of their plans and cast a powerful spell on Apsû and killed him. Then, Ea built his own temple on top of Apsû (I:59–78). He dwelt there with his wife Damkina who gave birth to Marduk. This newborn son was praised as follows:

The nurse who raised him filled him with splendor. His form was grand; his look penetrating. His advent was well-regarded; he was thereafter exceedingly strong. Anu, his grandfather, saw him and rejoiced; his heart was radiant and filled with joy. He [Marduk] was highly exalted; everything about him was surpassing. His limbs were unbelievably well-formed: beyond understanding, too difficult to perceive. He had four eyes and four ears. When he moved his lips, fire flamed forth. His four ears were exceedingly large, and also his eyes, which could see everything. He was elevated above the gods; his form was exceptional. His limbs were long; he was outstanding at birth. (*EE* I:86–100)

The composer of this epic had no hesitation in describing Marduk in anthropomorphic terms. He described Marduk's limbs, eyes, ears, and lips. His eyes and ears were four in number, which indicates that he was able to perceive in all four directions at once. Fire came forth from his mouth. This description approximates that of a statue, presuming that the Babylonians would have made a statue from whose mouth a fire flamed forth. Nevertheless, the composer emphasizes the superiority and perfection of Marduk, characteristics that also predominate in the following description of Marduk's capacities as a warrior and enforcer of justice:

¹⁰¹ Luigi Cagni, *The Poem of Erra* (Sources from the Ancient Near East 1; Malibu: Undena Publications, 1977) 21, 32–33.

¹⁰² Jacob Klein, "Akitu," *ABD* I.138–39.

He was clothed with the aura of ten gods; he set this high on his head. The fifty “Efulgences” are clustered above him. Anu created and begot the four winds; he placed them in his [Marduk’s] hand, saying: “my son, let them dance.” He [Marduk] created dust and the storm to carry it. He made a wave that disturbed Tiāmat. (*EE I*:103–8)

The winds are the major weapon that Marduk will use against Tiāmat. The narrator of this twelfth-century composition celebrated the kingship of Marduk in a way that subtly usurped the power of Enlil—whose name means “Lord Wind” and who was the chief executive power of the Babylonian pantheon in the second millennium B.C.E.—by placing the wind and storm cloud under Marduk’s control. Anu equipped Marduk with this wind power and allowed him to exercise it against Tiāmat, who symbolized the primordial sea. Marduk’s provocation of Tiāmat suggests that aggressiveness was not the sole preserve of those forces that are usually categorized as chaotic; rather the forces of order also seem to have had the potential to initiate wars.

Marduk rose above Enlil in stature not only by replacing him as the king of the gods but also by transcending the natural power of the wind and storm. From the perspective of the *Enūma Eliš*, when winds and storms appeared, they were a sign of the presence of Marduk, but they were not to be equated with Marduk.¹⁰³ Likewise, in Ezekiel’s throne chariot vision, the storm wind and the lightning flashes signaled the approach of Yhwh, but they were more closely associated with the living creatures and the cloud chariot than they were with Yhwh who was enthroned above them. Nevertheless, just as the wind or spirit suffused the cloud chariot and directed the motion of the living creatures in Ezekiel 1, so also the wind under Marduk’s control had the capacity to penetrate the forces of chaos and subdue them as seen in the following passage from the *Enūma Eliš* in which Marduk defeats Tiāmat:

He send a strong wind against her so that she could not close her lips. The raging wind filled her belly. Her intestines were clogged. She opened wide her mouth. He shot an arrow that broke through her belly; it split open her intestines and pierced her heart. He bound her and ended her life. (*EE IV*:98–103)

In this decisive battle that brought the ordered world into existence, the winds under Marduk’s control played a decisive role.

When Babylonia was threatened or invaded by foreigners, it seemed as though Marduk had withdrawn from the land and allowed the forces of chaos to reappear. In the poem *Erra and Išum*, probably composed in the ninth to

¹⁰³ Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (trans. Z. Bahrani and M. Van de Mieroop; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992) 217; idem, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (trans. T. Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001) 69–71; Walther Sommerfeld, “Marduk” 360–70, here 368–70, in *RLA* 7 (1987–1990); cf. Thorkild Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) 177–79.

eighth centuries B.C.E., the warrior god Erra persuaded Marduk to leave Babylon temporarily in order to have his cultic statue refurbished. The scenario unfolded as Erra entered Marduk's temple and said:

Why has the jewelry proper to your sovereignty, which is filled with beauty like the stars of heaven, become tarnished? The crown of your sovereignty, which made Ehalanki shine like Etemenanki—its appearance is dimmed." (*Erra*, I:127–28)

Then Marduk rehearsed his deed of old in which he unleashed a flood against heaven and earth. After he had completely subdued the earth, he said:

I charged Girra to make my face shine and to wash my robes. When he had completed the task of polishing my jewelry, I put on the crown of my sovereignty and returned to my place. My face is splendid; my glance is terrifying. (*Erra* I:141–44)

Marduk was reluctant to leave Babylon for fear that it would lapse into chaos. But finally Erra persuaded him that he himself would maintain order in Marduk's absence (I:180–91). In this way, Erra deceived Marduk and brought trouble to the land.

The royal inscriptions of Assyria and Persia in the first millennium B.C.E., as well as those of Babylon, acknowledged Marduk's sovereignty over Babylon. The inscriptions of Esarhaddon (680–669) explain the trouble in Babylon as a consequence of Marduk's absence from the city. In trying to make reparation for his father Sennacherib's sacrilegiously smashing the statues of Babylonian gods,¹⁰⁴ Esarhaddon claimed that Marduk allowed this to happen because he was angry with the Babylonians, as noted in the following excerpt from one of his inscriptions:

He had written seventy years as the span of its unrestored condition. But when the merciful Marduk's heart was calmed, he turned it (i.e., the sign) upside down and declared that it [Babylon] would be settled after eleven years.¹⁰⁵

When Cyrus of Persia captured Babylon, he had an inscription (i.e., the Cyrus Cylinder) produced that heralded him as the liberator of Babylon and as the one whom Marduk had summoned to reverse the sacrileges of the last Neo-Babylonian king, Nabonidus (555–539).¹⁰⁶ In this inscription, Cyrus accuses Nabonidus as follows:

He brought to an end the honoring of Marduk, the king of the gods. He repeatedly carried out evil things against his city. Each day [he oppressed the people] with the yoke without pause and destroyed all of them. At their outcry, the ruler

¹⁰⁴ COS 2.229E, lines 43–54; Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, 63–65, 67–68.

¹⁰⁵ Edition: Borger, *Asarhaddon*, p. 15, #11, episode 10, lines 2b–9.

¹⁰⁶ Amelie Kuhrt, "Nabonidus and Babylonian Priesthood," 119–55, here 127, 143, in Beard and North, *Pagan Priests*.

of the gods became terribly angry [and departed from] their territory. The gods who dwelt among them left their temples, enraged that he had made them come to Babylon. Marduk turned toward all the villages whose homes had been abandoned and the people of the land of Sumer and Akkad who had become corpses. He turned back and had mercy (on them). All the lands together he searched out, tested, and looked for an upright ruler who matched the urgings of his heart. (lines 7–11)¹⁰⁷

It is difficult to know why Nabonidus was absent from Babylon and lived in Tema for ten years. Because he had usurped the throne, he probably had many enemies in Babylon. His devotion to the moon god Sin may also have been a factor.¹⁰⁸ However, upon his return to Babylon, he acknowledged Marduk's sovereignty over Babylonia (cf. *COS* 2.123, i.8–ii.25),¹⁰⁹ including Sin's sanctuary of Ehulhul in Harran. These royal inscriptions of the seventh to sixth centuries B.C.E. claim that the trouble in Babylon was a consequence of Marduk's anger against his people.¹¹⁰ This theological understanding of history is echoed in Ezekiel's explanation to the exiles of the cause of their deportation: they had conducted idolatrous worship on the high places and in the temple and so had angered Yhwh who had deported them and was himself about to depart from the Jerusalem temple (Ezek 10:18-19).

The Presocratic Greek Understanding of Order within the Cosmos: From Personal Rule to Abstract Principles

The Greek city-states on the west coast of Asia Minor emerged in the eighth to sixth centuries B.C.E. at a time when there was increasing trade between the Greeks and the peoples of the ancient Near East. These centuries have been labeled "the orientalizing period," for trading in goods meant not only

¹⁰⁷ Edition: P.-R. Berger, "Der Kyros-Zylinder mit dem Zusatzfragment BIN II Nr. 32 und die akkadischen Personennamen im Danielbuch," *ZA* 64 (1975) 192–234. See also *COS* 2.124.

¹⁰⁸ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "King Nabonidus and the Neo-Babylonian Empire," 969–79, here 974–76, in *CANE*.

¹⁰⁹ P.-R. Berger, *Die neubabylonische Königsinschriften: Königsinschriften der ausgehenden babylonischen Reiches (626–539 a. Chr.)* (AOAT 4; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1973) 355–59.

¹¹⁰ Nabopolassar also saw his call by Marduk to be king of Babylonia as a summons to pay back Assyria for its sacrilegious actions against Marduk and his land and people; see Rainer Albertz, "Die Exilszeit als Ernstfall für eine historische Rekonstruktion ohne biblische Texte: Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften als 'Primärquelle,'" 23–39, here 30, in Lester L. Grabbe, *Leading Captivity Captive: 'The Exile' as History and Ideology* (JSOTSup 278; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998).

an exchange of material goods but also of culture and knowledge.¹¹¹ Since the local culture of the Greek tribes and cities had predominated during the Dark Age (1075–700 B.C.E.),¹¹² the increased communication was not only between Greeks and foreigners but also between the various Greek cities and tribes. In the midst of this ferment and growth, the performance of the Homeric epics began to have a significant impact on the worldviews of the Greeks. This performance aimed to forge a common consciousness among those who spoke Greek.¹¹³ The epics championed the pantheon of Olympia and synthesized various myths about the gods. However, the bias of the Homeric epics was toward the aristocratic values of households attached to the land and supported by farming and herding. The role of the trader was outwardly disparaged, for the exchange of goods in Homer was celebrated as an act of gift-giving more so than as a utilitarian exchange of commodities.¹¹⁴ It may be that the continuing performance of the Homeric epics in the seventh to sixth centuries was intended to slow down the pace of social change fueled by the growing commercial activity of the merchants independent of the aristocrats.¹¹⁵ Such performances tried to create a space in which the traditional ways and the self-understanding of the various Greek tribes and families might gain a fair hearing and thus continue in some form within the changing world order of that time.

In the seventh to sixth centuries B.C.E., the Greek cities of Ionia were subject to the neighboring kingdom of Lydia until Cyrus conquered the region in 546. Herodotus notes that Croesus, the king of Lydia (560–546), had ties with the ruling house in Ephesus. Even though Croesus made war on the Greek city-states, he revered their institutions.¹¹⁶ Herodotus (1.74) says that Croesus

¹¹¹ Cf. Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (trans. M. Pindar; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

¹¹² The dates for the Dark Ages are those given by Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History: Words and Things in Iron Age Greece* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000) 7.

¹¹³ Gregory Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) 37–38; Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 182–83; Giulia Sissa and Marcel Detienne, *The Daily Life of the Greek Gods* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 144; William G. Thalmann, *The Swineherd and the Bow: Representations of Class in the Odyssey* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) 275.

¹¹⁴ David Tandy, *Warriors into Traders: the Power of the Market in Early Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 101.

¹¹⁵ Tandy (*Warriors into Traders*, 125–26, 152) sees the performance of the epics and the celebration of symposia as aristocratic coverups to the social change deriving from the exchange of private property: a development that marked the emergence of a market economy.

¹¹⁶ Crawford M. Greenewalt Jr., “Croesus of Sardis and the Lydian Kingdom of Anatolia,” 1173–83, here 1173, in *CANE*.

even brought the Milesian thinker Thales to his court as an advisor.¹¹⁷ But with the new Persian rulers in the latter half of the sixth century, tighter controls were imposed and taxation pressures increased, which had a negative impact on the autonomy of the city-states.¹¹⁸

The socio-political circumstances of the eighth to sixth centuries B.C.E. show that the forces for change and stability were locked in a vigorous struggle.¹¹⁹ In this dynamic context of social change, new approaches to understanding order within the world were introduced by thinkers in the various cities of Ionia, including Miletus and Ephesus. Thales (ca. 590) captured the attention of his contemporaries by accurately predicting the eclipse of the sun in 585 (Herodotus 1.74)—a feat that he was probably able to accomplish by studying patterns in the astronomical data compiled by the Babylonians.¹²⁰ Thales identified water as the basic material (*archē*) of which all reality is composed; he claimed that everything proceeds from water and will return to it.¹²¹ Anaximenes (ca. 550) argued that this *archē* was air rather than water. Thales and Anaximenes departed from the traditional mythical cosmogonies by seeking explanations for order from within nature itself rather than from the external actions of the gods upon the material world.¹²² They first conceived of nature (*physis*) as a self-contained whole and then tried to explain the principle of order that generated this whole. These Milesian thinkers observed the world before them and refrained from anthropomorphizing the powers and processes at work in nature.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Herodotus, *The Persian Wars* (ed. A. D. Godley; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920) 90–92.

¹¹⁸ George Forrest, “Greece: The History of the Archaic Period,” 13–43, here 31, in John Boardman, Oswyn Murray, and Jasper Griffin, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Greece and the Hellenistic World* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Oswyn Murray, *Early Greece* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980) 243–44.

¹¹⁹ Gerard Naddaf, “On the Origin of Anaximander’s Cosmological Model,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59 (1998) 1–28, here 24; Murray, *Early Greece*, 233–34.

¹²⁰ Baruch Halpern, “Assyrian and Presocratic Astronomies and the Location of the Book of Job,” 255–64, here 262, in *Kein Land für sich allein: Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina, Ebirnari für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. University Hübner, E. Knauf; OBO 186; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2002).

¹²¹ W. K. C. Guthrie (*A History of Greek Philosophy* [= *HGP*] [Cambridge: University Press, 1962] 64) notes that something can be an *archē* only when its motion inheres in it.

¹²² H. S. Versnel, “Thrice One: Three Greek Experiments in Oneness,” 79–163, here 89, in Barbara N. Porter, *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World* (Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute 1; Chebeague, Maine: Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, 2000); Karl Popper, “The World of Parmenides: Notes on Parmenides’ Poem and its Origin in Early Greek Cosmology,” 105–45, here 109–10, in *The World of Parmenides*.

¹²³ Charles Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) 193.

Anaximander (ca. 570), who may have been the teacher of Anaximenes, identified the *archē* as “the boundless” (*to apeiron*, DK 12B1). As the first principle, “the boundless” encompasses and pervades everything and is the origin of everything.¹²⁴ Guthrie argues that “the boundless” is that primitive stuff that is neutral in the battle between hot and cold, dry and wet.¹²⁵ It has no definite characteristics of its own but is open to receiving either hot or cold as “the ordinance of Time” (*chronou taxin*, i.e., fate or the law of necessity, DK 12B1) dictates. As a description of this malleable, primitive stuff that obeys the “ordinance of Time,” “the boundless” suffuses all things as an unlimited mixture. Guthrie notes that it is not accurate to call the *archē* of any of the Milesians a material substance, if we mean by this phrase that water, “the boundless,” and air were realities without consciousness.¹²⁶ The cosmos was a living, breathing reality that had the life principle within it.

Anaximander is reported to have said:

... that the principle (*archē*) of beings is the boundless (*to apeiron*) . . . from which is the genesis of beings and their perishing back into it according to necessity. For they give justice and repayment to one another for injustice according to the ordinance of time. (DK 12A9 lines 7–8 + B1, Simplicius, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca* IX, 24.14–25)

Anaximander drew upon the power of poetic language to describe the processes that he observed in the world around him. Things not only arise and return to “the boundless,” they also contend with one another according to justice and injustice. This impinging upon one another of contending forces or things creates an equilibrium within the world that sustains its order. This tension between opposites arises out of and returns to an original unity. Without the tension between the dry and the moist and the hot and the cold, the world would lapse into chaos. Anaximander does not need pillars to support the world above a watery chaos as in mythical cosmogonies (e.g., Atlas). Rather he sees the world or cosmos as a sphere that is equipoised in space because of the contending opposites within it.¹²⁷

Kahn and Guthrie both share the view that in Anaximander’s cosmos opposites impinge on one another such that substances change into their opposites

¹²⁴ Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, 235; Guthrie, “Milesians,” 1.39–145, here 1.83–87, in *HGP*.

¹²⁵ Guthrie, “Milesians,” 1.39–145, here 1.86, in *HGP*.

¹²⁶ Guthrie, “Milesians,” 1.39–145, here 1.64–68, in *HGP*.

¹²⁷ Hermann Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jonanovich, 1962) 266–67. Naddaf (“On the Origin of Anaximander’s Cosmological Model,” 1–28, here 2) argues that Anaximander’s cosmological model reflects the equilibrium of three social groups (aristocracy, new middle class, and peasantry) who would have been equals before the law in the city-state.

in a cosmic process of generation and destruction.¹²⁸ Kahn recognizes that the notion of four elements changing into one another is a statement deriving from Simplicius; however, he contends that it is an accurate transmission of Theophrastus's views—except for the notion of “four elements.”¹²⁹ So if one reads this phrase simply as Theophrastus's view in the fourth century B.C.E. that Anaximander in the sixth century B.C.E. saw the cosmos as one in which the elements (hot/cold, dry/moist) changed into one another, then one is reasonably close to Anaximander. If so, then these opposites impinging on one another according to the law of necessity give rise to an equilibrium that shapes the cosmos into the environment around us. Anaximander provided a geometrical model for explaining order and disorder in the cosmic processes without appealing to interventions by forces external to the world (i.e., the gods).¹³⁰ For Kahn and Guthrie “the boundless” is an immense, encompassing reality, which is not infinite.¹³¹

Anaximander's “boundless” is the source of everything but has no beginning itself. It “contains and steers everything” (*DK* 12A15; Aristotle, *Physics*, 203b7–15). As such, “the boundless” takes over the role of Fate that was in place in Homer and decrees when the contention between opposing forces has run its course; at that point, this world is to pass away and another will take its place.¹³²

The notion of “unity-in-opposites” was central to the thought of Heraclitus (ca. 545–480), an Ionian from Ephesus. Heraclitus illustrated the necessary tension between the opposites in the cosmos by pointing to the bowstring and the strings of a lyre. Unless the string is pulled in opposite directions at the same time, it will not be functional. In this unity-in-opposites, the unity (the functioning string of the lyre) is more fundamental than the opposites even though the opposites (the simultaneous force to the right and to the left) are essential to

¹²⁸ Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, 237; Guthrie, “Milesians,” 1.39–145, here 1.99, in *HGP*.

¹²⁹ Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, 37–38, 186.

¹³⁰ However, M. L. West (*Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971] 79–84) argues that the evidence does not warrant the view that Anaximander saw a tension between opposites as an integral element in the cosmos. Further, West judges that the ancient commentators were in error in treating Anaximander as a monist along with Thales and Anaximenes. West traces the notion of “the ordinance of Time” that regulates the processes of birth and death in “the boundless” to the Zoroastrians. “The boundless” exists beyond the stars, the sun, and the moon as a sphere that knows no limits. However, Naddaf (“On the Origin of Anaximander's Cosmological Model,” 1–28, here 17) claims that the truly distinctive element of Anaximander's model—its geometrical character—is not imported from the East but is rather a result of his own analysis and creativity.

¹³¹ Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, 133; Guthrie, “The Milesians,” 1.39–145, here 1.84–85, in *HGP*.

¹³² Guthrie (“The Milesians,” 1.39–145, here 1.106–7, in *HGP*) notes the ambiguity in Anaximander's thought concerning whether innumerable worlds coexisted or the various worlds existed only one at a time and succeeded one another.

the unity (*DK* 22B51).¹³³ If this tensive dynamic between opposites is essential to order, then it would seem that it is not only inescapable but also good that natural forces, things, and people be in conflict. Heraclitus—as quoted in Origen’s *Against Celsus* 6.42.21–23—said: “It is necessary to acknowledge that war is common and that contention is justice and that everything occurs according to contention and necessity” (*DK* 22B80). In his positive assessment of conflict, Heraclitus goes so far as to say that “hidden harmony is better than manifest harmony” (*DK* 22B54; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.5.3). He perceives a unity in strife-ridden relationships that would usually be overlooked by those caught in the anguish of such relationships. The vigilance required in the midst of conflict would stave off sleepiness, which Heraclitus fears more than war (*DK* 22B89).

Heraclitus earned the reputation of a haughty aristocrat by his disdain of the commoners for their lack of understanding. He says: “The senseless ones, after having listened, are like the deaf. The saying bears witness to them as ones who are present but absent” (*DK* 22B34; Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.115.3). Even though he was highly critical of the commoners, he did not join hands with the aristocratic Homer, for he wished to see Homer “thrown out of the contest and flogged” (*DK* 22B42; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.1.8–10). Here he was consistent insofar as he saw paradox and contradiction as integral to the order of the world. His view of truth appears to be metaphorical truth: i.e., a thing “is” like another thing on the figurative level, but at the same time “is not” like it on the literal level.¹³⁴ The necessary tension between the literal and figurative meanings of a metaphor illustrates “the unity-in-opposites” which Heraclitus sees in every relationship. Heraclitus’ metaphorical logic does not conform to the principle of non-contradiction; therefore, his understanding of the identity of a thing is that it contains its opposite within it—a point that can be inferred from his saying, “The road up and down is one and the same” (*DK* 22B60; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.4.6).

In line with the rationalistic approach of the Milesian thinkers before him, Heraclitus downplayed the role of the gods in the world and ascribed their governing roles to abstract principles.¹³⁵ Whereas in Homer, Zeus bore the epithet, “the father of gods and humans” (*Il.* 1.544) and was honored as the king of the gods (*anax*, *Il.* 1.502, 529), Heraclitus says: “War is father of all and king of all” (*DK* 22B53; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.4.4–7). Nevertheless,

¹³³ Edward Hussey, “Heraclitus,” 88–112, here 96, in A. A. Long, *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹³⁴ Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) 212–15.

¹³⁵ Kirk, ed., *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 54.

Heraclitus has been characterized as a religious prophet.¹³⁶ His respect for metaphorical truth led him to set traditional wisdom against the scientific spirit of Ionian rationalism, for such a conflictual process generated reflection.¹³⁷ His view of wisdom as a reality transcending, yet within the reach of humans is reflected in the following paradoxical statement: “The one and only wise thing is to wish and not to wish to be called by the name of Zeus” (*DK* 22B32; Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.115.1).

Just as Anaximander appealed to “the boundless” as the reality establishing rules and boundaries, so also Heraclitus referred to an underlying order:

This order, the order of all, was made neither by a god nor by a human, but it always was and is and will be an ever-living fire, kindling according to measure and dying out according to measure.” (*DK* 22B30; Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.104.2)

He understood fire as a divine substance in accord with the popular thinking of the sixth to fifth centuries B.C.E. The traditional picture of the cosmos was that the earth was covered by the sky and that the sun, moon, and planets circled between the earth and the sky. The fixed stars were located at the edge of the sky. But beyond the sky, there was a higher, purer reality, which Heraclitus imagined as fire (i.e., *aithēr*). The term *aithēr* was understood in the fifth century B.C.E. as a fiery region, whereas earlier in Homer it referred to the bright blue upper sky.¹³⁸ In other words, the connotation of *aithēr* changed from “brightness” to “fire.” For Heraclitus, the divine fire from the *aithēr* brought an order to the world that must be as tense as a bowstring.¹³⁹ Fire symbolizes change, yet there is a continuity in the flame itself.¹⁴⁰ That this fiery order is an active governing force can be seen in Heraclitus’ statement that the “thunderbolt guides everything” (*DK* 22B64; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.7.4–5).¹⁴¹ The weapon with which Zeus had often intervened in human affairs in Homer was the thunderbolt (*Il.* 8.133, 405).

¹³⁶ Guthrie, “Heraclitus,” 1.403–92, here 1.479, in *HGP*; Kirk, ed., *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 37.

¹³⁷ Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 16–19.

¹³⁸ Guthrie, “Heraclitus,” 1.403–93, here 1.467, in *HGP*; G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 2, *Books 5–8* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 297–98; cf. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, 293.

¹³⁹ So while the underlying unity was more basic than the cosmos and in this sense transcended it, this unity was intertwined with the cosmos. For example, the “wise” transcends the world but is manifest in it; “craftsmanship” precedes the craftsman. See Hussey, “Heraclitus,” 88–112, here 108, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*.

¹⁴⁰ Popper, “Back to the Presocratics,” 7–32, here 18–19, in *The World of Parmenides*.

¹⁴¹ Martin West, “Early Greek Philosophy,” 107–17, here 112, in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Greece and the Hellenistic World*.

The de-anthropomorphizing of natural and cosmic powers by Anaximander and Heraclitus was not a move to banish divinity from their view of the world.¹⁴² Anaximander's "boundless" and Heraclitus' "fire" were living, imperishable, and divine.¹⁴³ But like the other Presocratic teachers, they were trying to explain the causes of order in the world without resorting to narratives about the gods. Both Anaximander and Heraclitus point to a reality beyond appearances, but they describe the nature and dynamics of this invisible reality in more abstract terms than are found in myths.¹⁴⁴ Myth, as with history, is interested in particular things, people, and events. By contrast, rational explanations aim to make general statements or laws that apply to large numbers of cases.¹⁴⁵ Both of these thinkers still use poetic language because they are unable to express adequately the dynamics of cosmic powers without the use of metaphor and imagery.¹⁴⁶ The tension between the figurative and literal meanings of a metaphor lie at the very heart of Heraclitus's thinking. Metaphor enables him to express the dynamics of the cosmic war in ways that avoid the reductionism of a strictly linear explanation limited to the literal meanings of the terms employed.

Heraclitus criticized the people's practice of prayer: "They pray to these statues, which is like someone talking to a house. They know nothing about gods or heroes" (*DK* 22B5; *Theosophia Tubigenensis* 68). Such worshipers were probably literally identifying the statue with the deity and thus failing to understand the divine.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, for Heraclitus, the divine contains all contraries within itself (*DK* 22B67).¹⁴⁸ Thus, in his view, praying for deliverance from conflicts would be counterproductive. Given his critical stance toward unreflective following of traditional practices, Heraclitus may also have been challenging the leadership of many *poleis* who had invested heavily in the construction of temples since the eighth century B.C.E.¹⁴⁹ The danger in worshipping before images is that the image would lose its symbolic character and become an end in itself.

¹⁴² West, "Early Greek Philosophy," 107–17, here 110, in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Greece and the Hellenistic World*.

¹⁴³ Hussey ("Heraclitus," 88–112, here 101, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*) notes that "the introduction of a living and intelligent being as the latent unity adds a further level of complexity." Cf. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 11.

¹⁴⁴ Popper, "The World of Parmenides: Notes on Parmenides' Poem and its Origin in Early Greek Cosmology," 105–45, here 110, in *The World of Parmenides*.

¹⁴⁵ Guthrie, "Milesians," 39–145, here 40, in *HGP*.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Greek Thinkers* (London: Oxford, 1947) 36.

¹⁴⁷ Guthrie, "Heraclitus," 1.403–92, here 1.472, in *HGP*.

¹⁴⁸ Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 277–79.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Gregory Vlastos, "Theology and Philosophy in Early Greek Thought," 92–129, here 119, in *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of Philosophy* (ed. David J. Furley and R. E. Allen; New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

Temples were a secondary structure in Greek sanctuaries prior to the eighth century B.C.E. At that time, Greek sanctuaries were open-air structures focused upon the altar, which was the location of the deity's portion of the sacrifice and so became the privileged meeting place of the deity with the worshippers. The temple was the house in which the deity's statue resided.¹⁵⁰ As more space was devoted to the construction of the temple, the altar came to be seen as one of the temple's features: it stood before the temple, and the image of the deity in the temple was regarded as looking upon and receiving the sacrificial offerings on the altar. Because the cultic image of the patron deity symbolized a city, it became the focus of competition between the Greek cities to demonstrate their excellence.¹⁵¹ Imitating the Egyptians, the Greeks emphasized the monumentality of their statues and temple structures in the sixth century B.C.E.¹⁵² In those times when a city-state was ruled by a tyrant, temple construction was a means for increasing the visibility of the tyrant.¹⁵³ The tyrant learned from the monarchies of the ancient Near East that the ruler of a state should be a patron of temples in order that the state and its people might remain on good terms with the gods.

¹⁵⁰ Birgitta Bergquist, *The Archaic Greek Temenos. A Study of Structure and Function* (Skifter Utg. Av Svenska insitutet in Athen. 4.13; Lund: Gleerup, 1967) 122; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Early Sanctuaries, The Eighth Century and Ritual Space: Fragments of a Discourse," 1–17, here 10, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches* (eds. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg; London: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁵¹ Nanno Marinatos, "What Were Greek Sanctuaries? A Synthesis," 228–33, here 229, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*; Francois de Polignac, "Mediation, Competition, and Sovereignty: The Evolution of Rural Sanctuaries in Geometric Greece," 3–18, here 15, in *Placing the Gods: Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece* (eds. Susan E. Alcock and Robin Osborne; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); cf. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 91. However, Silvia Schroer ("Griechische Heiligtümer im Spiegelalttestamentlicher Kosmologien und Theologien," 231–63, here 250, in *Gottesstadt und Gottesgarten: Zu Geschichte und Theologie des Jerusalemer Tempels* [ed. Othmar Keel; Freiburg: Herder, 2002]) contends that the Archaic Greeks' attention to the temples was first of all carried out from respect for the deity as protector, but then also served as a space for the expression of competitive drives through the giving of votive offerings.

¹⁵² R. A. Tomlinson, *Greek Sanctuaries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976) 29; Sourvinou-Inwood, "Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space," 1–17, here 10, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*; Helmut Kyrieleis, "The Heraion at Samos," 125–53, here 126, 150, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*; Murray, *Early Greece*, 222.

¹⁵³ Walter Burkert, "Greek Temple-builders: Who, Where and Why?" 21–29, here 24, in *The Role of Religion in the Early Greek Polis: Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, Organized by the Swedish Institute at Athens, 16–18 October 1992* (ed. Robin Hägg; Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen: Distributor P. Åströms Förlag, 1996). For a discussion of the positive achievements of early Greek tyrants, see John Salmon, "Lopping Off Heads? Tyrants, Politics and the Polis," 60–73, in *The Development of the Polis in Archaic Greece* (ed. Lynette Mitchell and P. J. Rhodes; London/New York: Routledge, 1997).

Whether the polis was ruled by a tyrant or by the city assembly, the city controlled the affairs of the temple. The regular rituals of the temple and the major festivals of the city became occasions for the city to further its agenda.¹⁵⁴ By framing the cultic statue in a beautiful house, by increasing its size and artistic quality, the city set in motion developments that would lead to the cultic image becoming an end in itself.¹⁵⁵ The cultic statues of Pheidias in the mid-fourth century B.C.E. marked the culmination of this process in which the beauty of the statue became more important than the statue's symbolic function of pointing to an invisible deity (cf. *Od.* 6.232–35).¹⁵⁶ This process of art displacing religion was underway in the phase of monumental temple construction in the seventh to sixth centuries B.C.E.¹⁵⁷ The threat to the symbolic function of the image came not only from the increasing size and quality of the image but also from the imposing size and beauty of the temple that framed the statue.

The move toward a more abstract understanding of divinity by Heraclitus may have been prompted in part by a need to counterpoint the growing influence of polis religion.¹⁵⁸ It is clear that he wanted to avoid in his explanation of

¹⁵⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood, "Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space," 1–17, here 11, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*.

¹⁵⁵ Nanno Marinatos, "What Were Greek Sanctuaries? A Synthesis," 228–33, here 229, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*. Oswyn Murray ("The Social Function of Art in Early Greece," 23–30, here 26, in *New Perspectives in Early Greek Art* [ed. Diana Buitron-Oliver; Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1991]) claims that artistic attention in Greece focused first upon the temple, then upon the cult statue. James Whitley (*Style and Society in Dark Age Greece: the Changing Face of a Pre-literate Society 1100–700 B.C.* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991] 45) notes that geometric art in the ninth century B.C.E. was aniconic: i.e., it was nonfigurative and nonrepresentational. For the view that the cult image did not become an end in itself in the Archaic Age, see John Boardman ("Images and Media in the Greek World," 323–37, here 334, in Christoph Uehlinger, *Images as Media: Sources for the Cultural History of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean: First Millennium B.C.E.* [OBO 175; Fribourg, Switzerland: University Press, 2000]).

¹⁵⁶ J. P. Vernant ("From the 'Presentification' of the Invisible to the Imitation of Appearance," 151–63, here 152, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991]) notes that there was a pivotal change in the fifth to fourth centuries B.C. in Greece: "The symbol that actualizes, that makes present in this world below a power from the world beyond (a fundamentally invisible being) is now transformed into an image that is the product of an expert imitation, which, as a result of skillful technique and illusionist procedures, enters into the general category of the 'fictitious'—that which we call art."

¹⁵⁷ Sourvinou-Inwood, "Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space," 1–17, here 10, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*) states that: "By the seventh century BC there existed temples in the more-or-less canonical form although we still find some regional variation. . . . Temples must be seen as an expression of the identity of the city-state. Since city-states were at war with each other, the temple and indeed the entire sanctuary can be seen as a manifestation of power and prestige within the framework of a competitive culture."

¹⁵⁸ Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "What Is Polis Religion?" 295–322, here 300–2, in *The Greek City: From Homer to Alexander* (ed. Oswyn Murray and S. R. F. Price; Oxford:

cosmic order the anthropomorphisms present in the myths of the various cities. He was also concerned about the kind of understanding of divinity promoted by worshipping with the aid of an image. As this study has shown, Anaximander also espoused a view of divinity that could not be represented adequately by a statue.

Figurines and statues had played a role in domestic religion in Greece throughout the Dark Age (1075–700). But as this iconic form of worship gained civic backing in the Archaic Age (700–480), voices in favor of an aniconic understanding of the divine emerged in the teachings of Anaximander and Heraclitus. Their movement toward a more abstract understanding of the divine bears similarities to Ezekiel's efforts to stretch the capacity of the throne chariot to communicate the reality of Yhwh's transcendence and sovereign power. Just as the complexity of Ezekiel's throne chariot forces one to look beyond the scene of the storm cloud to a superior reality, so also Anaximander and Heraclitus refer to "the boundless" and "the ever-living fire" as ways of signaling a governing divine power. As different as the approaches of Ezekiel, Anaximander, and Heraclitus are in attempting to describe the source of order in the cosmos, they share an aniconic ethos: a way of relating to ultimate reality that abstains from cultic images as a distortion of the divine-human relationship.

The Critical Interpretation of Symbols within an Aniconic Ethos

Heraclitus's criticism of the commoners' worship of idols converges with Ezekiel's condemnation of the Judahites for their idolatrous worship. Because a human can never fully apprehend the presence of a deity, symbols of a deity are important stable points of access to the deity. The symbol, whether it bears an image or not, is a material, corporeal reality that shares in a partial way in the reality of the deity in order to carry out its main function: to point beyond itself to the deity it signifies. Because the symbol shares in the reality of the deity, it is possible to say that it "is" the deity, but only at the same time to counter this identification by saying that it "is not" the deity. There is a resemblance between the way a symbol signifies and the way a metaphor communicates its truth through the tension between the literal and figurative meanings of the two terms compared. A cultic statue becomes an idol when it ceases to point beyond itself and claims to be identical with what it represents. The danger in imitating a model, whether this is in the plastic arts or in the area of human moral behavior, is, as Vernant puts it, when imitation becomes "the blind pursuit of

Clarendon, 1990); Joseph Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea in Solon's Political Poems* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 144; Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (trans. F. Philip; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997) 35. Bernard Dietrich ("From Knossos to Homer," 1–13, here 3, in *What Is a God? Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity* [ed. Alan B. Lloyd; London: Duckworth, 1997]) notes that "a most interesting coincidence between Homer and the Minoan world is the absence of cult statues."

similitude.”¹⁵⁹ Forces internal and external to a particular environment will try to harness the symbol’s power to their agenda or undercut its power.

Ezekiel condemned the Judahite popular piety that not only paid attention to deities other than Yhwh but also worshiped Yhwh in inappropriate ways. Worship becomes distorted when the symbols either turn back on themselves (e.g., the beauty or size of a cultic statue) or point only to other symbols within a religious system (i.e., the sacred canopy provided by a coherent set of myths, rituals, or dogmas) such that the symbols fail to point to the transcendent reality of the deity. Integral to the authentic functioning of a symbol is its interpretation. If that symbol does not resonate with the interpreter and call that person to self-expression, then the symbol has become broken. A cultic statue that becomes an end in itself distorts the self-understanding of those who worship before it.

In his throne vision, Ezekiel tried to communicate the mobility of the throne chariot by describing the thronebearers as living creatures-in-motion. The attention Ezekiel devotes to describing the thronebearers far exceeds that given to the fiery figure of the enthroned Yhwh. The fourfold duplication of the creatures and their faces indicates the comprehensiveness of their range of movement and of their capacity to be present. In Marduk’s case in the *Enūma Eliš*, his four eyes and four ears signify the universal reach of his perception. By ascribing divine characteristics to his thronebearers (e.g., a preeminent degree of swiftness, intelligence, strength, and ferocity to these four-faced creatures), Ezekiel was able to emphasize Yhwh’s transcendence. In Ezekiel 1:1-13, just as a clear picture of the thronebearers as four-faced statues begins to emerge, Ezekiel describes their lightninglike movement such that they lose their statue-like appearance and become more like lightning bolts. In other words, once the thronebearers appear to be captured in a statuelike picture, they dart away and leave the viewer at a loss as to who or what these creatures are. A symbol for a deity, when it is alive, will similarly prove to be elusive.

The state religion that turns to a particular deity for protection will most likely set up a system assuring that the deity is being properly honored. The danger with such a system is that the worshipers begin to trust in the system rather than in the transcendent deity. If the state itself grows powerful, it may also try to bring this religious system under its control so that it promotes the state’s interests and does not operate as an independent authority among the people. The danger of harnessing a deity to a particular state is particularly obvious at the time of the Babylonian exile and the impending destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. If Yhwh’s temple is destroyed, does that mean that Yhwh has lost status among the gods? Ezekiel insists in his vision that Yhwh departed from his

¹⁵⁹ J.-P. Vernant, “The Birth of Images,” 164–85, here 183, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

temple because of the defilement caused by the idolatry of the Judahites. The advance of the Babylonians against the temple was part of Yhwh's plan for purging the temple.¹⁶⁰ In this respect, Ezekiel's theology of history closely resembles that of the writers of inscriptions of Sennacherib and Cyrus who claimed that Babylon was overrun first by the Assyrians and then by the Persians because Marduk was angry with the Babylonians and their kings for their neglect of his cult. This motif of the angry deity abandoning his temple and land reflects a territorial understanding of a deity's sovereignty.¹⁶¹ Marduk may have been praised as all-seeing, all-hearing, and the king of the gods in the *Enūma Eliš*, but in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Cyrus, Marduk is respected insofar as he is one of the great gods of Babylon.¹⁶²

In his throne chariot vision, Ezekiel portrays Yhwh as a mobile deity whose sovereignty is universal. He visits Ezekiel in exile without abandoning his throne. When his temple in Jerusalem is destroyed, Yhwh will still be enthroned on his mobile chariot, exercising sovereignty over the course of events. Ezekiel's throne chariot vision summons those who hear its description to look beyond appearances to discern the true nature of Yhwh's sovereignty. Such interiorization of divine power constitutes a "spiritualization" of the traditional territorial understanding of divine sovereignty in the ancient Near East. If the traditional ancient Near Eastern religio-political system had succeeded in capturing the symbols of Yhwh in its system, the Yahwistic faith would have expired. Nevertheless, Ezekiel is compelled to respond to this dominant system, for Yhwh made known to him that the deportation of the Judahites from their land—though a necessary consequence of their sins—resulted in the desecration of his name (Ezek 36:19-20). The remedy for the misperception of Yhwh's sovereignty is articulated within the traditional territorial paradigm of the ancient Near East. The return of the exiles to their own land would show that the God of that land was still with them and was ready to return them. The reconstitution of the dry bones would manifest Yhwh's glory (i.e., his true nature) among the nations (Ezek 37:1-14).

Just as Ezekiel's description of his throne chariot became blurry when he tried to describe the creatures and the throne chariot in motion, so also early Greek thinkers encountered difficulties when they tried to describe the unity of a cosmos that was undergoing change or was in motion. The tension between the permanent and the changing was a burning issue among early Greek thinkers who attempted to explain the workings of natural powers without describing

¹⁶⁰ Smith-Christopher (*A Biblical Theology of Exile*, 81) notes that seeing one's troubles as a consequence of misdeeds gives one a sense of more control over one's circumstances than if the troubles came by chance or were the result of circumstances beyond one's control.

¹⁶¹ Daniel Block, "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of an Ancient Near Eastern Motif," 15–42, esp. 24–31, in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (eds. Margaret Odell and John Strong; SBLSymS 9; Atlanta: Scholars, 2000).

them in anthropomorphic terms. When Ezekiel portrayed Yhwh's thronebearers first as staring straight ahead without turning any of their four heads and then as darting-to-and-fro, this contradiction between static and dynamic figures leads the viewer to abstract from the details to try to piece together a larger picture. These composite creatures belong to a different order of reality. Their powerful presence is both appealing and ominous. In the early Greek world, Anaximander—probably through attention to the process of evaporation of water—noted that hot and cold, moist and dry passed into one another. This process of change, in which one element opposed the other, was like the reciprocity that occurs within the elements of the human body as pictured in Hippocratic texts.¹⁶³ This reciprocal justice was ensured by the “ordinance of Time” and overseen by “the boundless.” This “boundless,” all-encompassing reality without limits, which was the origin and source of all that is, was immersed in the material world but transcended it as an “inexhaustible store of creative power and material.”¹⁶⁴ This sense of boundlessness or inexhaustibility is an abstract characteristic that can also be ascribed to the fiery enthroned Yhwh for whom all anthropomorphic, theriomorphic, or astral portrayals are inadequate and reductionistic.

The opposition between the elements that is integral to the geometric model of the cosmos in Anaximander's thought is a central theme in the thought of Heraclitus. The conflict between contending natural forces or persons was a positive sign in Heraclitus's eyes. He believed the cosmos would collapse without such tension. The interaction between the elements was kept within limits by Anaximander's “boundless” and by Heraclitus's “ever-living fire.” To see such cosmic conflict as positive may find an echo in the way that the Babylonians developed a sense of their common identity through opposition to the Assyrian occupation of their land in the eighth to seventh centuries.¹⁶⁵ Likewise, the Judahite exiles were—through the traumatic loss of their homeland and institutions—paradoxically positioned to reestablish their relationship with Yhwh on a more truthful basis. Ezekiel insisted that they accept that this punishment came from Yhwh rather than from Marduk or other forces that did not care for them.

Ezekiel sees the dislocation and disillusionment in the Judahite community as a crisis of symbols. Yhwh initiated this crisis by refusing to be coopted by the state system common to the ancient Near East in which a deity was expected to fuel the program and agenda of the state. The state ideology was compatible with a proper symbolic approach to a deity as long as it allowed the necessary tension between the literal and figurative meanings of divine symbols to operate.

¹⁶² Sommerfeld, “Marduk,” 360–70, here 366, in *RLA* 7 (1987–1990).

¹⁶³ Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, 163, 178–79.

¹⁶⁴ Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, 237.

¹⁶⁵ Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, 2.

However, the temptation is strong for the state ideologists to develop a system that frames the ambiguity and polyvocality of symbols. Thus in the Archaic Greek poleis, the competitive construction of temples fostered a monumentality in statuary and temple construction that turned the attention back upon the city that built these structures rather than pointing to the invisible divinity who was regarded as protecting them. By contrast, Heraclitus and Anaximander promote the positive character of tension between opposites and the ambiguity associated with symbols. Their way of thinking is a countervailing force against the inward looking tendency of the developing polis religion. Although the ways of thinking of Ezekiel and Anaximander and Heraclitus are radically different, they could stand hand in hand in battling against a state system that tried to coopt symbols of the transcendent. Here the lesson from Heraclitus is that it is important to stand in tension with the state system and not to simply dismiss it as wrongheaded. The goal of thinking and criticizing is to pursue an equilibrium between contending forces. Within such a tensive equilibrium, there may even be flashes of profound insight, echoing on some level the vision of Ezekiel 1.

The Validation of the Intermediary through Divine Presence

After Ezekiel had his vision of the throne chariot, he collapsed to the ground. But a voice summoned him to stand on his feet. The power of the word was made evident by a spirit (*rūah*) entering Ezekiel and standing him on his feet. Zimmerli explains how Ezekiel's call narrative conforms more to the type of call narrative associated with a throne vision (cf. Isa 6:1-13; 1 Kgs 22:19-23) than with the type of call narrative that emphasizes divine speech (Jer 1:4-10; Exod 3:1-4:17).¹⁶⁶ He divides this main part of Ezekiel's call narrative into six sections: (1) 1:28b-2:2 introduction, (2) 2:3-5 commission, (3) 2:6-7 admonition against fear, (4) 2:8-3:3 an act of ordination; (5) 3:4-9 reiteration of the commission, (6) 3:10-11 summary.¹⁶⁷

In his commission, Ezekiel was charged to preach to the rebellious house of Israel, even if they refused to listen to him. Like his older contemporary Jeremiah, Ezekiel was counseled not to fear the Israelites (Ezek 2:6-7; Jer 1:17-19). In the second iteration of the commission, the Lord tried to strengthen Ezekiel by promising that he would make Ezekiel's brow and heart as hard as that of the rebellious Israelites (3:8-9). This way of assisting Ezekiel was a particular, concrete form of divine accompaniment, in contrast to the more general statement of divine reassurance given to Jeremiah in his call narrative: "Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord" (Jer 1:8). But because of the spirit accompanying the Lord's command to Ezekiel to get on his

¹⁶⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 97-10.

¹⁶⁷ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 135; cf. Leslie Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19* (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1994) 16.

feet—a sequence of command and execution analogous to that of the prophet addressing the dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14)—Ezekiel already had a strong sense of the divine presence with him.¹⁶⁸

Immediately after the call narrative, a short section (3:12-15) relates the transfer of Ezekiel from the place of his vision to the place where the exiles were residing at Tel-abib near the river Chebar. Ezekiel reported: “Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great rustling sound as the glory of the Lord lifted¹⁶⁹ from its place” (3:12). The action of this spirit had a profound impact on Ezekiel. Not only was his geographical location changed; also his inner landscape was altered as he said: “I walked in the bitterness of the wrath of my spirit, and the hand of the Lord was heavy upon me” (3:14). This same action of being seized by a spirit and by the hand of the Lord occurs at the beginning of the vision of the Lord’s abandonment of the Jerusalem temple (Ezek 8:1–11:13). In this vision, Ezekiel is lifted up from his place of exile in Babylonia and transported to Jerusalem. His journey lifts him beyond the confines of his space and his time and provides him with strategic information about the reasons why the Lord will abandon the Jerusalem temple.

This journey in the spirit bears numerous similarities to the mystical journeys of shaman-priests among the Siberian Tungus.¹⁷⁰ Ezekiel’s journeys seem to take him into a Jerusalem in which the idolatrous practices depicted there may have been telescoped over several decades—perhaps from the time of Manasseh to the time of Ezekiel.¹⁷¹ His journey into the future in Ezekiel 43:5 allows him to see the return of the Lord to his new temple after the exile. The way that Ezekiel transcends the constraints of time in these visions seems to be a more significant factor for informing him of the causes of the exile than his purported transfer in space from Babylonia to Jerusalem. But in sum, this journey back to Jerusalem both in space and time offers a wider perspective on Israel’s relationship with Yhwh through an increased level of interiorization.

With the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon (680–669) and Assurbanipal (669–627), intuitive prophecy grew in importance as a valued form of divine intermediation. Although the astrology of the scholars (*ummânû*) and the extispicy of the diviners (*bârûtu*) carried more weight, the growing influence of intuitive

¹⁶⁸ Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–25*, 122) interprets the briars, thorns, and scorpions of Ezekiel 2:6 as objects forming a protective wall around the prophet.

¹⁶⁹ Read *bêrûm*.

¹⁷⁰ I. M. Lewis, *Religion in Context: Cults and Charisma* (2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 107–8; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) 140–51, 209–10.

¹⁷¹ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20* (AB 22; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983). In terms of creating a bigger view of themselves and their current plight, Ezekiel’s description of Israel’s history of sin from the time in Egypt to his own time (Ezek 20:5-31) provided a wider context within which the exiles might assess their plight.

prophecy—a form of divine intermediation practiced in upper Mesopotamia as early as the eighteenth century B.C.E. in Mari—is marked by the formation of written collections of prophecies at the time of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal.¹⁷² Although the extant Assyrian prophecies do not ask the diviners to present their credentials to the diviners for validation, as was the case in eighteenth century B.C.E. Mari, the royal court was concerned about false prophecies.¹⁷³

The collections of written prophecies are associated with the cult of Ištar of Arbela. The prophets (masc., *raggimu*; fem. *ragintu*) proclaimed their divine messages to the populace.¹⁷⁴ In the power struggle at the time of Esarhaddon's rise to the kingship, these prophets played an important role in swaying public opinion—a fact indicating that intuitive prophecy probably had a more established place in the grassroots religious practices in Mesopotamia than is reflected in the extant records of the royal archives.¹⁷⁵ The male and female prophets who were devotees of the cult of Ištar delivered oracles in which the goddess Ištar spoke directly through them, as illustrated by the following oracle of an unknown prophet at the time of Esarhaddon's struggle to gain the kingship:

I am Ištar of [Arbela]. Esarhaddon, king of [Assyria]! In the Inner City, Nineveh, Calah and Arbela, length of days and enduring years, I grant to Esarhaddon, my king. I am your great midwife; I am your excellent wet nurse. For length of days and enduring years I have made firm your throne under the great heavens. I keep watch from a golden chamber in the midst of the heavens; I make the amber light (*nūr ša ilmēši*) shine before Esarhaddon, king of Assyria. I will guard him like the crown of my head. Do not be afraid, o king! I have spoken to you and have not lied to you. I have increased your confidence. I will not allow you to be humiliated. I will bring you safely across the river. (SAA 9 1.6 iii 7'–iv 4)¹⁷⁶

This message of encouragement to the king is communicated by a prophet from Ištar who says that she is watching over Esarhaddon from “a golden chamber in the midst of the heavens” (iii 23'–24'). Yet from such a height she is also

¹⁷² Marti Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources* (SAA 7; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998) 31–34; Karel van der Toorn, “Prophecy between Immanence and Transcendence: A Comparison of Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Prophecy,” 71–87, here 73–77, in *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (ed. M. Nissinen; Society of Biblical Literature SymbS13; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000).

¹⁷³ E.g., ARM X, 7:23–27; 8:19–28. Beate Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien* (SAAS 10; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1999) 72–75.

¹⁷⁴ Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, xlv, xlvii.

¹⁷⁵ Marti Nissinen, “The Socioreligious Role of the Neo-Assyrian Prophets,” 89–114, here 105, in *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (ed. M. Nissinen; SBL SymbS 13; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); idem, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources*, 170–71.

¹⁷⁶ Edition: Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, 7–8.

one who attends to him as though he were the crown of her own head. She cares for him as a nurse does for a child. The preservation of this oracle from a critical time of Esarhaddon's rise to power testifies to the power of the prophetic word to shape the self-understanding of the king and of those who were loyal to him. Even though Assyrian prophets criticized their kings—as indicated in royal letters such as ABL 1217 r. 4–5—no oracles are preserved in the Assyrian royal collections that are critical of the king. Nissinen notes that such a critical stance would have disqualified the prophet in the eyes of the king.¹⁷⁷

Parpola claims that the Assyrian prophets followed an ascetic regime that included separation from normal worldly activities.¹⁷⁸ It may have been in such a situation of withdrawal that Ištar communicated her messages to a prophet, as the following brief oracle to an unknown prophet suggests: “Peace to Esarhaddon, king of Assyria. Ištar of Arbela has gone out to the steppe and sent an oracle of salvation for her calf in the city” (*SAA* 9 1.9, lines 26–30). This withdrawal to the liminal area of the steppe may echo the language of the retreat of Gilgamesh upon the death of Enkidu: in a heightened state of anxiety Gilgamesh journeyed restlessly in search of enlightenment on the meaning of mortality.¹⁷⁹ Such a shamanlike journey by Gilgamesh may be seen to have affinities with the search by Assyrian prophets for divine illumination about critical issues in their land. Their withdrawal would also probably have included fasting and weeping. These practices would have contributed to the altered state of consciousness that made the prophets receptive to divine messages.¹⁸⁰ Devotees of Ištar who tried to achieve union with the goddess are also reported to have inflicted bodily pain on themselves by whipping, stinging, and cutting themselves and, in some cases, even castrating themselves.¹⁸¹ Prophets of Ištar may have been among such avid ascetics.

Hesiod's *Theogony* (ca. 730–700 B.C.E.) and *Works and Days* (ca. 700) became, along with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, a formative force in the emergence of a Panhellenic consciousness.¹⁸² Hesiod's *Theogony* maps out the genesis of the gods according to a genealogical schema whose events occurred outside

¹⁷⁷ Nissinen, *References to Assyrian Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources*, 166–67; Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, xlviii.

¹⁷⁸ Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, xlv.

¹⁷⁹ Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources*, 22 n. 88.

¹⁸⁰ Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, xlv. John Pairman Brown (*Israel and Hellas* [3 vols.; BZAW 231, 276, 299; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995–2001] 2.162) quotes Eliade who identifies the shaman as “a sick man who has been cured.”

¹⁸¹ Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, xxxiv.

¹⁸² M. L. West, ed. (*Theogony* by Hesiod [Oxford: Clarendon, 1966] 44, 48) claims that Hesiod was not a professional rhapsode, but rather composed on wooden tablets or animal skins before giving his performances.

¹⁸³ Jenny Strauss Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 66–67.

of time—if such occurrences are possible.¹⁸³ His second extant composition *Works and Days* describes the humans affairs of his time and instructs on how to treat others properly within the constraints of the human condition.¹⁸⁴ Both works appeal to the Muses to inform and guide the singing of these songs. But in the *Theogony*, the appeal to the Muses takes the form of an extended hymn (1–115); whereas in the *Works and Days* the poet calls upon the Muses in a brief prayer (1–8).¹⁸⁵ The hymn (1–115) at the beginning of the *Theogony* describes the genesis of the Muses and explains from the poet’s perspective the role that the Muses play in the production and performance of his poem. They “breathe into” him “a voice” (31) so that he might sing about the eternal gods (33). Thus, the Muses take over the poet’s voice—analogous to the way that Yhwh takes over Ezekiel’s voice (3:26-27) and the Assyrian goddess Ištar speaks in the first-person through her prophets. West argues that the Muses are a unique Greek creation insofar as they are deities who specialize in the task of inspiring poets.¹⁸⁶ The Muses suspend the poet’s capacity to manipulate their message.

Although Hesiod claims to speak about “things of the future, and things past,” he does not function as a prophet in the *Theogony*.¹⁸⁷ As Clay explains, Hesiod speaks about timeless realities in the *Theogony*: i.e., unverifiable assertions about unchanging realities.¹⁸⁸ While an authentic prophet is one who speaks the truth (*alētheia*), an authentic poet is one who lifts the spirits of his audience by entertaining them with the beauty of his singing and enabling them to forget the pain of their experience.¹⁸⁹ The stance of the poet toward truth is alluded to in riddling fashion in the first words the Muses speak to Hesiod:

Now somewhere they taught him beautiful singing while he was shepherding sheep beneath sacred Helicon. This was the very first word (*mythos*) the goddesses, the Muses of Olympia, the daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, spoke to me: “Rustic shepherds, base ones, only bellies, we know how to tell many lies (*pseudea polla*) that seem true (*etumoisin homoia*). But we also know how to sing truths (*alētheia*) whenever we wish. (22–28)¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁴ Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, 72.

¹⁸⁵ Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, 76–77.

¹⁸⁶ West, *The East Face of Helicon*, 170.

¹⁸⁷ West, ed. (*Theogony*, 159–60) reviews parallels proposed by commentators showing a convergence between literary aspects of Hesiod’s visionary experience and those of Hebrew prophets and other Greek visionaries.

¹⁸⁸ Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, 67.

¹⁸⁹ Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, 68; Tandy (*Warriors into Traders*, 188–89) distinguishes a bard such as Hesiod from a seer such as Theoclymenus as one who has specific information from the divine realm to communicate; in contrast, the seer is one who interprets signals from the gods better than the average human.

¹⁹⁰ West, ed., *Theogony*, 112.

Here the Muses are identified as belonging to Olympia, whereas in the opening lines of the hymn they were called “Heliconian Muses”: i.e., goddesses worshiped in the local sanctuaries of Mount Helicon in Boeotia.¹⁹¹ Clay points out that this shift of perspective to the Olympian location of the Muses highlights the distance between these goddesses and humans, a point reinforced by the Muses’s derogatory identification of their human audience as “base ones, only bellies” (26).¹⁹² The more troubling part of the Muses’s message quoted here is their claim that they are skilled in disguising falsehoods as true sayings (*etuma*, 27) and that they mix these falsehoods with truth (*alētheia*) as they wish. Thus, the Muses, as potential liars and truth-tellers, may be, as Scodel puts it, “hypostases of the tradition itself, instead of independent guarantors of the performance.”¹⁹³ Clay defines *etuma* as “things as they really are and cannot be distorted” and *alētheia* as “a full and true account” that can be distorted.¹⁹⁴ Trickery and forgetfulness can undermine *alētheia*; these acts of deception and omission can distort the truth in ways that rival boldfaced lies. So the Muses, who sing about the gods, suggest that they might be deceiving humans in their account of the genesis of the gods, but humans have no way of determining the truth or falsity of such matters. Clay contends that the Muses intend to instill an air of ambiguity into their performance: a performance that combines truthfulness about eternal things with forgetfulness about earthly things to bring about healing in the listeners.¹⁹⁵ The poet causes remembering and forgetfulness as the occasion requires. As Scodel puts it, lying occurs in the narrating of the poem to a particular occasion and not in the story itself.¹⁹⁶

The healing power of the Muses materializes in the assistance that they provide to the king:

For she at the same time accompanies the honored nobles. When one of these god-nurtured nobles is born, the daughters of great Zeus look and honor him by pouring sweet dew on his tongue so that gentle words flow from his mouth. All the people look to him to apply the customary laws with direct judgments. By quickly making a firm decision, he skillfully settles even a great dispute. Because of this,

¹⁹¹ West, ed., *Theogony*, 152.

¹⁹² Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, 57.

¹⁹³ Ruth Scodel, “Poetic Authority and Oral Tradition in Hesiod and Pindar,” 109–37, here 115, in *Speaking Volumes: Orality and Literacy in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (ed. Janet Watson; Leiden: Brill, 2001).

¹⁹⁴ Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, 61. Marcel Detienne (*The Masters of Truth* [New York: Zone Books, 1999] 49) claims that *alētheia* refers to that which comes into the light because it is remembered: the poet’s singing the praises of someone who rescues that person from oblivion and death. *Alētheia* is performative truth.

¹⁹⁵ Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, 61–66; see also Scodel, “Poetic Authority and Oral Tradition in Hesiod and Pindar,” 109–37, here 118.

¹⁹⁶ Scodel, “Poetic Authority and Oral Tradition in Hesiod and Pindar,” 109–37, here 119.

there are prudent judges. But when people are misled in the assembly, they [the judges] easily reverse their deeds through gentle, persuasive words. (80–90)

Hesiod claims here that the vital task of defusing disputes and restoring harmony to a community requires the assistance of the Muses.¹⁹⁷ The sweetness they bring to the king's speech make him appealing to individuals in search of an arbitrator.¹⁹⁸ The similarity of *Theogony* 84–87 with *Odyssey* 8.170–73 associate this effective royal judge with Odysseus.¹⁹⁹ In the *Iliad* when Agamemnon was quarreling with Achilles and his capacity to mediate disputes among the Achaeans was compromised, Odysseus seized the scepter of Argos to restore order among the retreating Achaean forces (*Il.* 2.182–333). His approach was to reason with the upper class and to use physical force with the lower class. Clay contends that this passage from *Theogony* 80–90 is picked up in the *Works and Days* in which the poet uses harsh words for the members of both the upper and lower classes and expresses his strongest threats against the king.²⁰⁰ Here in a prophetic manner, royal authority is criticized and reformed by the Muse-inspired words of the poet.

The prophet Ezekiel was challenged to confront an audience with a message that it would resist, whereas the Assyrian prophets of Ištar and the Boeotian poet Hesiod—according to the extant texts—set a higher priority on persuading their audiences than on condemning them. With each of these intermediaries, it is vital that they themselves are convinced that they are being divinely directed and empowered. Ezekiel is depicted as one who is a passive recipient of this divine presence. His primary act of asceticism is to accept the commission given him and not to join in the rebellion of his compatriots (*Ezek* 2:8). Although Hesiod prays for the intervention of the Muses at the beginning of the *Works and Days*, his attention to the Muses is more laudatory than petitionary. The Assyrian prophets engaged in ascetic efforts to reach communion with Ištar; however, in the recorded prophecies they appear confident of Ištar's assistance and try to persuade the king to trust in her protection.

¹⁹⁷ West, ed. (*Theogony*, 44, 182) suggests that the occasion for the *Theogony* may have been the games of Amphidamus; the praise of the king as judge would be words appropriate for such an occasion. Scodel ("Poetic Authority and Oral Tradition in Hesiod and Pindar," 109–37, here 112) believes Hesiod does not specify his audience in the *Theogony* because he wants this composition to be independent of the occasion of its performance—a deceptive strategy of a poet.

¹⁹⁸ West, ed. (*Theogony*, 183) notes that honey must be given to the Thriai if they are to speak true prophecy, and he alludes to the sweet-tasting scroll of Ezekiel (3:2).

¹⁹⁹ West, ed., *Theogony*, 183.

²⁰⁰ Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos*, 75.

Divine Sovereignty Expressed through the Order of the Cosmos

In the middle of Ezekiel's call narrative, in a section that Zimmerli labeled "act of ordination" (2:8–3:3), he received a vision (*wā'er'eh wēhinnēh*, 2:9) in which a hand—indicating the mysterious transcendent presence of Yhwh—placed an inscribed papyrus scroll before him containing the ominous message of "lamentation and wailing and woe" (2:9).²⁰¹ The point of this scroll was to indicate that the message was not to be altered.²⁰² Then the Lord commanded him: "mortal, eat what you have found: eat this scroll; then go, speak to the house of Israel" (3:1). By ingesting this scroll, the message was to become part of his whole person. The phrasing of the Lord's command suggests how the words of this scroll were to penetrate to the depths of Ezekiel's person: "Mortal, let your belly ingest and your insides be filled with this scroll that I am giving to you" (3:3). This episode suggests that Ezekiel conceived of the prophetic task as one in which prophecy was first written out and then delivered: a reversal of the traditional sequence in which prophecies were delivered orally and then (in some cases) recorded, particularly if the fulfillment of their message was still pending.²⁰³

In a short episode (3:22–27), which appears to be an addendum to the call narrative, Ezekiel is once again overtaken by "the hand of the Lord" (3:22) and directed to go to the plain where he had seen his inaugural vision of the throne chariot. When he saw the glory of the Lord (*kābôd Yhwh*, 3:23), he collapsed to the ground and was once again visited by a "spirit" (*rûah*) that made him stand on his feet. At that point, the Lord commanded him: "Go, enclose yourself in your house" (3:24). The Lord informed him that he would be bound by cords so that he would not be able to move about among the people. Then the Lord said: "I will make your tongue stick to your palate so that you cannot speak and will not be one who criticizes them" (3:26). Only when the Lord commanded him, would Ezekiel be able to speak. This passage comes immediately after a passage in which Ezekiel was exhorted to take seriously his responsibility as a sentinel for the people (3:17–21; cf. 33:1–9). The tension between these two passages indicates that in the final form of the book of Ezekiel the capacity for Ezekiel to choose to obey was still intact.

Ezekiel's consumption of the inscribed scroll and the prediction that the Lord would make him unable to speak unless specifically charged to do so

²⁰¹ Read *qînâ* and *hōy*.

²⁰² This scroll from the Lord with writing on both sides echoes the two tablets of the law given to Moses by the Lord on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:1–4, 27–28). Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, 135) notes that writing on both sides of a scroll was contrary to usual practice.

²⁰³ Ellen Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (JSOTSup 78; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 37–39, 51; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 126.

paints a picture of this prophet as one whose free will has been suspended.²⁰⁴ This heightened sense of divine intervention foreshadows the Lord's promise that he will give the exiles a heart transplant and a new spirit (11:19-20; 36:26). This serious reduction of human autonomy is slightly countered by the command in 18:31, in which the fabrication of a new heart and new spirit calls for human effort and is not seen as wholly a divine act. How the tension between these passages is assessed will depend upon one's perspective: if salvation is a priority, then the reduction in human autonomy is worth it. On the other hand, if human autonomy is regarded as integral to the human person, then the level of divine intervention that Ezekiel promises will seem suffocating. But are these the only two alternatives in this dilemma of freedom or determination posed by Ezekiel? The crucible of experience through which Ezekiel passes points to a much more profound understanding of the divine presence with Ezekiel and the exiles than the wooden dilemma of freedom versus determination suggests.²⁰⁵

The phenomenon of being determined by and interacting with forces more powerful than that of humans is addressed in the Mesopotamian tradition by the notion of the tablet of destinies: i.e., the bond that holds the cosmos together.²⁰⁶ A Neo-Assyrian descriptive text identifies the tablet of destinies as "the bond of supreme power."²⁰⁷ In the *Enūma Eliš*, Tīāmat appointed Kingu commander of her forces and entrusted to him the tablet of destinies. However, Marduk, commissioned by the divine assembly and equipped with powerful weapons by Ea, defeated Tīāmat and her forces.

As for Kingu, who had been great among them, he [Marduk] bound him and counted him among the doomed. He took away from him the tablet of destinies that were not to be in his possession (*lā šimātīšu*). He placed a seal (*kišibbi*) upon it and fastened it on his chest. (IV:119–22)

The *Enūma Eliš* does not say how Tīāmat initially obtains the tablet of destinies. Annus claims that Tīāmat represents the watery depths, which is the traditional seat of wisdom, and thus is a likely original location for the tablet of destinies.²⁰⁸ In the *Enūma Eliš*, Ea kills Apsū, the lover of Tīāmat, and makes the watery depths his new home (I:69–78). After Marduk captures the tablet

²⁰⁴ Baruch Schwartz, "Ezekiel's Dim View of Israel's Restoration," 43–67, here 43–44, in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* [ed. Margaret Odell and John Strong; SBLSymS 9; Atlanta: Scholars, 2000].

²⁰⁵ Michael Fishbane, "Sin and Judgment in the Prophecies of Ezekiel," *Interpretation* 38 (1984) 131–50, here 132.

²⁰⁶ Amar Annus, *The God Ninurta in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia* (SAA 14; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002) 148.

²⁰⁷ Andrew R. George, "Sennacherib and the Tablet of Destinies," *Iraq* 48 (1986) 133–46, here 138–39.

²⁰⁸ Annus, *The God Ninurta in the Mythology*, 149–50.

of destinies, he wears it on his chest as a seal (IV:122). It becomes a sign of the authority at his disposal. Yet it is not for Marduk to keep this seal in his possession. He soon returns it to Ea (V:70).²⁰⁹

As Lawson has pointed out, the tablet of destinies did not bestow supreme power upon Kingu. Marduk had been given sovereign power in the divine assembly and so could wrest the tablet of destinies away from Kingu. Lawson concludes that the tablet of destinies did not simply confer automatic power on anyone who captured it; it fulfilled its function of holding the cosmos together only if it were held by the proper hands.²¹⁰ In the *Epic of Anzu*, the Anzu bird stole the tablet of destinies from Enlil. Enlil's son Ninurta, the forerunner of Marduk as the type of warrior-king, engaged Anzu in combat:

From the center of the bow, he [Ninurta] shot an arrow, but it did not come close to Anzu. The arrow returned. Anzu cried out against it: "Arrow that has come, go back to your canebreak. Wood of the bow to your forests. Bowstring to your sheep's tendon, feathers to the birds." Because he carried the tablet of destinies in his hand, the bowstring shot the arrows, but they did not come close to his body. (II:60–67)²¹¹

Lawson notes that the tablet of destinies here is effective as a defensive weapon. But in terms of providing Anzu with the means for assuming absolute power, mere possession of the tablets was insufficient.²¹² The power that Marduk draws upon arises from a metadivine realm to which even the gods in assembly are subject.²¹³ In the *Enūma Eliš*, the gods cannot come into being except through this fundamental reality:

When no gods had clearly emerged, when no names had been named, when no destinies had been determined, the gods were created within these two. Lahmu and Lahamu were made distinct and called by name. (I:7–10)

These two gods, as Lambert explains, have the cosmic function of separating eternal time from heaven and earth; like Atlas, they are the pillars that hold up the cosmos.²¹⁴ The text indicates that these gods do not fully come

²⁰⁹ Annus (*The God Ninurta in the Mythology*, 149) reads the god's name in V:65 as ^d60, which is the numerical sign for Ea rather than Anu. See Simo Parpola, "The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy," *JNES* 52 (1993) 161–208, here 182 n. 89.

²¹⁰ Jack Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium: Toward an Understanding of Simtu* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994) 25.

²¹¹ Edition: Amar Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu* (SAA 3; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000).

²¹² Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium*, 29–30.

²¹³ Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium*, 32–35.

²¹⁴ W. G. Lambert, "The Pair Lahmu-Lahamu in Cosmology," *Or* n.s. 54 (1985) 189–202, here 199.

into being until they are named. It is the confluence between the linguistic metadivine reality of names and the naming activity of the gods, particularly the pronouncements of the divine assembly and its chief executive, that brings about an ordered world. The words written on the tablet of destinies attest to the Mesopotamians' belief in the power of the divine word, for the inscribed destinies afford the one who holds them the power to alter the ME—i.e., the traditional laws of the cosmos that function like natural law.²¹⁵

As related by the *Enūma Eliš* (VI:112–20) and the story of the *Atrahasis* poem (206–17, 223–26), human beings were created to serve the gods. Their lives were to be of limited duration. In his journey to the ends of the cosmos, Gilgamesh encountered the wise ale-wife who counseled him: “When the gods created humankind, they appointed death for humankind and kept for themselves control over life” (*Gilg.*, OB VA + BM iii.3–5). The acceptance of this general condition of mortality is less troubling for humans than the possibility of premature death and enduring various forms of suffering. Because the destinies of individuals were believed to be determined by the gods, humans tried first to find out what was in store for them through divination and then to alter unfavorable fates through prayer and ritual. In other words, the Mesopotamians regarded their lives as predestined by the gods but open to alteration.²¹⁶

Heraclitus tried to get his audience to examine themselves (*DK* 22B101, B45) and to search for insights into the reality that was common to all people and things (*DK* 22B2, B89, B114). If Heraclitus communicated only in writing, his obscure, aphoristic style succeeded in engaging his audiences. By the fourth century, his work was a classic, with a number of commentaries produced at that time.²¹⁷ The opening saying in Heraclitus' work is the following:

Concerning this account (*logos*) which exists forever, humans do not grasp it either before hearing it or after first hearing it. Although everything comes about according to this account (*logos*), they are like the inexperienced when they examine these words (*epeōn*) and works (*ergōn*) which I lay out by analyzing each according to its nature (*physis*) and stating how it is. But it escapes the notice of others inasmuch as what they do while awake is similar to their forgetting while asleep. (*DK* 22B1, Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 7.132)

One might wonder how it would be possible to comprehend an account (*logos*) before actually hearing it. By *logos*, Heraclitus means more than the words

²¹⁵ Wim van Binsbergen and Frans Wiggermann, “Magic in History,” 3–34, here 23, in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn; Ancient Magic and Divination 1; Groningen: Styx, 1999); Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium*, 64, 131.

²¹⁶ Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium*, 54–55.

²¹⁷ Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 5–7; cf. Kirk, ed., *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 36–37, 45.

of his book. It also refers to that which is common to the cosmos and holds all people and things together. So Heraclitus contends that comprehension of this *logos* is possible by observing and thinking so as to grasp that all-encompassing reality of the *logos*.²¹⁸ As explained earlier, Heraclitus sees a unity between opposites. He criticizes Hesiod, one of the revered teachers of the Greeks in the Archaic Age, as one “who did not know day and night, for they are one” (*DK 22 B57*, Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10). If the sun were removed, day and night would be the same. Thus, there is an underlying unity to opposites. It is this underlying, basic unity or commonality of all that exists that is the cosmic *logos*.

The comprehension of this cosmic *logos* is difficult. Most persons live their lives oblivious to it; and when Heraclitus tries to break open this reality to them, they do not grasp what he is trying to say. This lack of comprehension is not confined to the uneducated. Heraclitus criticizes his contemporaries who have achieved fame for their extensive learning: “Extensive learning does not make one intelligent. For it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and also Xenophanes and Hecataeus” (*DK 22 B40*; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 1.140.2). Yet at the same time, he says: “Those who love wisdom must be those who inquire very well into many things” (*DK 22 B35*; Clement, *Miscellanies*, 5.141). For “nature likes to hide” (*DK 22 B123*; Themistius, *Speeches*, 5.69b3). A key element in gaining such comprehension is a saying that echoes the exhortation to self-knowledge at Delphi: “I went in search of myself” (*DK 22 B101*; Plutarch, *Against Colotes*, 1118c7).²¹⁹

In terms of virtue (*arētē*), Heraclitus elevates thinking over courageous action and eloquence, particularly as promoted by Homer (e.g., *Il.* 2.283–322), when he says: “To think well (*sophronein*) is the greatest virtue (*arētē*), and wisdom (*sophiē*) is to say what is true (*alēthea*) and to act attentive to the nature of things” (*DK 22 B112*). This search for understanding is to be constant and attentive to things in the common world. Such attentiveness to the “constitution of things” (*physis*) will reveal the universality and commonality of the *logos*.²²⁰ Heraclitus says:

To speak with understanding (*noos*), it is necessary to maintain strenuously what is common (*xunos*) to all, just as a city does for its laws—but even more strenuously. For all human laws (*nomoi*) are maintained by a divine one. It exercises power as much as it desires, suffices for everything, and is superior.” (*DK 22 B114*; John of Stobi, *Anthology*, 3.1.179)

²¹⁸ Kirk, ed. (*Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 39) translates *logos*, “formula of things,” explaining that it refers to the measure or order that is present in things. In light of *DK 22 B114*, Kirk argues that Heraclitus held that apprehension of the *logos* is open to all humans.

²¹⁹ Translation: Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 41.

²²⁰ Kirk, ed., *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 43.

Heraclitus' focus upon practical wisdom is evident in this saying. He advocates obedience to the laws of the local city for in such concrete attention to the order of one's own city will bring one to grasp the cosmic *logos* in which the civic *logos* participates.²²¹ Nevertheless, there is a pronounced introspective element to Heraclitus' thought. He reimagines the nature of the *psychē*: it is not simply that which leaves the human at the point of death but rather is "the center of the human personality" and "is primarily a principle of rational cognition."²²² Because Heraclitus held that "thinking is common to all" (*DK* 22 B113; John of Stobi, *Anthology* 3.1.179), he could imagine the cognitive activity of a human as participating in a cosmicwide cognitive activity by both animate and inanimate objects. He indicates how deep and extensive is the connection between the human *psychē* and the cosmic *logos* when he says: "You will not discover the boundaries of the soul by going, even if you travel every path, so deep is its structure" (*DK* 22 B 45; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.7). If one is truly listening to the *logos* in private reflection, one is communing with the cosmos.

A common attitude promoted by these diverse texts from Ezekiel, the *Enūma Eliš*, the *Epic of Anzu*, and Heraclitus is the necessity for humans to be attentive to a cosmic order that they did not establish but to which they are accountable. Ezekiel identifies this order with the will of Yhwh. The recognition of Yhwh's sovereignty is so critical that Yhwh will come upon Ezekiel and the exiles and direct their minds and hearts to the point that they seem to be determined. The "canonical" texts of Mesopotamia typically portray humans as servants of the gods. To find their place within this divinely ruled cosmos, individuals would inquire of Šamaš and other gods to find out their destinies and then appeal through prayer and ritual to have undesirable prognostications altered. The tablet of destinies reveals that there is a metadivine realm that the gods also must take into account. This interplay between the word of the gods and elemental material power indicates the Mesopotamians' belief that the order of the world was shaped by forces beyond human control, and yet the possibility existed that such divine and material forces could be influenced. Heraclitus advocates thinking as the way to find one's place in the cosmos. He embraced conflict and strife as signs of the unity of all things rather than of their disintegration. He believed that the *logos* of the soul, the *logos* of the city, and the *logos* of the cosmos were all one. The challenge to each human was to know oneself so as to be cognizant of this all-embracing unity in which everyone and everything shared. Ezekiel's view of the spirit drew him into greater union with Yhwh while setting him more fiercely at odds with the exiles. In terms of the

²²¹ Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 117–18; Von Fritz, "Nous, Noein, Part I," 223–42, here 232–34; Kirk, ed., *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 53.

²²² Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 126–27.

plan of Yhwh and the ordering of the world according to his sovereign will and truth, such conflict was positive.

Conclusion

Ezekiel had a vision that brought him low to the ground. The power by which he was lifted up and was able to go forward was “spirit” (*rûah*, 2:2). The storm wind (*rûah sé‘ārâ*, 1:4) that Ezekiel saw in his vision and the spirit (*hârûah*, 1:20; *rûah bahayyâ*) that directed the four living creatures at the ends of the throne chariot were manifestations of the power under Yhwh’s control. The empowerment bestowed on Ezekiel through the vision and the *rûah* allowed him to see beyond appearances and to ground his noetic and affective activities (*lēb*) in the sovereign rule of Yhwh: a point capsulized in Ezekiel’s consumption of the sweet-tasting scroll (3:3). This looking beyond appearances has analogues in the Assyrian prophets inspired by Ištar and in Heraclitus’ reception of the *logos* (DK 22B1). The noetic and affective activities of the Assyrian prophet are located in the *libbu*, analogous to Hebrew *lēb*. However the *šāru*, “wind, breath, spirit,” is not emphasized as means of empowering the Assyrian prophet as the *rûah* was for Ezekiel. For Heraclitus, the *logos* bestows understanding (*nous*). He insists on wakefulness through insight and reflection. Even the *psychē*, the vapor or breath indicating the life force, is seen as a rational capacity in Heraclitus. The empowerment of the poet Hesiod through the force of *pneuma* is not repeated in Heraclitus or any of the other Presocratic philosophers.²²³ The bestowal of insight concerning the order of the cosmos, which leads to the right ordering of perception, is manifested in the rational capacities of the *psychē* and *nous*.

The well-known shift in emphasis toward “critical” rationality that marks the birth of philosophy is encompassed by a stance of listening to the order of the cosmos. The *nous* in Homer apprehends truth directly or intuitively and not by a process of reasoning. The role of questioning in which human reason (*nous*) is the judge of truth or falseness begins to gain more influence but is continuous with the kind of Ionian rationalism evident in Homer’s *Odyssey*. In terms of a major shift in the human capacity to perceive truth, Ezekiel’s reception of the *rûah* from Yhwh, was a *novum* in the Israelite tradition to a greater degree than Heraclitus’ use of the *nous* was in the Ionic tradition. But Ezekiel’s reception of the spirit was not an elitist experience, rather it was a forerunner of what was promised to happen to the whole Israelite community. Heraclitus believed the capacity of the *nous* to perceive truth was in principle open to all, but he doubted that the commoners would use the *nous* effectively.

²²³ *Pneuma* is mentioned in Xenophanes (DK 21 A1.27–28) and perhaps was replaced by *āēr* in a saying of Anaximenes (DK 13B2; Aetius I, 3, 4; see G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) 159.

If one were to perceive reality truthfully and avoid deception, Ezekiel insisted that the exiles cast away their idols and worship Yhwh who transcended all material and mental images that humans might fabricate. Xenophanes and Heraclitus likewise called for disposing of cultic images for they distorted people's perception of reality. The aniconic ethos promoted by Ezekiel and the Presocratics stands in marked contrast with the voice of the "canonical" Mesopotamian tradition in the *Enūma Eliš* and the poem *Erra and Išum* that the order of the cosmos depended on attention to the statue of Marduk. Attentiveness to the order of the cosmos is common to all three traditions, but how that order was communicated through symbols shows decisive differences among them. Aniconism or iconism reveal stances toward the symbol's capacity to manifest Being and toward the human capacity to interpret the symbol truthfully. The sleepiness, hard-heartedness, or indifference of humans can lead to distortion in the use of symbols. Remedies to such perceptual weakness in Ezekiel and in the traditions of Mesopotamia (750–539) and Presocratic Greece (750–440) call upon the capacities of spirit and reason to interpret symbols in the pursuit of truth.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PURE VERSUS THE IMPURE

A VITAL TENSION WITHIN A LIVING SYMBOL

Defilement results from a violation of the integrity of life. Humans, who have been given a life on this planet shared with other creatures, recognize when they have transgressed against the basic order of the universe. The experience of defilement arises as a feeling that one is dirty. Dirt is a substance that is out of place. To remove the dirt by washing or sweeping returns the person or place to the proper condition. When such cleansing removes defilement, it is called purification. In the daily round of activities, persons and places become dirty. Washing and cleaning are scheduled because it is certain that they will be necessary to some extent. When this language of becoming dirty and washing is applied to the sphere of defilement, it becomes a charged metaphor. To be defiled evokes a feeling of “being dirty” that indicates a disruption in one’s relations with the basic forces of life. To be cleansed is to remove that substance that puts one at odds with the fundamental order of life. To ignore this dirt and not have it cleansed places a person and a community in danger, for the order of things will not tolerate such highly charged dirt.¹

Ezekiel explains the exile as a consequence of Israel’s defilement. Their deeds defiled their land such that Yhwh proclaimed: “Their conduct in my sight was like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual period” (Ezek 36:17). Ezekiel’s inflammatory language strikes the ear of the listener with jarring force. Why would the natural cycles of woman’s body be regarded as defiling? Ezekiel, informed by the priestly legislation in Leviticus 15:19-23, states that her discharge

¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) 362.

of blood renders her unclean for seven days and whoever touches her or whatever she sits upon for one day. The priestly legislators do not explain why menstrual blood is impure and contagious. Interpreters of the priestly system explain that bodily emissions associated with reproduction—i.e., menstrual blood, semen, lochial blood—are defiling.² Although the patriarchal bias of the priestly texts is indisputable, the common denominator of these contagious defiling substances is their association with reproduction and sexuality. The defilement communicated to others by menstrual blood and semen is temporary: one need only launder and bathe and avoid the sanctuary until evening (Lev 15:16-17, 19-23). Jacob Milgrom notes that in a society in which women married at a young age and were pregnant for much of the time between ages twenty and forty, this treatment of the menstruant was less intrusive than it would be in contemporary Western cultures.³ Another serious question would be why a bodily function that is natural would be labeled with the pejorative term “defiling.” The ancient Israelite priests regarded reproductive blood as a substance wielding a power that must be contained. So while menstruation is not controllable, its effects can be contained by defining the measures to be taken to keep it from spreading throughout the community and leading to the defilement of the sanctuary. Ezekiel uses this metaphor to explain why the Judahites were deported: both the land and the sanctuary were defiled, and Yhwh had to depart.

Matters associated with birth, death, and sexuality are regarded as defiling in many cultures. In Israel, some defiling actions (e.g., murder and adultery) are unethical, but other defiling actions must be performed to avoid committing sin. For example, an Israelite would be defiled when standing near the bedside of a parent who has died (Num 19:14).⁴ This action of honoring a parent responds to a command of the Decalogue (Exod 20:12). So, to act ethically entails that one becomes defiled. After mourning a parent, one would then need to be purified by the ashes of the Red Cow on the third and seventh days of a seven-day waiting period (Num 19:17-19) and then would be ready to rejoin society and to approach the sanctuary. Failure to carry out this purificatory measure would then bring defilement on the land that would pollute the sanctuary (Num 19:20). Ezekiel proclaims that the people of Judah and Jerusalem have been guilty not only of defiling actions but also of neglecting to carry out purificatory measures (Ezek 22:26; 23:39).

Defilement is a crosscultural phenomenon. To place Israel’s understanding of defilement and purification in a crosscultural context will shed light not only on its similarities and differences with the neighboring cultures of Mesopotamia

² Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1994) xviii, 1163.

³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 953.

⁴ Cf. Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 7, 16.

(750–539) and Presocratic Greece (750–440) but also on how each culture has constructed its own interpretation of defilement and purification. Defilement occurs through individuals but is primarily a collective phenomenon. One of Ezekiel's primary concerns is the impact that individual defiling actions have upon the Yahwistic community and its capacity to remain in the land (36:16-19).

This chapter is based upon an examination of Ezekiel's second vision in Ezekiel 8–11. The first section is comprised of brief discussion of the shamanlike characteristics of Ezekiel when he is transported back to Jerusalem at the beginning of Ezekiel 8 in light of the shamanistic journeys reported of Empedocles in fifth century Archaic Greece. Sandwiched between these shamanistic experiences is a brief treatment of a less dramatic form of divine inspiration in which the author of the Mesopotamian poem *Erra and Išum* is directed to compose on the basis of a dreamlike experience. The second section begins the main part of the chapter with a description of false worship in the Jerusalem temple in Ezekiel 8, a defiling activity which testifies to the Jerusalemites' failure to trust in the sovereign power of Yhwh in a time of crisis. Parallels to the failure of humans and gods to honor the authority of the sovereign god are drawn from the Mesopotamian poem *Erra and Išum* and from the Homeric epics. The third section examines Ezekiel 9–10 in which Yhwh departs from the Jerusalem temple, orders the slaughter of the unrepentant—which results in the defilement of the sanctuary by corpses—and then commands the destruction of the temple and city with fire. Analogous cases of divine abandonment and purification of a sanctuary in Mesopotamia are drawn from the royal inscriptions and *Erra and Išum*. Parallels from Presocratic Greece are drawn from the Homeric epics where the gods react to the failure of humans to offer them sacrifice and from historical materials describing the late Archaic Greek citizens' increasing concern to construct sanctuaries and keep their communities free from defilement—despite the Presocratics' call for a more rational understanding of cosmic forces. In the fourth section, the role of fire as a purificatory agent is explicated in texts from Ezekiel 10–11; 24. Parallels from Mesopotamian and Presocratic texts raise the question whether fire, when imagined as operating as a pervasive cosmic force, initiates in human communities a creative or a destructive process. In the last section, Ezekiel's view of the destruction of the temple and the exile as stages of a purificatory process aimed ultimately at the restoration of the community is presented in light of exorcistic and purificatory rituals in Mesopotamia (e.g., the Mesopotamian mouth-washing ritual [*mīs pi*], the *Maqlû*, and *Šurpu*) and Archaic Greece (e.g., purging miasmata from corpses, scapegoat rituals). Purification aims to restore the wholeness and integrity of a person and a community by purging hostile, distorting influences.

The Journey into the Beyond: The Validation of the Intermediary

At the beginning of Ezekiel's second heavenly vision, the hand of the Lord fell upon him while a group of Israelite elders sat before him in his house in Babylon (8:1). Then a humanoid figure resembling the one enthroned above the cherubim—whose appearance below the waist was like fire and above the waist like electrum—stretched out the form of a hand and took Ezekiel by a lock of hair. Then it is reported that “a wind⁵ raised me up between earth and heaven, and caused me through a divine vision to enter Jerusalem” (8:3). Ezekiel is portrayed here as a shamanlike figure who has ascended to the sky like the inspired priest of the Siberian Tungus who ascended to heaven on mystical trips.⁶ The transport of Ezekiel resembles that of Elijah (1 Kgs 18:12).

Although there is no shamanlike journey described in the Mesopotamian poem *Erra and Išum*, its author Kabti-ilāni-Marduk claims to have received his poem during the night just at the point that he was awaking (V:40). He claims divine inspiration for his poem but not in the strong terms that Ezekiel uses in his call narrative (1:4–3:14). Cagni notes that this form of inspiration of an author is unique in Mesopotamian literature.⁷ Kabti-ilāni-Marduk's composition, which may well be based on sociopolitical troubles that he had endured, consists primarily of the speeches of Erra, Išum, and Marduk. Here Erra's accomplishments as the god of war and famine are narrated by his closest companion Išum—a literary device attested here for the first time.⁸

In the Presocratic world, Pythagoras was revered as a shamanlike, superhuman figure. His disciple Empedocles (450 B.C.E.) in Metapontum in southern Italy likewise was credited with superhuman powers.⁹ Burkert notes that “there was a belief in southern Italy that healing could be won by an ecstatic journey into the new world beyond, to the gods.”¹⁰ This notion of the shamanistic journey could possibly have entered into the Greek world through the trading colonies in the Black Sea that had connections with the Siberian shamanistic

⁵ Since *rūah* is anarthrous in 8:3, it is probably best rendered here as “wind” rather than as “spirit.”

⁶ I. M. Lewis, *Religion in Context: Cults and Charisma* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 107–8; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) 140–51, 209–10.

⁷ Luigi Cagni, *The Poem of Erra* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1977) 61 n. 169.

⁸ Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses* (2 vols.; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 1.771. J. J. M. Roberts (“Erra: Scorched Earth,” *JCS* 24 [1971]: 11–16, here 14–15) associates Erra with famine rather than with plague; the famine arises from wild fires that burn the crops and lead to famine.

⁹ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 143–45.

¹⁰ Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972) 153.

traditions.¹¹ The shamanistic journey would form a precedent for the notion of the separation of the soul (*psychē*) from the body, which became vitally important to Plato and subsequent philosophy.¹²

The Threat of Polytheism: A World of Diminished Sovereignty

In the first part of Ezekiel's visionary journey to the Jerusalem temple, Yhwh, as his tour guide, introduced him to four scenes that highlight the abominations (*tô'ēbôt*, 8:6, 13, 15, 17) that were driving Yhwh from the temple. The first is the image of jealousy (*sēmel haqqinā'*, 8:5). Who or what this image represented is difficult to determine.¹³ The word *sēmel* occurs only five times in the Old Testament. It stands together with the term *pesel*, "carved image," in Deuteronomy 4:16. This Deuteronomistic passage makes clear that no images are to be produced, for Yhwh manifested himself by his voice and not by his form (Deut 4:12, 14). Thus, the abomination of this image in Ezekiel 8:5 is that it pretends to represent Yhwh and so distracts the worshiper's attention away from Yhwh and onto the image: a consequence that stirs up the jealousy of Yhwh (cf. 5:13; 16:42; 23:25; 35:11; 36:5-6; 38:19). Ezekiel stands together with the proponents of the Josianic reform that exclusive worship of Yhwh is the norm.¹⁴ A carved image would challenge the sovereignty of Yhwh—as seen by the strong reaction Yhwh has to this statue (8:5).¹⁵ The use of images or the worship of other deities creates competition within the divine sphere that fragments Israel's loyalty to Yhwh and diminishes his authority.

In the second scene in the temple, Ezekiel was instructed to dig a hole through the wall. Inside, he saw seventy Israelite elders offering incense to images portrayed on the wall. It may be that each Israelite elder had his own

¹¹ Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 163; M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 150; idem, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) 143–50.

¹² *Gorgias* 493A–C in *Plato: vol. V* (ed. W. R. M. Lamb; New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1925); Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 210; for the view that there was no shamanistic influence on the development of the Greek notion of *psychē*, see David Claus, *Toward the Soul: An Inquiry into the Meaning of ψυχή before Plato* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1981) 116–18.

¹³ Margaret Odell, "What Was the Image of Jealousy in Ezekiel 8?" 134–48, here 135–37, in *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets* (ed. Lester Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis; JSOTSup 408; London: T&T Clark, 2004).

¹⁴ Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 101–2, 108–9.

¹⁵ Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 1, *Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 282.

image in his individual niche (*heder*, v. 12).¹⁶ Zimmerli notes that these carved images on the wall may have been intended to represent Yhwh.¹⁷ More likely though, the elders, according to a polytheistic mentality, probably imagined that collectively they were increasing their protection against the dangers pressing upon Jerusalem by paying attention to every conceivable deity and demon.¹⁸ They claim that “Yhwh has forsaken the land” (8:12; cf. 9:9). The offering of incense may have been an apotropaic measure to appease demonic forces.¹⁹

In the third temple scene, Ezekiel sees the women “weeping the Tammuz” at the entrance to the north gate of the temple forecourt. Perhaps “the Tammuz” is the title to a lamentation that they were reciting.²⁰ It seems then to reflect a type of passover rite in which protection was sought from the evil effects of the dry season.²¹ In the Mesopotamian tradition, Dumuzi/Tammuz was the protector of the flocks. Inanna/Ištar was the goddess of sexual reproduction and fertility. When Tammuz was seized to take Ištar’s place in the Netherworld, the wise woman Bēlilī²² recited a lamentation apparently either to try to keep Ištar from having Tammuz descend to the Netherworld to take Ištar’s place or to mourn his death in anticipation of his rising again after six months in the Netherworld.²³ For the women of Jerusalem who were chanting this Tammuz

¹⁶ Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 291) claims that *bēḥadrē māškit* refers to Canaanite images (cf. Lev 26:1; Num 33:52). Cf. Victor Hurowitz (“Wish Upon A Stone: Discovering the Idolatry of the Even Maskit,” BRev 15 [1999] 30–33, 51) emends *bēḥadrē māškit* to *’eben māškit* and translates it as “wishing stone.”

¹⁷ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 241.

¹⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 293; Giuseppe Bettenzoli, *Geist der Heiligkeit: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des QDŠ-Begriffes im Buch Ezechiel* (Quaderni di Semististica 8; Firenze: Università de Firenze, 1979) 125.

¹⁹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 293. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, 241) notes that the offering of incense may be an allusion to the Korah rebellion (Num 16:1–50).

²⁰ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 295.

²¹ J. A. Scurlock, “Magical Uses of Ancient Mesopotamian Festivals of the Dead,” 93–107, here 96–100, in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki; Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 129; Leiden: Brill, 1995). Tzvi Abusch (*Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature* [Ancient Magic and Divination V; Leiden: Brill, 2002] 77) refers to the healing of a sick man at the time of the mourning of Tammuz in which Tammuz and family ghosts were asked to take evils afflicting him to the Netherworld.

²² In the “Descent of Inanna,” Dumuzi’s sister Gestinanna first laments for Dumuzi—which Jacobsen (*Treasures of Darkness*, 62) claims is during the half year beginning in the spring when the beer keg was underground fermenting—and then takes his place for the other half year beginning in autumn—the time when the wine casks were fermenting.

²³ Borger, *BAL*, 1.103, lines 131–38; Foster, *Beyond the Muses*, 409; Thorkild Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) 55–63, esp. 61–63.

lament, they may have been asking either for the protection of Jerusalem or for the revivification of a Jerusalem subdued under Babylonian rule.²⁴

The fourth and final scene surveying these abominations occurs in the forecourt of the temple, between the vestibule and the altar. Here twenty-five men (cf. 11:1) faced the east with their backs to the temple. They were “bowing down” (v. 16) to the sun and ignoring Yhwh who was in the temple behind them. There is some evidence for solar worship in Jerusalem in the seventh century (2 Kgs 21:5; 23:11-12; cf. Deut 4:19; 17:2-5).²⁵ By their worship of the sun, the elders were attributing sovereign rule to the sun god, who was revered in the ancient Near East not only as the god of justice with rule over the earth and the Netherworld but often also as the king of the gods (RIME 4, E4.6.8.2, lines 1–6).²⁶

These cultic abominations indicate that the people of Jerusalem and Judah were not acknowledging Yhwh’s sovereignty and his exclusive claim on their obedience. By their worship of images and various deities, they diluted the sovereignty of Yhwh. The imbalances introduced into their community through idolatry were not confined to the cultic sphere. Distorted worship led to distorted social relationships. Claiming that idolaters have amplified the violence in the land (Ezek 8:17), Ezekiel emphasized the point that social chaos is an inevitable consequence of shortchanging the sovereignty of Yhwh.

In the poem *Erra and Išum*, when Marduk’s image was refurbished and returned to his temple Esagila, Erra felt that he had been slighted in merely serving as a guard for Marduk during his absence and so decided to go on a campaign to demonstrate his power and, more particularly, to get the attention of Marduk and Ea (III:36’–46’). When Išum challenged Erra for planning violence against “god and man” (IIIC:36–37), Erra contended that he was acting in response to Marduk’s departure from his temple, saying:

You are counseling me as if you did not know Marduk’s order. The king of the gods left his residence. Which of all their lands can stand firm? He has taken off the crown of his sovereignty. King and prince neglect their duties. He has loosened his belt. The bond of god and man is loosened. It cannot be bound together again. (*Erra* IIIC:43–49)

²⁴ Cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 242.

²⁵ Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 115–24.

²⁶ Douglas Frayne, *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Early Periods*, vol. 4, *Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 605. The final offense of “setting the branch (*zēmôrâ*) on their nose” (8:17) has been interpreted as (1) a phallic symbol, (2) a symbol of immortality associated with Tammuz’ descent/ascent, (3) a symbol of entreaty (see Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 299).

Here Erra reasoned that if Marduk abandons his throne, then chaos should reign in the land. If it does not, then the course of events would indicate that Marduk's sovereignty and Erra's reputation as god of war were more fictional than real. So Erra enters Babylon and stirs up revolt, as recounted by Išum:

You put on your weapons and entered Babylon. Within Babylon, you spoke in its midst as one who is about to seize the city. The citizens of Babylon, who were like reeds in a swamp, had no leader. So all of them gathered around you. (*Erra* IV:4–6)

The ensuing chaos in the form of invading foreign troops and civil strife generates so much bloodshed that Marduk sensed the defilement of the place and uttered a curse over the city: "He swore that he would not drink water from its river. He was horrified by their blood and would not enter Esagila" (*Erra* IV:38–39). In Išum's extended speech in which he describes the extreme devastation that Erra had caused in Babylonia, he points out to Erra that even after so much destruction, Erra still feels slighted: "But you have not calmed down at all! You have said in your heart (*libbika*), "They despise me!" (*Erra* IV:112–13). The extreme devastation went beyond the bounds of reason; the irrational fury of Erra expresses the chaos of war in which all restraint is cast off. Erra eventually acknowledges the excess of his wrath, but he does so in a statement before the assembled gods in which he makes the point that he ought not to be taken lightly (V:5–22).

The poem *Erra and Išum* explains how the excessive violence of war and civil strife could arise in Babylonia even though Marduk, its protector god, was sovereign. Typically when Marduk suffered a loss of honor, he would take strong measures to restore it (*Erra* I:132–37). So the statements on the dirtiness (i.e., the defilement, *Erra* I:127–29) of Marduk's image refer not merely to the physical needs of his image but more importantly to the respect that was to be given to Marduk as sovereign. In the poem, this diminishment of respect for Marduk arose after Marduk's image was refurbished and Erra rose up in revolt. Erra, who symbolized the power inherent in strife, felt slighted by Marduk and so was compelled to express himself. The inevitability of this action was suggested by the astral omens that informed the gods that rebellious Erra was acting in accord with the order of the world (*Erra* IIC1:1'–15'). When war erupted in Babylonia, it seemed at first glance to signal a diminishment in Marduk's power. But Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, the author of the poem *Erra and Išum*, seems to be doubleminded about the reality of war: he recognizes the horror and devastation of war, but by mentioning the astral omens favoring Erra, he suggests that war has its place within the contending forces that maintain order in the world. War devastates humans but honors Erra.²⁷ This literary work seems to take the position that there is a measure of inevitability to war.

²⁷ The war effort is catalyzed and furthered by the Sebetti, "the Seven (warriors)." Chris-

Ionia of the seventh to sixth centuries B.C.E. was no stranger to war and civil strife.²⁸ The repeated recitation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* indicates that there was a Greek audience that supported the ethos of a warrior culture. The storyline of the *Iliad* would have validated the intensification of war to vindicate the honor of a slighted warrior. On the divine plane in the *Iliad*, Zeus took decisive action against the members of his Olympian household (8:8–17; 15:184–95) when his authority was challenged. When Athena, Zeus' daughter, intervened in battles despite Zeus' interdict, he threatened her with physical punishment, much as a parent would a child. When Poseidon, Zeus' brother, intervened in a battle, Zeus had to recognize that he and Poseidon were relative equals, even though he was of first rank. When power struggles erupted in the heavenly sphere, they had consequences for the humans allied with the competing gods. Most often, the reason the gods vied with one another was their perception that not enough honor had been shown to them by humans (*Il.* 7.451–53). Failing to offer sacrifice or treating lightly the work of a god were ways that humans stirred up the anger of the Olympian gods (*Il.* 7.446–53; cf. 9.499–501). With regard to his sovereignty, there were circumstances in which Zeus had to acknowledge that Fate limited his exercise of power. For example, he could not save his human son Sarpedon from death, even though Zeus foresaw that this was about to happen (*Il.* 16:431–52).

The competition between Homeric warriors in their pursuit of honor would have formed an analogy with the competition among traders that led to colonial expansion by Miletos, Samos, and other cities on the west coast of Asia Minor into various areas of the Mediterranean and Black Seas.²⁹ Tandy has argued that

toph Uehlinger and Susan Müller Trufaut ("Ezekiel 1, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography: Attempts at Further Refinement," *TZ* 57 [2001] 140–71, here 164) identify the Sebetti as the Pleiades: i.e., astral deities. Cagni (*The Poem of Erra*, 18) notes that even though the Sebetti have no redeeming qualities in the poem *Erra and Išum*, they are not demonized; see also J. J. M. Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon: A Study of the Semitic Deities Attested in Mesopotamia Before Ur III* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972) 52–53.

²⁸ J. M. Cook, "The Eastern Greeks," 196–221, here 196–202, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 3: *The Expansion of the Greek World, Eighth to Sixth Centuries B.C.* (ed. John Boardman and N. G. L. Hammond; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Hermann Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jonanovich, 1962) 139.

²⁹ David W. Tandy, *Warriors into Traders: The Power of the Market in Early Greece* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997) 122–23, 136, 149; cf. Cook, "The Eastern Greeks," 196–221, here 213. William G. Thalmann (*The Swineherd and the Bow: Representations of Class in the Odyssey* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998] 264–65) notes that this competition aims to increase status through acquiring gifts rather than by giving them. Ian Morris (*Archaeology as Cultural History* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2000] 182–89) argues that the symposia in which the epics were sung were part of a subculture in the polis in which aristocrats defined themselves over against the new social order of the polis.

the epics' disparagement of traders is a ploy within aristocratic circles, which promoted the singing of epics, to divert attention from their trading enterprises.³⁰ Lydia, the dominant power in western Anatolia throughout the seventh and the first half of the sixth century B.C.E., allowed the Ionians considerable space for commercial groups to pursue their goals.³¹ Under Persian rule in the late sixth and early fifth centuries, Ephesus still seems to have had considerable freedom to pursue its commercial interests.³²

Although Heraclitus disdained the acquisitiveness of the merchant class (*DK* 22B125a), he may have recognized the positive consequences of their competition in accord with the following aphorism: "hidden harmony is better than manifest harmony" (*DK* 22B54; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.9.5.3). In Heraclitus' world, war has a positive value, for discord may be closer to a true order than moments of calm. Artemis was called upon prior to entry into battle that one's forces might be protected from the mania that erupts in the midst of a conflict.³³ She may have served as a fit patroness for the adversarial Heraclitus. Even though his deposition of his writings in the Artemision may have had as a goal making them accessible to the aristocrats,³⁴ he did not privilege aristocratic spokespersons when he cast barbs, for as noted in chapter 1, Heraclitus said: "Homer deserved to be removed from the contest and flogged, and Archilochus as well" (*DK* 22B42; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 9.1.8–10). Heraclitus's war of words extended from Zeus to the commoner; no one was spared criticism, for that would relax the necessary tension for living in a way attentive to the underlying cosmic harmony.

In the polytheistic religio-political systems of Mesopotamia (750–539) and Presocratic Greece (750–440), the authority exerted by the divine world over the course of human events was not absolute, for Fate or the stars set limits to the ways that the gods could use their power.³⁵ In Israel, Yhwh's authority was

³⁰ Tandy, *Warriors into Traders*, 165, 181.

³¹ Cf. Crawford H. Greenewalt Jr., "Croesus of Sardis and the Lydian Kingdom of Anatolia," 1173–83, here 1173–74, 1181.

³² Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (trans. Peter Daniels; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002) 150; J. M. Cook, "The Eastern Greeks," 196–221, here 199, in *CAH* vol. 3, part 3.

³³ Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Artemis and Preliminary Sacrifice in Combat," 244–57, here 254–55, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (ed. Froma Zeitlin; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

³⁴ Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 6–9; see also Hermann Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jonanovich, 1962) 370; G. S. Kirk, ed., *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954) 8.

³⁵ Jack Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994) 7–16, 38–39; Giulia Sissa and Marcel Detienne, *The Daily Life of the Greek Gods* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 116; Leonard Mueller

absolute (Exod 20:1-3; Jer 10:6-10; cf. Isa 45:5-7). So when Ezekiel explained the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, he stated that the people of Judah and Jerusalem failed to acknowledge Yhwh's absolute sovereignty (Ezek 6:12-14; 7:15-16; 17:19-21). Ezekiel accused them of honoring nature deities and objects that they had fabricated (7:19-20). In recognizing these other deities, the people were splitting the divine will into multiple components—a way of conceiving the divine that had evolved over the centuries in the ancient Near East.³⁶ But such splitting of the divine will into multiple components was a move that Yhwh regarded as non-negotiable. Not only did the worship of idols dishonor Yhwh (6:9-10; 20:39; 43:7-8), it also distorted the way the Israelites related to one another. Ezekiel emphasizes on numerous occasions how idolatry gives rise to violence (Ezek 7:19-23; 8:17; 28:16).

In the monotheistic system promoted by Ezekiel, the relationship between Yhwh and the Israelites had to be able to absorb the contradictions and ambiguities of human experience. The trauma of the destruction of Jerusalem—the symbolic center of the kingdom of Judah—put intense pressure upon the Israelites' relationship with Yhwh. Within Yahwism, there was no room in the divine-human relationship to say that the stars or Fate had a part to play in this disaster. It was not another deity or demonic power that caused the destruction of Jerusalem. In this destructive act, it was not a god of war such as Erra who acted but rather Yhwh. Ezekiel emphasized this point repeatedly to promote fidelity to Yhwh alone among the exiles.³⁷

Fidelity to Yhwh alone would have been fostered through observance of the purity regulations and the round of sacrificial offerings. These ritual practices were designed to keep the sanctuary free from defilement by the chaotic forces associated with birth, death, and sexuality—these forces were dangerous because they could take on a quasi-divine status and compete with Yhwh. The priestly legislators, with whose traditions Ezekiel was intimately acquainted, refused to demonize these forces.³⁸ Rather they put forward a practical program by which to deal with them. So while genital bodily emissions per se were not sinful, they were defiling of the person and, most importantly, of the cult. Therefore, the contagion of genital emissions, lochial blood, and the human corpse needed to be contained. From the priestly point of view, if the Israelites did not address

(*The Anger of Achilles: Mēnis in Greek Epic* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996] 43–44) notes that there is an evolution in emphasis between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* from maintenance of the world system to following a moral code.

³⁶ For a description of development of the Mesopotamian pantheon, see W. G. Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods: Superstition, Philosophy, Theology," *RHR* 207 (1990) 115–30.

³⁷ John Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 52.

³⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 42–43.

these powerful natural forces in light of their relationship with Yhwh, then the Israelites would have to spend a disproportionate amount of time in combating them, time that would be better spent in the service of Yhwh.³⁹ The logic of this priestly system was to prevent the major forms of defilement by building a fence around these prohibitions: e.g., adultery, idolatry, murder.⁴⁰ The priests seem to have believed that through attention to naturally occurring genital emissions, an Israelite would be more apt to be on guard against temptations to adultery and other serious sexual sins (Lev 18:6-23). It was on account of these more serious offenses—especially idolatry and bloodshed (Ezek 8:6, 17; 9:9)—that Yhwh had to leave the temple and send the Judahites into exile (Ezek 22:1-12; 36:18-19; Lev 18:25).

The jealousy of Yhwh in the Book of Ezekiel is not mirrored in the ways that Erra and Zeus related to their people. Erra's fury toward Babylon is intense and may have brought greater destruction to Babylon than Yhwh's wrath brought to Jerusalem, for Erra repented of his excesses (V:5-15). By contrast, in the Book of Ezekiel, Yhwh repeatedly refused to have pity upon the Jerusalemites (Ezek 8:18; 9:10); instead, he drove home to them the fact that they deserved severe punishment. In the *Iliad*, Zeus seems somewhat detached from humans, even though he has his favorites. He hesitated in giving his assent to Thetis' request for a ten-year war to vindicate Achilles' honor (1.511-30). But in the course of the war, he shows little concern for human suffering (cf. 24:525-33). In contrast to both Erra and Zeus, Yhwh's attachment to the Israelites is pronounced; he reacts to the infidelity of his covenant partner with an intensity like that of a jealous lover (Ezekiel 16 and 23).⁴¹

Abandonment, Defilement, and Destruction of Sacred Space: A Preliminary Act of Purification

In the second part of Ezekiel's visionary journey through the Jerusalem temple, he heard Yhwh summoning seven men—six executioners and a priestly scribe—to take their place beside the bronze altar (9:1-2; cf. Exod 12:23; Isa 36:36; 2 Sam 24:15-17). Before Yhwh gave them instructions concerning the slaughter of the people of Jerusalem and the burning of the city, Ezekiel saw "the glory of the Lord" (*kābôd Yhwh*) rise up from the cherub (singular) to a position at the threshold of the temple (9:3). The *kābôd Yhwh* remained stationed at the threshold until the executioners and the priestly scribe had begun their work

³⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 43-45.

⁴⁰ David P. Wright, "The Spectrum of Priestly Impurities," 150-81, here 176-78, in *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel* (ed. Gary Anderson and Saul Olyan; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 35.

⁴¹ Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel* (SBLDS 130; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992) 37, 78-79.

(10:18). When the *kābôd Yhwh* moved off the threshold, it settled upon the cherubim (plural, 10:18). The cherubim were the living creatures that Ezekiel had seen in his inaugural vision (10:15). These creatures powered the divine chariot as it transported the *kābôd Yhwh* away from the temple (10:19). The next stopping place was the east gate of the temple. It appears that the singular cherub, corresponding to one of the two immobile sphinxlike images placed by the artisans in the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 6:23-35; 8:6-7), was left behind in the temple.⁴² The movement of the *kābôd Yhwh* from the visible cherub to the visionary cherubim signaled that Yhwh had not abdicated his throne, although that would appear to have been the case to those who could only see the immobile cherub of Solomon's temple.⁴³ At the end of the second heavenly vision in Ezek 11:22-23, the cherubim carried the *kābôd Yhwh* out of the city to the mountains east of the city. In Ezekiel's third heavenly vision (Ezekiel 40-48), the *kābôd Yhwh* returned to the new temple (43:4-5).

With the *kābôd Yhwh* at the threshold of the temple, the executioners were able to proceed with their slaughter and destruction, for the holiness of Yhwh could not come into contact with the impurity of death. Before the six executioners set out, Yhwh commanded the priestly scribe to place a mark on the foreheads of those "who sigh and groan over all the abominations" that have been committed in Jerusalem (9:4; cf. Gen 4:15; Exod 21:6).⁴⁴ But Yhwh reiterated his intention to show no pity (9:5). This elimination of the people of Jerusalem would be not simply a punishment for past transgressions but also a form of purification. For crimes that defiled the land (e.g., sacrificing children to Molech, Lev 20:4), the priestly legislators had prescribed the punishment of *kārēt*: one that "cuts off" (*kārat*) the transgressor from the land.⁴⁵ In the case of

⁴² On cherub figures in Phoenicia and Israel, see Christoph Uehlinger, "Anthropomorphic Deities Recede," 133-75, here 168, in Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst*, 322; Trygve N. D. Mettinger, "Israelite Aniconism: Developments and Origins" 173-204, here 186, 189, in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. Karel van der Toorn; Biblical Exegesis and Theology 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997); idem, *Dethronement of Sabaoth*, 21-24.

⁴³ John Strong, "God's Kabod: The Presence of Yahweh in the Book of Ezekiel," 69-95, here 73, in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* [eds. Margaret Odell and John Strong; SBLSymS 9; Atlanta: Scholars, 2000]. Block (*Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 320) claims that Ezekiel makes the connection between the "living creatures" of the inaugural vision and the cherubim of the inner sanctuary only when the action of the vision was inside the sanctuary itself.

⁴⁴ Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, 248) notes that it is striking that there no development of the notion of a remnant in the book of Ezekiel (cf. 5:3-4; 6:8-10; 12:16; 14:22-23); he speculates that the Zadokites in 44:15 would be such a group.

⁴⁵ D. J. Wold, "The Kareth Penalty in P: Rationale and Cases," 1-45, in *Society of Biblical Literature 1979 Seminar Papers* (vol. 1; ed. P. J. Achtemeier; Missoula, Mt.: Scholars, 1979).

sacrificing children to Molech, if the people of the land had not put the transgressors to death, then the priestly legislators contended that Yhwh would put to death both the transgressor and his family (Lev 20:4-5).⁴⁶ In Ezekiel 9, almost all of the people of Jerusalem were guilty—the only ones to be spared were those who had received the mark, a sign given to them because they had repented. Ezekiel fell prostrate and cried out to the Lord when he heard of the punishment decreed for Jerusalem. He feared that no one would survive (9:8).⁴⁷

In Ezekiel 9, Yhwh intended not only to kill the guilty but also to make clear that the temple was unfit for worship. So he instructed the executioners to kill those who were in the temple area and to fill its courts with the slain. Even accidental death in the sanctuary was defiling. This command to defile the temple (9:7) resembled the actions of Josiah against the altar at Bethel when he took bones from nearby tombs and burned them on the altar to defile it (2 Kgs 23:16). Corpse contamination was one of the most powerful contagions in the priestly system (cf. 39:11-16).⁴⁸ According to Ezekiel 44:25-27, a priest who was contaminated by a corpse must stay away from the sanctuary for two weeks, then must offer a *hattā't* sacrifice; in P, priests and laymen undergo the same ritual: contact with a human corpse required ablutions with the ashes of the Red Cow on the third and seventh days (Num 19:11-13) during which time one was not to enter the sanctuary. The touching of an animal carcass required one to remain outside the sanctuary until evening (Lev 11:39). In the account of Yhwh's striking down Nadab and Abihu for the use of unauthorized fire for their censers (Lev 10:1-2), the removal of their corpses led to the purification of the sanctuary. Until such purification occurred, the holy could not reside there; it was a desecrated space. Such was the Solomonic temple in Ezekiel 9 after the supernatural executioners had carried out their charge.

The next action decreed by Yhwh continued the destruction of the temple but also initiated the purification process of the temple and the city. The Lord enthroned above the cherubim instructed the priestly scribe to reach beneath the cherubim in the midst of the wheelwork (*galgal*) of the divine chariot and to bring forth burning coals that he was to scatter (*zāraq*) over the city.⁴⁹ The word "scatter" (*zāraq*) is a typical term used for sprinkling in purification ritu-

⁴⁶ George Heider ("Molech," DDD 585) identifies Molech as "a netherworld deity to whom children were offered by fire for some divinatory purpose."

⁴⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 309.

⁴⁸ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004) 38; cf. Baruch Levine, *Numbers 1–20* (New York: Doubleday, 1993) 457.

⁴⁹ Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 316–17) argues that the parallel of 10:9-22 with 1:6-21 show that Ezekiel has revisited his inaugural vision more than a year later and has made more concrete the abstract portions of the vision. Uehlinger and Trufaut ("Ezekiel 1, Babylonian Cosmological Scholarship and Iconography," 154–57) note that Keel associated *galgal* with rolling fire, coals, and lightning, but then propose on the basis of iconographical evidence that the wheel be associated with astral symbols.

als.⁵⁰ This action is retold a few verses later (10:7-8) with the intent of showing that one of the cherubs assisted the priestly scribe by reaching out with a hand to get the “fire” (i.e., the burning coals). This action by the cherub explains why the narrator described the cherubim as creatures with the form of a human hand under each of their wings (10:8; cf. 1:8).⁵¹ Fire is a powerful purifying agent: one that Ezekiel will refer to later as a means for the removal of the most recalcitrant filth (24:11-13). The purpose of the removal of idolaters from Jerusalem and the casting of fire over the city was not only to punish idolaters but also to begin to purify the temple area so that a new temple could eventually be built.⁵²

By this vision, Yhwh informed Ezekiel that his glory and sovereign rule were not tied to the temple in Jerusalem. Rather, Yhwh withdrew from the temple to reestablish his sovereignty over an Israelite community that had compromised its fidelity to him. Upon his withdrawal, he went to the exiles in Babylonia to be with them as a *miqdaš mē’āt*, “a little sanctuary” (11:16).⁵³ He revealed to Ezekiel in his third heavenly vision a plan of the temple that he intended to rebuild on the mountains of Israel (37:26-27; 40:1–48:35).

Mesopotamian texts claim that Marduk also abandoned his temple Esagila because he was angry with the way that the people of Babylon were treating him and one another. The following inscription of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680–669) illustrates this point in the justification that Esarhaddon gave for his father Sennacherib’s devastation of Babylonia:

At that time, during the reign of previous kings, there were evil powers in the land of Sumer and Akkad. The people who lived there repeatedly responded to one another “yes” and “no,” but they uttered lies. Vicious murderers beset their body [politic]. They strong-armed the poor and sent them to the powerful. In their cities there was oppression and corruption. Daily, without ceasing, they stole one another’s possessions. A son cursed his father in public. The male slave did not obey his master, and the female slave did not obey her mistress. The divine cultic ordinances were abandoned. . . . They ate what was forbidden. . . . They undermined the regular cultic routine and made plots. They carried in their hands the property of Esagila, the temple of the gods, the restricted place. Its silver, gold, and precious stones, they released to Elam as the price [necessary for military assistance].⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Block (*Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 322) claims that in the context of Ezekiel 9–10 *zāraq* refers to an act of judgment here rather than of purification.

⁵¹ Block, *Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 322.

⁵² Ka Leung Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel* (VTSup 87; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 157–58.

⁵³ Paul Joyce, “Dislocation and Adaptation in the Exilic Age and After,” 45–58, here 50, in *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason* (ed. J. Barton and David Reimer; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ See version B: “. . . they put in their hand and stole its property. They released the [property] of the temple to Elam as the price” in Riecke Borger, *Die Inschriften Assarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* (AfO B 9; Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1956) 12–13.

Marduk, the sovereign of the gods, became enraged. He made evil plans to overthrow the land and destroy its people (#11, episodes 2–5, lines 18b–37).⁵⁵

Esarhaddon was intent on restoring Babylonia. He laid the blame for the devastation of the land squarely upon the Babylonians.⁵⁶ Esarhaddon charged them with social crimes of breaking promises, exploiting the vulnerable, and lacking respect for elders and masters. But even more serious were their crimes against the gods through cultic transgressions: neglecting the prescribed rituals, eating what was taboo, and stealing property from the sanctuary. In the sacrilegious stealing of temple property, the Babylonians used it to secure military assistance from the Elamites in a rebellion against their Assyrian overlords.⁵⁷ The Babylonians had rebelled against Assyria in 694 and, with the assistance of their Elamite allies, had kidnapped and killed Sennacherib's son Assur-nadin-shumi, who had been placed on the throne of Babylon in 700. This incident angered Sennacherib and led to his vengeful destruction of Babylon in 689.⁵⁸ Sennacherib was held accountable for this sacrilegious destruction by Babylonians and Assyrians alike. The rhetoric of this inscription reveals how the Assyrian crown tried to divert guilt for this sacrilege away from Sennacherib and his heirs.⁵⁹

Esarhaddon reversed his father's policy toward Babylon and initiated an ambitious building program.⁶⁰ His typical explanation for such building activities can be summed up in his claim that he was trying to assuage the anger of Marduk. This explanation and a description of activities that reversed the cultic offenses of the Babylonians recounted in the inscription above are given in the prologue to a clay cylinder inscription celebrating the restoration of the Eanna temple of the goddess Ištar in Uruk.⁶¹ Esarhaddon described himself as:

. . . the one who remade the temple of Aššur; the one who reconstructed Esagila and Babylon, renovated Eanna, completed the chapels and cult centers, (and) rees-

⁵⁵ Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, 12–13.

⁵⁶ J. A. Brinkman, "Through a Glass Darkly: Esarhaddon's Retrospects on the Downfall of Babylon," 35–42, esp. 41, in *Studies in the Literature from the Ancient Near East by Members of the American Oriental Society Dedicated to Samuel Noah Kramer* (ed. Jack Sasson; AOS 65; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1984); Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* (OBO 104: Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1991) 203.

⁵⁷ A. K. Grayson, "Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC)," 103–41, here 134, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2: *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.* (ed. John Boardman et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁵⁸ Grayson, "Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC)," 107–8, 118; Steven Holloway, *Aššur Is King! Aššur Is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 353–56.

⁵⁹ Earl Leichty, "Esarhaddon," 949–58, here 950–51, in *CANE*.

⁶⁰ Grayson, "Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC)," 132.

⁶¹ Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 367–68.

established regular offerings; the king during the days of whose reign, the great lord, the god Marduk, became reconciled to Babylon and made his home in Esagila, his palace; the one who made Anu, the great god, enter into his city Der and his temple Edimgalkalama and had him take his place on an everlasting cult stand; the one who refurbished the finery of the great gods who had fled to Assyria, returned them from Assyria to their places, and reestablished their portions; the wise prince, the skilled one well-versed in every craft, who repeatedly restored what was fitting (*šimāti*) in the great cult centers (and) properly carried out purificatory rites (*šuluhḫa*). (RIMB2, B.6.31.15, lines 16–25)⁶²

Esarhaddon, as with Mesopotamian kings of the previous two millennia, proclaimed his accomplishments as a pious king who had been attentive to the sanctuaries of the gods. He honored the Babylonian gods by returning their cult images to their sanctuaries and reinstating the regular round of cultic activities.⁶³

The cultic statue of Marduk is not mentioned above in connection with Esagila because this statue was not returned to Babylon until 668—the first year of Assurbanipal's reign.⁶⁴ Grayson states that the return could not have occurred prior to this because the renovation of the Esagila shrine in Babylon was not finished. The *Akitu* festival, celebrated both in the spring and the fall in many Mesopotamian cities, was not able to be held in Babylon for more than twenty years because of the absence of the statue of Marduk.⁶⁵ With his restoration pro-

⁶² Edition: Grant Frame, *Rulers of Babylonia: From the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination (1157–612 BC)* (RIMB2; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) 183.

⁶³ Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 363–65. Thorkild Jacobsen (“The Graven Image,” 15–32, here 22, in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* [ed. P. D. Miller Jr., P. D. Hanson, S. D. McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987]) defines a cult statue as “a foreshadowing of and a stage in a divine presence, a theophany. . . . If he [the god] becomes angry and denies his presence to a community, he lets the cult statue of him be lost or transferred elsewhere.”

⁶⁴ John Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 90. Cf. Hayim Tadmor, Benno Landsberger, Simo Parpola, “The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib's Last Will,” *SAAB* 3 (1989) 3–51, here 47, 50; Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 369. There is a debate whether Sennacherib smashed the statue of Marduk along with other cult statues in 689 (see Angelika Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder: Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und de alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik* [OBO 162; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1998] 161).

⁶⁵ A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 35, 131; idem, “Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC),” 135; Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (ed. B. Foster; SBL Writings from the Ancient World 19; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004) 208–9. E. Jan Wilson (“Holiness” and “Purity” in Mesopotamia [AOAT 237; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker / Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1994] 17) notes with regard to the Sumerian KU₃, “pertaining/belonging to the realm of the divine,” that the sanctuary was still holy when the cult statue was absent.

gram, Esarhaddon prepared the way for the resumption of this foundational festival that celebrated Marduk's taking possession of the city of Babylon.⁶⁶ In this way, Esarhaddon portrayed himself and the preceding Assyrian kings as servants of Marduk and the great gods. Esarhaddon claimed that these Assyrian kings carried out the will of the gods by punishing the Babylonians for their cultic and social sins and by restoring the regular activities of the sanctuaries.⁶⁷ Among these rituals were "purification" rites (*šulubha*), which Mesopotamian kings regularly claimed to have implemented in order to maintain the separation between sacred and profane space.⁶⁸

The poem *Erra and Išum* in its designation of the Sebetti, "the Seven," provides a striking parallel to the seven agents of destruction and purification in Ezekiel 9. The Seven was the group of warrior gods that urged the warrior Erra into action and assisted him in battle (*Erra* I:23–91). They reflected the way of life of soldiers; they acted collectively rather than as individuals.⁶⁹ Anu had created them, assigned them their position and function, and commissioned them to serve Erra. The functions of each of the Seven are as follows: the first was to terrorize people more than anyone else; the second was to burn like fire; the third was to look like a lion and so to paralyze opponents with fear; the fourth was to undermine the confidence of the foe by fierce weapons; the fifth was to blast like the wind; the sixth was to wipe out everyone; and the seventh was to kill whatever lives (*Erra* I:30–43). The Seven, "the warriors without equal" (*Erra* I:23), roused Erra into action with the claim that "the wild and domestic animals despise us (*lēqú šēřūtu*)" (*Erra* I:77). In other words, the Seven claimed that the Babylonians did not sufficiently fear the destructive power of the gods. Because the role of the Seven was to be foremost in spreading terror, they did not believe they had fulfilled their duty unless the land under attack was paralyzed.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Grayson, "Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC)," 135; Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendar of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 404, 440.

⁶⁷ Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 368–70.

⁶⁸ CAD Š, part III, 260; Richard Henshaw (*Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel: The Bible and the Rest of the Ancient Near East* [Princeton Theological Monograph Series 31; Allison Park, Pa.: Pickwick, 1994] 67, #1.47.2) notes that the *šulubhu* originally was a ritual act of handwashing but then was extended to mean washing in general. E. Jan Wilson ("*Holiness*" and "*Purity*" in *Mesopotamia*, 36) notes that the *šulubhu* rites were a means of sanctifying people so that they might enter a sanctuary before a deity.

⁶⁹ Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* (OBO 104: Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1991) 104–5.

⁷⁰ On parallels with Aeschylus's *Seven against Thebes*, see Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992) 106–14; West, *The East Face of Helicon*, 456–57.

From a human perspective, the behavior of the Seven as described in the poem *Erra and Išum* is almost entirely negative.⁷¹ Their only redeeming feature from the Babylonians' perspective was that in the end they turned their fury toward Babylonia's traditional enemies on the south (the Sealand), the north (Assyria), the east (Elam, the Kassites, the Suteans, the Gutians), and the west (the Lullabaeans). Bodi pointed out how the expression *lêqû šêrûtu* ("to hold in contempt") is strategic (I:77, 120; IIID:15; IV:133) to the movement of the poem: lack of respect—i.e., humans' insufficient fear—was what moved Erra to act.⁷² Here Erra and the Seven claim that fear of consequences is necessary for humans if they are to take prohibitions seriously. Therefore, they devastated Babylon to create fear in humans for neglecting the gods and collapsing the distinction between gods and humans.

The temple was introduced into Greek society in the eighth century B.C.E.⁷³ The construction of temples increased dramatically in the seventh century and slowed at the end of the sixth century.⁷⁴ Prior to the seventh century, the altar was the symbolic center of the sanctuary and thus functioned as the focal point for communal gatherings.⁷⁵ The sanctuary (*temenos* from *temnein*, "to cut off") was separated from the profane world by a *peribolos*, "a surrounding wall."⁷⁶ From the eighth to the sixth centuries the center of the sanctuary, as Bergquist explains, shifted from the altar as the table on which the deity's portion was placed to the sanctuary itself as the place where the worshipers gathered to perform the sacrificial rites and then to the temple as the place that houses the cult statue.⁷⁷ This cultic statue was not only fed and clothed but was also cleansed on

⁷¹ Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 108.

⁷² Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 77.

⁷³ Walter Burkert, "Greek Poleis and Civic Cults: Some Further Thoughts," 205, in *Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1995); Kurt Raaflaub, "Homer to Solon: The Rise of the Polis: The Written Sources," 52, in *The Ancient Greek City-State: Symposium on the Occasion of the 250th Anniversary of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, July 1–4, 1992* (ed. M. H. Hansen; Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1993); François de Polignac, *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-State* (trans. J. Lloyd; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 8, 152–54; Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000) 273–74.

⁷⁴ R. A. Tomlinson, *Greek Sanctuaries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976) 22.

⁷⁵ Birgitta Bergquist, *The Archaic Greek Temenos: A Study of Structure and Function* (Skrifter Utg. Av Svenska insitutet in Athen. 4. 13; Lund: Gleerup, 1967) 122; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Early Sanctuaries, The Eighth Century and Ritual Space: Fragments of a Discourse," 1–17, here 10, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches* (ed. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg; London: Routledge, 1993).

⁷⁶ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 86; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space," 1–17, here 10, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*.

⁷⁷ Bergquist, *The Archaic Greek Temenos*, 119–22.

a regular basis. In Athens, the fall washing festival (the Plynteria) was the event in which women cleansed the wooden statue of Athena; another annual ritual was the procession of the young men (*epheboi*) carrying the Palladion image of Athena to the sea to immerse it.⁷⁸

A common understanding of the Olympian gods as the rulers of the Greek pantheon began to emerge with the regular performance of the Homeric epics. The diverse local myths and traditions associated with the various gods were incorporated into the epic narrative.⁷⁹ In Homer, the interaction between gods and humans was usually at a distance, yet the contact was direct rather than being an encounter mediated through cultic rituals and images (*Il.* 1.194–214; *Od.* 3.420).⁸⁰ Sacrificial ritual was an expected part of the slaughter of animals and was enacted by leaders within the community; it was not an exclusive prerogative of a priestly group (*Il.* 2.398–404; *Od.* 3.420).⁸¹ The failure to offer sacrifices dishonored a deity and incited his or her anger (*Od.* 3.5–9, 380–84, 418–63; 4:452–53, 472–79, 581–83).⁸² For example, when the Achaeans built a wall along the sea near Troy without consulting Poseidon or offering him sacrifice, he was determined to destroy the wall (*Il.* 7.446–53; cf. 12.15–34; 21.441–60). However, Zeus humored him for thinking that his status among the gods was affected in an appreciable way by the amount of honor that humans might give him. Anger might have been the reason that Athena abandoned Odysseus throughout his delayed return to Ithaca from the Trojan War (*Od.* 6.324–31). She may have perceived him as a rival in cunning schemes and so decided to leave him on his own to let him fend for himself.⁸³ On the other hand, as stated in *Od.* 13.341–43, she may have refrained from intervening out of respect for Poseidon's desire to punish Odysseus for blinding Poseidon's son, the Cyclop Polyphemus.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 79.

⁷⁹ Richard Buxton, *Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Mythology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994) 96, 204, 213; Gregory Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996) 130–31.

⁸⁰ Bernard Dietrich, "From Knossos to Homer," 1–13, here 8, in *What Is a God? Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity* (ed. Alan Lloyd; London: Duckworth, 1997).

⁸¹ On the polis' oversight of sacrifice and the absence of a priestly elite in archaic and classical Athens, see Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 125–27.

⁸² Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter*, 16; Richard Buxton, *Imaginary Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1994) 150; J.-P. Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*, 35, 280; Erwin Cook, *The Odyssey in Athens: Myths of Cultural Origins* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 119.

⁸³ Jenny Strauss Clay, *The Wrath of Athena* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) 205, 209; Mueller, *The Anger of Achilles*, 8–15.

⁸⁴ Karl Reinhardt, "The Adventures in the Odyssey," 87, in *Reading the Odyssey: Selected Interpretive Essays* (ed. Seth Schein; Princeton: Princeton University, 1996); Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Atlantic Heights, N.J.: Humanities, 1980) 103.

Homer left his audience with questions about whether or not the gods were angry when a human felt abandoned or troubled.

Collective responsibility was a widely acknowledged reality in the city-states of the Archaic Age.⁸⁵ The opening scene of the *Iliad* speaks of the plague afflicting the Achaean forces. The seer Chalcas claimed that the plague was sent by Apollo because the daughter of Apollo's priest Chryses had been taken captive in an Achaean raid (*Il.* 1.9–10) and Chryses' request for her return had been arrogantly denied by Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.11, 24–32). Because Agamemnon was the ruling king of the Achaean coalition, his actions, whether willed by himself alone or in collaboration with his advisers, had an impact on the whole Achaean force. But even beyond the bond between the ruler and the ruled, there was a sense in Archaic Greece that transgressions against the gods carried ill consequences for the whole group, and not just for the individual transgressor. Thus, in making reparation for the treatment of Chryses and his daughter, it was necessary for the Achaeans not only to restore the daughter of Chryses to her father but also to offer sacrifices to Apollo (*Il.* 1.436–74).

The space of a polis was demarcated by its civic center and its territory. The cohesion of the polis would be maintained by the centripetal force of the center and by processes at the periphery.⁸⁶ Prior to the eighth century, sacrifices at the local sanctuary may have had the character of occasional gatherings rather than of a continuous cult and would have created the space for other forms of exchange and competition.⁸⁷ Sanctuaries formed outside the city at the boundary of the polis' territory were places at which struggles over land ownership were worked out and at which marriages, trade arrangements, festivals, and games occurred. These rural sanctuaries promoted interaction with a city's neighboring territories as well as with the sanctuaries of the civic center. This bipolar form of religious unity was operative in every polis except Athens, where the aristocrats

⁸⁵ Robert Parker (*Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983] 257) notes that every religious danger was regarded as contagious such that "every member of any community . . . in principle lived under the threat of suffering for his neighbor's offences." Carol Dougherty ("It's Murder to Found a Colony," 178–98, here 181, in *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics* [ed. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993]) discusses the city's duty to purge the contamination of murder from its midst.

⁸⁶ Catherine Morgan, *Athletes and Oracles: The Transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the Eighth Century B.C.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 4.

⁸⁷ François de Polignac, "Mediation, Competition, and Sovereignty: The Evolution of Rural Sanctuaries in Geometric Greece," 3–18, here 10, in *Placing the Gods* (ed. Susan Alcock and Robin Osborne; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994). However, Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood ("Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space," 1–17, here 5, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*) rejects the position that there was religious indeterminacy (i.e., only occasional gatherings) in the sanctuaries of the Geometric Age (900–700), which were centered around the altar.

maintained their exclusiveness from 700–500.⁸⁸ Processions to the outer sanctuary included the entire population and thus helped to create a sense of belonging and identity as a polis community.⁸⁹ Extraterritorial sanctuaries, such as those at Delphi and Olympia, provided the place for aristocrats of greater Greece to meet, compete with one another, and establish their elite status.⁹⁰ This competition occurred with a set of activities that forged a larger sense of identity. This partnership among aristocrats and between aristocrats and commoners gave rise to the polis structure.⁹¹

The sanctuary (*temenos*) created not simply physical space through its architecture and landscape but also cultural space through its symbols and rituals. To demarcate the sacred from the profane, potent substances associated with sex, birth, and death were, as a general rule, to be kept from the Greek sanctuary—even though there were a few exceptions (e.g., the sacred marriage ritual of the Dionysian Anthesteria festival in Athens and perhaps Dionysian initiation rites).⁹² Killing someone in a sanctuary was regarded as an affront to the gods.⁹³ The regulations regarding sexuality varied according to cult and occasion (e.g., the Thesmophoria festival excluded men and had an ethos against sexuality; the priest in the Heracles cult at Phocis was obliged to observe a year of celibacy; the women who tended the lamp of Athena were of an age at which they were expected to be finished with sex).⁹⁴ A woman was secluded in the first forty days of her pregnancy for her own protection; thereafter, she was encouraged to visit the sanctuary.⁹⁵ There were no regulations regarding menstruation in Archaic Greek cults.⁹⁶ The pollution attributed to the corpse was intended to assist the relatives to provide space for them to carry out their mourning rather than to indicate that there was a contagion that needed to be contained. Parker concludes that the real barrier erected by pollution rules was not between one human and another, but rather between humans and gods.⁹⁷

⁸⁸ De Polignac, “Mediation, Competition, and Sovereignty,” 3–18, here 9–10, in *Placing the Gods*; Joseph Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea in Solon’s Political Poems* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 140–44, 169.

⁸⁹ Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea*, 140.

⁹⁰ Morgan, *Athletes and Oracles*, 19, 45–46; Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History*, 278.

⁹¹ Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea*, 148–51; Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History*, 111; idem, “Poetics of Power: The Interpretation of Ritual Action in Archaic Greece,” 15–45, here 35, in *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics* (ed. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁹² Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 108–9.

⁹³ Parker, *Miasma*, 273.

⁹⁴ Parker, *Miasma*, 81, 84, 88.

⁹⁵ Parker, *Miasma*, 48–49.

⁹⁶ Parker, *Miasma*, 101–2.

⁹⁷ Parker, *Miasma*, 66.

At the opening of the *Odyssey*, Zeus lamented that humans blame their troubles on the gods. He contended to the contrary that humans were the source of their own troubles (1.32–34). This rational approach to the understanding of the dynamics of history was continued by Ionian thinkers who explained the order of the world by first observing it and then by theorizing about the forces inherent in the materials or behind their appearances.⁹⁸ With the open-ended questioning about divine justice triggered by the Homeric narratives and the continuing existence of local cults to multiple deities, the individual in Archaic Greece would seem to have been more aware of chance. One response was for individuals to deal with this greater measure of uncertainty by paying attention to multiple deities. Parker notes that in trying to understand where disease came from, individuals in Archaic Greece had four attitudes: (1) they expected that the natural order would follow moral principles; (2) they believed that there should be automatic sanctions against those who would ignore the distinction between gods and humans; (3) they accepted events as fated; and (4) they were discouraged when they perceived the cosmos as unjust.⁹⁹ The increasing sphere of individual freedom for all classes in the polis carried with it a heightened sense of human vulnerability.¹⁰⁰ Thus the transition from the Archaic to the Classical Age in the fifth century shows that Greek religion was becoming a religion of lustrations and ceremonial purifications in which purity was of greater concern than justice.¹⁰¹

The destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Babylonian king Nebuchadrezzar, the devastation of Babylon by the Assyrian king Sennacherib, and the unrest within the emerging Greek city-states bordering the Persian empire were anxiety-producing situations that called for explanations about who was in charge of these events. Ezekiel made it clear that Yhwh was not engulfed in the flames of the temple but, to the contrary, was the one who ordered the death of Jerusalemites and the burning of the defiled temple and city. Yhwh was the sovereign to whom only the repentant Israelites could turn for help. The Assyrian inscriptions of Esarhaddon that sought reconciliation with the Babylonians drew upon the traditional explanation for disaster in Babylonia as articulated in

⁹⁸ Guthrie, "Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans," 1.146–340, here 1.196, in *HGP*.

⁹⁹ Parker, *Miasma*, 256.

¹⁰⁰ See for example the slave trade reflected in Homer's *Odyssey* with regard to Eumaeus (*Od.* 17.320–24) and Irus (*Od.* 18.112–16). Cf. Ian Morris, "An Archaeology of Equalities? The Greek City-States," 91–105, here 96, 102–3, in *The Archaeology of City-States: Cross-Cultural Approaches* (ed. Deborah L. Nichols and Thomas H. Charlton; Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997). David Small ("City-State Dynamics through a Greek Lens," 107–18, esp. 110–12, in *The Archaeology of City-States*) argues that elite households formed regional economic networks that gave them power independent of city-states and claims that aristocratic families took steps to prioritize the family over the city-state community.

¹⁰¹ Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, 305.

the poem *Erra and Išum* that Marduk was angry with the Babylonians and abandoned their city. But the poem *Erra and Išum* attributes the extensiveness of the destruction to the ruse of Erra. Here the divine realm is more unpredictable than in the world of Ezekiel. The gods may vie with one another in manifesting their reality that then results in increased human suffering. But in the Mesopotamian world humans were charged with neglecting to honor Marduk and Erra. The same expectation that humans honor the gods is evident in the world of Archaic Greece. The Homeric gods had their favorite cities (*Il.* 4.30-67; 21:441-60) and expected the humans residing there to honor them through sacrifice and other means. The increased attention to cultic statues and the temples that housed them in the seventh to the fifth centuries showed that the citizens were concerned about paying attention to the gods. They could not rest with exclusive fidelity to one god but had to honor as many as possible in order to reduce the possibility of catastrophe sent by an offended god.¹⁰² While these sanctuaries were dedicated to particular gods, they also served as social settings in which political, social, and economic relationships were forged through religious rituals, athletics, and other competitive activities.

Purging Defilement from Community and Cosmos by Fire: A Creative or Destructive Process?

In Ezekiel 11:1-2, the spirit lifted Ezekiel and carried him to the east gate of the temple where he saw twenty-five Jerusalemites assembled. Yhwh, as Ezekiel's temple guide, informed him that these men were devising evil plots and saying: "The time is not near to build houses; she (i.e., the city) is the cauldron, and we are the meat." This quotation sets the stage for the following disputation (11:5-12) in which the Spirit of the Lord directed Ezekiel to engage. These men were accused of killing many in Jerusalem: perhaps they had murdered their opponents and had developed plans that drew many into battles where they lost their lives. In this visionary setting in Ezekiel 11, Yhwh ordered Ezekiel to deliver a counterpoint to the interpretation of the cauldron promoted by these men. They believed the cauldron was a metaphor for Jerusalem's fortifications, which would protect them from the Babylonian army. Ezekiel countered that these fortifications would not protect them, for Yhwh would remove the men from the cauldron (i.e., Jerusalem), hand them over to foreigners to be slain, and enter into judgment at the border with those who survived (11:11; cf. 20:35-38). Yhwh made clear that he was the one who was acting through the Babylonian army to bring judgment against the people of Jerusalem (11:8-11).

The image of Yhwh removing the people of Jerusalem from the cauldron and leaving only the slain within it finds an echo in the "allegory (*māšāl*) of the

¹⁰² Burkert (*Greek Religion*, 216) notes that "however much a god is intent on his honour, he never disputes the existence of any other god."

boiling cauldron” in Ezekiel 24:1-14.¹⁰³ According to this passage—dated to a revelation on January 5, 588 B.C.E., the day of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem¹⁰⁴—the “meat” (i.e., the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 24:6, cf. 11:3, 7, 9, 11) would be removed from the cauldron “piece by piece” (24:6). However, a few verses later, there was meat in the cauldron again that was to be cooked to the point at which its bones were scorched (24:10). It is not clear either how this meat was returned to the cauldron or to whom this meat refers. Two identifications of the meat are possible: (a) If the meat in 24:6 had been placed back in the cauldron in 24:10, then it was all the inhabitants of Jerusalem who would be cooked like sacrificial meat. (b) If the meat in 24:6 was interpreted in light of 11:7, then the meat referred only to those who had been slain in the city of Jerusalem: i.e., either by murders committed by the Jerusalemites themselves or by the killing carried out by the invading Babylonian army. All those who did not die were to be taken into the wilderness for judgment. If the slain had been lying there as corpses for a time, then the purging of the cauldron would have been a means of removing corpse contamination. But if those who were killed were immediately placed in the cauldron, then the action would have borne a closer resemblance to sacrificial slaughter.

According to Ezekiel 46:20, the meat in reparation and purification offerings for the individual Israelite—not the high priest or the community as a whole—was to be boiled. The boiling of the animal offering was not a ritual direction in the priestly legislation of Leviticus 4–5 and 7. Because the reparation and purification offerings were to be boiled in Ezekiel 46:20, the boiling in 24:11 seems to be an allusion to a purification (*ḥattāʾt*) offering, even though the action of boiling the meat in 24:1-14 is not explicitly labeled a *ḥattāʾt*.¹⁰⁵ This boiling action was to be so intense that it would consume the meat, which is an outcome equivalent to burning the meat. Thus, the action described seems to combine the boiling action of the individual *ḥattāʾt* with the outcome of the burning action of the *ḥattāʾt* for the high priest and the community. The purification required for Jerusalem was not one that would only expiate certain offenses but one that would take away the sins of the high priest and the whole community, including high-handed sins (cf. Lev 4:3-21; 16:2-28). Once the meat had been boiled away, the cauldron itself had to be further purified, which indicates that the contamination caused by the sacrifice itself had to be removed (Ezek 24:11-13)—a step

¹⁰³ Guiseppe Bettenzoli, *Geist der Heiligkeit: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des QDŠ-Begriffes im Buch Ezechiel* (Quaderni di Semististica 8; Firenze: Università de Firenze, 1979) 107–9.

¹⁰⁴ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 773–74.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Marvin Sweeney, “Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile,” 728–51, here 732, 742, in *SBLSP 2000* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); Harland, “A Land Full of Violence,” 113–27, here 121.

usually taken by removing the sacrificial meat to a clean place outside the camp (Lev 4:12, 21).¹⁰⁶

Another action fundamental to the purificatory sacrifice for the high priest and the community was the placement of the blood of the victim before the Lord by sprinkling the curtain with it seven times (Lev 4:6). In Ezekiel 24:7, the blood of the meat that had been placed in the cauldron was to be removed and placed before the Lord. Such blood had not been properly disposed of. The primary reference here was to animal blood as indicated by the expectation that it should have been poured into the ground (24:7), but there may also be an allusion to the blood of humans murdered in the city or killed in war. This blood would incite the wrath of Yhwh rather than functioning as a kind of “magical substance” that would pacify his anger. This blood appeals to the justice of Yhwh, for reconciliation can only come about through acknowledgment of sin and removal of its impurity.¹⁰⁷ The boiling of the meat signifies both punishment of the Jerusalemites and a step toward the purification of the land.

The boiling action was only to be the first stage of the purification process according to the allegory of the boiling cauldron. In Ezekiel 43:21, the bull of the sin offering for the purification and consecration of the altar is to be taken to be burned in a “designated place” (*mipqād*), which is outside the inner court but still within the temple area designated for the priests. Once it is burned, the contamination has ceased. So if the meat in the cauldron has been boiled away to a residue, it is this contaminating residue that must be purged through an intense fire that makes the copper of the cauldron glow (Ezek 24:11-12). In this way, the fire of Yhwh’s wrath would have to burn against Jerusalem until its “filthy impurity” (*bētum’ātēk zimmā*, v. 13)¹⁰⁸ was purged (Ezek 24:11-13).

In Mesopotamia, temple restoration was an age-old duty of an upright king. Nebuchadrezzar II (604–562) proclaims in one of his inscriptions how he has restored Esagila, the temple of Marduk, in the following terms:

I provided maintenance for Esagila, the palace of his sovereignty. I made Ekua, the chapel of Marduk, the sovereign of the gods, bright (*ušanbīt*) like the sun. I coated the dwelling place of the temple with shining gold instead of its plaster, with lapis lazuli and marble instead of bitumen paint and gypsum.” (VAB 4 124 [Nbk 15 = Stein Tafel X] ii 40–50)¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 262–63.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005) 280–84.

¹⁰⁸ Literally, “your impurity, lewdness.” Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 768 n. 30) identifies the construction as a substantive (*tum’ātēk*) followed by an epexegetical substantive (*zimmā*); cf. *GKC* 131r.

¹⁰⁹ Text: H. Winckler, E. Böhden, eds., *Altbabylonische Keilschrifttexte zum Gebrauch bei Vorlesung* (Leipzig, 1892) no. 78, p. 33. Edition: Stephen Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912) 124–25.

This action of making the sanctuary resplendent is described with the same term (*nabātu*) that Kabti-ilāni-Marduk used in the poem *Erra and Išum* to describe how the statue of Marduk should look: “They made its jewelry glisten (*ušanbiṭ ū*), but now it is worse than before” (*Erra* IIB:21; cf. II:23, 30; I:141, 157).¹¹⁰ When Marduk’s statue was in proper order, its shining brilliance communicated its purity (*ellu*).¹¹¹ As Nebuchadrezzar undertook the renovation of the ziggurat Etemenanki, he noted the rites of purification that his father Nabopolassar had already carried out: “He purified it (*ullil*) through the technique of exorcism according to the wisdom of Ea and Marduk” (VAB 4 146 [*Nbk* 17 = Zyl. IV, 1] i 47–49).¹¹²

As the ancient Mesopotamian city-laments (e.g., *Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, *Lament of Nippur*) show, the rebuilding of a worn or destroyed temple was regarded as a dangerous task.¹¹³ The god who owned the shrine must grant permission for the rebuilding; any clearing of the foundations for the purpose of rebuilding might be interpreted as an attack on an already fragile structure.¹¹⁴ In a text that seems to be a ritual commentary associated with the *mīs pî / pīt pî* rituals, there is a description of the distress that accompanied the refurbishing of a cult statue:

If the work of the god weakened and suffered damage, to the place of restoration, for which his heart longs, by the command of Šamaš, Adad, and Marduk, in a wholesome month on a favorable date during the night, when the foot holds back from in front of Ea . . . you shall cloak him; when you have gone out, you shall kindle brushwood (and) make intercession. You shall lift that god from his pedestal, and the lamentation-priest (*kalû*) shall uncover his head; he shall beat his breast and utter ‘Alas!’” (TuL27, ll. 1–8)¹¹⁵

The situation surrounding this dilapidated statue called for cautious, mournful behavior such as that which was to accompany kings in their rebuilding projects.

¹¹⁰ Cagni, *L’Epopée de Erra*, 84; CAD N, part 1, 23B; cf. Foster, *Before the Muses*, 2.783.

¹¹¹ Wilson (“Holiness” and “Purity” in *Mesopotamia*, 67, 87) claims that the Akkadian term *ellu* refers primarily to purity and only secondarily to holiness. He contends that the Mesopotamians understood holiness to be an aspect of reality that can only be given by a divinity, whereas the maintenance of purity was one in which humans had a key role to play. See also Philip P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness* (JSOTSup 106; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) 47–48.

¹¹² Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*, 146.

¹¹³ Thorkild Jacobsen, “Lament for Ur,” 447, in *The Harps That Once . . . : Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); William W. Hallo, “Lamentations and Prayers in Sumer and Akkad,” 1872, in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (ed. J. Sasson; New York: Scribners & Sons, 1995).

¹¹⁴ Cf. Piotr Michalowski, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989) 8–9; Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 62, 65, 68.

¹¹⁵ Edition: Christopher Walker and Michael Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mīs Pî Ritual* (SAA 1; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), 230–31.

The *kalû* priest, the usual cultic official for refurbishing projects, led a ritual that extended over two days: day one—the mouth-washing (*mīs pî*) purified the object; day two—the mouth-opening (*pīt pî*) vivified the statue. When it was a new statue, the priest was usually an *ašīpu*, “exorcist”; when an oracle gave directions for the restoration, the priest was a *bārû*, “diviner.”¹¹⁶ Incantations occupied a prominent place in these rituals dedicated to transferring statues or objects from the profane sphere to that of the sacred.¹¹⁷

The task of building and maintaining temples was the royal accomplishment celebrated most frequently in the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions.¹¹⁸ The king mirrored the actions of Marduk when he provided for the various sanctuaries throughout the land. In the *Enūma Eliš*, when the assembly of the gods acknowledged Marduk’s victory over Tīamat and her forces, Anšar bestowed the name Asarluhi upon Marduk and commissioned him to take care of the various material needs of the gods in the land, with the assistance of the Mesopotamians (VI:95–120). When Nebuchadrezzar claimed that he had made the face of a god shine, he believed that he, the earthly king, had acted as an agent of Marduk, the heavenly king, in carrying out his role as king of the gods (VAB 4 142-43 [Nbk 10 = Zyl. II, 4] i 14–33).¹¹⁹ At the conclusion of the *Enūma Eliš*, when Anu began the list of the fifty names of Marduk, he noted that humans were created to serve the gods and free them from their burdens (VI:130–31). Anu further proclaimed to the assembled gods concerning the champion Marduk: “Creation, annihilation, forgiveness, punishment: Each shall be at his command, these shall look upon him” (VI:132–33). In their immediate context, these words of Anu make the point that humans must pay attention to Marduk; as sovereign, he has power over their existence and they need to assist him in keeping the sanctuaries of the land in good order (i.e., pure). When the sanctuaries diminish in their glory, it is equivalent to an erosion of the boundaries between the pure and impure, a step that in turn leads to a blurring of the distinction between the divine and the human.

The defilement of a god or a sanctuary manifests itself as a loss of luminosity or radiance.¹²⁰ In the poem *Erra and Išum*, Marduk recalled in former times

¹¹⁶ Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder*, 187; Walker and Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image*, 16; Jacobsen, “The Graven Image,” 15–32, here 23–28, in *Ancient Israelite Religion*.

¹¹⁷ Walker and Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image*, 29–30. Wilson (“Holiness” and “Purity” in Mesopotamia, 95) argues that cultic purity (*ellu*) referred to a sphere free from demonic influence, whereas purity in profane or everyday life (*ebbu*) as noncultic purity was a sphere free from pollutants.

¹¹⁸ Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*; Paul-Richard Berger, *Die neubabylonische Königsinschriften: Königsinschriften des ausgehenden babylonischen Reiches (626–539 a. Chr.)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973) 103–10.

¹¹⁹ Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*, 142–43.

¹²⁰ Girra manifested both the constructive and destructive aspects of fire (see Black,

when his statue had to be refurbished that he had called upon the god Girra to cleanse his features and his apparel (I:141). Girra, the son of Anu, was the god of fire and light. In the descriptions of Marduk's statue in the *Enūma Eliš*, Marduk is described as one who "when he moves his lips, fire flames forth (*girra*)" (I:96). Also Gibil (Girra) is listed as one of the fifty names of Marduk in *EE* VII:115. Girra was the patron of metalworkers: a craft from which images of purification were readily drawn (cf. K.44, Rs. 16–18; Ezek 22:17–22).¹²¹ The intense fire of the foundry used for separating metals would provide a graphic image of how the most engrained impurities could be removed. Along with Ea and Šamaš, Girra was appealed to by exorcists. With the exorcistic series of texts known as the *Maqlû* ("burning"), Girra, identified with his father Nusku,¹²² was asked to burn sorcerers and witches.¹²³ Girra was also called upon in a related set of exorcistic texts known as *Šurpu* ("burning"), which dealt with situations in which a person had no idea what the source of the evil was that was threatening him or her.¹²⁴ The purificatory and transformative power of fire is recurrent in the *Maqlû* and *Šurpu* rituals, which burned objects symbolizing demonic influences (e.g., *Maqlû* I:135–43; V:118–38, 139–48).

On the second day of the twelve-day Babylonian New Year festival celebrated in Nisannu (March/April), craftsmen were given gold and precious stones from the treasury of Marduk along with cedar and tamarisk wood. On that same day, the carpenters and smiths fashioned figurines that were to be kept in the chapel of the god Madānu and fed bran. On the sixth day, when the god Nabû (i.e., his statue) arrived from the temple Ehursagtila in Borsippa, a butcher was to cut off the heads of the figures and burn them in front of Nabû. Other purificatory rituals on the second day of the New Year celebration—such as the slaughtering of a ram that was then taken around the chapel of Nabû to absorb any impurities present there—were employed to remove any evil forces that would impede Nabû and his father Marduk from exercising their rule over Babylonia in the upcoming year. Also on the sixth day, all the other

Green, "Girra," 88, in *GDS*. Abusch ("An Early Form of the Witchcraft Ritual *Maqlû* and the Origin of a Babylonian Magical Ceremony," 1–57, here 21, in *Lingering Over Words* [ed. T. Abusch et al.; HSS 37; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990]) identifies Girra in magic ritual as "a hypostatization of the burning rays of the sun." Išum ("fire"), Erra's partner in the poem *Erra and Išum*, was associated with the "scorched earth," but is portrayed here as the good vizier who is concerned about Babylon, see Cagni, *The Poem of Erra*, 16–18; J. J. M. Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon*, 40–41.

¹²¹ R. Frankena, "Girra und Gibil," *RLA* (1957–1971): 383–85, here 384.

¹²² Abusch ("An Early Form of the Witchcraft Ritual *Maqlû* and the Origin of a Babylonian Magical Ceremony," 1–57, here 17, in *Lingering Over Words*) identifies Nusku in magic ritual as "a protective night light" who protects the sleeping household against intruders and evil dreams.

¹²³ Black, Green, "Nusku," 145, in *GDS*.

¹²⁴ Frankena, "Girra und Gibil," 383–85.

gods' statues from the surrounding towns arrived in Babylon.¹²⁵ On the eighth or ninth day of Nisannu, there was a grand procession from Esagila to the *Akitu* house outside the city.¹²⁶ In this grand procession, all the gods of the land who had come to Babylon for their annual visit would process with priests, royalty, singers, musicians, and dancers.¹²⁷ This public spectacle aimed to renew the commitment of the people to the rule of Marduk and the way of life mediated to them through the temple priesthood and the royal establishment. The most important part of this ritual was the reentry of Marduk from the *Akitu* house into the city to resume his rule for the next year: this action commemorated his initial rise to power over the city. The procession made the statement that the beginning was the greatest and needed to be maintained.¹²⁸ The elaborate rituals of purification prior to the procession manifested a serious concern among the Mesopotamians about hostile spiritual forces.

In the ancient Greek world, Hephaestus, the subterranean fire-god, served as the patron of smiths.¹²⁹ In the *Iliad*, he fashioned the shield of Achilles (18.468–613); in the *Odyssey*, Hephaestus created a set of metal fasteners that trapped Ares in the act of adultery with Hephaestus' wife Aphrodite (8:266–300). After Achilles had made the Trojan forces retreat on the plain in front of the city of Troy, the divine river Xanthos pursued Achilles and would have killed him if Hera had not intervened by sending Hephaestus to defend Achilles:

Thus she [Hera] spoke, and Hephaestus prepared a devouring fire. First, a fire was started on the plain, and it began to burn the many dead that were there in abundance, those whom Achilles had killed. The whole plain was dried up. The bright water was held back. As when the north wind in late summer quickly dries up a newly watered garden and cheers up whoever tills it, so was the whole plain

¹²⁵ J. A. Black, "The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: 'Taking Bel by the Hand' and a Cultic Picnic," *Religion* 11 (1981) 39–59, here 45. Beate Pongratz-Leisten (*Ina Šulmi Irub: Die kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der akītu-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* [Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994] 11) notes how the New Year's festival in Babylon aimed to unify the various cult cities of Babylonia, which was not the case in Assyria.

¹²⁶ Cohen (*The Cultic Calendar of the Ancient Near East*, 440) explains that days eight to eleven in the Babylonian *Akitu* in the month of Nisannu (March/April) probably constitute a second *Akitu* festival; the first seven days were an *Akitu* with a focus on Nabû and were structured similarly to the *Akitu* for Anu in Uruk in the month of Nisannu. Pongratz-Leisten (*Ina Šulmi Irub*, 39) notes that NA ritual texts place the king at the center of the New Year's procession; Aššur did not travel all the stages of the procession as did Marduk and Anu.

¹²⁷ Jule Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2002) 94–96; Cohen, *The Cultic Calendar of the Ancient Near East*, 404, 450–51; Bill Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 83.

¹²⁸ VAB 4, 126–28; B. Pongratz-Leisten, "Neujahrfest B. Nach akkadischen Quellen," 294–98 in *RLA* 9 (1998–2001).

¹²⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 167–68.

dried up. Hephaestus consumed the corpses on it. But then he turned his gleaming flame toward the river. The elms, the willows, and the tamarisks were consumed as well as the clover, the rushes, and the galingale that grew abundantly by the beautiful streams of the river. (*Il.* 21:342–52)

Hephaestus not only defeated the river Xanthos, he also purified the field of battle by cremating the war dead.

The later description of the cremation of Patroclus relates not only how Achilles honored his friend Patroclus with an elaborate ritual but also how he expressed his aggression and desire for vengeance. Achilles' sacrifice of twelve noble Trojans on the funeral pyre (*Il.* 23.175–77) revealed the deep rage that still boiled within him. When death invaded a family or a close circle of friends in Archaic Greece, the people believed that it defiled the family. This defilement made the metaphysical dimension of human relationships tangible.¹³⁰ The emotional burden of this defilement, if borne only by the family and immediate friends, could give way to aggression, particularly when the deceased was murdered by a member of another family in the city.¹³¹ In the case of Patroclus, Achilles did not treat his death merely as that of a warrior but rather as that of a close friend that needed to be avenged (*Il.* 16.278–83; 23.243; *Od.* 24:76–77).¹³² Part of this vengeance involved burning representative Trojans on Patroclus' funeral pyre.

In the first decade of the sixth century B.C.E. in Athens, Solon promoted funeral legislation that shifted the funeral ritual from a private to a civic setting.¹³³ This legislation permitted only those women who were older than sixty years of age or who were closely related to the deceased person to participate in the carrying out of the corpse and the lamentations. Solon was also instrumental in changing the festival of *Genesia* (Bedromian 5 = September) from an exclusively aristocratic event celebrated on days of the upper class's own choosing to a public event on a date set by the city to which all citizens were invited. Solon's goal in these legislative reforms was to shift the loyalties of the people from the family to the city.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Parker, *Miasma*, 19–20, 294.

¹³¹ Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 83, 87; William Blake Tyrrell and Larry J. Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998) 14–17.

¹³² Muellner, *The Anger of Achilles*, 135–36, 160.

¹³³ Catherine Morgan, "The Origins of Pan-Hellenism," 18–44, here 26, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*.

¹³⁴ Sarah I. Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) xxi, 329; cf. Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History*, 124, 162.

The fire of the funeral pyre was both destructive and purifying. This ambivalence of fire carried over into everyday life.¹³⁵ According to Hippolytus (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.7.2–3), Heraclitus said that “with regard to all things, the suddenly approaching fire will choose and seize for itself” (*DK* 22B66). This discernment abides by the cosmic law in its purifying and destructive approach to all things: “All things are a repayment to fire, and fire is a repayment to all things, just as useful things are for gold and gold for useful things” (*DK* 22B90, Plutarch, *On the E at Delphi* 388e). Here Heraclitus speaks of a cosmic cycle in which all things emerge from fire and return to fire. Kahn pictures this cycle of fire as occurring not only in a primeval era but in ongoing processes of the cosmos.¹³⁶ The return to fire or destruction is observable; the first movement of emerging from fire is not. Fire is the gold standard in this cosmic exchange. In the cosmic economy in which everything changes into fire and emerges from fire on a cyclical basis—like the unity of day and night—fire is the currency of the invisible law that keeps the conflicted reality of the cosmos intact.¹³⁷ The agency of this fire is dramatized in the symbol of the thunderbolt in which the governing capacity of fire is emphasized: the “thunderbolt guides everything” (*DK* 22B64; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.7.4–5). This cosmic fire that pervades and governs all things is a rarefied physical reality, which the Stoics identified as *pneuma*, “breath” and *pyr noeron*, “rational fire.”¹³⁸ If the cosmos is “a living fire” (*DK* 22B30; Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.104.2), Heraclitus may have regarded a portion of such fire as exercising governance.¹³⁹

Almost a century prior to Heraclitus, Solon (ca. 594) had promoted in the life of the polis the search for the “hidden measure” that would curb the excesses associated with the accumulation of money (4.5–8, 17–25).¹⁴⁰ Such greed made the polis more vulnerable to the rule of a tyrant, for it fragmented the community to the point that its viability depended on a strong central authority (36.18–22).¹⁴¹ For Heraclitus, this “hidden measure” was the tensive reality of the

¹³⁵ Cf. Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History*, 291.

¹³⁶ Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 145–47; however, Kirk, ed. (*Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 307–8, 312–13) regards not only the notion of fire in the generation and destruction of the cosmos but the also the term “cosmos” as arising from a later Stoic and Theophrastian reading of Heraclitus.

¹³⁷ Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 149–51.

¹³⁸ Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 275; Kirk, ed., *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 355.

¹³⁹ Kirk, ed., *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 356.

¹⁴⁰ M. L. West, ed., *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum Cantati* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 121–22; Elizabeth Irwin, *Solon and Early Greek Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 91–96.

¹⁴¹ West, ed., *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, 141; Irwin, *Solon and Early Greek Poetry*, 227–29.

ever-living fire (*pyr aeizōon* = *aithēr* rather than *pyr*) that inhered in and moved all things; it is an actual constituent of things.¹⁴²

The Pythagorean tradition in southern Italy revered fire as the most important cosmic element. Philolaus (ca. 470–385) says that

there is fire in the middle around the center. He calls it “the hearth of all things” and “the house of Zeus” and “the mother of the gods,” (and) “the altar and bond and measure of nature.” And again there is another topmost fire at the periphery. But by nature the middle is of first rank. Around it dance ten divine bodies: heaven (after the sphere of the fixed ones); the planets; after these, the sun; under this one, the moon; under this one, the earth; under this one, the counter-earth; after all of these, the hearth-fire is ordered around the center. (*DK* 44A16; Aëtius, *Opinions* 2.7.7)

The Pythagorean imagination of fire at the center of the earth was probably stirred by the volcanic activity of Mount Etna and the presence of numerous thermal springs in Sicily.¹⁴³ Even though the fire at the center was primary, there were also the sun, the stars, and the other planets, which in turn were surrounded on the periphery by another ring of fire.

The Sicilian landscape with its subterranean fire fit well the capacities of the god Hephaestus. His original home was in the northeastern Mediterranean and Aegean where he was honored not only as an Olympian god but as the god of subterranean fire: a paradoxical, yet creative conjunction of the realms of heaven and the underworld.¹⁴⁴ When the colonists from Euboean cities of Chalcis and Eretria settled in southern Italy and Sicily in the late eighth century B.C.E., they brought with them their traditions about Hephaestus. This movement of the colonists from the mother city to the new foundation was ritualized by taking fire from the hearth of the mother city to the hearths of its colonial foundations.¹⁴⁵ This fire symbolized the continuity of life between mother city and colony.¹⁴⁶

Empedocles (492–432 B.C.E.), a native of Metapontum and a Pythagorean, saw fire as one of the four basic elements (*viz.*, *pyr*, “fire,” *hydōr*, “water,” *gaia*, “earth,” and *aēr*, “*aithēr*/air”¹⁴⁷) that combined with one another to form

¹⁴² Kirk, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 315–16.

¹⁴³ Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and the Pythagorean Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 49–56, 73; Guthrie, “Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans,” 1.146–359, here 1.285, in *HGP*.

¹⁴⁴ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 281. Note also that Hephaestus created Pandora (Hesiod, *Op.*, 60–83).

¹⁴⁵ A. J. Graham, “The Colonial Expansion of Greece,” 83–159, here 148, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 3: *The Expansion of the Greek World, Eighth to Sixth Centuries B.C.* (ed. John Boardman and N. G. L. Hammond; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

¹⁴⁶ Graham, “The Colonial Expansion of Greece,” 83–159, here 149.

¹⁴⁷ Kingsley (*Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 29–30) argues that *aithēr* rather than air was one of Empedocles’ four elements.

the world and its creatures (*DK* 31A33; Aëtius, *Opinions* 1.3.20). He differed from the Milesians by claiming that there were four basic elements rather than one. According to the Theophrastian tradition, these four basic, unchanging elements were gods: Zeus = fire, Hera = air, Nestis = water, Aidoneus = earth (*DK* 31A33),¹⁴⁸ but he rethought the traditional understanding of who the gods were and how they related to humans (e.g., *DK* 31B128).¹⁴⁹ Empedocles agreed with Parmenides that there was no such thing as non-being when he said: “From being nowhere, it is impossible to be born. And to be utterly destroyed is impossible and unheard of. For whatever is firmly fixed forever, there it will always be” (*DK* 31B12; Ps.-Aristotle, *On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias* 975b1–4). But he did not dismiss change as an illusion, as Parmenides had.¹⁵⁰ Instead he explained the perception of change as that of observing the varying combinations of the four unchanging, homogeneous elements: “There is no mortal thing with a beginning, nor is there an end with annihilating death. But there is only a mixing and exchange of what was mixed. But it is called a “beginning” by humans” (*DK* 31B8; Aëtius, *Opinions* 1.30.1).¹⁵¹ With regard to human perception of birth and death, he said: “They speak according to custom; I myself also agree with convention” (*DK* 31B9; Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1113a11–b2). So for Empedocles, death was not a passing into nonbeing, rather it was a change in the combination of the four basic elements that had given rise to the human, animal, or plant at the beginning of its life. He identified the forces that triggered the combination of the four basic elements as Love (i.e., attraction) and Strife (i.e., repulsion), which he regarded as divine and eternal (*DK* 31 B16).¹⁵²

Empedocles contended that the sun, the moon, and the stars were formed from the subterranean fire. Therefore, the fire at the center of the earth was the source of all light. Kingsley claims that Empedocles, in his explanation of the formation of the stars, alluded to Hector’s command to the Trojans: “Collect much wood so that throughout the night until early dawn we might burn many fires and that the blaze might reach to heaven” (*Il.* 8.507–9).¹⁵³ Empedocles claimed that the fire shooting to the heavens—like an erupting volcano—provides a clue on the formation of the stars. Just as the many fires on the Trojan plain rose up to bring light to the skies so also the subterranean fire rose up to become stars that give light to the nighttime sky. Kingsley contends that Empedocles went so far as

¹⁴⁸ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.122–265, here 2.146, in *HGP*; M. R. Wright, “Introduction,” 22, in *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

¹⁴⁹ Wright, “Introduction,” *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 60–61.

¹⁵⁰ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.139–40, in *HGP*; Wright, “Introduction,” *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 29.

¹⁵¹ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.141–42, in *HGP*.

¹⁵² Wright, “Introduction,” *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 30–34.

¹⁵³ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 52; cf. Wright, “Introduction,” *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 28.

to turn this metaphor into fact (i.e., Empedocles claims that the subterranean fire actually created the stars).¹⁵⁴ Empedocles also believed that the subterranean fire gave rise to the first humans, animals, and plants: “But when the [the elements] reach to the *aithēr*, mixed in the form of man or of the genus of wild animals, or of plants, or of birds, then they say that a thing is born” (*DK* 31B9; Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1113a11–b2). Even in instances where the metaphorical meaning of fire as a creative force was strong, Empedocles saw a physical manifestation of this cosmic fire.

The other face of fire for both Empedocles and Pythagoras was its capacity to purge. While the ancient commentators called the first section of Empedocles’ writings “Nature,” they labeled the second section “Purifications.”¹⁵⁵ These teachings on purification were not esoteric doctrines intended only for a Pythagorean sect, rather they were to be shouted from the rooftops. These teachings covered topics on lustrations, libations, sacrifices, and other forms of ritual as well as directions for ascetic practice. The goal of these practices was to purge defilements (*miasmos*, *misos*) associated with a range of transgressions from homicide to unauthorized entry into a sacred grove.¹⁵⁶

Empedocles, as with Pythagoras before him (*DK* 58D2), saw philosophy as a way of life rather than, as the Milesians did, as an activity motivated either by curiosity about nature or by the need for technical improvement.¹⁵⁷ Iamblichus, the fourth century C.E. Neoplatonist, noted the Pythagoreans’ focus upon the divine: “This is the principle of their philosophy: that people act ridiculously by seeking the good from one place or another rather than from the gods” (*DK* 58D2; Iamblichus, *Pythagorean Life* 137). The purificatory teachings and practices promoted by Pythagoras and Empedocles used fire both metaphorically and literally to show how the fire within them had as its proper goal its assimilation to the cosmic fire that coursed through all things. In other words, these Pythagoreans understood the goal of human life to be assimilation to the divine.¹⁵⁸

Fire functioned as a powerful purificatory agent in the purging of the cauldron of Jerusalem, in the refurbishing of the statue of Marduk, and in the removal of corpses from the battlefield in the *Iliad*. The defilement of a sanctuary, a people, or a place indicated that “dirt” was present that needed to be removed. If someone or something was defiled, it meant that something was out of place and was a destabilizing force. So, while defilement was imagined as a miasma—a tangible substance—its danger lay in the way that it upset the order of relations between people and things. In the profane sphere, people were defiled by a death

¹⁵⁴ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 53.

¹⁵⁵ M. R. Wright, ed., *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 20–21.

¹⁵⁶ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.244, in *HGP*.

¹⁵⁷ Guthrie, “Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans,” 1.148.

¹⁵⁸ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.253, in *HGP*.

in a family. They had to stop ordinary activities and mourn. The purificatory dimension of these activities restored order. In the cultic sphere, the failure to bring pure offerings dishonored the deity and diminished the radiance of his or her face. The purging of these negligences by renewed offerings and by refurbishings of the shrine and the cult statue or cultic vessels was a purificatory measure that burned away distortions in the divine-human relationship.

The way that this divine-human relationship was mediated brings to light important differences between Ezekiel and the traditions of Mesopotamia (750–539) and Presocratic Greece (750–440). For Ezekiel, the exclusive relationship that Yhwh expected to have with the Israelites could exist with the exiles in Babylon while the temple cult in Jerusalem and the land of Israel were undergoing purification. In Babylon, however, according to the royal inscriptions, the *Enūma Eliš*, and the poem *Erra and Išum*, the cultic dimension of the relationship between Marduk and the people was indispensable. As a symbol of the community in his role as king, Nebuchadnezzar was charged with maintaining the temple and its rituals. His success in these duties symbolized not only his commitment to Marduk but also Marduk's favor toward him. The external symbols of cult and crown were the places in which the manifestation of the divine occurred. By contrast, the prophet Ezekiel highlighted how the exiles' relationship with Yhwh could exist in the land of Babylonia without either a temple or a king. Yhwh's rule transcended territory and cultic institutions, and his presence could be mediated directly to the people—even though Ezekiel proclaimed that the temple would be rebuilt (37:26–28; 40:1–42:20). In Presocratic Greece, Heraclitus in Ionia and Pythagoras and Empedocles in southern Italy moved toward deanthropomorphizing the governing forces of the cosmos. Hephaestus, the subterranean fire-god, was transformed into a basic element or force in the cosmos. Fire came to be seen as a destructive and creative force that coursed through the cosmos from the heights of heaven to the depths of the individual soul. For Heraclitus and Empedocles, it was a central force that transcended death: it purged and restored; it destroyed and created. Yet for these thinkers, the way that this force operated could not be adequately described without ascribing personal traits to it (e.g., Empedocles speaks of love and strife, Heraclitus of repayment and exchange). Finding one's place in this material cosmos involved more than mechanical adjustments. The harmonizing of one's own life with the rhythms of the cosmos called for a combination of reflection and purification. By contrast, Ezekiel focused on the personal dynamics of Israel's relationship with Yhwh, who transcended cosmic forces and could mediate his presence apart from cultic institutions. Vigilance, repentance, and purification would be essential to coming into right relationship with Yhwh: the fiery Being enthroned above the cherubim (Ezek 1:26–27; 8:2; 10:2).

The Offscourings: The Obstacles to Wholeness

In the final section of Ezekiel's second heavenly vision, Yhwh quotes to him what the Jerusalemites were saying about the exiles: "They have become distant from the Lord: this land has been given to us as a possession" (Ezek 11:15).¹⁵⁹ When Nebuchadrezzar deported members of the upper class, top military units, and skilled workers to Babylonia in 597, these deportees left behind property, which was being claimed by Jerusalemites under the pretense that Yhwh had abandoned the exiles.¹⁶⁰ Their argument seems to be that the exile itself was a sign that they had lost favor with Yhwh. To go into exile was to be turned over to the gods of another land (cf. Deut 4:28). After the destruction of Jerusalem, the surviving Jerusalemites would lay claim to the land by appealing to the example of Abraham within the following *a fortiori* argument: "Abraham was only a single person, but he gained possession of the land; since we are many; the land has been given to us as a possession" (Ezek 33:24). Yhwh instructed Ezekiel to refute their claim by accusing them of the crimes of ingestion of blood, idolatry, and murder (33:25). Ezekiel is portrayed not as entering into debate with the Jerusalemites but rather as delivering an authoritative pronouncement from Yhwh. The verdict followed: they would be put to death by the sword, by wild animals, and by pestilence (33:27).

In Ezekiel 3:16-21 and in 33:7-9, Yhwh had instructed Ezekiel that he was to be a sentinel for the people. His warnings were vital to the exiles' future. The people had a choice whether or not to turn from their idols and serve Yhwh alone. In Ezek 11:16, Yhwh instructed Ezekiel to assure the Israelites that he had not abandoned them. In fact, he had become "a little sanctuary" (*miqdāš mē'āt*) for them in the land of exile, indicating that the covenant relationship with the exiles was still intact.¹⁶¹ This phrase can be interpreted as: (1) Yhwh had decided to be among the exiles but in a less conspicuous way than in a building, or (2) Yhwh would be present with them in this mode only for a short time.¹⁶² This symbol of the "little sanctuary" shows that their expulsion from the land had not been an abandonment by Yhwh. With further words of promise, Yhwh directed Ezekiel to inform the Jerusalemites that he planned to gather the exiles and return them to the land of Israel where they would have the chance to remove all the idols in the land (*šiqqušîm* and *tô'ēbôt*, 11:18). After they had done so, then Yhwh would give them a new heart and a new spirit.¹⁶³ They had

¹⁵⁹ Along with Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, 231), Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 342–46), Greenberg (*Ezekiel 1–20*, 192, 203–4) and Joyce ("Dislocation and Adaptation in the Exilic Age and After," 45–58, here 48, in *After the Exile*) I date this passage before 586.

¹⁶⁰ Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005) 364; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 348.

¹⁶¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 262.

¹⁶² Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 350.

¹⁶³ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 204. Later, in Ezekiel 36:25, Yhwh promised to sprinkle

been brought into a privileged position insofar as the loss of their homeland gave them an impetus to repent; by contrast, the majority of the Jerusalemites had been condemned to destruction by fire—unless they should happen to repent and receive the mark from the priestly scribe as noted in Ezekiel 9:4. The exile had the potential to be a means of purification for the exiles.

The uncleanness of the exiles that needed to be washed away were those associated with idolatry, sexual crimes, and murder (Ezek 22:1-12). To be unclean meant that one was not fit to enter the sanctuary. Uncleanness seemed to be, just as in archaic Greece, a kind of film or miasma that clung to the person.¹⁶⁴ This physical understanding of a metaphysical reality shows that the issue of clean and unclean for the Israelites was a bodily reality and not simply a mental or spiritual construct.¹⁶⁵

The cultic concern that should have been occupying the Israelites was the maintenance of the cleanness of Yhwh's sanctuary. In Ezekiel 22:26, Yhwh condemned the priests for their failure to distinguish between the clean and the unclean and between the holy and the common. Of these four elements, the priests decreed that it was absolutely essential to keep the unclean separate from the holy (Ezek 8:6).¹⁶⁶ The miasmatic character of impurity in the Israelite cult gave it a dynamism that at times appeared to be a thinly disguised demonic force.¹⁶⁷ From a strictly monotheistic perspective, anxiety about demonic forces was to be nonexistent, for such attention would have granted them a quasi-existence.¹⁶⁸ The unclean idols, which Ezekiel commonly refers to as *gillûlîm*, "shit-gods," *šiqqûšîm*, "detestable things," or *tô'ebôt*, "abominations," possessed only the quasi-reality that humans granted to them.¹⁶⁹ So, as Kutsko has argued,

them with clean (*tehôrîm*) water to cleanse them of all their uncleanness (*tum'ôtékem*) and all their idols (*gillûlêkem*). In this later passage the effectiveness of the sprinkling in removing uncleanness is emphasized rather than the people's choice of turning from idols as in 11:18. The root *tâmē'* occurs thirty-seven times in Ezekiel, with a concentration of occurrences in chapters 20, 22, 23, and 36. The root *tāhēr* is less frequent: it occurs sixteen times.

¹⁶⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 258–61, 731–32.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz, "Purity and Holiness: An Introductory Survey," 1–32, here 5, in *Purity and Holiness: the Heritage of Leviticus* (ed. Marcel Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 2000). Marie-Louise Thomsen ("Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," 3–95, here 21, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Biblical and Pagan Societies* (ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) notes that in Mesopotamia, uncleanness, as it affected individuals in the profane sphere, was frequently identified as a demonic force that had invaded a person.

¹⁶⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 732.

¹⁶⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 256–57.

¹⁶⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 42–43, 977.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Daniel Bodi, "Les *gillûlîm* chez Ézéchiél et dans L'Ancien Testament, et les différentes pratiques culturelles associées à ce terme," *RB* 100 (1993): 481–510, here 509–10.

Ezekiel never refers to idols as *'elohim*, “gods.”¹⁷⁰ Rather, in Elijah-like fashion (1 Kgs 18:27), he taunts them with the label *gillulim*.

Yhwh promised to wash the exiles and cleanse them of all their defilements (Ezek 36:25). The only other ablution mentioned in the book of Ezekiel is that which Yhwh administered to the personified Jerusalem who was cast off by her parents at birth (Ezek 16:4, 9). In the priestly legislation, ablutions were enjoined upon:

- (1) those cured of scaly skin disease (Lev 14:8)
- (2) those who were defiled by sexual emissions and those who came into contact with the material emitted (Leviticus 15)
- (3) those who took the scapegoat and the carcasses of the sin offerings outside the camp (Lev 16:26, 28)
- (4) those who prepared the ashes of the Red Cow and those who were defiled by a corpse (Numbers 19)
- (5) priests at the beginning of their rite of consecration and of the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Lev 8:6; 16:4, 24)
- (6) priests who touched swarming creatures (Lev 22:6)
- (7) laypeople who ate what died on its own (Lev 17:15).¹⁷¹

The “dirt” that was washed off in these rituals seems to have been both physical (disease, sexuality, death) and metaphysical. For the Israelites, the metaphysical dirt was the more potent reality, but it could not be separated from the physical dirt that carried it. The physical dirt that was washed off was a symbol of impurity: it participated in the metaphysical reality to which it pointed. This dirt upset the human’s relationship with Yhwh, with others, and with himself or herself. The cleansing would bring these relationships back into balance. These intrusive ritual requirements kept the Israelite mindful of his or her relationship with Yhwh.

In Mesopotamia, the cleansing and repair of a cultic statue was a physical operation with metaphysical implications. The care with which these repairs were carried out would communicate how much the people honored the deity. The ritual details of the refurbishing procedures reflect a priestly mentality—one with which Ezekiel could have seen analogues in Israelite rites of passage (e.g., the ordination of priests, Leviticus 8:1-36; the purification of the person with scale disease, Lev 14:1-32). The statue in need of repair was returned to the *bīr mummū*, a workshop like that in which it was originally crafted. In an inscription that can be dated to 671 B.C.E., Esarhaddon referred to the statues of Marduk and his consort Šarpanitu, whom he was about to return to the temple Esagila as soon as its renovation was completed: “Bēl (Marduk) and Bēltija

¹⁷⁰ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 38.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 957–76.

(Šarpanitu), loving one another, were restored according to their directions (*kī tēmīšūnu*) in the city of Ashur; in Ehursaggalkurkurra, they were truly born” (*kēniš immaldū*, #57 AsBbE, rev.11–12).¹⁷² As part of his description of the ceremonial reentry of Marduk to Babylon, Esarhaddon referred to the following purification rites:

Into Babylon, the city of their honor, I made them enter joyfully. Among the orchards, canals, and gardens of Ekarzaginna, the pure place (*ašri elli*), through the work of the sage (*šipir apkallī*), the mouth-washing, the mouth-opening, the washing, and purification, they were to enter before the stars of heaven, Ea, Šamaš, Assaluhi, Bēlet-ilī, Kusu, Ningirim, Ninkurra, Ninagal, Kisibanda, Ninildu and Ninzadim. (#57 AsBbE, ll. 21–24)¹⁷³

These rituals, which probably duplicate those already carried out on the refurbished Marduk statue in Assyria,¹⁷⁴ were designed to bring the senses of the statue to life as a god so that it could listen, ingest food, and participate in the activities of temple life.

The mouth-washing ritual was performed many times in the course of the two-day ritual that involved the transfer of the cultic statue from its place in the workshop to its residence in the inner-room of the temple. The mouth-washing aimed to purify the statue from any human contamination so that there might be unimpeded communication between the divine and human worlds.¹⁷⁵ The purificatory mouth-washing ritual preceded the mouth-opening ritual: the one through which the statue was vivified so that it might be functional.¹⁷⁶ The use of water, flour, incense, and fire to separate the unclean from the clean can be seen in the following description of the first day’s activities of the ritual of the induction of the cult statue.¹⁷⁷ On the first day, the priest functioned in five locations: out in the country, in the Kusu chapel, in the craftsmen’s workshop, near the river, and in the garden near the river.

(1) In the country (ll. 1–22): he went into a deserted area (*ana šēri*, l. 2) at dawn to locate a favorable spot. Berlejung notes that this marginal area was

¹⁷² Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons*, 88; Barbara Nevling Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics: Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon’s Babylonian Policy* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1993) 127.

¹⁷³ Edition: Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons*, 89.

¹⁷⁴ Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics*, 145 n. 304.

¹⁷⁵ Angelika Berlejung, “Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia,” 45–72, here 45, in Karel van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997).

¹⁷⁶ Walker and Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 14.

¹⁷⁷ The activities of the first day are described on the Nineveh ritual tablet as reconstructed by Walker and Dick in *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 36–46, 52–60.

the place in the wild at which the impurities could be deposited.¹⁷⁸ Reed huts were constructed for Ea, Šamaš, and Asalluhi; incantations were recited to purify them, and a magical flour circle was made to protect them, while the remaining flour was tossed into the river.

(2) In the Kusu chapel in the city (ll. 23–54): the priest returned there to prepare materials for the seven holy water basins to be used in the mouth-washings. These materials (various types of reeds, woods, precious stones, oils, syrups, and ghee) were placed in the basins and tied with wool. Next, these holy water basins were incensed and a torch was passed over them; then the area was purified and sprinkled with water. Finally, the offerings of a ram, beer, and juniper incense were made.

(3) At the house of the craftsmen (ll. 55–64): the area was swept and sprinkled with pure water. Incense and beer offerings were made. Then the mouth of the statue was washed and opened for the first time (l. 58). After this main ritual, the statue was purified by swinging the censor and the torch over it and sprinkling it with holy water. Then a designated incantation was recited three times in which the priest said that he has washed his mouth, hands, and feet (*STT* 199; ll. 6–8).¹⁷⁹

(4) Near the river (ll. 65–80): with the onset of evening, the incantation priest took hold of the hand of the god to escort him to the river. The craftsmen were instructed to bring their tools to this deserted place. At the river bank, they set up reed huts and an offering table for Ea and Asalluhi upon which were placed dates, meal, syrup, and ghee. Then they sacrificed the ram along with beer and incense. Thereafter, the priest took an axe, a nail, a saw, and golden and silver images of a turtle and a tortoise and wrapped them in the thigh of the ram. The ram was then tossed into the river (ll. 78–80). This offering of the craftsmen's tools along with the golden and silver images of water creatures were intended to appeal to Ea to receive the pure tools used in the production of the statue.¹⁸⁰

(5) In the garden near the river (ll. 95–108): having been freed from defilements from the human sphere,¹⁸¹ the statue was set up in the garden. Sacrifices were offered to various gods. The mouth-washing and mouth-opening rituals were repeated two more times (ll. 104, 108). Then the statue was ready to stand before the nighttime sky where the astral deities were called upon to accept him or her into their company.¹⁸²

The offscourings of the mouth-washing rituals were cast into the river, which was regarded as divine. In the river ordeals for difficult legal cases, the river was

¹⁷⁸ Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," 53–54.

¹⁷⁹ Walker and Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 114.

¹⁸⁰ Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth," 54.

¹⁸¹ Walker and Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 12, 14.

¹⁸² Erica Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995) 150.

the judge. The person who drowned was absorbed into the watery abyss (i.e., the realm of Ea).¹⁸³ When the participants in the mouth-opening ritual tossed the carcass of the ram along with the craftsmen's tools into the river, they disposed of marked substances—the impurities plus the tools. These marked substances were like matter out of place; they were not presented as aggressive powers intent upon undermining the established order. In summary, the mouth-washing marks the passage of the statue from the ordinary world of humans to the sphere of the holy. The ritual created the space within which the encounter with the holy could occur, whereby the statue was believed to be transformed into a living deity.

When the mouth-washing ritual is lifted out of the peaceful, creative setting of the induction of a new cult statue into that of the refurbishing of a neglected statue, the situation becomes more ominous. According to the poem *Erra and Išum*, it was the absence of Marduk in primordial times that caused the flood to overwhelm civilization (*Erra* I:131–37). In the present time of the poem's narrative, the transfer of Marduk's statue from the house of refurbishing to the throne was a particularly dangerous time. Although Marduk was ready to resume his rule in the land (*Erra* IIB:46–48), Erra, the god of war, had other plans and was about to set out on his rampage to demonstrate that as a warrior he was still a force with which to be reckoned (*Erra* IIC:3–47). When Erra seized sovereign power (*Erra* IIID:3–15), it seems that Marduk had to wait until Erra had spent his fury. The tremendous suffering that Babylonia endured during Marduk's absence, both in primordial and historical times, showed that there were death-dealing consequences for a land that had no sovereign ruler (*Erra* IV:1–151). In the absence of the sovereign's restraining power, all kinds of exploitation and violence erupt in a land.

Another important ritual designed to create mindfulness of Marduk's sovereignty was the humiliation of the king on the climactic fifth day of Babylon's New Year celebration (*Akitu*) in the month of Nisannu (*RAcc*, ll. 420–452).¹⁸⁴ The part of the festival in which this “ritual of reversal” in the king's status occurred is known from a Seleucid era tablet that seems to reflect a merging of part of the *Akitu* of Marduk with that of Nabû.¹⁸⁵ On this day, the high priest (*šešgallu*) bathed before dawn in the Tigris and Euphrates and then recited intercessory prayers to Bēl and Bēltiya.¹⁸⁶ Two hours after dawn, the incantation priest (*mašmaššu*) cleansed the chapel of Marduk by sprinkling its four corners with water from the Tigris and Euphrates. Next, he sounded the kettledrum to scare away evil forces. Then he carried a torch around the chapel. After this purifica-

¹⁸³ *CH* 2:33–56, in Borger, *BAL* 10; *ANET* 166.

¹⁸⁴ François Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens* (Paris: Leroux, 1921) 144–45, 152, 154; *ANET*, 334; Cohen, *The Cultic Calendar of the Ancient Near East*, 446–47; Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival*, 13, 70.

¹⁸⁵ Cohen, *The Cultic Calendar of the Ancient Near East*, 441.

¹⁸⁶ Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival*, 126–27.

tion of Marduk's chapel, he repeated the procedures in the chapel of Nabû; however, here he also decapitated a sheep and carried the carcass around the chapel to absorb any remaining impurities. He then took the sheep's carcass with an assistant carrying its severed head; both parts of the animal were cast into the river. The incantation priest and the slaughterer both had to remain in the countryside (*sēri*) for the rest of the *Akitu*. The *šesgallu* had not even been allowed to view these exorcistic rituals. With these two chapels purified, the *šesgallu* and other cultic officials were prepared to celebrate Nabû's arrival from Borsippa.

The next stage in the ceremonies of day five was the ritual of the humiliation of the king (ll. 420–52). The king washed his hands; the high priest came forth from Marduk's chapel and led the king into Nabû's chapel. There the high priest stripped the king of his scepter, circlet, and mace. He took these symbols of kingship back to Marduk's chapel and placed them on a seat in front of Marduk's statue. Then the high priest returned to the king, struck him on the cheek, and pulled him by the ears into Marduk's sanctuary. There the king was forced to kneel and recite a negative confession: i.e., listing all of the possible abuses of power from which he had refrained in the previous year. Then the high priest assured the king that Marduk had heard his confession and would restore him to his kingship and bless him. As a conclusion to this ritual, the high priest struck the king on the cheek once more. If tears came to the king's eyes, it was a sign that Marduk would show favor to him. If not, then the king could expect that a usurper would rise up to take away his rule.¹⁸⁷ This ritual within the private confines of the chapels of Marduk and Nabû shows how the sovereign god Marduk aimed to keep his viceroy, the king of Babylon, attentive to the hierarchy of power. It was an important balancing act that purged away evils within the royal government by the symbolic medium of humiliating actions and confessional words. This appeal to the king's conscience within this sacred setting was a key moment in the renewal of the kingship for another year.¹⁸⁸ The king's responsibility in promoting justice in the community called for him to be accountable to religious as well as social values of the community. If he were negligent in responding either to the gods or the people, he would be acting as though he were not accountable to anyone higher than himself and thus a rebel against the sovereign Marduk.

If a solar eclipse or some other ominous astral omen occurred, the Mesopotamian king was believed to be in great danger. A method for responding to this threat was for the king to abdicate the throne for one hundred days and to hand his rule over to a substitute. According to current information, the practice is first attested at Isin in the early OB period. In this instance, the king Irri-imitti died himself and so the gardener, Enlil-bani, who had been ruling in his stead,

¹⁸⁷ Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival*, 73–78.

¹⁸⁸ Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival*, 163–64.

simply continued as king. In 674 a total lunar eclipse deeply troubled the Assyrian king Esarhaddon. He called for the implementation of the ancient ritual of the substitute king: a man was to be enthroned, allowed to rule for a short time, and then put to death in order to fulfill the omen. Because of further eclipses during his reign, Esarhaddon implemented this ritual on three more occasions.¹⁸⁹ The purgative significance of this ritual against unknown evils is illustrative of a growing concern of the Mesopotamians of the first millennium to try to fend off misfortune and other ominous forces by ritual means.¹⁹⁰ The Mesopotamian kings believed that they needed to be attentive to cosmic forces—both divine and demonic—other than the sovereign god of their city or realm.

In the ancient Greek world, efforts to purify from bloodguilt revealed the tangible sense of guilt felt by the slayers. After Odysseus, his son Telemachus, and his two servants had killed the suitors in the dining room of Odysseus' manor house in Ithaca, they set about removing the corpses, the blood, and the gore on the same evening. Once this task was finished, they washed their hands and feet, and Odysseus said to his beloved nurse Eurykleia: "Bring me sulphur, elderly woman, a remedy for evils. Bring me fire that I might purge the hall with sulphur" (*Od.* 22:480–81). Parker notes that "the dry, acrid smoke" of sulphur was believed to counteract "the damp, rottenness of impurity."¹⁹¹ Sulphur has these purificatory qualities elsewhere in Homer.¹⁹² When Achilles was about to intercede with Zeus for Patroclus' safety and success in the upcoming battle, he prepared a libation cup that he used only for prayer to Zeus.

Then taking this cup from a chest, he first cleansed it with sulphur and washed it with beautiful streams of water. Then he washed his hands and drew the sparkling wine. Then standing in the middle of the enclosure, he prayed and made a libation of the wine while looking to heaven. (*Il.* 16.228–32)

For Odysseus, however, the purification with water and sulphur could not remove the miasma that triggered the desire for blood vengeance among the relatives of the suitors (*Od.* 24:412–71). It was only the intervention of Athena and Zeus that rescued Odysseus and his family from the suitors' enraged relatives in Ithaca (*Od.* 24:502–48).

¹⁸⁹ Earl Leichty, "Esarhaddon, King of Assyria," 949–58, here 953, in *CANE*.

¹⁹⁰ Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 199–200; Thorkild Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) 230–32.

¹⁹¹ Parker, *Miasma*, 227. Cf. "fire and brimstone" in Ezekiel 38:22.

¹⁹² Sulphur can be found near volcanoes. Its pungent, acrid smell is also evident near objects that have been struck by lightning. So the ancient Greeks associated this substance with the thunderbolt of Zeus (*Il.* 14.415; *Od.* 12.415–17). See Peter V. Hobbes, Lawrence F. Radke, Mark W. Eltgroth, Dean A. Hegg, "Airborne Studies of the Emissions from the Volcanic Eruptions of Mount St. Helens," *Science* n.s. 211 (1981) 816–18.

The miasma that clung to Odysseus and his family arose from what the relatives perceived to be murder. Such bloodshed was an invasion of their family that triggered a corresponding aggression. Within the tribe and the family where blood can only be purified by blood, the law of talion has a natural environment.¹⁹³ Because bloodguilt was driving him insane, Orestes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* sought to be purified (ll. 281–83). But it is not clear whether he was seeking healing from madness or from guilt. The Greek word *nosos* could refer to both physical and social illnesses.¹⁹⁴ Orestes underwent a ritual of purification in Apollo's sanctuary because Apollo was the purifier who had himself murdered and undergone purification. The term *hagnos* (what separates humans from gods) may stem from the same root as *agos* (what delivers a human to the gods upon transgressing the barrier between gods and humans).¹⁹⁵ The ambiguity of the figure of Apollo enabled him to assist the impure transgressor.

Hippocratic forms of catharsis operated according to the principle that the body was a container that periodically needed to release excess materials (e.g., excretion, menstruation) to maintain the proper balance among its vital humors. The remedy for disease was to draw off the excess. Usually the excess was believed to affect the whole body rather than to be localized in an area such as the bowels or the sinuses. Therefore, a purgative drug (*pharmakon*) needed to have an impact on the entire body.¹⁹⁶ In trying to explain the great plague of Athens in 430 B.C.E., the Hippocratic doctors attributed it to miasmata in the air. The model with which the Hippocratic doctors operated was that any violation of the body's integrity demanded a cathartic cure. They placed contagious contaminants in two categories: (1) those associated with birth, death, or bloodguilt and (2) those undesirable qualities or conditions that can be wiped off a person, such as bad luck, folly, immorality.¹⁹⁷ Such contagions had more of a symbolic than a physiological basis—in contrast to that of modern theories concerning viruses or infections.

The notion of airborne miasmata was also used previously to explain the plague: it arose from burying the dead on the island of Delos, a place sacred to Apollo requiring that corpse contamination be avoided there.¹⁹⁸ Earlier in the

¹⁹³ Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992) 56.

¹⁹⁴ Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution*, 57. The difference between purification by ritual and purification by medicine in Archaic Greek society is often not clear.

¹⁹⁵ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 81, 270–71; Dougherty, "It's Murder to Found a Colony," 178–98, here 186–87, in *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece*.

¹⁹⁶ Parker, *Miasma*, 213–18.

¹⁹⁷ Parker, *Miasma*, 218–19.

¹⁹⁸ Herodotus 1.64 in *The Persian Wars* (ed. A. D. Godley; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926) 74; Parker, *Miasma*, 218.

early sixth century B.C.E., Solon is reported to have called upon Epimenides of Crete to come to Athens to try to put an end to the plague that was ravaging the city (Diogenes Laertius 1.109–14).¹⁹⁹ Epimenides was an ascetic sage from Crete who was revered in the tradition as the first one to purify houses and fields.²⁰⁰

Empedocles developed a theory that attempted to give a material explanation to human sensation and thought based on the principle that “like knows like.”²⁰¹ He contended that humans are able to know the physical world because humans are part of the physical world. So he explained eyesight as effluences given off objects combining with fire from the eye to communicate the image to the person. He thought that the effluences entered through pores in the human body such that a person’s physical condition would determine how much one knows about the world.²⁰² Therefore, he emphasized that various forms of purification were necessary to bring one to a knowledge of reality and union with the divine.²⁰³

The purifiers at the end of the Archaic Age and into the Classical Age in Greece prescribed washing as a means of removing disease. They recommended bathing in hot springs as a means of healing.²⁰⁴ In a purificatory ritual, the person would face east and a symbolic circle would be drawn around him or her as protection from hostile forces. If lustral water was used, it had to be drawn from a pure, flowing source; it could not be mixed with water from other springs. A more potent form of purifying water was seawater (cf. *Il.* 1.314).²⁰⁵ Other substances were also valued as purificatory: salt, laurel and olive branches, and wool. Of substances that absorbed impurities, blood from a blood sacrifice was the most potent. But an egg, mud, bran mash, or wool were also regarded as having this absorbent capacity.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁹ John Pairman Brown, *Israel and Hellas* (3 vols.; BZAW 231, 276, 299; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995–2001) 2.179. M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) 45–53.

²⁰⁰ Richard P. Martin, “The Seven Sages as Performers of Wisdom,” 108–26, here 122, in *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics* (eds. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Johnston, *Restless Dead*, 118–19.

²⁰¹ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.122–265, here 2.228–29, in *HGP*; Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 72.

²⁰² Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.122–265, here 2.230–34, in *HGP*; Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 240–43.

²⁰³ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.122–265, here 2.243–44, in *HGP*; on the need for purification for one who has committed a crime but was compelled to do so by outside forces, see Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 66–67.

²⁰⁴ Parker, *Miasma*, 212.

²⁰⁵ Parker, *Miasma*, 225–26.

²⁰⁶ Parker, *Miasma*, 230.

Religious dangers, were by definition, contagious. In Archaic Greek society, everyone felt vulnerable for the offenses of their neighbor.²⁰⁷ Crop failure, plague, natural disasters, and civil strife were all calamities that cried out for an explanation. They thought that an offender was hidden in their midst. If this person could not be identified, then someone was selected to serve as the *pharmakos*, “the scapegoat,” to carry away the miasma that beset their community. Often the *pharmakos* was both a wretch and a villain; to drive such a one from the land seemed to many to be beneficial, even if it did not cure the major ills of the community.²⁰⁸ On those occasions in which the safety of the city was at issue, the civic leaders hoped that someone of high rank would step forward and offer his or her life on behalf of the community. In this case, death rather than expulsion was the price to be paid.²⁰⁹

This practice of looking for a scapegoat cast its shadow further into related practices of stereotyping and alienating individuals or groups within the community. The commoner Thersites in the *Iliad* is portrayed as a buffoon who earned the mockery of his fellow soldiers for his criticism of Agamemnon (2.225–42), even though his criticism of Agamemnon mirrored what Achilles had been saying about Agamemnon’s tyrannical tendencies. Homer encouraged his audience to dismiss Thersites as a loud-mouth who rightfully received blows from Odysseus. In Archaic Greek cities, foreign traders were viewed as outsiders by the locals. Among them, the corndealers were frequently branded as the ones who brought hard times on the city. One reason for this popular distrust may well have been the fact that the price of corn always increased when war or drought diminished the supply. So the corndealers were singled out as the enemy within the community that needed to be expelled.²¹⁰ The Athenian statesman Cleisthenes (ca. 508 B.C.E.) is believed to have written into the Athenian constitution a provision that every winter the city assembly should send someone of high rank into exile for the well-being of the city.²¹¹ The grounds for expulsion were that the person had squandered opportunities or had brought unnecessary harm to the city.²¹²

Through the exile, the Judahites in Babylon were undergoing a purification that would prepare them for reentry to the land of Israel. The trials of the exile were a form of washing and purging by fire that would make them ready to receive Yhwh’s Spirit. In Mesopotamia, cult statues underwent an analogous process as they were purged of substances from the profane sphere so that they might be brought to life by the entry of the god’s lifeforce into the statue. The presence of cosmic and demonic dangers was not accented in the mouth-washing

²⁰⁷ Parker, *Miasma*, 257.

²⁰⁸ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 82–83.

²⁰⁹ Parker, *Miasma*, 259.

²¹⁰ Parker, *Miasma*, 267.

²¹¹ A. R. Burn, *The Pelican History of Greece* (New York: Penguin Books, 1965) 164.

²¹² Parker, *Miasma*, 267.

ritual as they were in the rituals of the substitute king and the New Year ceremonies, especially those of the purification of the chapels and the ritual humiliation of the king. In ancient Greece, the practice of purifying by sulfur revealed the tangible dimension of metaphysical substances such as guilt, which bears both an individual and a collective face. The imbalance in the communal body triggered by miasmata called for ritual responses that would purge away the defilement: a process analogous to that employed by Hippocratic doctors in restoring a healthy balance to a diseased body.

Conclusion

The priestly task of separating and making distinctions was a creative process essential to the manifestation of Yhwh's identity and to the maintenance of the identity of the Israelites. To create this identity over and over again, the priest's role was to help Israel clear a space in its midst in which the holiness of Yhwh could dwell. This separation revolved around the antithetical pair of clean/unclean, which provided a fixed point from which Israel was to organize its social and religious relationships. Ezekiel used the terms *tāhēr* and *tāmē*, "clean" and "unclean," to mark out that which can stand within the presence of God. The other antithetical pair, *qōdeš* and *hōl*, the "sacred" and the "common," indicated that God and humans resided in different spheres. When the divine and human spheres intersected, humans had to be clean. Clean and unclean related to the matters of everyday life. These were embodied realities. It was significant for the priests and Ezekiel that the Israelite community was a concrete group of individual, embodied beings and not simply a gathering of intellects whose sole reality consisted of the decisions they made and to which they remained faithful—as though they were disembodied souls possessing only rational intellects and wills. This distinction between the clean and the unclean was to keep them mindful of their inescapable embodiedness and of the tentativeness of their relationship with the divine. As such, the priestly regulations were intrusive into everyday life.

For the Judahite exiles, the temple in Jerusalem was the place of intersection of the vertical and horizontal axes of the cosmos. It provided a starting point for mapping out the physical world in a way that focused their communication with Yhwh: a reality transcending the observable. Because the sanctuary provided a fixed point for organizing relationships both vertically and horizontally, it had a metonymic character (i.e., the sanctuary was a part pointing to a whole socio-religious cultic system). This cultic system anchored in the sanctuary created a space within which a community could live attentive to the divine. Analogously within the Mesopotamian cultic system, when the Mesopotamians offered food to a god whose mouth had been opened, they believed that the god had consumed the food even though a cultic official had taken the food away. The offerer

believed that this was how the gods ate their food: religious reality was different from ordinary, profane reality. In Greece, prior to the eighth century, there were no temples. During the seventh century the cities of Ephesus and Miletus became bustling commercial centers due to expanding trade and colonial connections, which resulted in a heightened exchange of information about myths and cults.²¹³ This religious diversity within a politically decentralized region encouraged skepticism toward traditional religious formulations of the divine by thinkers like Xenophanes. At the same time that this critical rationalism was arising in Ionia, the culture of temples spread rapidly in seventh-century Greece. The temples in Greece, as with those in Jerusalem and in Mesopotamia, aimed to break open a space within which the holy might make contact with the ordinary human world. The challenge was to keep this space free from defilement and desecration.

Israel's polemic against fabricated divine images seems to have been based on the fact that a statue could not communicate the dynamism and the ambiguity of the divine-human relationship. Israelite priests seem to have taught that the symbolic character of Israel's relationship with Yhwh was best represented by the personal relationships between a man and a woman or between members of a community (Gen 1:26-28). In Ezekiel 8, the Judahites were trying to reduce their vulnerability in a time of crisis by emphasizing the tangible. They tried to grasp the metaphysical as though it were physical and thereby undercut the symbolic dimension of their relationship with Yhwh. The primary danger to this relationship was their fearing other gods or other powers. Such fear fed the quasi-reality of these gods and gave them a place within the imagination of the Israelite community that they would not have had if the Israelites had directed their fears toward Yhwh. In Babylon, the concern of the king and the priests was to make Marduk's image resplendent. This referred not only to the renown of Marduk through the power of the Babylonian kingdom but also to the physical condition of Marduk's statue and temple. From the perspective of an aniconic critic like Ezekiel or Heraclitus, Marduk's reality was reduced to that of a part of a religious system: his metaphysical reality was reduced to the physical as a way of empowering the system.

Neglect of a deity results in punishment for the humans who have failed in their service. In the *Iliad*, the Achaeans' affront to a priest of Apollo was answered with a plague (1.9-12). According to the poem *Erra and Ishtar*, the city of Babylon was destroyed by Erra because humans neglected his cult. According to Ezekiel 8-11, Yhwh destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and eliminated its population because of its refusal to acknowledge his exclusive claim on their loyalty; the population defiled his temple by importing impure representations of quasi-deities into his sacred space. The distortion in perception created by such cultic

²¹³ Oswyn Murray, *Early Greece* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980) 64-67, 84-86, 233-34.

practices made Yhwh unrecognizable. Erra's fury seems to be as intense as that of Yhwh, but the justification for its exercise verges on the unethical: war needs to occur to make the god of war visible. In the *Iliad*, Apollo intervened to assist his priest and those he favored, but he was not portrayed as concerned about the honor that humans gave him. He had assisted Poseidon in the building of a sea wall, but he apparently was not threatened by the Achaeans' building one without sacrificing to him, as was the case with Poseidon (*Il.* 7.446–53). Yhwh's anger toward the Jerusalemites in Ezekiel 8–11 is based first of all on their turning away from the exclusive relationship that the Israelites were expected to have with him but importantly also on the significant way that Israel's perception of his divine reality could become distorted. This distortion in perception could undermine Israel's relationships with Yhwh, other humans, and the rest of creation.

Yhwh purged Jerusalem with fire, removing its cultic defilement and corpse contamination. In the poem *Erra and Išum*, the statue of Marduk was made resplendent by the work of the fire god Girra; this god also removed demonic realities in exorcistic rituals. The Greek god of smiths Hephaestus removed corpse contamination from the battlefield in the *Iliad* (21:342–52) but also manifested the creative potential of fire important to Heraclitus, the Pythagoreans, and Empedocles. Fire not only purged but also was a dynamic force within the cosmic processes. In the Presocratics, the fire itself took on divine qualities, whereas in Ezekiel, the poem of *Erra and Išum*, and in the *Iliad*, fire was an instrument used in the service of Yhwh, Marduk, and the Olympian deities. However, both the fiery portrayal of Yhwh in Ezekiel 1:27 and Marduk's appropriation of the name Girra in *EE* VII:115 indicate that the mystical, ambivalent quality of this force of destruction and renewal was an apt symbol of the divine.

Ezekiel informed the exiles that their dislocation from the land was an initial stage in their purification rather than an abandonment by Yhwh, as some in Jerusalem had been claiming. The cleansing of their defilements was like ablutions within the priestly system in which one was required to bathe and launder one's clothes after genital emissions (Lev 15:5, 10, 13, 16, 21–22, 27) or healing from scale disease (Lev 14:8). Rituals of purification in Mesopotamia ranged from mouth-washing rituals of objects to the burning of figurines in exorcistic rites to purgative rituals of the sanctuary in the renewal ceremonies of the *Akitu*-festival. In Greece, there were purgative rituals aimed at removing miasmata ranging from bloodguilt to disease to anxiety. These negative influences upset the balance within the community and the individual. The Hippocratic doctors, although they defined themselves over against the healing rituals of the magicians, likewise imagined the afflicted body as an organism in need of equilibrium; suffering was the result of an excess of one or another substance that needed to be siphoned away. In the political sphere, the Greek practice of exiling a human scapegoat bears similarities to the Mesopotamian practice of the substitute king insofar as it

calls for the selection of a member of the community upon whom to transfer the community's anxiety about an ominous future.

Ezekiel spoke of a purification of the exiles in terms of an ablution that Yhwh would pour over them. Such a washing would remove "the dirt" that accrued through idolatry, sexual sins, and violence toward others. The lingering effects of these transgressions would then be wiped away, and Yhwh would give them a new heart and a new spirit as he returned them to the land. At that point, they would regain a fixed point in the land with the rebuilding of the temple. Within this temple, the purificatory sacrifices would be put in place that would enable Israel to clear away those impurities that, if left unaddressed, would eventually break off Israel's relationship with Yhwh.



CHAPTER THREE

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNITY

The exiles appear to have been victimized by their circumstances. Their deportation to Babylonia was carried out by a Babylonian army that was too powerful for them. If they were wondering what they might have done differently to escape deportation, Ezekiel insisted that they take responsibility for their situation and recognize the potential for a new start that would come with repentance. Ezekiel tolerated no second-guessing and wondering how events might have been different apart from acknowledgment of guilt followed by repentance. Their deportation did not happen by chance. To solidify his case further that Yhwh was in charge of the course of events, Ezekiel delivered oracles against Tyre and Egypt: two imperial powers in the eastern Mediterranean that were still independent of Nebuchadrezzar's yoke in the late 590s B.C.E. If the exiles thought that their fate would have been different if Judah only had the material wealth and power of Tyre and Egypt, Ezekiel summoned them to reexamine their thinking and recognize that the imperial powers of the world were subject to the sovereignty of Yhwh. Ezekiel devoted three chapters to Tyre (26–28) and four chapters to Egypt (29–32) to make clear to the exiles that Nebuchadrezzar, as an instrument of Yhwh, would bring these two rebellious imperial powers into subjection. Their means for resisting Yhwh's plan would falter.¹

¹ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 24; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 32.

Human cleverness is an ambiguous attribute. On the one hand, it refers to inventiveness, the capacity to find solutions to problems. On the other hand, it refers to an evasion of circumstances that still remain in force. The evasion is a temporary solution that could bring more painful side-effects on the clever person or on the community of which he is a part. The patriarch Jacob in Israel (Gen 25:19–33:20), the wandering Odysseus in Homer (*Od.* 14.191–359), and the crafty god Enki/Ea in Mesopotamia (*EE* I:59–65) are three personalities in these three traditions that exemplify the trickster. Each of these characters is celebrated for his cleverness, and yet ethical questions surround some of their exploits. Would a new solution benefit only the clever person and bring greater trouble to others in the community? The removal of a constriction for one person may create greater problems for others. Each of these three traditions did not want to stifle creativity for the sake of the security of the familiar. They lifted up the trickster as someone who could be admired but not necessarily imitated. The capacity to discern whether cleverness or resignation was more appropriate required developing a larger worldview in which one could see the ramifications of one's actions. Without such a bigger picture, the clever person was prone to self-deception.²

Ezekiel identifies Tyre's fatal flaw as a form of self-deception (28:1-10). He describes Tyre's downfall, not as a misfortune that has chanced upon this maritime empire, but rather as a just reward for its understanding of its place in the world. This distortion in self-understanding threads its way through all of Ezekiel's oracles about Tyre in which Ezekiel makes clear the insidious potential of this attitude to bring great harm to others. With a focus on Ezekiel's indictment of Tyre's cleverness, chapter 3 examines Ezekiel's judgment upon three aspects of Tyre's commercial enterprises: (1) the public display of wealth, (2) the king of Tyre as a boundary keeper, and (3) the impact of wealth on self-perception. Each of these aspects will then be compared and contrasted with analogous instances from Mesopotamia (750–539) and Presocratic Greece (750–440). Next, the chapter examines Ezekiel's account of how the hubris of the king of Tyre led to his exploitation of others in three ways: (1) his unchecked desires led to aggression, (2) his mercantile system covered over this exploitation through abstractions, and (3) symbols can be coopted into self-serving systems. Analogous instances from Mesopotamia and Presocratic Greece will then be drawn upon to illustrate the uniqueness and commonality of efforts of each culture to curb hubris and its tendency to reproduce itself in humanly constructed systems (e.g., the power of coinage to effect the accumulation of wealth). The chapter will conclude with a treatment of the symbol's potential to create and

² Dale Launderville, *Piety and Politics: The Dynamics of Royal Authority in Homeric Greece, Biblical Israel, and Old Babylonian Mesopotamia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 225–31.

to undermine the bonds of a community through its integration of the divine, human, and animal aspects of human experience.

Public Display of Wealth: A Treacherous Pathway

On February 3, 585, Ezekiel condemned Tyre for rejoicing at the fall of Jerusalem on the tenth of Ab (August 5), 586 B.C.E. Ezekiel begins his oracle by quoting Tyre's reaction to the news: "Aha, it is broken, the gateway to the peoples; now that it is ruined, its wealth reverts to me!" (Ezek 26:2). Even though Jerusalem itself did not sit directly on a trade route, it had control over portions of the routes from Egypt to Mesopotamia and from the Sinai to the Mediterranean. Such a position may account for the ascription of the epithet "gateway to the peoples" to Jerusalem. As such, Jerusalem would have been a competitor to Tyre.³ According to a market-driven understanding of commerce, such competition can introduce efficiencies into the transactions. But from Ezekiel's perspective, Tyre's delight at capitalizing on Jerusalem's misfortune was grounds for Tyre's destruction.⁴ Such delight at another's misfortune would be seen as a form of hubris. So Ezekiel delivers an indictment in which "the many nations" will batter against Tyre like the waves of the ocean with the result that Tyre will be left "like a drying place for nets" (26:5). This initial judgment in verses 2–6 is elaborated upon in verses 7–14. After briefly mentioning the destruction of fortresses on the mainland (v. 8), Ezekiel foresees Nebuchadrezzar directing his siege engines and cavalry against the island fortress of Tyre (vv. 9–12). The methods of siege towers and battering rams designed for city walls on the mainland would hardly work against the seawalls of Tyre. But the force of the prediction is that this island fortress will fall like any fortress on the mainland.⁵ Thus, in this description, when the city is breached and utterly leveled (v. 14), it will be a bare rock on which fishermen can dry their nets (v. 7).

The destroyer who will come against Tyre is "Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, the king of kings" (26:7). Although Nebuchadrezzar never used the epithet "king of kings" in any known inscription or writing, it had been used by Assyrian kings since the thirteenth century B.C.E.⁶ Such an epithet helped Ezekiel emphasize the point that Yhwh would bring Nebuchadrezzar against Tyre and that his will could not be thwarted.⁷

³ Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 32, 35.

⁴ Tyrian deportees may have been relocated near Nippur. See D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 76, who cites Ran Zadok, *On West Semites in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods: An Onomastic Study* (Jerusalem: Wanaarta, 1978) 60–61.

⁵ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 40–41.

⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 36; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 39.

⁷ Tyre survived the thirteen-year siege of Nebuchadrezzar (585–572 B.C.E.). It was not

Ezekiel illustrates how the nations of the ancient Near East were connected with one another in his description of the mourning and trembling of the island nations at the news of Tyre's fall. Their reaction of mourning at Tyre's fall was the direct opposite of Tyre's reaction of rejoicing at Jerusalem's fall. The reason for the lamentation by these island nations seems to be both the catastrophic character of Tyre's demise (26:17) and the suffering that these nations would undergo with the breakdown of Tyre's trading activities. This description of the reaction of the nations (vv. 15–18) seems to have been added to its present location in the book of Ezekiel when chapter 27 was joined with chapter 26 with the result that it foreshadows the longer lamentation of the surrounding nations in 27:28-36.⁸

The fullest description of Tyre's maritime activities is presented in chapter 27. Here in a lament that Yhwh directs Ezekiel to speak to Tyre, he describes Tyre as a ship (27:3-10). Just as in 26:2, Ezekiel begins his oracle by quoting the words of Tyre: "You, Tyre, said, 'I am perfect in beauty'" (27:3). Such a quotation provides the audience with an insight into the attitude of Tyre, who is personified as a woman ('att, 2nd fem. sing.). Tyre is narcissistic. Ezekiel then describes how Tyre became so beautiful by describing it as a ship whose builders used the highest quality materials. The decks were made of cypress from Mount Hermon; the mast was shaped from the towering cedars of Lebanon; the oars were made from the durable wood of the oaks of Bashan; and the bridge was constructed from cypress from the island of Cyprus. Its sail was made from linen from Egypt and the cloth coverings for the cabin from the rich purple and scarlet material from Cyprus. This majestic ship was manned by oarsmen from the Phoenician cities of Sidon and Arwad, cities which would typically have competed with Tyre rather than supply it with manpower. Its mariners and experts were also drawn from the Phoenician cities of Zemer and Byblos, renowned for their sea-going skills. To provide security for this ship and its cargo, Tyre had mercenaries from Persia (Paras), Lydia in Asia Minor (Lud), and Libya (Put);⁹ the warriors from these lands were distinguished for the splendor (*bādār*, 27:10) of their shields and helmets. To complete its ornamentation, Ezekiel refers to Phoenician soldiers from Arwad and Gamad who hung their shields on the edges of the ship. The components that make up Tyre have been drawn from many nations; the prestige that it wields is international in scope. Thus, the image of Tyre that Ezekiel creates is one that will attract attention.

until the time of Alexander the Great that Tyre was conquered. See H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre: From the Beginning of the Second Millennium B.C.E. until the Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 538 B.C.E.* (Jerusalem: Schocken Institute for Jewish Research, 1973) 323–30.

⁸ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 40.

⁹ Peter Haider, "Griechen im Voerderen Orient und in Ägypten bis ca. 590 v. Chr." 59–115, here 71, in *Wege zur Genese griechischer Identität* (ed. Christoph Ulf; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996).

Nebuchadrezzar aimed to make Babylon the most beautiful city in the world.¹⁰ In his Wādī-Brīsa inscription,¹¹ he described how he had built a processional ship for Marduk for the New Year festival:

His pure processional ship, I coated its sides, front and back, its tackle, its planks, with golden spades and dragons. I adorned it with precious stones and put it in the pure streams of the Euphrates. Like the stars of the firmament, I made its brightness shine. In view of all the people, I filled it with splendor.” (VAB 4 156 [Nbk 19 = Wādī-Brīsa] A v 19–30)

This ship was to be the vehicle to transport Marduk, “the master of masters” (*bēl bēlē*, VAB 4 156 [Nbk 19 = Wādī-Brīsa] A v 41), from the dock of the Arahtu-canal to the house of offerings. The splendor of this vehicle was to be commensurate with the status of the being that it transported.

In another inscription Nebuchadrezzar noted how Marduk had placed reverence or fear for Marduk’s divinity (*puluḫti ilūtišu*, VAB 4 125 [Nbk 15 = Stein Tafel X] ii 7) in his heart.¹² Such divine assistance had moved Nebuchadrezzar to conquer distant lands through arduous campaigns and to subdue their peoples with the consequence that Nebuchadrezzar brought their riches to Esagila, Marduk’s temple in Babylon:

Distant lands, remote paths where there were no footprints, roads full of difficulty, ways full of thirst, deep-lying regions whose places were difficult. . . . Your good protection was stretched out over me when I lifted up my hands to you that you might receive my prayer and hear my petitions. The yield of the mountains, the treasures of the sea, the possessions of all lands, gold, silver, costly precious stones, powerful cedars, heavy tribute, opulent gifts, I strove to heap up and bring yearly.” (VAB 4 151–52 [Nbk 19 = Wādī-Brīsa] iii 10–34)¹³

This inscription makes known Nebuchadrezzar’s rationale for his imperialistic activities: it was to bring honor to Marduk. Such honor had to take the concrete form of prestige objects that would attract the attention of all peoples.

¹⁰ Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 42, 81; David Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (HSM 59; Atlanta: Scholars, 1999) 41, 45–49.

¹¹ Stephen Langdon (*Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* [VAB 4; trans. R. Zehnpfund; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912] 33, 35) notes that this inscription from a valley in Lebanon was written upon the images of Nebuchadrezzar and a lion that he was battling; its primary goal is to celebrate the Babylonian conquest of the Lebanon region in 605–604. See Chronicle 5:12–20 (A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* [Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2000] 100), which relates his campaigns in Hattu.

¹² Hugo Winckler and E. Böhden, *Altbabylonische Keilschrifttexte zum Gebrauch bei Vorlesungen* (Leipzig, 1892) n. 78, p. 32.

¹³ F. H. Weissbach, ed., *Die Inschriften Nebukadnezars II im Wādī Brīsa und am Nahr El-Kelb* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich’sche Buchhandlung, 1906).

The refurbishing and expansion of Esagila was only a portion of Nebuchadrezzar's efforts to exalt Marduk. He worked on sixteen temples in Babylon and on temples in twelve other cities.¹⁴ The restoration of docks and canals in Babylon as recounted in his inscriptions was designed not only to promote the grandeur of processional feasts but also to facilitate the transport of building materials. On several occasions, Nebuchadrezzar accents the superlative character of his renovations by referring to the cedars of Lebanon that he incorporated into the structure.¹⁵ The size and weight of these cedar logs, ferried by way of the Euphrates, required that strong and spacious dock facilities be constructed in Babylon to receive them.¹⁶ These pragmatic requirements for a large infrastructure fit together with Nechadrezzar's grandiose aesthetic and ritual plans for Babylon.

During the New Year festival, the deities from the various Mesopotamian cities were to travel by way of rivers and canals to Babylon.¹⁷ This assembling of the cultic statues and the cultic personnel of the various Mesopotamian deities would have sent a strong message to the peoples assembled about their identity as peoples residing within the realm of Marduk. The procession of Marduk's statue in his glorious ship on the canal and on the wide processional way lined with cedars highlighted the symbolism of Marduk's statue by surrounding it with valuable prestige objects from all parts of the known world and with the attention of peoples assembled from the various Mesopotamian cities.¹⁸ This annual celebration was interrupted only by the absence from Babylon of either Marduk's statue or the king of Babylon: situations indicating that the kingdom was in crisis.¹⁹

The seventh century B.C.E. in Greece was "the age of the sanctuaries."²⁰ Cities began to invest in temples and the cultic statues that were to be housed in

¹⁴ Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 66.

¹⁵ For example, VAB 4 127 [Nbk 15 = Stein Tafel X] iii 21–22; VAB 4 152 [Nbk = Wādī-Brīsa] iv 4. On the symbolic significance of the cedar, see Lawrence Boadt, *Ezekiel's Oracles against Egypt: A Literary and Philological Study of Ezekiel 29–32* (BibOr 37; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980) 98–102.

¹⁶ Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 51, 69.

¹⁷ J. A. Black, "The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: 'Taking Bel by the Hand' and a Cultic Picnic," *Religion* 11 (1981) 39–59, here 45.

¹⁸ Julye Bidmead, *The Akītu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2002) 125, 167–68; Beate Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina Šulmi Irbu: Die kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der akītu-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Main am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994) 15–16, 19.

¹⁹ A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 35, 131; idem, "Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 B.C.)," 135; Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (ed. B. Foster; SBL Writings from the Ancient World 19; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004) 208–9.

²⁰ R. A. Tomlinson, *Greek Sanctuaries* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1976) 22; Oswyn Murray, *Early Greece* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980) 228.

them. The sacred space in a city became a place for manifesting the glory of its deity and the status of its citizens. The importance of the temple to the Archaic Greek city is reflected in the following passage from Homer's *Odyssey*, describing in mythical terms the foundation of a colony:

From there [the land of the Cyclopes] godlike Nausithous rose up and settled in Scheria far away from humans who labor for bread. He built a wall around the city and constructed houses and built temples for gods and divided the fields. (*Od.* 6.6–10).

This movement into an “unsettled” region in order to domesticate it has as one of its first tasks the construction of a temple. Such construction indicates, as Sourvinou-Inwood has argued, that “the polis put religion at its centre, forged its identity through religion.”²¹ With the competition among cities to create larger and more impressive statues of their patron deities, the temple buildings had to be increased in size.²² The monumental statues were to be on display in the sanctuary at all times and not simply to be visible on feast days at the end of processions. The traditional wooden cultic statues on a small scale were still honored, but increasing emphasis was placed on the monumental.²³

This movement toward monumentality in the Archaic Age can be traced at the sanctuary of Hera on Samos. In the late eighth century, a temple was constructed according to the standard style of the time: a long, narrow structure of one hundred feet known as a *hekatompedos*. In the mid-sixth century, a huge dipteral temple, known as the Rhoikos temple, was constructed. This structure was soon replaced by the late Archaic temple of colossal proportions (55.2 x 108.6 meters). It had 155 columns on the outside and inside of the structure.²⁴

In the Archaic Age, sanctuaries developed not only through the construction of large temples; there was also a dramatic increase in the number of votive offerings. Such offerings at the Heraion ranged from toy ships about forty centimeters long carved from wood to a colossal black marble *kouros* statue. These gifts from a sailor and a rich aristocrat respectively represented ways that the various strata of the population could participate in the activities of the sanctuary.²⁵ But there were also votive gifts from visitors, including bronze figures of

²¹ Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, “Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space: Fragments of a Discourse,” 1–17, here 11, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches* (eds. N. Marinatos and R. Hägg; New York: Routledge, 1993).

²² Nanno Marinatos, “What Were Greek Sanctuaries? A Synthesis,” 228–33, here 229, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*.

²³ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (trans. John Raffan; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 90–91.

²⁴ Helmut Kyrieleis, “The Heraion at Samos,” 125–53, here 126, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*.

²⁵ Kyrieleis, “The Heraion at Samos,” 140, 150.

bearded men with a dog, which seems to have represented the Mesopotamian mother-and healing-goddess Gula of Isin; Pharaoh Necho dedicated his armor from the battle at Megiddo in 609; Croesus of Lydia made numerous offerings to the Heraion and other Greek sanctuaries.²⁶ The Heraion at Samos has yielded more remains of imported articles than any other sanctuary in Archaic Greece, which is testimony to the flourishing trade conducted by Samos in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E.²⁷ The presence of votive gifts in the sanctuary raises the question about whether a temple functioned primarily as a house for a cultic statue or as a treasury for votive offerings. In Athens, the house for the cult statue of Athena was first the Old Temple of Athena and later a chamber in the Erechthion. But the Parthenon functioned as a treasury for Athens.²⁸

The sanctuary was administered by the city assembly and its magistrate.²⁹ The priests functioned in the temples on a rotating basis, but they did not form a permanent group whose sole role in the community was service of the sanctuary.³⁰ Because there was no king to oversee the construction and maintenance of Greek temples, as was the case in the ancient Near East, the funds for the temple must have been provided by the city and by donations.³¹ The temple and its rituals provided a public space in which the wealthy could show their greater capacity to give a gift and thus make known their higher status. In the transition from the aristocratic society of the Dark Age to the egalitarian society of the Classical Age, the temple provided a space for the aristocrats to distinguish themselves when the public space of the city assembly ignored the lineage of the aristocrat and treated every citizen as equal before the law.³² So the dedication

²⁶ Kyrieleis, "The Heraion at Samos," 145–46; Catherine Morgan, "The Origins of Pan-Hellenism," 18–44, here 33, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*.

²⁷ Kyrieleis, "The Heraion at Samos," 145–6; Catherine Morgan, "The Origins of Pan-Hellenism," 18–44, here 26, 33, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*.

²⁸ Kyrieleis, "The Heraion at Samos," 133.

²⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 95–98; Robert Garland, "Priests and Power in Classical Athens," 75–91, here 80, in Mary Beard and John A. North, *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990)

³⁰ Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "What Is Polis Religion?" 295–322, here 300–2, in *The Greek City: From Homer to Alexander* (eds. Oswyn Murray and S. R. F. Price; Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

³¹ Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 196–97. Catherine Morgan ("The Origins of Pan-Hellenism," 18–44, here 33, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*) notes how local rulers allied with sanctuaries such as the Didyma, Artemision, Samaian Heraion, and the sanctuary of Athena at Emborio on Chios in order to strengthen their hold on power. See also Walter Burkert, "Greek Temple-Builders: Who, Where and Why?" 21–29, here 24, in Robin Hägg, *The Role of Religion in the Early Greek Polis: Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, Organized by the Swedish Institute at Athens, 16–18 October 1992* (Stockholm: For the Svenska Institutet i Athen by P. Åströms Förlag, 1996).

³² Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 111; idem,

of a bronze tripod to an Archaic Greek sanctuary indicated that its giver was wealthy and helped that wealthy person to deal with a society that otherwise did not wish to extend privileges to him because of his wealth.³³

Just as the ship of Tyre in Ezekiel 27 caught the attention of the many nations and revealed the power of the city-state of Tyre so also did the processional ship of Marduk on the Arahta-canal during the New Year festival stir up a sense of wonder about the power of Babylon. These ships were more than vehicles; they were symbols of the power of their communities.³⁴ A heavily laden merchant ship would seem to point simply to material power; but by announcing judgment against this ship (Ezek 27:26-36), Yhwh makes clear that this ship of Tyre is under his control. The processional ship of Marduk communicates its full significance only in the context of the New Year ritual; the cultic festival is the occasion for the many peoples to see the spectacle of Marduk's beauty and power. Yhwh's judgment of the ship of Tyre within historical, secular space in Ezekiel 27 is an event that is seen from a cultic perspective in Ezekiel 28. If the king who is enthroned in Tyre in Ezekiel 28:2 is imagined as sitting on Tyre as a ship, through juxtaposition with Ezekiel 27:4-11, then the beautiful ship of Tyre can be seen as the "processional ship" carrying the monarch who claims to be a god. This function of displaying wealth by a royal or processional ship has an analogue in the use of the beauty of the buildings, cultic statues, and votive offerings in the Greek sanctuaries to proclaim to the citizens and visitors that the deity residing in this place and the community associated with this deity are important and powerful. The display of wealth was an important function of cultic space in the Mesopotamian, Greek, and Tyrian cities, which in turn had an important sociopolitical function of creating a place for the members and officials of the community.

The Composite Being as a Boundary Keeper: A Servant or a Rebel?

The situating of the community of Tyre in a cultic context is effected in Ezekiel 28:11-19 by placing the king of Tyre in Eden, the garden of God (28:13). This king is identified as a cherub, if one reads the *'at-kērūb*, "you are a cherub," of the MT in v. 14.³⁵ Alternatively, one could read *'et-kērūb*, "with the cherub,"

"Poetics of Power: The Interpretation of Ritual Action in Archaic Greece," 15–45, here 35, in *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics* (ed. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³³ Morgan, "The Origins of Pan-Hellenism," 18–44, here 22–28.

³⁴ Pongratz-Leisten (*Ina Šulmi Irub*, 22) argues that the procession of the ship over the waters of the canal would have symbolized Marduk's triumph over Tīāmat.

³⁵ James Barr ("'Thou Art the Cherub': Ezekiel 28.14 and the Post Ezekiel Understanding of Genesis 2–3," 213–23, here 217, in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp* [JSOTSup 149];

according to the LXX, in which case the king would be accompanied by the cherub rather than identified with it.³⁶ According to the latter interpretation, the cherub would be a divine protector for the king. According to the former reading, the king would take on the characteristics and functions of the cherub and so would be responsible for maintaining the boundaries of the garden. The ambiguity concerning the best reading of this phrase finds an analogue in the ambiguity of the figure of the cherub itself, for it was a composite being that transcended the familiar natural order.

The singular use of cherub in Ezekiel 28 distinguishes this figure from the four living creatures of the throne chariot in Ezekiel 1:5-25 who are identified as cherubim in Ezekiel 10:20. When the burning of Jerusalem is ordered in 10:4, 7, one of the cherubim is singled out to remove a burning coal from the midst of the four cherubim. The capacity of one of the cherubim to act on his own is affirmed in Ezekiel 10:4, 7 (cf. 9:3) and so provides a link for the creatures of the throne chariot to the creature on the mountain of God in Ezekiel 28:14, 16.

The cherub figure in Phoenician-Canaanite iconography is a sphinxlike thronebearer.³⁷ The sphinx has a body of a lion and the wings of an eagle. The cherub in Ezekiel 1 is a humanoid figure with four faces: that of a human, lion, eagle, and bull. In both representations, the cherub is a composite creature with human and animal characteristics. Such hybrid creatures belong to the realm of myth where they serve to bring together the divine, human, and animal spheres. It is precisely this capacity to compare, contrast, and merge the divine, human, and animal spheres that makes the cherub a potent symbol as a boundary keeper.

The Old Testament cherub was a winged creature, either biped or quadruped,³⁸ that had three distinctive roles: (1) to guard the source of life (Gen 3:24); (2) to draw the chariot of God (Ps 18:11 = 2 Sam 22:11; Ezek 1:5-20;

Sheffield: JSOT, 1992]) notes that the Masorah Parva indicate that a rare masculine form of 'att, "you," occurs three times (out of 740-50 occurrences): Numbers 11:15; Deuteronomy 5:24; and Ezekiel 28:14. Alternatively, as Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 113) notes, the Masoretes may have misvocalized the form 'att as the feminine singular independent pronoun.

³⁶ Kalmon Yaron, "The Dirge over the King of Tyre," *ASTI* 3 (1964) 28-57, here 29-31. Barr ("Thou Art the Cherub," 213-23, here 219-21) notes that Jerome entertained both of the alternative translations.

³⁷ W. F. Albright, "What Were the Cherubim?" 95-97, in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* (vol. 1; eds. G. E. Wright and D. N. Freedman; Missoula, Mt.: Scholars, 1975); T. N. D. Mettinger, "YHWH Sabaoth—The Heavenly King on the Cherubim Throne," 107-38, here 113-16, in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays* (ed. T. Ishida; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1982); E. Bloch-Smith, "Solomon's Temple: The Politics of Ritual Space" 83-94, here 85, 88, in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (ed. B. Gittlen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

³⁸ D. N. Freedman and M. O'Connor, "kerub," *TDOT* 7 (1995): 307-19, here 314.

10:1-22); and (3) to serve as a throne for God (1 Kgs 6:23-28; 8:6-8).³⁹ In Ezekiel 28:14, the “anointed cherub” (*kērúb mimšah*)⁴⁰ functioned as a guardian (*haššōkēk*) within the garden of Eden, where, analogous to Genesis 3:24, one of the cherub’s responsibilities may have been the protection of the vegetation or the fertility of the garden.⁴¹

In his construction of religious and civic space in Babylon, Nebuchadrezzar strategically placed dragon (*mušbuššu*) and lion figures on gates and walls. He states in his inscription for the renovation of the E-ulla temple for Ninkarrak in Sippar:

Babylon, the city of the great lord Marduk, the city of his highest praise, I completed its great walls: Imgur-Enlil and Nimitti-Enlil. On the threshold of their gates, I constructed fierce bronze bulls and raging dragons.” (VAB 4 106 [Nbk 13 = Zyl III,7] I:54–60)⁴²

He elaborates on his adornment of the Ištar Gate in the inscription celebrating renovations to the old palace and the construction of a new inner wall:

On the other side of the water, I laid its foundation with asphalt and bricks; and I artfully adorned it with glistening lapis lazuli bricks with wild bulls and dragons formed upon them. I placed massive bronze bulls and fierce dragons on their thresholds; I filled those gates with splendor in view of all peoples. (VAB 4 132 [Nbk 15 = Stein Tafel X] vi 1–7, 16–21)⁴³

The snake-dragon (*mušbuššu*) was associated with several gods in Mesopotamian history. It was a servant of Ninazu, the city-god of Ešnunna in the third millennium and the son of Ereškigal, the queen of the underworld.⁴⁴ When Ninazu was displaced by Tišpak, the Hurrian storm god, the *mušbuššu* came to be seen as a mount for Tišpak. In the Labbu-myth, Tišpak subdues the *mušbuššu* and so brings this fierce monster under his control. The snake-dragon

³⁹ Freedman and O’Connor, “kerub,” 307–19, here 312–13.

⁴⁰ Alternatively, HALAT 608B lists *māšah* II, “to measure,” in which case *kērúb mimšah*, “the cherub who measures out,” would be a distributor or boundary-keeper; cf. Dexter E. Callender Jr., *Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human* (HSM 48; Atlanta: Scholars, 2000) 110.

⁴¹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 113; James Miller, “The Maelaek of Tyre (Ezekiel 28, 11-19),” *ZAW* 105 (1993): 497–501, here 499. For the identification of the cherub of Eden with the cherubim of the chariot and the ark, see Yaron, “The Dirge over the King of Tyre,” 28–57, here 33, 45.

⁴² Text: Ludwig Abel and Hugo Winckler, *Keilschrifttexte zum Gebrauch bei Vorlesungen* (Berlin: W. Spemann, 1890) 34–35.

⁴³ Text: H. Winckler, E. Böhden, eds., *Altabyylonische Keilschrifttexte zum Gebrauch bei Vorlesungen* (Leipzig, 1892) no. 78, p. 36.

⁴⁴ Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, eds., *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

figure in Mesopotamian iconography has the body of a snake, the front legs of a lion, the back legs of a bird, a serpentine neck and a head with horns.⁴⁵ When Hammurapi conquered Ešnunna, the *mušbuššu* became the servant of Marduk; later it served Nabû. Under the Assyrians, the *mušbuššu* served Aššur.⁴⁶ As a composite being of two wild, terror-inspiring animals, the snake-dragon (perhaps a roaring lion-dragon)⁴⁷ with a venomous bite was a foe beyond all foes. Such a powerful monster would be a fitting symbol for the deity regarded as exercising sovereignty in Mesopotamia. This figure may be the one referred to in Ezekiel 32:2, if the juxtaposition of “lion” and “dragon” refers to a composite creature (i.e., the lion-dragon) rather than to two separate creatures; here Ezekiel applied it to the Egyptian Pharaoh Hophrah.⁴⁸

When Tiamat was preparing for battle against the gods, she created monsters to assist her, including:

monster snakes (*mušmahbū*) . . . fierce dragons (*ušumgallū*) . . . She positioned serpents (*bašmū*), snake-dragons (*mušbuššu*), and hairy hero-men (*lahamū*), lion monsters (*ugallumū*), lion men (*uridimmū*), scorpion men (*girtablullū*), mighty demons (*imūdabrātu*, “violent storms”), fish men (*kululū*), bull men (*kusarikkū*).”
(*EE* I:134, 137, 141–43)

These eleven monsters were placed under the command of Kingu, which then constituted a group of twelve fierce foes that represented cosmic evil. By defeating them, Marduk made the case that his rule was cosmic in scope.⁴⁹ He communicated his victory by placing images of these eleven defeated monsters in the *apsū* and said, “so that they may never be forgotten, let this be the sign” (*EE* V:76).⁵⁰

The threatening character of a monster highlights its potential for rebellion against the established order. Wiggermann explains that as a supernatural freak, a monster is linked with a god as a servant: i.e., the god and the monster operate in the same field of action. The monster represents merely a slice of this field, whereas the god covers the whole field. The god is concerned for stability,

⁴⁵ Theodore Lewis, “CT 13.33–34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths,” *JAOS* 116 (1996): 28–47, here 35.

⁴⁶ Tallay Ornan, *The Triumph of the Symbol: Pictorial Representation of Deities in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Image Ban* (OBO 213; Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005) 48–49.

⁴⁷ Lewis, “CT 13.33–34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths,” 28–47, here 34.

⁴⁸ Lewis, “CT 13.33–34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths,” 28–47, here 34–36, 38; cf. Lawrence Boadt, *Ezekiel’s Oracles against Egypt: A Literary and Philological Study of Ezekiel 29–32* (BibOr 37; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980) 130–32.

⁴⁹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 163.

⁵⁰ Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina Šulmi Irub*, 22–23. For parallels with Heracles’ labors, see M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 468.

whereas the monster is associated with a crisis. As a defeated rebel, the *mušbuššu* serves as the mount of his master.⁵¹ Analogously, the cherub of Psalm 18:11 serves as a mount for Yhwh.

In the Greek tradition, composite beings play a prominent role in mythical texts as anomalous figures who do not fit the typical categories of the divine, human, and animal.⁵² For example, the one-eyed Cyclopes are giants who stand outside of the human by the addition of size and by the subtraction of one eye (*Theog.* 139–46). They were apparently imprisoned in Tartarus with the Titans until Zeus released them (*Theog.* 501–6).⁵³ Then they became his servants and provided the thunderbolt for him. The three Hundred Handers—Kottos, Briareos, Gyges—were powerful warrior gods (*Theog.* 149–59, 244, 1006). Uranus imprisoned them in Tartarus, but Zeus released them at the urging of Gaia (*Theog.* 617–26). A version of this release is also reported in the *Iliad*. Achilles reminded his mother Thetis (daughter of Nereus) that she was instrumental in the release of Briareos who then was able to thwart the rebellion of Hera, Poseidon, and Athena against Zeus (*Il.* 1.396–404). Thereafter, Briareos stood watch before the throne of Zeus (*Il.* 1.405–6).

In his *Theogony*, Hesiod identifies the monsters as members of the family of Pontus, the deep sea (*Theog.* 270–336). Pontus was the son of Gaia, the earth (*Theog.* 132). When he had incestuous relations with Gaia, the offspring were Phorkys and Keto, and probably Nereus—although Hesiod says only that Pontus was the father of Nereus (*Theog.* 233–39).⁵⁴ The offspring of Nereus were revered in popular religion for their capacity to foretell the future and for their beauty.⁵⁵ But the offspring of Phorkys and Keto were all monsters: i.e., hybrid creatures that violated the normal categories of the divine, human, and animal worlds. West notes that they are creatures that appear in popular stories about Heracles and other heroes.⁵⁶ Phorkys and Keto incestuously united to form the

⁵¹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 152–55. Amar Annus (*The God Ninurta in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia* [SAAS 14; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002] 5) provides a profile of the god Ninurta as “the defender of the divine world order,” a forerunner of Marduk.

⁵² Dominique Lenfant (“Monsters in Greek Ethnography and Society in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BCE,” 197–214, here 198–200, in *From Myth to Reason: Studies in the Development of Greek Thought* [ed. Richard Buxton; New York: Oxford University Press 1999]) notes that the Greek *teras* carried the meaning of “portent” as did the Latin *monstrum*. Hesiod (*Op.* 182) sees a connection between monstrous human births and the divine punishment of a society. But the Hippocratic authors and Aristotle refrained from attributing a divine warning to human births that bore traits of other species.

⁵³ M. L. West, ed., *Theogony* by Hesiod (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 206.

⁵⁴ West, ed., *Theogony*, 235.

⁵⁵ West, ed., *Theogony*, 236.

Graiai⁵⁷ and the Gorgons⁵⁸ (*Theog.* 270–75). One of the three Gorgons was the mortal Medusa. After she had intercourse with Poseidon, she was slain by the semidivine hero Perseus.⁵⁹ From her neck came forth Chrysaor and Pegasus. Pegasus fled to heaven to be with his father Poseidon, from which position he was believed to be the messenger of Zeus' thunderbolts, which presumably had been manufactured and stored away by the Cyclopes (*Theog.* 276–86). Chrysaor united with the Oceanid Kallirhoe to produce the tripleheaded Geryon, who was then slain by Heracles, the son of Zeus (*Theog.* 287–89).

Kallirhoe⁶⁰ also gave birth to Echidna whom Hesiod describes as an:

. . . immense monster in a hollow cave, nothing similar to mortal humans or to immortal gods. This is dauntless, divine Echidna. Half of her is nymph with beautiful cheeks and quick-glancing eyes, but the other half is a snake-monster: fierce, large, quick-moving, and an eater of raw flesh, hidden in inaccessible places of the earth. (*Theog.* 296–301, 311–12)

She apparently united with Typhoeus (*Theog.* 306–8).⁶¹ Clay notes that her snake half would accord with Typhoeus's one hundred heads.⁶² Among their three offspring were two doglike creatures: Orthos, the herding dog of Geryon, and Cerberus, "the savage, bronze barking dog of Hades, fifty-headed, and powerful, and without pity" (*Theog.* 311–12), the one who keeps the dead from escaping from Hades. The third creature born from the union of Typhoeus and Echidna was the Hydra of Lerna. Hera wanted the Hydra to slay the semidi-

⁵⁶ West, ed., *Theogony*, 243.

⁵⁷ Three sisters whose hair was gray from birth but who otherwise are portrayed as young (see West, ed., *Theogony*, 244–45).

⁵⁸ Three sisters (Stheno, Euryale, Medusa) whose hair was like serpents; everyone who looked at them turned to stone (see Mark Morford and Robert Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* [7th ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003] 154).

⁵⁹ Perseus' father was Zeus and his mother was Danaë, the daughter of Acrisius, king of Argos. Because an oracle informed him that a future son of Danaë would kill him, he imprisoned her in an underground room in his palace to keep her from having children. Zeus impregnated her; she gave birth to Perseus whom she hid in the chamber for four years. Acrisius put Danaë and Perseus in a chest and floated them on the sea. They were rescued by the fisherman Dictys. Perseus boasted to Polydectes, the brother of Dictys and king of Seriphos, that he could secure the Gorgon's head (see Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 506).

⁶⁰ West, ed., (*Theogony*, 249) claims that the mother referred to here by *bēd'* is probably Keto, not Kallirhoe since her only child in lines 979–83 is Geryon.

⁶¹ This youngest offspring of Gaia was a terrifying dragon with a hundred snakeheads protruding from his shoulders. Zeus immediately killed this formidable foe in an earth-shaking battle. Typhoeus is regarded as the source of destructive winds (*Theog.* 820–80; see West, *The East Face of Helicon*; Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 79–80).

⁶² Jenny Strauss Clay, "The Generation of Monsters in Hesiod," *CP* 88 (1993) 105–16, here 110.

vine Heracles, offspring of Zeus and Amphytryon (*Theog.* 313–14). Here, as Clay notes, the monstrous invades the inhabited world and poses a threat to humans.⁶³ Heracles slays the Hydra and so turns back the monstrous from the human sphere. The Hydra gave birth to the Chimaera, a fire-breathing monster with three heads: that of a lion, a she-goat, and a snake (*Theog.* 319–24). Pegasus and Bellerophon defeated this creature who is portrayed as a fanciful, almost comic figure. Two final monsters are the Sphinx and the Nemean Lion, which were born from the incestuous union of the Echidna with Orthos (*Theog.* 326–27). The Nemean Lion was killed by Heracles who thereby restored the natural hierarchy between the human and the animal (*Theog.* 332).⁶⁴ For the lion's capacity to hunt down humans was regarded as inverting the natural order between humans and beasts.⁶⁵

These monsters pointed to the forces of chaos that tried to make the world uninhabitable. These creatures were anomalies: i.e., they fell outside the normal categories of being. Clay argues that they were not sufficiently individuated.⁶⁶ These monsters were not so powerful as to merit the status of anti-gods, yet they were too powerful for mere humans to subdue. The semidivine heroes that conquered them—Perseus and Heracles—exhibited the power of the monster they subdued; their benefit was that they brought this power into the service of the cosmos.⁶⁷

Composite beings in Ezekiel, Mesopotamia, and Archaic Greece were located at two pivotal points in the cosmic order: (1) the juncture of the divine and the human and (2) the juncture of the human and the animal. For the integrity of communal life and for the proper ordering of the cosmos, it was important that the spheres of the divine, human, and animal properly interact: i.e., these spheres needed to maintain their distinctiveness and yet at the same time had to intermingle appropriately to do what was necessary to uphold the cosmic order. The Mesopotamian snake-dragon was a harnessed rebel that always had the potential to turn on its master. This rebellious potential of Briareos had been contained and channeled toward the support of Zeus' rule (*Il.* 1.405–6). The cherub in Ezekiel is a composite being with this same potential to turn from a thronebearer to one who tries to take over the throne. How to guide this rebellious potential in creatures cuts to the very heart of Ezekiel's prophetic mission. There is no simple solution to the balancing act required to keep the vital forces in the universe mindful of the sovereignty of Yhwh. If Ezekiel identified the king of Tyre as the cherub in Ezekiel 28:14, then this human ruler was seen to have within him animal, human, and divine components that

⁶³ Clay, "The Generation of Monsters in Hesiod," 111.

⁶⁴ West, *The East Face of Helicon*, 461.

⁶⁵ Clay, "The Generation of Monsters in Hesiod," 111–12.

⁶⁶ Clay, "The Generation of Monsters in Hesiod," 114.

⁶⁷ Clay, "The Generation of Monsters in Hesiod," 111, 115–16.

made their claim upon him. Each component had its place, but the place of one was defined against the other two. The relationship between these three components in the human person was a tensive one: the forces in each sphere had to be allowed to unfold but at the same time had to be channeled. When Ezekiel sounded forth his lament over the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:11-19, he was making known to the king of Tyre how he had failed to maintain this balance. Ezekiel emphasized the role of humans in maintaining the balance between the animal, human, and divine spheres. In Hesiod, semidivine figures like Perseus or Heracles battled against the monsters. In the *Enūma Eliš*, the god Marduk defeated the monsters and imprisoned them in the *apsū*. But Ezekiel, although he recognized that forces larger than the individual imposed on human life, did not step back from his judgment that human choices to honor idols and other powers had diluted their recognition of Yhwh's sovereignty and so had triggered the judgment that the exiles were currently undergoing.

Wealth Acquired through Trade: Networks of Power and Illusion

In Ezekiel 28:1-10, Yhwh directs Ezekiel to pronounce an oracle of judgment against the "prince" (*nāgīd*) of Tyre who believes that he is a god and is immune from death, for he says: "I am El; I reside in a divine residence in the heart of the seas" (28:2). It seems that the prince of Tyre is claiming not merely to be a god but rather to hold the sovereignty traditionally ascribed to El. But the prince of Tyre is the one who "has made his heart high (i.e., haughty)" (*gābāh libbēkā*, v. 2); he has positioned his heart as though it were that of a god (*libbēkā kēlēb 'elōhīm*, v. 2). The heart (*lēb*) is the center of a person's being; if this center is not in balance, then the whole body suffers from disequilibrium. Thus, the condition of the heart is a barometer of how well the person's perception is in order. Ezekiel admits that the prince of Tyre is "wise"; in fact, he is wiser than Dan'el (v. 3)—probably a reference to a legendary sage in the Canaanite tradition mentioned in the Ugaritic texts (*Aghat*, *CT* 1.19, III.1–IV.50; cf. Ezek 14:12-20). The principle way in which the prince of Tyre has manifested his wisdom has been through his capacity to amass riches (28:4-5). His control over riches has in turn made him think of himself as a god.

The riches that the prince of Tyre was able to acquire came to him by way of the trading empire that the Phoenicians had developed in the first half of the first millennium B.C.E. In Ezekiel 27:12-25, Ezekiel incorporates and reworks what seems to have been a Phoenician document mapping out Tyre's trading partners at the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E.⁶⁸ Liverani has pointed out that a striking feature of Ezekiel 27:12-25 is that the flow of goods is toward

⁶⁸ Mario Liverani ("The Trade Network of Tyre according to Ezek. 27," 65–79, here 66, n. 5, in *Ab, Assyria. . . Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Pre-*

and not away Tyre. It describes ways that Tyre imported materials rather than the ways that it engaged in bilateral trade. If the original Phoenician document stems from the early first millennium, it could reflect the mentality of a type of redistributive rather than mercantile exchange, in which the primary concern was the way that the center received goods. Although the lament of Ezekiel 27 presents a non-judgmental, somber picture of Tyre, it serves well Ezekiel's larger purpose in chapters 26–28 in which he criticizes Tyre and its ruler for regarding its trading operations as superior to all others (27:25; 28:2-7).⁶⁹

Liverani has grouped Tyre's trading partners in Ezekiel 27:12-25 into four concentric bands: (1) the inner band, consisting of Judah, Israel, and Damascus, which supplied agricultural products; (2) the second band, consisting of Bet-Togarmah, Arabia, Qedar, and Damascus, which sent both animals and their products to Tyre; (3) the third band, consisting of Yawan, Tubal and Meshek, Dedan II, Edom, Eden-Harran-Assur, which brought manufactured goods and slaves; and (4) the outer band, consisting of Tarshish, Sheba and Ra'ma, Dedan I, and Edom, which sent metals and luxury goods to Tyre. A surprising feature of this schema is that it emphasizes overland rather than maritime trade, for Tyre's uniqueness lay in its shipping activities. Perhaps the Phoenician document that Ezekiel reworked was trying to adjust this popular perception and claim that overland trade was much more significant to the Tyrian trading enterprise than was commonly thought. Another oddity in Ezekiel 27:12-25 is the omission of Egypt and Babylon: these two imperial powers would seem to have been major markets for Phoenician goods. Perhaps the original document included them; alternatively, the Phoenician document could have stemmed, as Liverani suggests, from around 627–616 B.C.E. at which time there was a relaxation of Assyrian and Egyptian influence in Syro-Palestine; therefore, the Tyrians would have had an opportunity to expand their trade.⁷⁰ Furthermore, to have included Egypt and Babylon in the list would have meant that Tyre was overshadowed by imperial powers with larger populations and stronger militaries—a point that would have been inconceivable to the prince of Tyre portrayed in Ezekiel 28:1-10.

sented to Hayim Tadmor [ed. M. Cogan and I. Eph'al; Scripta Hierosolymitana 33; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991] cites (1) B. Mazar ("The Philistines and the Rise of Israel and Tyre," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 1/7 (1967) 21) for a tenth to ninth century B.C.E. date to a Tyrian poem; (2) Katzenstein (*The History of Tyre*, 162, 323–24) for a date in the first half of the ninth century; (3) W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (London: Althone Press, 1968) for a date in the first half of the eighth century.

⁶⁹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 53.

⁷⁰ Liverani, "The Trade Network of Tyre according to Ezek. 27," 65–79, here 71, in *Ab, Assyria*.

Phoenician trade in the western Mediterranean flourished between 750–550 B.C.E.⁷¹ The Phoenicians typically established trading colonies in the areas where they saw potential markets.⁷² They did not immediately settle down with the aim of colonizing the area. Their relations with the local population had to be cooperative, for the services offered by the indigenous population were vital to the trading and manufacturing enterprises that the Phoenicians promoted.⁷³ On the island of Thasos in the northern Aegean, the Phoenicians worked the gold mines with the cooperation of the Thracians.⁷⁴ Phoenician trade in the western Mediterranean trade involving Tartessos of Spain is well known (cf. Ps 48:7; 72:10). The interest in the Guadalquivir valley, where Tartessos was located, was primarily in metal products. One of the most sought after products in Spain in the eighth to seventh centuries B.C.E. was silver; the mining and refining of silver in the Riontinto region was extensive.⁷⁵ In the seventh century, agricultural products in the western Mediterranean also became important to Phoenician traders. However, the map in Ezekiel 27:12, 25 suggests that the Phoenicians were primarily interested in precious metals and luxury goods in the western Mediterranean.

Assyria's incorporation of much of Syro-Palestine into its provincial system in the late eighth century had as its goal to make these regions resemble Assyria.⁷⁶ The deportation of large portions of the population and replacement with other population groups from another part of the empire was a social engineering project aimed at making these territories permanently part of Assyria.⁷⁷ The Assyrians were not simply interested in extracting wealth in the short-term, as seems to have been the case with the Babylonians under Nebuchadrezzar.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the Phoenicians were given considerable latitude in developing their sea trade in the eighth to seventh centuries. The Assyrians would have benefited from tolls on increased trade; also their own demand for more materials would have been addressed more favorably if Phoenician commerce were strong.⁷⁹

⁷¹ María Eugenia Aubet Semmler, "Phoenician Trade in the West: Balance and Perspective, 97–112, here 101, in *Phoenicians in Spain: An Archaeological Review of the Eighth-Sixth Centuries B.C.E.* (ed. and trans. Marilyn Bierling; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

⁷² Edward Lipíński, "The Phoenicians," 1321–33, here 1329, in *CANE*.

⁷³ Aubet Semmler, "Phoenician Trade in the West: Balance and Perspective, 97–112, here 103, in *Phoenicians in Spain*; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 71.

⁷⁴ A. J. Graham, "The Colonial Expansion of Greece," 116.

⁷⁵ María Eugenia Aubet Semmler, "Notes on the Economy of the Phoenician Settlements in Southern Spain," 79–95, here 79, in *Phoenicians in Spain*.

⁷⁶ Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 41, 44.

⁷⁷ Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 144) notes that under Sargon II the deportees were instructed in proper cultural and linguistic behavior, but it is not known whether this practice continued under the Babylonians.

⁷⁸ Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 41, 44.

⁷⁹ Lipíński, "The Phoenicians," 1327, in *CANE*.

The typical policy of Neo-Assyrian rulers was to keep vassals intact so that the lucrative trade network in the ancient Near East might work to their advantage.⁸⁰ One of the reasons that the Assyrian kings paid close attention to Babylonia was that important trade routes traversed that land: the route to the Persian gulf ports and the route from the Zagros mountains to northern Africa and back through Arabia.⁸¹ Esarhaddon seized Arabian divine images on three occasions and returned them with his name inscribed on them—something that Assyria rarely did except for Babylonia.⁸² This symbolic maneuver of capturing and returning divine images was designed to bring Arabia and its trade within the Assyrian orbit. Assyria's involvement in trade in upper Syria and Cilicia since the early second millennium could account for its continuing control in these regions three years beyond the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C.E.⁸³ Until 609 B.C.E., the upper Syrian city of Harran (meaning "road") remained a strategic location for Assyrian commerce and military transport.⁸⁴

Under the Sargonid kings, the imperial center maintained its authority not only militarily and economically but also through intelligence-gathering.⁸⁵ Loyalty oaths were administered to crown-appointed provincial officials who were expected to value loyalty to the king above all other considerations. This system allowed the Assyrian king to micromanage the affairs of Babylonian temples.⁸⁶ The extraction of wealth was an important material goal of the provincial system, yet the giving of tribute in the form of offerings to Aššur was an important symbolic act of acknowledging the power of the Assyrian king and his protector deity Aššur.⁸⁷ In the next ring of imperial organization beyond the provinces, client or vassal states were expected to pay annual taxes and tribute.⁸⁸ So just as the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 27–28 viewed his commercial empire as one in which the goods flowed to the center, so also the Assyrian kings expected offerings and tribute to flow to the Assyrian capital in acknowledgment of its position as

⁸⁰ Steven Holloway, *Aššur Is King! Aššur Is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 192.

⁸¹ Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 347; cf. Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 47–48.

⁸² Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 366; cf. Grayson, "Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC), 103–41, here 135, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2: *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.* (ed. John Boardman et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁸³ Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 67.

⁸⁴ Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 400–1.

⁸⁵ Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 83–85.

⁸⁶ Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 331–36.

⁸⁷ Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "Mental Map und Weltbild in Mesopotamien," 261–79, here 263, in *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalische Kontexte* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 32; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 100–8.

⁸⁸ Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 100.

the center. However, the Assyrian imperial model prioritized palace-centered exchange over commodity exchange.

Nebuchadrezzar II was intent on building magnificent temples and buildings in Babylonian cities. He needed materials, labor, and wealth from the provinces to do so. It is debated whether he tried to maintain the Neo-Assyrian provincial system.⁸⁹ Such a system may have been more expensive to establish in the short-term, but it would have paid dividends in the long haul as a continuous source of revenue. One of Nebuchadrezzar's main goals in his campaigns in Syro-Palestine in 601–598 B.C.E. was to keep Egypt out of that area,⁹⁰ in contrast to the campaigns of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon in the eighth to seventh centuries whose primary aim was to subdue Palestine as a staging ground for an invasion of Egypt.⁹¹ Nebuchadrezzar's appointment of Gedaliah as governor of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem indicates that he was not intent on eliminating Yahwism;⁹² nevertheless, this action was far short of designating Judah as a Babylonian province. With regard to Tyre, Nebuchadrezzar lay siege to it for thirteen years (585–572 B.C.E.); still this action did not aim to destroy Tyre's trade network, for Babylonia benefitted from it as a rival to Egyptian and Greek trade.⁹³

In the list of trading partners in Ezekiel 27:12–24, Assyria is mentioned in the third band as one who supplied manufactured products and slaves. Babylon is not listed. Yet Babylon was immersed in the trading activities of the ancient Near East as seen not only by business documents but also by the large number of aliens resident in Babylonia in the seventh to sixth centuries, including merchants, mercenaries, political refugees, and seasonal workers from Elam, Persia, Cilicia, Judah, Ionia, Media, and Egypt.⁹⁴ Ezekiel's group of Judahite deportees

⁸⁹ Rainer Albertz (*Israel in Exile* [Leiden: Brill, 2004] 53) claims that it was the goal of Nebuchadrezzar to take over the provincial system. Vanderhooft (*The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 99, 111) counters that there is almost no evidence for such a provincial government in the records; idem, "Babylonian Strategies of Imperial Control in the West: Royal Practice and Rhetoric," 235–62, here 237, in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003).

⁹⁰ Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 29; Vanderhooft, "Babylonian Strategies of Imperial Control in the West: Royal Practice and Rhetoric," 235–62, here 242, in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*; idem, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 81–82.

⁹¹ Grayson, "Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 B.C.)," 103–41, here 124–25, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2.

⁹² Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 56.

⁹³ Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 57.

⁹⁴ Dandamaev, "Neo-Babylonian Society and Economy," 252–75, here 256, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2; John Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747–626 B.C.* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1984) 35.

were valuable to Babylonia as a labor resource. They were probably located near Nippur to cultivate land that the crown was trying to bring back into production. This region had endured a strong Assyrian military presence until at least 627.⁹⁵ Thus, the changeover from Assyrian to Babylonian rule may have led the Babylonian king to designate the area around Nippur as one much in need of development.

The Babylonian economy gained strength during the *Pax Assyriaca* of the seventh century.⁹⁶ Throughout the NB era, agriculture had developed steadily and continued to be the basis for Babylonia's prosperity. Its well-developed system of canals and rivers provided a network for gathering and distributing agricultural products to various parts of the empire.⁹⁷ It is noteworthy that the palace held only a small amount of land.⁹⁸ The king secured a major portion of his revenues from taxes and tolls. Even though the NB temples were more independent of the palace in NB times than in the earlier NA times, the palace in sixth-century Babylonia still played a key regulative role in the production and exchange of goods.⁹⁹ Furthermore, individual merchants could carry on many projects independently of these large institutions, even though the largest Babylonian landholders in NB times were the temples and entrepreneurs.¹⁰⁰ For ventures in international trade requiring substantial capital, temples were involved as indicated by the presence of temple scribes as accountants and managers in places as far away as Tyre.¹⁰¹ One of the reasons that the Neo-Babylonian economy cannot be described as a market economy is that craftsmen were not able to secure raw materials in sufficient quantity; therefore, they worked for the temples.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Grant Frame, *Babylonia 689–627: A Political History* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1992) 193, 199.

⁹⁶ Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, 31–36.

⁹⁷ Marc van de Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000–323 B.C.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) 263.

⁹⁸ M. A. Dandamaev, "Neo-Babylonian Society and Economy," 252–75, here 261, in *CAH* vol. 3, part 2.

⁹⁹ Peter Bedford, "The Economy of the Near East in the First Millennium," 58–88, here 62, 71, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia* (MOS Studies 1; Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1999); cf. A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964) 114; J. G. Dercksen ed., "Introduction," 1–4, here 3, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*; Liverani, "The Trade Network of Tyre according to Ezek. 27," 65–79, here 75, in *Ab, Assyria*.

¹⁰⁰ Van de Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East*, 263.

¹⁰¹ Dandamaev, "Neo-Babylonian Society and Economy," 252–75, here 263, in *CAH* vol. 3, part 2.

¹⁰² Dandamaev, "Neo-Babylonian Society and Economy," 252–75, here 265, in *CAH* vol. 3, part 2.

In the eighth century B.C.E., a commercial revolution was changing the landscape of Greek society. In Dark Age Greece, wealth was redistributed to maintain social status. A *basileus*, “king, noble,” would receive goods as a sign of deference and would give goods to others as a sign of benevolence.¹⁰³ In other words, status dictated how wealth was distributed. In the eighth century, wealth began to dictate status: i.e., the accumulation and circulation of wealth began to happen without regard to one’s status as an aristocrat or a commoner. The rule of the *basileus* was still in place as a redistributive center, but the various *basilēes* began to move beyond gift-exchange with outsiders to engagement in commodity exchange.¹⁰⁴ The resulting shift in the relationship between status and wealth was a key factor in the rise of the polis: in the aristocratic society of Dark Age Greece, wealth followed status; but in the emerging polis society of Archaic Greece, status followed wealth.¹⁰⁵

In the eighth century, Greek trade expanded throughout the Mediterranean and into the Black Sea. Although Greek goods made their way to Tyre in the period of 950–750 B.C.E., Greek traders were probably not resident there until after 750.¹⁰⁶ There is also evidence in the late eighth century for Greek trading settlements among the Phoenicians in Al-Mina, Ras el-Bassit, and Sukas.¹⁰⁷ At the Cretan port of Kommos, there had been a Phoenician trading station since the tenth century B.C.E.; but around 750, the Phoenician presence retreated and was replaced by Greek traders. For the Phoenicians, the eighth century was also a time of increasing trade in the western Mediterranean;¹⁰⁸ therefore, the departure of the Phoenician traders from Kommos may have been the result of better opportunities elsewhere rather than of hostility from Greek traders.

In the eighth century in Pithecusa on the island of Ischia near Naples, the Euboeans from Chalcis and Eretria in central Greece joined hands in establishing a settlement on what was then an uninhabited spot. The commonalities in burial practice between these Euboean settlers in Pithecusa and the Etruscans in Campania show a level of cultural exchange and cooperation between the two

¹⁰³ David W. Tandy, *Warriors into Traders: The Power of the Market in Early Greece* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997) 92–93.

¹⁰⁴ Tandy, *Warriors into Traders*, 109, 125; Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 18, 194, 198–99.

¹⁰⁵ Tandy, *Warriors into Traders*, 109, 135.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Haider, “Griechen im Voerderen Orient und in Ägypten bis ca. 590 v. Chr.” 59–115, here 62, in *Wege zur Genese griechischer Identität* (ed. Christoph Ulf; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996).

¹⁰⁷ Haider, “Griechen im Voerderen Orient und in Ägypten bis ca. 590 v. Chr.” 59–115, here 63–67, in *Wege zur Genese griechischer Identität*.

¹⁰⁸ Adolfo J. Domínguez, “Greeks in Iberia: Colonialism without Colonization,” 65–95, here 70, in *Archaeology of Colonialism* (ed. Claire L. Lyons and John Popadopoulos; Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002).

groups.¹⁰⁹ Also Phoenician traders were accepted into this Greek settlement for there is evidence that the Phoenicians were buried alongside the Greeks.¹¹⁰ A primary reason for investing in a location as a colony rather than as a trading settlement was the economic potential of the site rather than its availability as a place for the mother city to dispose of excess and unwanted population.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, some colonies were founded to address drought or climate-related problems in the mother city. As trade networks developed, food supplies could be brought to an area rather than relocating parts of the population.¹¹²

In addition to the colonizing efforts of Chalcis and Eretria in southern Italy and Sicily, significant foundations were established by Miletus in the Propontis and Black Sea area, by Megara in Sicily and the Propontis, by Corinth in Sicily and Illyria, by Thera in Cyrene in north Africa, and by Ionian Phocaea in Massalia in the Rhone delta of Gaul. A significant trading port with mercenaries was set up at Naucratis in the delta region of the Nile at the invitation of the Saite Pharaohs in the seventh century. Unlike other colonies, Naucratis had no mother city; it was a trading port overseen by several participating Greek cities, including Chios, Teos, Phocaea, and Mytilene.¹¹³ It was not until the second half of the sixth century that Athens established a colony at Sigeum in the Propontis; it did so because of its interest in the corn trade in this area.¹¹⁴

The king of Tyre is portrayed in Ezekiel 27–28 as if he were an imperial ruler over a redistributive system of exchange as could be found in the second half of the second millennium in the ancient Near East.¹¹⁵ Historically, the king of Tyre in 587 B.C.E. was the head of a kingdom in which most trading initiatives were not palace-based. Phoenician and Greek traders were competing and cooperating in various parts of the Mediterranean. The economic dimension would seem to have countered numerous cultural barriers to their cooperation. The Babylonian and Egyptian rulers would have overshadowed the king of Tyre in terms of the military and political power at their disposal. If the king of Tyre were as

¹⁰⁹ Irad Malkin, "A Colonial Middle Ground: Greek, Etruscan, and Local Elites in the Bay of Naples," 151–81, here 156–59, in *Archaeology of Colonialism*. Herodotus 1.94 speaks of the migration of the Etruscans from Lydia in Asia Minor because of drought.

¹¹⁰ A. J. Graham, "The Colonial Expansion of Greece," 83–162, here 101–2, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 3.

¹¹¹ G. L. Calkwell, "Early Colonization," *CQ* 42 (1992): 289–303, here 297; cf. Malkin, "A Colonial Middle Ground: Greek, Etruscan, and Local Elites in the Bay of Naples," 151–81, here 154–56, in *Archaeology of Colonialism*.

¹¹² Calkwell, "Early Colonization," 302.

¹¹³ Graham, "The Colonial Expansion of Greece," 83–162, here 83–142, in *CAH* vol. 3, part 3.

¹¹⁴ Graham, "The Colonial Expansion of Greece," 83–162, here 121, in *CAH* vol. 3, part 3.

¹¹⁵ Van de Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East*, 127–35.

arrogant as Ezekiel portrays him, such a king would have been out of touch with the realities of the mercantile world of the early sixth century.

Hubris: Distorted Desire and Unchecked Aggression

In English usage, hubris means “excessive pride.” In Greek, *hybris* refers to “wanton violence, arising from the pride of strength or of passion.”¹¹⁶ Ezekiel accuses the prince of Tyre of making the claim that he was a god and of piling up riches for himself, which in turn fueled his haughtiness (28:2, 5). The judgment oracle in 28:1-10 is offset by a lament in 28:11-19, which provides a window into the invisible sphere to show how the king of Tyre was blessed with a privileged position but then transgressed by trying to control this blessing rather than accepting the challenge of living within it. This invisible sphere is labeled “Eden, the garden of God” (28:13). In this place of harmony, the king of Tyre was “a signet of perfection,¹¹⁷ full of wisdom and perfect beauty” (v. 12).¹¹⁸ A signet was an instrument used to place a person’s signature on a document. It represented a person’s authority. If someone were to steal a person’s signet, it would be an instance of identity theft. If a signet became separated from its rightful owner, it could become a disruptive force. But within the garden of Eden, the king of Tyre is metaphorically identified as a signet of perfection: i.e., one who functions blamelessly on behalf of the owner of the garden (v. 15). He is also described as “full of wisdom and perfect beauty” (v. 12): a description that ties back to the judgment oracle in the first half of the chapter in which the king was reveling in his wisdom (*hokmā*, vv. 4, 5, 7) and beauty (*yōpī*, v. 7). Here in the invisible realm of Eden, such beauty indicates that all things have taken their rightful place.

To highlight the privileged state of the king, Ezekiel describes the king as one who was adorned (*mšukātekā*, v. 13) with every kind of precious stone¹¹⁹—an honor that Mesopotamians typically bestowed on objects that symbolized the presence of divinity such as cultic statues and processional ships.¹²⁰ In the

¹¹⁶ Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1940) 1841.

¹¹⁷ Read *hōtam toknūt*.

¹¹⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 99, 104–5.

¹¹⁹ Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 111–12) refrains from associating these gemstones in Ezekiel 28 with the high priest’s breastpiece. H.J. Van Dijk (*Ezekiel’s Prophecy on Tyre* [BibOr 20; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute] 116–17) distances the stones from the king or his apparel by translating *mšukātekā* as “your defense” from a rare meaning of the root *sūk*, “to hedge about,” and thus pictures the precious stones as forming a wall about the garden in which the king resides; see also Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 581–82.

¹²⁰ Cf. Angelika Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder: Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik* (OBO 162; Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag / Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) 59–60, 98, 126–31.

Israelite tradition, these precious stones pointed to the holiness of Yhwh. All nine of the stones listed in verse 13 appear among the twelve stones of the high priest's breastpiece in Exodus 28:17-20 (parallel in Exod 39:10-13).¹²¹ A second metaphorical identification of the king of Tyre, as noted earlier, is that he is an "anointed cherub" (v. 14).¹²² He is to be a thronebearer or a mount for God who is to protect the throne against all usurpers. As a composite being with human and animal dimensions, the cherub has potential beyond that of humans for good or for ill. As a cherub, the king of Tyre walked about in the garden among the "fiery stones," which may refer to the stars as astral deities.¹²³ The king was to be a mobile guardian who moved back and forth within Eden (v. 14).

Then Ezekiel abruptly states that the king of Tyre fell. He says: "Wickedness was discovered in you; from the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence (*hāmās*); you sinned and I banned you from the mountain of God, and I drove you, the protecting cherub, out from among the fiery stones" (v. 16). Ezekiel then reiterates the charge leveled against the king of Tyre in the oracle of judgment in verses 2-5: "your heart was high on account of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom on account of your beauty" (v. 17). The king became self-absorbed over the beauty that was bestowed upon him and began to regard himself as a god. The prince of Tyre had said, "I am a god" (v. 2), but Yhwh said to him, "You are cherub" (v. 14). This confusion over his identity would have an impact on the way he carried out his trading activities and amassed wealth. He would not hesitate to use violence to achieve his goals (v. 16). Ezekiel shows then that the hubris of the king of Tyre had not only a vertical but also a horizontal dimension: his actions distorted not only his relation with God but also his relationships with other humans. By claiming to be a god, the king set himself up for a tyrannical form of rule in which he would try to impress observers with the power he wielded.¹²⁴

It is a convention of the Mesopotamian royal inscriptions that the king portray himself as exemplary. Although Mesopotamian kings did not typically

¹²¹ Wilson, "The Death of the King of Tyre," 215-16; Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, vol. 3, *chaps. 20-40* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000) 503.

¹²² See p. 157.

¹²³ Callender, *Adam in Myth and History*, 111-13. Hugh R. Page Jr. (*The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion* [VTSup 65; Leiden, Brill, 1996] 154) sees the cherub of Ezekiel 28:16 as a counselor deity in the heavenly assembly of Yhwh who has fallen from favor. Cf. Erica Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 85.4; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995) 15-16.

¹²⁴ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 592-93; Callender, *Adam in Myth and History*, 123-24. On the culpability of the king of Tyre on the basis of "general, collective principles" rather than on Israelite covenantal law, see Stephen L. Cook, "Cosmos, Kabod, and Cherub: Ontological and Epistemological Hierarchy in Ezekiel," 179-97, here 196, in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World* (ed. Stephen Cook and Corrine Patton; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

make the claim to be gods by means of first-person speech as did the king of Tyre in Ezek 28:2, they did write their name with the divine determinative from about 2250 to 1750 B.C.E.¹²⁵ Even though this form of royal etiquette was discontinued around the time of Hammurapi, other forms of royal self-promotion continued through NB times. For example, Nebuchadrezzar proclaimed at the end of his description of the improvements that he made to the Ezida temple of Nabû: “What no earlier king has done, I did in a grand way for Nabu my lord” (VAB 4 158 [Nbk 19 = Wādī-Brīsa] vi 51–53; see also vii 41–42).¹²⁶ This formulaic way of saying that the king was carrying out his responsibilities can be traced back to royal inscriptions in the Old Akkadian period.¹²⁷

According to Berossus, Nebuchadrezzar constructed what later became known as the “Hanging Gardens of Babylon” as a park for one of his wives who came from the mountainous region on the east side of the Tigris.¹²⁸ Such a royal park would have imitated those constructed by Sargon II in his capital of Dur-Sharruken and by Sennacherib in Nineveh.¹²⁹ Because kings had been celebrated in Mesopotamian royal ideology as heroic characters elevated above the common lot of humanity,¹³⁰ it would be a small step to place a typical king in an Eden-like setting like that of Ezekiel 28:11–19.

¹²⁵ William W. Hallo, *Origins: The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Some Modern Western Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 152.

¹²⁶ Annus (*The God Ninurta in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 44–47) explains how Nabû grew in importance from the mid-eighth century to the end of the NA period and thus replaced Ninurta; in the late Babylonian period, Nabû rivaled Marduk.

¹²⁷ A. K. Grayson, “Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: Literary Characteristics,” 45, in *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literary, Ideological and Historical Analysis* (ed. F. Faes; Roma: Istituto per L’Oriente, 1981); Sabina Franke, *Königsinschriften und Königsideologie: Die Könige von Akkade zwischen Tradition und Neuerung* (Münster: LIT, 1995) 82.

¹²⁸ Stephanie Dalley (“The Hanging Gardens of Babylon at Nineveh,” 19–24, in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeit: XXXIXe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Heidelberg 6.–10. Juli 1992* [ed. Hartmut Waetzoldt and Harald Hauptmann; CRR 39; Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient 6; Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1997] notes that the account of Berossus was quoted by Josephus in *Contra Apionem* 1:128–41 and *Jewish Antiquities* 10:219–26 and suggests that the location of the Hanging Gardens was Nineveh and not Babylon. Idem, “Ancient Mesopotamian Gardens and the Identification of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon Resolved,” *Garden History* 21 (1993) 1–13.

¹²⁹ John Pairman Brown (*Israel and Hellas* [3 vols.; BZAW 231, 276, 299; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995–2001] 3.124) cites Berossos from F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1957) 680 F8.141. Grayson, “Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 B.C.) 103–41, here 110, 113, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2; Mirko Novák, “The Artificial Paradise: Programme and Ideology of Royal Gardens,” 443–60, here 446–49, in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001* (ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting; CRR 47; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002).

¹³⁰ See Launderville, *Piety and Politics*, 142, 311–12.

When Mesopotamian kings disregarded divinely-sanctioned privileges, such actions were regarded as ones that the gods would avenge. In the NB text known as “Advice to a Prince,” a king is warned of the consequences for disregarding the *kidinnūtu* (“privileges”) for the Akkadian populations of specific temple cities:

If he made Sippar, Nippur, and Babylon arise at the same time to subject them to forced labor and imposed duties upon them at the herald’s cry, Marduk, the wise one among the gods, the reflective noble, will turn over his land to his enemies so that work forces of his land will carry out forced labor for his enemies. In their assembly, Anu, Enlil, and Ea, the great gods who dwell in heaven and on earth, have established their freedom from such burdens. (ll. 23–30)¹³¹

It has been suggested that the king transgressing against the *kidinnūtu* was Merodach-Baladan II, the Chaldean prince who ruled Babylon from 721 to 710 B.C.E.. As their opponent and as a foil to Sargon II (721–705), the Assyrians portrayed Merodach-Baladan in their inscriptions as an outsider who had usurped power, as one who oppressed the non-tribal population of Babylonia, and as one who removed cult statues from their shrines.¹³² But, as Brinkman explains, the truth about Merodach-Baladan was quite the opposite. He was a conscientious ruler who rebuilt shrines, honored the *kidinnūtu*, undertook public works projects, raised the economy to its highest level in five centuries, and promoted scholarly work.¹³³ Nevertheless, one of the ways the Assyrian kings tried to win the support of the Akkadian population was by honoring the *kidinnūtu* privileges.¹³⁴ The plea cited above from the author of “Advice to the Prince” is that Marduk might repay in kind a tyrannical king, whoever he might be, such that the king’s own people will be taken over and subjected to forced labor. The urbanized Akkadian population found the imposition of forced labor demeaning. Other transgressions listed in the “Advice to the Prince” indicate that the Akkadians were concerned about the humiliation they would suffer under such a king: his disregard for due process, his expropriation of their property, and his dismissing their legal cases as trivial matters. The king who would do such things would be paying no attention to the status that Babylonian tradition had upheld for the Akkadian population of designated temple cities.¹³⁵ From the perspective of the Akkadians, this king who treated them with less respect than they deserved was overstepping his limits and should have been paid back by the gods: i.e., he was hubristic.

¹³¹ Edition: Lambert, *BWL*, 112.

¹³² Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, 47.

¹³³ Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, 49.

¹³⁴ Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, 53, 95; Frame, *Babylonia 689–627*, 35.

¹³⁵ Frame, *Babylonia 689–627*, 34–35.

In Greek Boeotia in the late eighth century B.C.E., Hesiod relates three accounts at the beginning of his *Works and Days* that explain how humans have passed from an original state of harmony to one of pain and trouble. In the myth concerning his stealth of fire from Zeus (*Op.* 47–58; *Theog.* 558–70), Prometheus, as the offspring of the Titan Iapetos and the Oceanid Klymene (*Op.* 50; *Theog.* 511), has brought troubles upon humans by his crafty, yet hubristic action. This etiology identifies the trickery by the individual Prometheus against Zeus as the reason why fire, an element that belongs in heaven (*aithēr*) came to be used by humans.¹³⁶ Next, Hesiod describes the four ages through which human history has passed to the present: the gold, the silver, the bronze, and the iron (*Op.* 109–201). In the age of gold, humans lived like gods, free of sorrow, work, and pain. Upon death they became benevolent spirits who acted like upright kings (*Op.* 126). In the age of silver, humans lived a long time but failed to mature. During this time, “they had anguish, for they in their arrogance were not able to avoid crime (*hybris*) nor did they want to serve the immortals” (*Op.* 134–35). The age of bronze consisted of two main generations: the first one was characterized by humans who were warlike and ended up destroying one another (*Op.* 153), but the second was comprised of semidivine heroes from the Trojan war who had passed into the isles of the blessed (*Op.* 158–70). Finally, there was the age of iron: a time not only of hard work, pain, and anxiety but also of lying, envy, and strife between generations (*Op.* 173–201). By not honoring those whom they should honor, the men of the iron age are guilty of *hybris*.¹³⁷ Each successive metallic age diminishes in terms of moral character and length of life, and the inhabitants of each age have a less glorious afterlife than their predecessors.¹³⁸ This scheme of four ages indicates that the forces that lead to strife and chaos arise from sources more primordial than the human will.¹³⁹ Despite the note of pessimism introduced by this schema in which collectively humans seem to be their own worst enemy, Hesiod does not exonerate individual humans from the necessity of striving against evil, as his exhortations to Perses to work illustrate (e.g., *Op.* 27–39, 213–47).¹⁴⁰

Hesiod followed this account with the myth about the hawk and the nightingale (*Op.* 202–12) in which the hawk claims to be the master and can consume the nightingale if he so desires: an attitude that can be clearly categorized

¹³⁶ West, ed., *Theogony*, 306.

¹³⁷ N. R. E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, 1992) 193.

¹³⁸ M. L. West, ed. (*Works and Days* by Hesiod [Oxford: Clarendon, 1978] 173–74, 177) notes that this scheme of four ages is un-Greek and probably was borrowed from Mesopotamia.

¹³⁹ Stephanie A. Nelson, *God and the Land: The Metaphysics of Farming in Hesiod and Vergil* (New York: Oxford, 1998) 69–71.

¹⁴⁰ West, ed., *Works and Days*, 47; Fisher, *Hybris*, 187, 191.

as hubristic if the hawk is a king. However, if the hawk is Zeus and the king is the nightingale, then the king should learn that he cannot resist the will of Zeus. Here, however, Zeus is portrayed negatively as a tyrant rather than as a just ruler.¹⁴¹ Of the twelve occurrences of the word *hybris* in *Works and Days*, Hesiod uses the term seven times in the first 250 lines. Here Hesiod warns the kings (*basilēes*) that they are in a position to lord it over others, but such hubristic behavior will be too much for them to bear (*Op.* 214–15).¹⁴²

In the Greek tradition from Homer through Aristotle, *hybris* refers more frequently to a transgression against other humans rather than against a god.¹⁴³ The definition of *hybris* that Fisher traces through texts from Homer to Aristotle is that *hybris* is “an act of violence against another that expresses a sense of superiority over another and takes pleasure in it.”¹⁴⁴ Fisher downplays the religious or collective dimension of *hybris*—as seen in Hesiod’s myth of Prometheus’ stealing the fire (*Op.* 47–58). Rather he points to the kind of transgressions that the first generation of the men of the bronze age carried out: they committed violence against one another (*Op.* 134–35). What makes *hybris* so revolting is the fact that it is often a criminal attack on the honor of another that is done gratuitously or simply for the pleasure of it.¹⁴⁵ In Athenian legal cases, it is clear that *hybris* was regarded as a violation of a person’s body, where the inviolability of the body was a revered principle.¹⁴⁶ The seriousness of *hybris* was recognized in Athens in the sixth century B.C.E. by the introduction of a law that made *hybris* a criminal act, which in some cases could carry the death penalty. Offenses included: disruption of a speech at a festival, assault against officials, brutal assaults against slaves, sexual assault, deprivation of one’s share in an estate, and false and humiliating allegations. The thread running through these offenses was the intention by the offender to dishonor another.¹⁴⁷

The violence that the king of Tyre was perpetrating against others to further his trade and to promote his own splendor was a form of *hybris* that transgressed not only against God but also against humans. He forsook his role as a cherub and used his privileged position for his own aggrandizement. In so doing, he did not hold in check his self-centered, animal-like desires, which

¹⁴¹ Nelson, *God and the Land*, 78–81.

¹⁴² West, ed., *Works and Days*, 50.

¹⁴³ Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1841; Fisher, *Hybris*, 186.

¹⁴⁴ Fisher, *Hybris*, 1; Simon Goldhill, “Violence in Greek Tragedy,” 15–33, here 19–20, in *Violence in Drama* (ed. James Redmond; Themes in Drama 13; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Ian Morris, “An Archaeology of Equalities? The Greek City-States,” 91–105, here 96, in *The Archaeology of City-States: Cross-Cultural Approaches* (ed. Deborah L. Nichols and Thomas H. Charlton; Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).

¹⁴⁵ Fisher, *Hybris*, 6.

¹⁴⁶ Fisher, *Hybris*, 53.

¹⁴⁷ Fisher, *Hybris*, 36–43.

was a necessary form of discipline if the boundaries between human and God and between human and human were to be maintained. In the Mesopotamian tradition, the distinction between mortal and immortal was not drawn as tightly as in the Greek and Israelite traditions, for in Mesopotamian royal ideology the king was celebrated as a superior being. The boundary that the hubristic Mesopotamian king would violate with regard to the divine realm would be disrespect for the prerogatives or will of particular gods, rather than a general decree that humans were not to pretend to be gods. A Mesopotamian king's disregard of *kidinnūtu* privileges would be a hubristic action insofar as the king was ignoring the will of Anu, Enlil, and Ea and desiring to humiliate the Akkadian people. In the Archaic Greek tradition, the boundary between mortals and immortals was marked more clearly, as seen in Hesiod's myth of the four ages in which humans were subject to death in each of the four ages. Humans' tendency toward violence surfaced most strongly in the age of bronze but persisted into the age of iron. What was distinctive about the age of gold was that humans who went into the underworld returned as *daimones* who protected humans and made them prosper (*Op.* 122–24). Hesiod is realistic about the way that humans in the age of iron could do violence to one another as a way of exalting themselves. Even though they were on a pathway toward destruction, they could work hard and alter the future (*Op.* 213–17).¹⁴⁸

Symbolic Violence: The Danger of Abstraction

The fall of the king of Tyre is introduced in Ezekiel 28:15 as follows: “until wickedness (*‘awlātā*) was found in you.” This *‘awlātā*, which sets in motion the process for expelling the king from the garden, is described as if it had an objective existence apart from the king. It is the consequence of his sin (*ḥātā*, v. 16). The king was able to frame his business activities in a way that seemed to convince himself and many others that he belonged to a higher order of being. A single action could not produce such an illusion. The process of constructing his royal world must have consisted of many beneficial actions that he then distorted toward his own aggrandizement rather than toward the service of others. In Ezekiel 28:4-5, Ezekiel stated that the prince of Tyre had used his “abundant wisdom” (*bērōb ḥokmātēkā*) in trade (*rēkullā*) to amass his wealth. He had acquired silver and gold for his treasuries. In the invisible scene in Eden (28:11-19), such wisdom was regarded as a gift and was creating perfection: i.e., wholeness and beauty (v. 12). But down in the city of Tyre, such wisdom was diverted from the service of wholeness to the service of the king's aggrandizement (vv. 16-17).

¹⁴⁸ Fisher, *Hybris*, 191.

Symbols are necessary for culture.¹⁴⁹ The construction and interpretation of symbols require human participation, and thus are also a reality that can be easily manipulated for self-serving ends.¹⁵⁰ Silver and gold, because of their scarcity, became symbols of power and prestige, a functional role that became more widespread as these metals served as media of exchange in commerce. As noted earlier, the Phoenicians mined gold on the Aegean island of Thasos and silver in the Riontinto region of Spain in the eighth to seventh centuries.¹⁵¹ According to Ezekiel 27:12, the king of Tyre continued to garner precious metals from western Mediterranean regions through commerce associated with Tarshish.

In Mesopotamia, silver was used throughout the second and first millennia as the primary medium of exchange except for a short time at the end of the Bronze Age in which gold was used. But tin, copper, bronze, and lead were also used so that these metals, in addition to silver, formed what Powell refers to as a pre-coinage money system in northern Mesopotamia. In the mid-third millennium, copper or bronze functioned as cheap money. But by the Ur III period, copper and bronze were replaced by barley as the primary form of cheap money. Sometimes, dates were used instead of barley.¹⁵² Rader, arguing on the basis of NA legal texts and letters, claims that copper, bronze, and silver could be used for the full range of transactions.¹⁵³ She notes that the primary medium of exchange in Assyria was copper in the eighth century, but silver in the seventh century. This change to silver as currency was probably because of Sargon II's capture of immense quantities of silver from Carchemish in 712.¹⁵⁴ "The mina of Carchemish" became the most frequently cited standard of silver in NA letters and legal texts.¹⁵⁵ Two other silver standards were the king's mina and the merchant's mina, which indicate that the palace and the private entrepreneur in Assyria played a significant role in establishing the measures by which silver and other media of exchange were weighed.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁹ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944) 24–26, 223–24.

¹⁵⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) 8–11.

¹⁵¹ See p. 164.

¹⁵² Marvin Powell, "Wir müssen alle unsere Nische nutzen: Monies, Motives, and Methods in Babylonian Economics," 5–23, here 14, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

¹⁵³ Karen Rader, "Money in the Neo-Assyrian Empire," 127–57, here 128, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*; cf. A. C. V. M. Bongenaar, "Money in the Neo-Babylonian Institutions," 159–74, here 161, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

¹⁵⁴ Rader, "Money in the Neo-Assyrian Empire," 127–57, here 129, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

¹⁵⁵ Rader, "Money in the Neo-Assyrian Empire," 127–57, here 129–30, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

¹⁵⁶ Rader, "Money in the Neo-Assyrian Empire," 127–57, here 130–31, in *Trade and*

The possibility of using deceptive weights was legislated against in the CH §94, 108 and denounced in the *Hymn to Shamash* 107–13;¹⁵⁷ it is a problem addressed on numerous occasions in the OT (Lev 19:36; Deut 25:13; Amos 8:5–6; Mic 6:11; Prov 16:11; 20:10, 23). In the exchange of small quantities, it would have been better to use barley than silver. According to Powell, the margin of error in the use of small weights was about three percent of the total mass. Three percent of a shekel would be equivalent to about a day's wage. Therefore, silver was probably used only in major transactions.¹⁵⁸

For the exchange of large quantities of a commodity over a great distance, silver or other valuable metals was a more practical medium of exchange than barley because it was easier to store and transport. The capacity to store silver meant that it could become a force in leveraging a range of sociopolitical as well as economic transactions. Instead of exchanging goods to circulate them to build up relationships, as in gift-giving (i.e., redistributive exchange), one would exchange goods to accumulate silver as payment that, in turn, could be used to move a commodity from a place where it was abundant to a place where it was scarce (i.e., commodity exchange). Polanyi has argued that redistributive exchange dominated the Mesopotamian economy from the OB period (2003–1595) to the Persian period (539–333). He contends that merchants did not exchange goods for a profit according to the conditions of supply and demand.¹⁵⁹ Several Mesopotamian specialists disagree with him on this point.¹⁶⁰ While his claim that the subsistence economy was widespread in Mesopotamia is true, his claim that market forces and money were nonexistent must, in Powell's view, be rejected.¹⁶¹ Marketplaces (*māhirū*) existed in most Mesopotamian cities from

Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia; cf. Marc Van de Mieroop, *Society and Enterprise in Old Babylonian Ur* (BBVO 12; Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1992) 248–49.

¹⁵⁷ Lambert, *BWL*, 132.

¹⁵⁸ Powell, "Wir müssen alle unsere Nische nutzen," 5–23, here 16, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

¹⁵⁹ Karl Polanyi, "On the Comparative Treatment of Economic Institutions in Antiquity with Illustrations from Athens, Mycenae, and Alalakh," 306–34, here 328–34, in *Primitive, Archaic, and Modern Societies* (Boston: Beacon, 1968); Powell, "Wir müssen alle unsere Nische nutzen," 5–23, here 9, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*; cf. David Tandy and Walter C. Neale, "Karl Polanyi's Distinctive Approach to Social Analysis and the Case of Ancient Greece: Ideas, Criticisms, Consequences," 9–33, here 12–13, in *From Political Economy to Anthropology: Situating Economic Life in Past Societies* (ed. Colin Duncan and David Tandy; New York: Black Rose Books, 1994).

¹⁶⁰ Van de Mieroop, *Society and Enterprise in Old Babylonian Ur*, 208–9; idem, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 195–202; Norman Yoffee, "The Economy of Ancient Western Asia," 1387–99, here 1393, in *CANE*.

¹⁶¹ Powell, "Wir müssen alle unsere Nische nutzen," 5–23, here 5–6, 9, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

the early second millennium through the Macedonian period.¹⁶² Within NB institutions, money in the form of silver or other precious metals was an object that one would acquire to exchange it for other objects that one desired.¹⁶³

Coinage is first attested in Lydia in Asia Minor at the time of Croesus in the mid-sixth century.¹⁶⁴ The imprinting of a symbol of a king on a coin would validate that the amount of silver in the coin was a certain amount. It is as though the coin has been stamped with the seal or signet ring of the king. If someone had shaved off a portion of it, the king would still back up the amount of silver the coin claimed to have. The standard shifts from the weight of a specific metal to the amount guaranteed by a political authority.¹⁶⁵ Coins were initially used by kings or magistrates (e.g., Peisistratus, ca. 546) to pay their mercenaries.¹⁶⁶

In forms of barter and gift exchange, the trading parties operated according to the principle of reciprocity: persons accepted gifts with the understanding that they were obliged to reciprocate in the future. By contrast, in a monetary exchange of goods, there may well have been no further strings attached to the transaction beyond the monetarily defined equivalencies. Thus there was a movement in the monetary exchange toward a more abstract relationship between the negotiating parties. The fact that the money persisted at a stable value through the exchange gave a point of reference outside of the exchange upon which one could rely. Seaford has argued that this move toward abstraction was analogous to the movement from Dark Age rule by a *basileus* to the Archaic Age rule of the polis.¹⁶⁷ The polis was able to come into existence only if: (1) political offices existed separately from persons, (2) due process in legal cases was guaranteed by laws, and (3) laws were written and publicly acknowledged.¹⁶⁸ All of these attributes also were operative in ancient Near Eastern monarchies. A polis tried to keep these aspects intact without a personal sovereign.

A written law is a stable artifact that persists through change. In this regard, it functions analogously to money. This capacity to be part of changing relationships and yet to emerge with its identity intact is an indicator of a dynamic

¹⁶² Powell, "Wir müssen alle unsere Nische nutzen," 5–23, here 10, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

¹⁶³ Bongenaar, "Money in the Neo-Babylonian Institutions," 159–74, here 160, in *Trade and Finance in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

¹⁶⁴ Daniel Snell, "Coinage," 1495, in *CANE*.

¹⁶⁵ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 225–26.

¹⁶⁶ Snell, "Coinage," 1495, in *CANE*; Murray, *Early Greece*, 225.

¹⁶⁷ Seaford (*Reciprocity and Ritual*, 204) argues that "in archaic Greek society two basic kinds of reciprocity, gift-exchange and revenge, are to some extent marginalized by commodity-exchange (eventually involving coinage) and the judicial process respectively, and that these two transformations are analogous."

¹⁶⁸ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 217–19.

reality. Heraclitus referred to this reality as the *logos* (*DK* 22 B1, B2, B50); metaphorically, he identified it with cosmic fire. This cosmic fire—which is not the same as physical fire—is present in all things and persists through a thing's coming to be and passing away. This dynamic of the Heraclitean *logos* is the same as the dynamic of a symbol. As in king Midas' touch where everything can be changed into gold, so also within the Heracleitean universe everything can be changed into fire.¹⁶⁹ Money and written law function at their highest capacity when this symbolic dynamic is operative within them. The danger of distortion with regard to both of these symbolic media is that money can be accumulated and written law must be interpreted. There is no recipe for the proper use of these symbols other than the imperative of ongoing attentiveness.

The king of Tyre defaulted on the tensive relationship that the exchange of commodities placed upon him. He focused upon accumulating money and failed to view this money as primarily a means for strengthening the relationships integral to the city of Tyre. This money allowed him to exert his will without restraint. So he carried out acts of violence toward many in fulfilling his desires. It was apparently this capacity to act at will that led him to regard himself as a god. His sense of what was beautiful became tied up with his own perception (*ḥākām*, Ezek 28:3), which departed from the beauty (*yōpî*) and wisdom (*ḥokmā*) designed for the king of Tyre in Eden, on the mountain of God (Ezek 28:17). Repeated misreadings of himself and his kingdom led to his spinning off in an orbit that was detached from reality. Ezekiel informed him that he would be brought back from his illusion of immortality when foreigners put him to death (28:7).

Symbols and Perception: The Challenge of Standing in Relationship with the Divine, Human, and Animal Spheres

Ezekiel reported that on the invisible metaphysical plane, the king of Tyre was driven from Eden when he fell (28:16). On the historical plane, this fall was the series of events stretching from his initial acts of exploitation, through his building of a maritime empire, to his death and destruction by foreigners. The invisible scene (28:12-15) made clear that the king of Tyre had forsaken his call to be a symbol of Yhwh's sovereignty in order to take over Yhwh's position. In other words, he had abandoned his role as a cherub who serves his Deity and fends off all pretenders to the throne. Instead, he himself had usurped the throne. In so doing, he had allowed the animal portion of his composite being to break loose and do violence to others (vv. 15-16). What the king of Tyre had perceived as beauty (v. 17) was not the same as what Yhwh regarded as beauty (vv. 12-13). The king's wisdom or perception was distorted and his guilt multiplied (v. 17). So instead of being a symbol of Yhwh's rule, the king of Tyre had

¹⁶⁹ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 226.

become an idol: one whom Yhwh would purge from the garden by fire coming forth from the midst of the king of Tyre as cherub (v 18). The similarities of the destruction of the king of Tyre with the destruction of Jerusalem are apparent: both Jerusalem and the king of Tyre would be burnt; the fire for burning Jerusalem would start from a burning coal brought forth from between the cherubim (10:2, 6); the temple in Jerusalem and the sanctuaries of Tyre would be desecrated so that they were no longer sacred space. Ezekiel emphasized that the king of Tyre would be made “a spectacle in the sight of kings” (28:17) and would be reduced to “dust on the earth in the sight of all” (28:18). Thus, Ezekiel noted that it was very important to Yhwh that the demise of the king of Tyre be made known to the world. Those who looked on would be horrified—the same ones who were distressed over the shipwreck of Tyre in Ezek 27:28-36. The narcissistic arrogance of the king of Tyre was a form of hubris against Yhwh and against humans.¹⁷⁰

In 689 the Assyrian king Sennacherib destroyed the city of Babylon and took the statue of Marduk to Assyria, where it remained until his grandson Assurbanipal returned it in 668.¹⁷¹ The ziggurat of Marduk, Etemenanki, and the temple of Marduk, Esagila, suffered major damage at the hands of the soldiers of Sennacherib. Such actions seemed sacrilegious to many. Sennacherib had become frustrated with the repeated rebellions of the Babylonians against his rule; he also held the Babylonians responsible for Elam's kidnapping his son Ashur-nadin-shum in 694;¹⁷² therefore, he took strong measures to break their resistance.¹⁷³ But as a consequence, Sennacherib's son, Esarhaddon, had to devote considerable time and resources not only to rebuilding the structures that Sennacherib had destroyed but also to making the case that Sennacherib's actions were not sacrilegious. Esarhaddon's defense of his father's harsh measures was that they were to be seen as a reflection of Marduk's anger against the people of Babylon for their disrespect and neglect of him. Such is the argument that Esarhaddon presents in his inscriptions.¹⁷⁴ However, Sennacherib's scribes

¹⁷⁰ Daniel Bodi (*The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* [OBO 104: Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1991] 158–59) notes that Ezekiel is unique in his linking hubris with *hāmōn* (Ezek 23:42; cf. 7:11,13–14).

¹⁷¹ Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, 86, 90.

¹⁷² Grayson, “Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC),” 103–41, here 118–19, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2.

¹⁷³ Barbara Nevling Porter (“Beds, Sex, and Politics: The Return of Marduk's Bed to Babylon,” 523–35, here 528, in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East*) notes that Sennacherib's public display of Marduk's bed—a luxury item of wood and precious stones—upon his conquest of Babylon was intended to signal Marduk's loss of status.

¹⁷⁴ Riecke Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* (AfO Beiheft 9; Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1956) 12–13, #11, ll. 18b–37; Grant Frame, *Rulers of Babylonia: From the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination (1157–612 BC)* (RIMB2; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) B.6.31, pp. 164–93; J. A. Brinkman,

produced an unusual text, “The Ordeal of Marduk,” claiming that Marduk had committed a crime (*hītišu*, l. 56).¹⁷⁵ Marduk was then subjected to trial by ordeal in a scene in which Aššur presided over a number of gods.¹⁷⁶ Because Marduk was imprisoned, the *Akitu* festival could not be celebrated in Babylon, which accords with the fact that the *Akitu* was not celebrated in Babylon from 689 to 668 due to the absence of Marduk’s statue.¹⁷⁷ Furthering this view of the ascendancy of Aššur is the alteration in some editions of the *Enūma Eliš* where Aššur replaced Marduk as the sovereign deity.¹⁷⁸ Also in a temple in Ashur, Sennacherib commissioned bas reliefs in which Aššur was portrayed as the protago-

“Through a Glass Darkly: Esarhaddon’s Retrospects on the Downfall of Babylon,” 35–42, esp. 41, in *Studies in the Literature from the Ancient Near East by Members of the American Oriental Society Dedicated to Samuel Noah Kramer* (ed. Jack Sasson; AOS 65; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1984); idem, *Prelude to Empire*, 73; Grayson, “Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC),” 103–41, here 132–34, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2.

¹⁷⁵ Alasdair Livingstone (*Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* [SAA 3; Helsinki: University Press, 1989] 56) reads line 56 as: *šutu ša hītišu ina libbi kadamme šutu*, “the (outfit) of his crime is gathered in the storeroom”; Grayson, “Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC),” 103–41, here 119, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2. Wolfran von Soden (“Gibt es ein Zeugnis dafür, dass die Babylonier an die Wiederauferstehung Marduks geglaubt haben?” *ZA* 51 [1955]: 130–66, here 138) completes this broken portion of the tablet with the phrase: *šū ūmu hītišu ina libbi kadamme šutu ešip*, “this is the day of his sin; he is gathered in the building (?)” (CAD K, 30). Benno Landsberger (“The Political Testament of Sennacherib,” 33–44, here 37–39, in Hayim Tadmor, Benno Landsberger, Simo Parpola, “The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib’s Last Will,” *SAAB* 3 [1989]: 3–51) argues that “sin” should be reserved for *arnu*; he recommends “error” as a better translation for *hītu*.

¹⁷⁶ Holloway (*Aššur Is King!*, 147–48) notes the contested interpretation of this broken text. Tikva Frymer-Kensky (“The Tribulations of Marduk: The So-Called ‘Marduk Ordeal Text’,” 131–41, 140, in *Studies in the Ancient Near East by Members of the American Oriental Society Dedicated to Samuel Noah Kramer* [AOS 65; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1984]) argues that this text is not anti-Marduk; she claims that it refers to a temporary captivity of Marduk and not to an ordeal; thus, the text relates to events of the return of Marduk’s statue to Babylon in 668 rather than to those of the destruction of Babylon in 689.

¹⁷⁷ A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 35, 131; idem, “Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC),” 135; Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (ed. B. Foster; SBL Writings from the Ancient World 19; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004) 208–9. Porter (“Beds, Sex, and Politics,” 523–35, here 531–34) notes that Assurbanipal returned Marduk’s bed in 654 B.C.E. as part of the ritual of betrothal of Marduk and Šarpanitu with the goal of soothing the anger of these offended gods, particularly by pleasing the goddess.

¹⁷⁸ W. G. Lambert (“The Assyrian Recension of *Enūma Eliš*,” 77–79, here 77, in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeit*) notes that in two tablets from Ashur and one from Nineveh the scribes during the reign of Sennacherib (704–681) changed the name Marduk to AN.ŠĀR and added to the extant version of the *Enūma Eliš* the claim that Aššur came into being before heaven and earth were created (cf. Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, 85, ll. 54–55).

nist in the *Enūma Eliš*.¹⁷⁹ In an earlier Babylonian version of the *Enūma Eliš*, the changeover in sovereignty from Enlil to Marduk had been done quietly by simply not mentioning Enlil.¹⁸⁰ However, the “Ordeal of Marduk” takes a more aggressive stance: it shows Marduk being removed from his temple in Babylon and brought to Assyria to stand trial before Aššur through a river ordeal (ll. 35–39).

As different as the imperialistic explanation of Marduk’s departure from Babylon in the “Ordeal of Marduk” by Sennacherib’s scribes was from the more conciliatory accounts of Esarhaddon’s inscriptions,¹⁸¹ both approaches regard the destruction of Babylon as a purging of the city because of wrongdoing. In “The Ordeal of Marduk,” the wrongdoer was Marduk; in Sennacherib’s inscriptions, the Babylonians were the transgressors. Although some scribes in Sennacherib’s reign claimed that the problem arose from Marduk’s sin (*hīṭīšū*), the dominant view among Esarhaddon’s scribes was that Marduk had departed in anger because of the Babylonians’ neglect and desecration of his cult.¹⁸² Common to both viewpoints is the claim that Babylon was purged through the disasters that accompanied the removal of Marduk’s statue. Analogously, Ezekiel proclaimed that Tyre would be purged through the removal of the cherub (i.e., the king of Tyre) for his hubris and idolatrous self-understanding.

Just as disasters such as the fall of Tyre or the sack of Babylon demanded explanations, so also did the plague that ravaged Athens in the late seventh century. This plague was linked to the bloodguilt of the Alcmaeonid family who killed the followers of Cylon and who claimed to be suppliants of Athena.¹⁸³ To purge the miasmata that had settled upon Athens, Solon called upon the noted sage Epimenides of Crete to come to Athens and purify the city.¹⁸⁴ Such a purification ritual would have interpreted the disaster that plagued their city not as something that happened by chance but rather as something for which

¹⁷⁹ Barbara Nevling Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics: Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon’s Babylonian Policy* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1993) 139.

¹⁸⁰ Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) 169.

¹⁸¹ E.g., RIMB 2.B.6.31.11, ll. 4–9; B.6.31.12, ll. 7–24; B.6.31.15, ll. 15–19 in Frame, *Rulers of Babylonia*, 168, 178–79, 183; Israel Eph`al, “Esarhaddon, Egypt, and Shubria: Politics and Propaganda,” *JCS* 57 (2005) 99–111, here 102, 111.

¹⁸² Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons*, 12–13, §11, ll. 25–37; Grayson, “Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 B.C.),” 103–41, here 134, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2.

¹⁸³ Herodotus 5.71; Thucydides 1.126. Jonathan M. Hall, *A History of the Archaic Greek World (ca. 1200–479 BCE)* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007) 211.

¹⁸⁴ Richard P. Martin, “The Seven Sages as Performers of Wisdom,” 108–26, here 122, in *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics* (ed. Carol Dougherty and Leslie Kurke; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

they collectively bore responsibility.¹⁸⁵ Solon noted that although Zeus may not punish wicked actions immediately (fr. 13, ll. 63–70), he will nevertheless intervene with vengeance at the appointed time (fr. 13, ll. 17–25).¹⁸⁶ He emphasized that the citizens of Athens should take responsibility for their actions: “If you suffer bitterly through your own wrongs, do not blame the gods for it” (fr. 11, ll. 1–2).¹⁸⁷ He noted how the undisciplined pursuit of riches brings harm to a community and ruin on the one who pursues them:

I desire to have wealth, but I do not want to acquire it unjustly. Justice always comes afterwards. Riches that the gods give remain firmly with a human, from the lowest to the highest. That which humans prize from wanton violence (*hybris*) does not come in an orderly way. But the one who trusts in unjust deeds unwillingly submits (to them); quickly it joins together with ruin. In the beginning, it happens like a little fire: at first it is insignificant, but at the end, serious. Deeds of wanton violence (*hybris*) by humans do not endure for long (fr. 13, ll. 7–16).¹⁸⁸

The problems for the community created by individuals who pursue money-making for its own sake make clear for Solon that harmony (*eunomia*) in the community can only be maintained by the citizens’ awareness of the impact their actions have on one another.¹⁸⁹ The rich (*agathoi*) and the poor (*kakoi*) compete with each other and define themselves against one another, but it is important for the polis that they recognize their interdependence.¹⁹⁰ The paradox within the idea of the polis is that the individual and the community both need and compete with one another.¹⁹¹

Solon is revered as one of the Seven Sages in the Greek tradition. He was a rationalist in line with the Ionian rationalism of Homer’s *Odyssey* in which humans were exhorted to take responsibility for their lives (*Od.* 1.38) and not to regard themselves as mere pawns in the hands of the gods.¹⁹² So just as Hermes the divine messenger warned the audience of the *Odyssey* to take responsibility for their lives, so also Solon the sage functioned as a sentinel who alerted the

¹⁸⁵ Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) 257.

¹⁸⁶ Irwin, *Solon and Early Greek Poetry*, 179.

¹⁸⁷ M. L. West, ed., *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 126.

¹⁸⁸ Edition: West, ed., *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, 127.

¹⁸⁹ Werner Jaeger, “Solon’s *Eunomia*,” 77–99, here 82, in *Five Essays* (trans. Adele Fiske; Montreal: Mario Casalini, 1966); Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History*, 162–63; Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 83.

¹⁹⁰ Joseph Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea in Solon’s Political Poems* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 155–56.

¹⁹¹ Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea*, 172.

¹⁹² *Od.* 1.32–43; Jaeger, “Solon’s *Eunomia*,” 77–99, here 83–84, in *Five Essays*; Elizabeth Irwin, *Solon and Early Greek Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 113–14, 125.

people of Athens to the price they would inevitably pay for their greed. Jaeger argues that Solon understood the ethical world order to be more a self-regulating mechanism than Hesiod did. The consequences of greed would be the violence that the citizens inflict upon one another. Even though Solon referred to Zeus' oversight of the course of events in fr. 13.17–25, he omitted the name of Zeus in fr. 4.12–16 in connection with the “revered foundations of justice” (*semna dikēs themethla*). In fr. 4, Solon did not accent direct divine intervention through famine, plague, barrenness, and war as Hesiod did (*Op.* 219–24).¹⁹³ However, Jaeger's differentiation of Solon's attitude toward divine intervention from that of Hesiod seems overdrawn, for, as Almeida notes, Solon still regards *Dikē* as a goddess in fr. 4 whose enforcement of what is right prevails (frs. 4.14–16; 13.7–8).¹⁹⁴

Solon's idea of the polis aimed to keep before the citizens a sense of their interdependence. They could have intuitively understood this idea even though they might not have been able to say how this interdependence would have been realized. The idea of Eden in Ezekiel 28 would have created in the imaginations of Ezekiel's audience a picture of a place in which harmony reigned, an environment in which everything had its place. In envisioning a restored Babylon under a pacified Marduk, Esarhaddon must have had in mind some idea of a harmonious Babylon. Solon, Ezekiel, and Esarhaddon each offer a rationale for order that fit their particular communities. Solon stands out as a thinker who tended to step away from the picture where the gods intervened to shape events. Solon's way of accounting for order in the polis stepped toward the Ionian rationalism of the *Odyssey* in which human responsibility was accented.¹⁹⁵

Even though Solon did not emphasize the role of personal gods, he accented the role of the personal agent in maintaining harmony in the polis.¹⁹⁶ Jaeger has compared Solon's idea of *eunomia*, “harmony,” to the *apeiron* of Anaximander, which operated as an immanent law keeping a just order in the cosmos.¹⁹⁷ Yet Anaximander operated at a higher degree of abstraction in dealing with the forces that order nature and society. He saw the world order as a result of the coincidence of opposites: i.e., the impingement of equals upon one another with the result that they were symmetrically arranged around a center.¹⁹⁸ This unity-in-opposites had a self-correcting mechanism in the coming-into-being and the passing-away of all things. For Anaximander, it was absolutely necessary

¹⁹³ Jaeger, “Solon's Eunomia,” 77–99, here 79, in *Five Essays*.

¹⁹⁴ Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea*, 77–79; Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 76; Irwin, *Solon and Early Greek Poetry*, 175, 178, 180–82.

¹⁹⁵ Irwin (*Solon and Early Greek Poetry*, 129) argues that Solon may well have been modeling his singing about the hardships besetting Athens upon Odysseus' singing of the Achaeans' hardships before the Phaeacians (*Od.* 9.2–11).

¹⁹⁶ Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 85.

¹⁹⁷ Jaeger, “Solon's Eunomia,” 77–99, here 92, in *Five Essays*.

¹⁹⁸ Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 119–21; Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 220.

that death compensate for birth.¹⁹⁹ Thus, in Jaeger's view, this impinging upon one another of opposites in Anaximander's cosmos was analogous to the competition between the rich and the poor in Solon's polis.²⁰⁰ However, Solon focuses upon the importance of the personal agent as a force in maintaining *eunomia* in the polis. Vernant contends that Solon conceived of the polis as a geometric model of interacting anonymous forces.²⁰¹ However, in Solon's elegies, the goddess *Dikē* plays a fundamental role in ordering the polis by undergirding the actions of the arbitrator (i.e., Solon) in maintaining *eunomia*. When *eunomia* is in place, it is a manifestation of *Dikē*.²⁰²

Symbols cannot function without interaction with an interpreter, which implies that there is a personal dimension in the interpretation of symbols. Some symbols, according to Cassirer and Langer, function almost univocally like signs.²⁰³ But in the sociopolitical and religious spheres, symbols become the means by which beings express themselves and so manifest their being. Although it is important for the formation of the polis that its laws and offices achieve a sufficient level of distance or abstraction from the individual officeholders and legislators, it is essential to the operation of the polis that personal agents invest themselves in the sociopolitical fabric of the polis itself. In Ezekiel's visionary world, the king of Tyre was driven from Eden because he had chosen to retreat into a narcissistic world cut off from Yhwh and exploitative of other humans. By such a stance, the king of Tyre undercut his symbolic role as a cherub. In seventh-century Babylonia, Esarhaddon claimed that Marduk refused to function in the midst of the people because they were not honoring him properly. Symbols call forth the ongoing cultivation of vertical and horizontal relationships in a world ruled by the gods. The silencing of the gods would mean a serious diminishment of the role of the personal agent in the ordering of the cosmos.

Conclusion

In the invisible sphere on the heavenly mountain, the king of Tyre was identified by Yhwh as the signet of perfection (Ezek 28:12) and as a cherub (28:14). Both designations ascribe to the king of Tyre the status of servant of Yhwh. But as a composite being, the cherub, according to Mesopotamian analogues, was congenitally a rebel. Therefore, the king of Tyre needed to be aware of the power

¹⁹⁹ Charles Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) 183.

²⁰⁰ Jaeger, "Solon's Eunomia," 77–99, here 92, in *Five Essays*.

²⁰¹ Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 92.

²⁰² Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea*, 219–23.

²⁰³ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944) 31, 57; Suzanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960) 61.

of the animal dimension of his being and to keep the desires that issued from it responsive to the human and divine portions (i.e., the *rūah* of Ezekiel 1:20-21; cf. 2:2; 3:24) of his being. The cherub's balancing of these three dimensions of his being was integral to his identity as a symbol. He could not identify with any one of these dimensions without forfeiting his character as a symbol. By balancing these three dimensions, the cherub would stand at the boundary between the human and the animal and between the human and the divine and point to Yhwh as the sovereign enthroned above him.

The king of Tyre identified himself as a god and so neglected the animal and human dimensions of his being. These dimensions, however, did not go away. Rather they controlled him as he constructed an alternative symbol system to support his claim to be divine. He turned aside from his symbolic role as a thronebearer and protector of the integrity of the garden and adopted the symbol of the mercantile system as primary to his newly claimed status as an autonomous god. The silver and gold that he accumulated bore the burden of his hubristic claim to be a god. For the mercantile system to support the grandiose claim of the king of Tyre, the accumulation of riches had to astonish all onlookers. The wealth that he accumulated was to be put on display so as to symbolize his powerful (i.e., divine) status. His acquiring wealth placed burdens upon others. It probably forced farmers to shift from subsistence crops, like wheat, to wine and oil, which were commodities that could have been exported. It upset the distribution of wealth in towns and cities and thus caused a shift in status among the households. Some shifts may have been welcomed, but others would have been implemented only when violently imposed. The king of Tyre would probably not have been aware of the full impact of his adoption of money as the primary symbol of his existence. But it was this ripple effect within the community that made his turning away from his symbolic role as cherub so dangerous.

In late seventh-century Athens, Solon saw the danger of the unchecked accumulation of money on the polis community. He warned that it could lead to a degree of fragmentation of the community through which the only way for the polis to survive would be for the citizens to unite behind a tyrant. He saw the potential for money to be a source of both order and disorder. Therefore, money could not be the primary symbol about which a citizen was to be concerned if the polis community was to be healthy. In the eastern Mediterranean region in the Late Bronze Age, the palace-centered exchange of commodities was dominant. It promoted the distributed goods with an eye toward building up the center of a monarchically structured community. But the merchant-centered form of exchange, which was expanding in Archaic Age Greece, was not tied to a political center. As an instrument of the merchant-centered form of exchange, money facilitated mercantile transactions because it perjured through the exchange of commodities. Money became a versatile means of increasing

and displaying one's economic power. This merchant-centered form of exchange existed in NA and NB times, but it was overshadowed by the economies of the palace and the temple. The imperial regimes capitalized on merchant-centered exchange insofar as it generated silver, gold, and other luxury items that subject peoples could then use to pay tribute.

In the Mediterranean world in which trading settlements and colonies of Phoenicians and Greeks were established from the eighth to the sixth centuries, these communities were governed by a group of relatively equal traders. The processes by which they organized themselves gave birth to the idea of a polis. Even though cities had existed in Mesopotamia since the early third millennium, the cities of the Mediterranean world of the eighth to the fifth centuries B.C.E. recognized that they could create a state without a king. The royal task of building and maintaining temples was taken up in the Greek cities, which did not have temples prior to the seventh century B.C.E., by the city assembly and its magistrates. To keep the idea of a polis community viable, the citizens had to be engaged in its organization. So while certain forms of abstraction were necessary for the polis—e.g., the separation of the office from the officeholder, the display of written law that could be applied to successive cases—these measures alone could not create the sense of wholeness necessary for the polis to survive. How the symbol system of the polis operated was essential to the survival of the polis. Ezekiel claimed that no political community could endure that did not promote in its leaders and people alike an attentiveness to the tense equilibrium needed to maintain the balance between the divine, human, and animal dimensions of their beings.

THE PLACE OF SKEPTICISM IN DETERMINING THE DIVINELY WILLED ORDER OF THE WORLD

The need for inspired knowledge was felt not only among the Judahite deportees but also among the Mesopotamians with whom they were resettled and among the more distant peoples of Presocratic Greece. The vulnerability of mortals along with their limited knowledge of reality leads them to seek guidance about their place in the larger world within which they sojourn. The kind of knowledge needed is one that will reduce anxiety about what the future holds in store. Prophets, sages, and diviners from each of these three cultures responded to this need and offered their form of divinely legitimated knowledge to their audiences. But not all the practitioners of these crafts of divine communication were regarded as authentic. Skepticism toward claims of having a divine message was a practice evident not only in the tradition of ancient Israel but also in those of ancient Mesopotamia and Presocratic Greece. This chapter examines the conflictual context in which divine communications were reported and received by Ezekiel's exilic audience, by Neo-Assyrian audiences, and Presocratic Greek audiences. The presuppositions of those who hear prophetic messages are crucial to the way they interpret them. Such prerational factors are, this study contends, fundamental to the functioning of a coherent vision for the community. So the debates about the truth of such messages and the means by which such messages are received and formulated are essential to the veracity of the community's way of life. Skepticism is essential to the discernment of truth, but it can only function positively when a person is aware of the limits that humans face in their efforts to create order in the world. If

such limits are not acknowledged, then the order given in the world will be overlooked in favor of an order that the human perceiver fabricates.

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section addresses the issue of how the absolute pronouncements of an Israelite prophet provoke not only an acceptance or rejection of the message but also reflection on its content. This conflict in interpretation took the form of public disputations as well as individual questioning. Analogous responses from Neo-Assyrian and Homeric prophecy are examined. The second section highlights the importance of the proper starting point of an inquiry for the capacity to apprehend truth. Authentic prophecy gives a hearer a new standing place for perceiving the world. The shamanlike journeys of Gilgamesh, Odysseus, and Parmenides will be compared to Ezekiel's prophetic communication. The third section examines how the debate over the search for truth is essential to the proper apprehension of divinely revealed truth communicated by prophets, diviners, and thinkers. Parmenides claimed that truth properly apprehended is unchanging, but Heraclitus countered that such truth can only be intuited in the midst of conflict and change. The fourth section examines further how conflict within the thought of prophets, diviners, exorcists, thinkers, physicians and statesmen is indispensable for the discernment of truth and the right ordering of a community. The fifth section addresses the question whether there is an objective order to nature that operates independently from the intervention of a sovereign deity. Ezekiel emphasizes God's direct intervention to connect cause with effect, but the Mesopotamian "Advice to a Prince" indicates that the law of talion was regarded as a ruling force even when the gods were not summoned to enforce it. In Presocratic Greece, the just order ruling within the fabric of the polis had a necessary character like the order of nature. Finally, the sixth section addresses the practice of magic, which aimed to manipulate the order of nature and society through its rituals and formulas. The binding rituals condemned by Yhwh in Ezekiel 13:17-23 have analogues in the Mesopotamian rituals against which exorcists battled with their rituals such as the *Maqlû*. From Presocratic Greece, binding rituals have been preserved in the form of lead curse tablets. Also the Hippocratic doctors tried to heal by manipulating nature, but they distinguished their approach from that of the exorcists. With what might be called a more holistic approach, Empedocles tried to understand nature rationally but also tried to manipulate it with exorcisms.

Human Conflict over Prophetic Messages: A Catalyst to Thought and Reflection

Ezekiel's prophecy of doom for Judah and Jerusalem (12:19-20) was met with skepticism and denial by both the Jerusalemites and the exiles. The Judahites had been circulating the proverb: "The days drag on, and no vision ever comes

to anything?" (12:22). This claim that Ezekiel's prophecies never materialized was equivalent to labeling him a false prophet. According to Ezekiel 12:23-25, the Lord brought this conflict with the Judahites to Ezekiel's awareness in order to assure the prophet that he would stop the recitation of this proverb in the land of Israel and would give Ezekiel a pronouncement to counter the thrust of the proverb. As a proverb this easily remembered saying appealed to the impatient and skeptical Judahites. It was a saying that could be repeated by anyone with doubts about Ezekiel's message of doom and could thereby undercut the struggles of the people to accept Ezekiel's difficult message. Such negativity supported the status quo and allowed the exiles to live on with the illusion that their lives would soon be restored or would carry on without any further major disruption.

The refutation of this proverb, which the Lord gave to Ezekiel to deliver, was presumably something that Ezekiel communicated either by letter or by word of mouth to the exiles, who in turn repeated it to the Judahites.¹ The Lord's message stated the opposite of the proverb: "The days are at hand, and also the fulfillment of every vision. . . . Whatever I speak is final, and it shall be done without further delay. In your days, rebellious house, whatever I speak, I will bring about," says the Lord (*nē'um Yhwh*)" (12:23, 25). The language of this pronouncement was fixed; it was not a proposal that was open to reformulation as a result of dialogue with the audience. Ezekiel claims to have received this message intuitively: i.e., it came to him in his thoughts without any effort to formulate it from signs divinely placed in the world.

Ezekiel's credibility was questioned by the distant Judahites and his relevance was denied by the exiles. According to Ezekiel 12:26-27, the Lord again informed the isolated Ezekiel of what was being said about him: "The vision he sees is a long way off; he prophesies of the distant future!" This saying, which circulated among the exiles, did not go so far as to deny Ezekiel's authenticity as a prophet of Yhwh, but it did try to prevent his message from influencing the outlook and behavior of the people. The Lord's response to this saying was to give a message whose content was exactly opposite: "None of my words shall be delayed any longer; whatever I speak is final, and it shall be done, says the Lord" (*nē'um Yhwh*) (12:28). The disputation that the Lord directed Ezekiel to conduct with the Israelites took the form of point-counterpoint. There was no accompanying explanation of either side that would try to persuade an audience of the merits of a particular position. The disputation assumed the form of a clear statement of the opposing positions. Discernment of whether or not Ezekiel's message of impending doom on Jerusalem was true had to rest on grounds other than reasoned argument.

¹ Walther Zimmerli (*Ezekiel I* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969] 282), argues that this disputation oracle was delivered in Babylon shortly before 587 B.C.E.

In Assyria, prophecy served not only the king but also the larger populace. In the omen series *Šumma alu*, the following omen points to the widespread existence of male and female prophets in Mesopotamia: “If there are many prophets in a city, the city will fall. If there are many prophetesses in a city, the city will fall” (i.101–2).² In the seventh century B.C.E., oracles delivered by Assyrian prophets, primarily women from the cult of Ištar of Arbela, were gathered into written collections because, it seems, they were regarded as having continuing validity for later times.³ Because the majority of extant Assyrian prophecies were gathered under royal auspices, these messages usually refer to issues of the protection and success of the king. Since the first half of the second millennium B.C.E., intuitive prophecy had been practiced in the upper Mesopotamian region of Mari. It seems that it was widely practiced prior to the writing down of oracles in the seventh century. One of the reasons that oracles were recorded at this time was that intuitive prophecy came to be more highly regarded during the reigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal.⁴

The following report of an oracle from Ištar of Arbela illustrates the prophet’s concern for the divine protection of the king:

Do not be afraid, Esarhaddon. I am Bēl. I am speaking with you and am observing the structures of your heart. When your mother gave birth to you, sixty great gods along with me protected you. Sin was at your right side and Šamaš at your left. Sixty great gods are standing with you; they have girded your loins.

Do not trust humans. Raise your eyes and look toward me. I am Ištar of Arbela. I made Aššur peaceful toward you. When you were young, I brought you forth. Do not be afraid! Praise me.

What enemy has attacked you while I remained silent? The coming times will be like the former ones. I am Nabû, master of the stylus. Praise me.

By the mouth of Bayâ,⁵ citizen of Arbela. (SAA 9.1.4 ii.16’–40’)⁶

² Quoted in Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Writings from the Ancient World 12; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 190–91.

³ Karel van der Toorn, “Mesopotamian Prophecy between Immanence and Transcendence: A Comparison of Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Prophecy,” 71–81, here 75, in *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (SBL SymS 13; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000).

⁴ Martti Nissinen, “The Socioreligious Role of the Neo-Assyrian Prophets,” 89–114, here 106, in *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context*; idem, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources* (SAA 7; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998) 94–95.

⁵ Bayâ is written with the feminine determinative MÍ. Nissinen (*Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 105 n. f) suggests either that Bayâ belonged to those of “undefinable gender role” or that a scribe mistakenly wrote his name with the feminine determinative because Bayâ was used as a masculine and feminine name.

⁶ Edition: Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (SAA 9; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997) 6–7.

Here Ištar promised to continue her careful protection for Esarhaddon. She intercedes for him with Aššur and seems to assume the identity of the divine scribe Nabû who wrote the tablet of destinies.⁷ Because the NA collections of prophecies were largely associated with the cult of Ištar of Arbela, the feminine identity of the intermediary was accented. Even the gender identity of a male prophet such as Bayâ was rendered ambiguous by writing his name with the female determinative (*MĪ*).⁸

As intuitive prophecy grew in importance in the seventh century, it began to be perceived by some of the male scholarly intermediaries as a threat to their own positions. The astrologer Bēl-ušēzib wrote to Esarhaddon with the complaint:

Why did the king call upon the male and female prophets when I had pointed out many things that had happened that I had heard in Nineveh. I had impeded the activity of the exorcist by my speech and had gone to wish well-being to the crown prince, my lord. I avoided execution by fleeing to the tower. Concerning the murder of me, it was plotted daily. And the omen concerning the kingship of my lord, the crown prince Esarhaddon, I told it to Dāda, the exorcist, and to the queen mother as follows: "Esarhaddon will build Babylon and complete Esagila and me. . . ." Why has the king not yet designated me? (*SAA* 10 109.8'–10')⁹

Bēl-ušēzib emphasizes the life-saving advice that he had given to Esarhaddon at great personal risk. The rivalry upsetting Bēl-ušēzib here was that between an astrologer and the prophets. The criterion on which Bēl-ušēzib based his claim to higher status was his success in providing valuable advice to the king. He did not argue for the superiority of his method of gaining information from the divine sphere, for that point may have been commonly understood. Furthermore, astrological forms of divination increased in importance in seventh-century Assyria during the reigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal.¹⁰

In the ancient Greek world of Homer's *Odyssey*, a prophet named Theoclymenus presented himself to Telemachus as a suppliant fleeing from his fellow tribesmen because he had killed a member of his tribe (*Od.* 15.271–73). Theoclymenus was the grandson of the legendary seer Melampous (*Od.* 11.291; 15.256). When Telemachus and Theoclymenus visited Penelope upon reaching Ithaca, Telemachus told his mother about his visit to Nestor and Menelaus, especially the news that Proteus had revealed to Menelaus: Odysseus was alive and held captive on Calypso's island, but he had no ship by which to return to Ithaca (*Od.* 17.107–44). At that point, Theoclymenus spoke up:

⁷ Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 105 n. e.

⁸ Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 105 n. f.

⁹ Edition: Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (*SAA* 10; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993) 86.

¹⁰ Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources*, 101.

O worthy wife of Odysseus, son of Laertes, he [Telemachus] certainly does not understand clearly. Pay attention to my word (*mythos*). I will prophesy to you exactly; I will conceal nothing. Let my witness now be Zeus, first of the gods, and the table of hospitality and the hearth of blameless Odysseus to which I come, that Odysseus is already now in his fatherland, sitting or moving, hearing of these evil deeds. But he is devising an evil thing for all the suitors. For I, when sitting on the well-benched ship, marked this bird of omen and told it to Telemachus. (*Od.* 17:152–61)

Like Theoclymenus, the prophet Calchas in the *Iliad* (1.69) was categorized as one who gained his divine knowledge by interpreting the flight and behavior of birds. Neither of them were mantic seers who were possessed by a divine spirit.¹¹ However, the words of inspired prophets were not the only way in which intuitive knowledge from the gods was believed to be imparted to humans. The Homeric gods assumed human form and spoke directly to humans as happened when Athena took on the form of the elder Mentor to advise Telemachus (*Od.* 2.267–95).¹² The Homeric gods also intervened directly by placing a message in the human mind as happened when Helen was about to interpret the eagle/goose sign as referring to Odysseus's imminent return: "Listen to me! Now I will prophesy as the immortals cast into my heart, and I think it will be fulfilled" (*Od.* 15:172–73).¹³

Circumspect Penelope responded to Theoclymenus that if his words about Odysseus's imminent return were true, he would be highly celebrated (*Od.* 17.163–65). She showed a note of caution or skepticism toward his words, which was probably a typical response by ancient Greeks toward prophetic messages.¹⁴ But such skepticism would have arisen on even more fundamental grounds: knowledge about the future was regarded as the prerogative of the gods. Thus when humans were granted glimpses of such knowledge, it often took on a paradoxical character resistant to interpretation.¹⁵ Penelope did not dismiss the prophecy of Theoclymenus, but set up a series of tests for the one who either claimed to be Odysseus or wanted to take his place so that he might demonstrate

¹¹ Later, Plato distinguished inspired divination (*entheos*) from the art of reading divine signs from birds (*Phaedrus* 244c5).

¹² Bernard Dietrich, "From Knossos to Homer," 1–13, here 4, in *What Is a God? Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity* (ed. Alan B. Lloyd; London: Duckworth, 1997).

¹³ M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 181–89.

¹⁴ Andrew Karp, "Prophecy and Divination in Archaic Greek Literature," 11, in *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination, Dreams, and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity* (ed. Robert Berchman; Atlanta: Scholars, 1998).

¹⁵ Karp, "Prophecy and Divination in Archaic Greek Literature," 12; John Pollard, *Seers Shrines and Sirens: The Greek Religious Revolution in the Sixth Century B.C.* (South Brunswick, N.Y.: A. S. Barnes, 1965) 37.

his worthiness. To act upon a divine sign required human deliberation.¹⁶ So the function of divine signs in Presocratic Greece was perhaps not so much to communicate knowledge about the future as it was to enable humans to see their issues on a larger canvas and so to make decisions with greater confidence.¹⁷

Xenophanes (570–470 B.C.E.), the strong critic of Homer's anthropomorphic portrayal of the gods, claimed to have superior insight into divine matters: "There never has been a man who knew or will be one who knows the truth about the gods, and all the matters of which I speak" (*DK* 21B34; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 7.49.4–7). His rejection of the notion of the birth of the gods and their genealogies undercut the traditional Greek theology as articulated in Hesiod's *Theogony*.¹⁸ Furthermore, he denied the validity of intuitive prophecy and inductive divination¹⁹ and urged instead a practice of continual searching: "From the beginning the gods did not reveal all things to mortals; but, over time, the ones who search will discover what is better" (*DK* 21B18; John of Stobi, *Anthology* 1.8.2).

Ezekiel was often dismissed by his audience as a prophet whose oracles were either false or irrelevant (33:30–33). As in the disputations of Ezekiel 12:21–28, the opposing positions were recorded but not the debate between them. But such debates must have occurred in private, as Ezekiel's subsequent clash with opposing prophets in Ezekiel 13:1–23 suggests. In Assyria, when prophets gave favorable oracles to the king, they were no doubt treated graciously, if for no other reason than that their words allowed the king to carry on his life without having to participate in bothersome prophylactic rituals.²⁰ If the omen from *Šumma alu* quoted earlier reflects the reality in seventh-century Assyria, there was a surplus of prophets whose activities tended to stir up rivalry both in their

¹⁶ Karl Reinhardt ("The Adventures in the *Odyssey*," 63–132, here 132, in *Reading the Odyssey* [ed. Seth L. Schein; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996]) contrasts the prophecy of Teresias with the fortune-telling of Proteus: the ambiguous signs of prophecy require investigation and interpretation. Karp, "Prophecy and Divination in Archaic Greek Literature," 24.

¹⁷ Karp, "Prophecy and Divination in Archaic Greek Literature," 26; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (trans. John Raffan; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 113–14. John Pairman Brown (*Israel and Hellas* [3 vols.; BZAW 231, 276, 299; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995–2001] 2.155) claims that "Mediterranean prophecy was part of the matrix out of which civic freedom, high religion and rational thought was to grow."

¹⁸ Guthrie, "Xenophanes," 1.360–402, here 1.372–73, in *HGP*; G. E. R. Lloyd, *Methods and Problems in Greek Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 132–33; Giovanni Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 1, *From the Origins to Socrates* (trans. John Catalan; Albany: State University of New York, 1987) 78.

¹⁹ Guthrie, "Xenophanes," 1.360–402, here 1.373, in *HGP*.

²⁰ Stefan Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung: eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale (Namburbi)* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994) 20.

own ranks and with diviners and thus unnecessarily complicated the life of the cities. In the examples of prophecy drawn from Homeric Greece, it appears that the prophets were primarily interested in getting the people to move forward in their thoughts about alternative courses of action rather than to provide them with ready-made decisions.

The Proper Starting Point for the Apprehension of Truth

For Ezekiel, the starting point for the reception of a divine message was the recognition of the difference in the levels of reality at which the divine and human operate. When the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, he was addressed as “son of man/mortal” (13:2). This standard way in which the Lord addressed the prophet in the book of Ezekiel made clear that there was a vast gulf that separated the divine from the human. Such an awareness was fundamental for Ezekiel for the way that the Israelite prophets were to understand their own thoughts and experience when listening for a word from the Lord. Nevertheless, the Lord treated Ezekiel as his confidant as seen in the following private communication of the Lord to Ezekiel: “Prophecy against the prophets of Israel. Prophecy and say to the ones who prophesy from their own hearts (*lēb*): listen to the word of the Lord: Thus says the Lord God: Alas concerning the foolish (*nābāl*) prophets who behave according to their own spirit (*rūah*) and have seen nothing” (13:2-3). The heart and the spirit refer to the ruling parts of the human person: the place from which thinking arises and where decisions are made.²¹ It is the place of discernment where one’s perspective is shaped. When the Lord told Ezekiel that the prophets of Israel were foolish, he meant that their perception was seriously flawed. Their views were to be dismissed because they had received no vision and yet were portraying themselves as messengers from the Lord. As a conclusion to this initial indictment of the prophets of Israel, the Lord likened them to “foxes in the ruins” (13:3). They were like creatures who pursued their own advantage when trouble beset the city.²² The usurpation of the authority of the prophetic role and the use of it without actual divine involvement brought distortion to their perception and that of all who followed them.

A vision granted to an intermediary endowed a human with a portion of divine knowledge. As noted in chapter 2, Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, the author of

²¹ Daniel Block (*The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997] 399) states: “Here *lēb* is used interchangeable with *rūah* (cf. v. 3) for the seat of thought and the source of speech.”

²² Franz Sedlmeier, “Wie Füchse in den Ruinen . . .,” 293–321, here 300, in *Gottes Wege suchend: Beiträge zum Verständnis der Bibel und ihrer Botschaft* (ed. F. Sedlmeier; Würzburg: Echter, 2003).

²³ Luigi Cagni, *L’Epoepa di Erra* (Studi Semitici 34; Roma: Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente, 1969) 127. See chap. 2, p. 98.

the poem *Erra and Išum*, claimed that the contents of his narrative poem were revealed to him at night when he was in a half-waking state (*Erra* V:43).²³ The vision of this poem came to be revered in Mesopotamia in the first millennium as one that honored Erra, the god of war and pestilence, and so could provide a means of propitiating such a deity. The poem *Erra and Išum* concludes with blessings for those attentive to its message and curses for those who neglect it. A special place was given to the scribe in these blessings: "The scribe who understands it shall be spared in a hostile land and honored in his own land; in the scriptorium where they consistently invoke my name, I will open their ear" (V:56–57).²⁴ The author was perhaps a priestly scribe, for he wanted this poem to be honored both in sanctuaries and in the circles of the scribes.

Another epic poem that circulated widely in Mesopotamia in the first millennium B.C.E. was the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The final journey of Gilgamesh through the mountains of Mashu to meet Utnapishtim has the character of a journey in a dream.²⁵ When Gilgamesh finally met Utnapishtim, Gilgamesh asked him how he had managed to join the assembly of the gods. Utnapishtim replied: "I will open up for you, Gilgamesh, a treasured word and a secret of the gods I will relate to you" (XI:9–10).²⁶ Utnapishtim proceeded to relate the story of the flood and how he had survived it to be translated to the assembly of the gods, even though he was only a human. This travel story portrays Gilgamesh as a shamanlike character who was able not only to travel to the world beyond but also to return. What he experienced on his journey gave him a divinelike knowledge capable of bringing guidance to people on matters of life and death.

In the Presocratic Greek world, Homer's Odysseus mirrors many experiences of Gilgamesh.²⁷ Odysseus made a journey to the Netherworld and returned. He combined this experience with his travels in the far-reaches of the world to shape a cycle of stories that he sang to the Phaeaceans (*Od.* 9.1–35). Traveling with Odysseus in his stories is like entering into a dream in which the characters resemble the real world but function according to a different set of limits.²⁸

Parmenides (ca. 490), one of the most influential Presocratic thinkers who led a philosophical school in Elea in southern Italy in the fifth century B.C.E., transformed the epic hero's striving for a victorious homecoming into the search

²⁴ Edition: Cagni, *L'Epopea di Erra*, 128.

²⁵ Cf. Tzvi Abusch, "The Socio-Religious Framework of the *Maqlû*: Some Observations on the Introductory Section of the Text, Part II," 497–94, here 484–88, in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots* (ed. Z. Zevit, S. Gitin, M. Sokoloff; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995).

²⁶ Edition: Andrew R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic* (2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 1.702.

²⁷ West, *East Face of Helicon*, 402–17.

²⁸ John H. Finley Jr., *Homer's Odyssey* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978) 77–78, 95; Reinhardt, "The Adventures in the Odyssey," 79.

for truth.²⁹ He introduced his philosophical poem on the way of Truth (*DK* 28B2.1–8.51) and the way of Illusion (*DK* 28B8.51–19.3) with a shamanlike journey:³⁰

The horses carrying me conducted me as far as was fitting for my heart, when the daimons set me and led me on the famous way which carries the knowing person over all habitations. For I was carried where the well-trained horses, straining, drew the chariot. Maidens were leading the way. (*DK* 28B1, ll. 1–5; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 7.111)

Through this rapid journey, Parmenides was brought to “the gates of the pathways of day and night” (*DK* 28B1, l.11): the passageway from the heavens and the earth to the Netherworld through which the sun passes each day.³¹ There the maidens persuaded Lady Justice (*Dikē*; *DK* 28B1, l. 14) to open the gates. They entered, and the carriage was brought down the road to the goddess who addressed him:

Young man, companion of the immortal charioteers and horses who carry you, you have reached my abode. Welcome! It was no ill fate that urged you to journey this way—for it is beyond the beaten paths of humans—but rather customary ways and justice. It is necessary for you to inquire about everything: both the unflappable heart of well-rounded truth and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true confidence. (*DK* 28B1, ll. 24–30; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 7.111; Simplicius, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca* 7, 557.25–558.2)

In this opening passage to his poem, Parmenides makes clear how vital it is to have the proper starting place if one is to deal with reality.³² Like Xenophanes before him, Parmenides believed that it had been granted to him to see things in ways that few mortals had been allowed. Once he was at this point, he was in a position to learn from the goddess. He believed that his ensuing logical deductive argument about Truth was a timeless one that would be applicable to all times and places (*DK* 28B8.1–6).³³ The Truth that he sought possessed definiteness, in contrast to the Infinite whose boundlessness was a source of distress to the Greeks.³⁴

²⁹ Scott Austin, *Parmenides: Being, Bounds, and Logic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) 3.

³⁰ Guthrie (“Parmenides,” 2.1–80, here 11, in *HGP*) notes here in the prologue to Parmenides’ poem the shamanistic strain of early Greek thought as illustrated by such semi-legendary figures as Aithalides, Aristreas, Abaris, Epimenides, and Hermitimus.

³¹ Guthrie, “Parmenides,” 2.1–80, here 2.5, 7–8, in *HGP*.

³² Guthrie, “Parmenides,” 2.1–80, here 2.51–52, in *HGP*; Sarah Brodie, “Rational Theology,” 205–24, here 215, in *Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (ed. A. A. Long; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

³³ Guthrie, “Parmenides,” 2.29–30, in *HGP*.

³⁴ Austin, *Parmenides*, 5.

Ezekiel the prophet, Gilgamesh the warrior, Kabti-ilāni-Marduk the scribe, Odysseus the wily explorer, and Parmenides the philosopher were revered by their traditions as individuals who had received authentic communications from the divine sphere. Such divinely revealed knowledge gave them a privileged starting point for understanding the truth about life. The listening attitude displayed by these characters manifested their conviction that there was a knowable world order that would provide them with the content and criteria of Truth.

Diverse Modes for Intermediaries to Connect with the Truth

Ezekiel condemned the prophets of Israel for presenting their own thoughts and experiences as though they had been divinely revealed. After having identified them as “foxes in the ruins” who scurry about amid the brokenness of their community, he addressed them directly: “you have not gone up into the breaches” (13:4): an action that prophets such as Moses (Exod 32:11-14) and Jeremiah (Jer 15:11) would have taken to defend their communities. They also have not attempted to build a protective wall (*gādēr*, 13:4): an action that a shepherd such as David would have taken for his sheep (37:24). Instead of taking a stand where they put their lives on the line, they had generated “false visions” and “lying divinations” and identified each of them as “an oracle of the Lord” (*nē’um Yhwh*, 13:6). This empty imitation of prophetic practice did not end with their speech acts; they also were ones who “wait for a confirming event” (*lēqayyēm dābār*, 13:6). But they were waiting for something that they had only imagined. Ezekiel scrutinized such lying behavior by repeating in the form of a rhetorical question the threefold charge of false visions, lying divinations, and invalid claims concerning the divine origin of their words. It seems that Ezekiel’s repetition of the truth about their actions was a rhetorical technique aimed at breaking through the wall of self-deception within which they operated. These prophets were not simply negligent in their obligation as sentinels for the community (33:1-9), they were actively corrupting it. These prophets pretended to act as messengers from the Lord, but “the Lord did not send them” (13:6). Ezekiel quoted the Lord as saying: “I did not make a pronouncement [through them]” (13:7).

Their “lying divinations” (*miq̄sam kāzāb*, 13:7) indicate that these prophets engaged in inductive as well as intuitive forms of divination. The urim and thummim appear to have been a form of sacred lots or crystals through which a “yes” or “no” answer could have been obtained for specifically formulated questions.³⁵ The oracular capacity associated with the ark during the reigns of Saul

³⁵ Beate Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien* (SAAS 10; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1999) 154; Frederick Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its*

and David indicates that priestly circles communicated to the leaders and the people what they revered as divine knowledge. In light of the salvation oracles in Second Isaiah and the structure of the lament psalms,³⁶ it may be that cultic officials regularly dispensed divine information to the peoples. Such information would have been secured by oracular techniques that provoked a divine response rather than by observance of natural phenomena to see whether the Lord was speaking to them through some unusual occurrence (e.g., the eclipse of the sun or the flight of a bird). It seems then that forms of inductive divination were more widely practiced in Israel than the biblical sources report.³⁷

Mesopotamian leaders valued inductive divination more than intuitive prophecy. The widespread practice of divination was founded on their belief that the gods inscribed their knowledge and will on material objects and in observable events.³⁸ For example, if a dog came to a man's house and began howling and moaning, this was a sign that trouble was in store for the man and his household.³⁹ Maul has argued that the evil portended by the dog was not simply a future evil but rather was in the present moment emitting negative energies. The contamination carried by the dog was transmitted not only by touching the dog but simply by seeing it.⁴⁰ The danger that this dog brought to a household was analogous to that which moderns see in a virus: if allowed to incubate, it will fester and unfold the fullness of its virulence. Thus, the Mesopotamians understood the evil to be present in the sign itself. Measures needed to be taken as soon as possible to contain and, if possible, eliminate the evil. That step involved calling upon the services of the exorcist.⁴¹

For those in leadership positions such as the king and his officials who had to make important decisions, they wanted to know what course of action Marduk, Šamaš, or Aššur wanted them to take. In these situations, extispicy functioned more efficiently than astral or terrestrial omens because the pressing

Ancient Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation (JSOTSup 142; Sheffield: Academic Press, 1994) 273–75. However, Cornelis van Dam (*The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997] 224–26) argues that the messages communicated through the urim and thummim were more detailed than “yes” or “no” responses and required prophetic communication, which he speculates was linked with the way light shone through a gem or crystal.

³⁶ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 286–95; Joachim Bégrich, “Das priesterliche Heil-sorakel,” 217–31, here 218, 229, in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (ed. W. Zimmerli; München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1964).

³⁷ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 241–43.

³⁸ A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (rev. ed. by Erica Reiner; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) 207–13.

³⁹ Richard Caplice, *The Akkadian Namburba Texts: An Introduction* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1974) 16, #7.

⁴⁰ Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, 5.

⁴¹ Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, 5.

issue could be stated directly to the god in binary form: do you recommend option A or option B? In this procedure, equivocation could be avoided.⁴² The following query to Šamaš was made by one of Esarhaddon's diviners sometime between 674 and 672 B.C.E. as Esarhaddon tried to discern how the relations between a Median city ruler and a Kassite city ruler would affect their relations with him:

I ask you, Šamaš, the great lord: Will Mamitīaršu, the lord of the city of the Medes, reach an agreement with Kaštaritu, the lord of the city of Karkašši? Or is he now reaching an agreement? Or will he be hostile to Esarhaddon, king of Assyria? Be present [in] this sheep. Make stand in it a firm answer, a positive decision, and favorable omens by the command of your great divinity. Let this come before your great divinity, Šamaš, the great lord. May an oracle provide an answer. (SAA IV, 41. r.2–8)⁴³

The next four lines of the tablet describe the characteristics of the entrails in the terminology of the diviner. The configuration and markings on the entrails would indicate whether or not the god had given an answer. To be sure that a divine answer had been given, the query often had to be repeated a number of times.⁴⁴ Despite the juridical nature of this ritual, it was carried out in circumstances that evoked a sense of mystery. The procedure was believed to be enacted in the presence of Šamaš in his Netherworld residence near the Western Gate; the defense attorney in these hearings was a god of the night.⁴⁵

The Mesopotamian practice of divination is referenced in Ezekiel 21:26–27a:

For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the teraphim, he looks at the liver. Into his right hand comes the omen (*haqqesem*) for Jerusalem.

Three forms of divination are used here: (1) divining by arrows,⁴⁶ (2) securing oracles from what seem to have been household gods (i.e., teraphim), and (3) examining the entrails, of which the liver was a part. Greenberg has argued that

⁴² Ivan Starr, *Queries to the Sungod: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria* (SAA 4; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1990) xxxii.

⁴³ Edition: Starr, *Queries to the Sungod*, 46.

⁴⁴ Starr, *Queries to the Sungod*, xxxii–xxxiii.

⁴⁵ Piotr Steinkeller, "Of Stars and Men: The Conceptual and Mythological Setup of Babylonian Extispicy," 11–47, here 12, 28–34, 38–42, in *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran* (BibOr 48; ed. A. Gianto; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005); Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 188.

⁴⁶ Ann Jeffers (*Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* [Leiden: Brill, 1996] 191–93) claims this technique probably refers to shaking the arrows rather than to belomancy (firing or throwing arrows), rhabdomancy (use of sticks or rods), or sideromancy (scrying or crystal gazing).

haqqesem in verse 27a is a summary of the results of the three forms of divination. The reason that the right hand is designated for Jerusalem seems to be that in the inquiry of the liver, the righthand side of the liver designated Jerusalem. Even if this scenario, set at the time immediately before Nebuchadrezzar's siege of Jerusalem is fictional, it nevertheless reflects an acquaintance with the long-standing Mesopotamian practice of extispicy.⁴⁷

The epic heroes Gilgamesh and Odysseus who ventured into the world of the gods and returned to earth were ones uniquely positioned to offer insight into the reality of life in the world. The transcendent perspective of the gods was believed to allow one a glimpse into that which abides and is not subject to change. Parmenides based his understanding of the world on this transcendent perspective that had been granted to him by the chariot ride that rocketed him into the abode of the goddess.⁴⁸ There the goddess instructed him on the two ways:

The one that it is and that it is impossible not to be. It is the path of persuasion, for it follows truth. The other is that it is not and that it is necessary that it not be. I point out to you that it is an utterly inscrutable track. For you cannot know what is not (for it is not knowable) nor can you speak of it. (*DK* 28B2, ll. 3–8)

This passage shows us that Parmenides was not only the first ontologist but also the first logician.⁴⁹ He argued that whatever exists does so by necessity. If something exists, it cannot at the same time be said not to exist (i.e., the principle of non-contradiction). If something exists, it can be thought about and talked about.⁵⁰ He says “it is there for being, but nothing does not exist” (*DK* 28B6, l. 1). Parmenides states, however, that there are confused humans “who hold that being and not-being are the same and not the same” (*DK* 28B6, ll. 8–9, Simplicius, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca* 86.27–28; 117.4–13).

Because Parmenides had taken the chariot ride, he contended that he could see through things and not be stalled out in mere appearances; he claimed to see what actually exists. But for the average human, the things in the world appear to change. For example, an acorn that is potentially a tree both is and is not a tree; it appears to change as it grows. For Parmenides though, the goddess warned him upon his arrival in her abode that he must properly interpret what is conveyed through the senses. It is the senses that tell humans that things

⁴⁷ Moshe Greenberg, “Nebuchadnezzar at the Parting of the Ways: Ezek 21:26–27,” 267–71, here 270–71, in *Ah, Assyria . . . Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph'al; Scripta Hierosolymitana 33; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991).

⁴⁸ Guthrie, “Parmenides,” 2.1–80, here 2.11, in *HGP*; Austin, *Parmenides*, 3.

⁴⁹ Austin, *Parmenides*, 1.

⁵⁰ Austin, *Parmenides*, 4; Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 1, *From the Origins to Socrates*, 84; Guthrie, “Parmenides,” 2.1–80, here 2.6, 15, in *HGP*.

change. For Parmenides, if a person really has knowledge of a thing, that knowledge will be stable and unchanging—just like the real thing about which it reports. In defending his viewpoint that whatever exists does so by necessity and that there is no such thing as nothing, Parmenides developed a sustained deductive argument—a first in the history of Greek thought.⁵¹ Parmenides believed that true knowledge transcends time and place: it is a reality whose coherence cannot be impaired by varying perspectives.⁵²

At roughly the same time in Ephesus of Ionia, Heraclitus (ca. 500) held the contrary position: that what is real is changing. He claimed that reality manifests itself as a process (e.g., *DK* 22B12, B90, B94). Nevertheless, Heraclitus aimed to affirm the unity of all things. For Heraclitus, the unity was more essential than the opposites (*DK* 22B2, B29, B44, B114).⁵³ He tried through the aphoristic presentation of his thought to show the dramatic unfolding of this great truth of the unity that exists in opposites.⁵⁴ This notion of the unity-in-opposites is evident in his saying: “The road up and down is one and the same” (*DK* 22B60, Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.4.6). The perspective from which one views the road will determine whether one sees the approaching journey as uphill or downhill—a significant difference subjectively. But however different the subjective experience of traveling uphill or downhill might be, it entails traveling on the same objective road. For Heraclitus, the opposing forces in the world were not simply subjectively determined. He had what might be labeled the idea of the “nonrelative copresence of opposites,”⁵⁵ an idea that can be seen in his saying that reads: “Sea water, most pure and most polluted. For fish it is drinkable and healthy, but for humans undrinkable and deadly” (*DK* 22B61, Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.10.5.3–4). The quality of the water does not depend on the perspective of an individual fish or human.

Heraclitus valued the information provided by the senses.⁵⁶ So the insights gained through the experience and reflection of the sages of the early sixth century found their way into his thinking. At the same time, he was attentive to the way of observing nature promoted by the Milesian thinkers. Kahn has argued

⁵¹ Austin, *Parmenides*, 2.

⁵² Guthrie, “Parmenides,” 2.1–80, here 2.5, in *HGP*; Reale, *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 1, *From the Origins to Socrates*, 88–89.

⁵³ Edward Hussey, “Heraclitus,” 88–112, here 96, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (ed. A. A. Long; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 21–22.

⁵⁴ Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 7.

⁵⁵ Hussey, “Heraclitus,” 95.

⁵⁶ A. W. Saxonhouse (*Fear of Diversity: The Birth of Political Science in Ancient Greek Thought* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992] 31) claims that Heraclitus saw the “bonds of community in the noetic sphere”; the mind exerted more authority than the senses.

that the distinctiveness of Heraclitus' thought resides in the way that he bridged the popular wisdom culture of his time and the emerging scientific culture of Miletus.⁵⁷ Heraclitus emphasized the necessity of humans' acknowledging that they were mortal and not immortal like the gods (*DK* 22 B78, B79, B101). In a similar vein, Guthrie says that Heraclitus was more a religious prophet than a rationalist.⁵⁸ In line with his capacity to provoke thought through paradoxical or contradictory expressions, Heraclitus said: "The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither speaks nor hides but signifies (*sēmainei*)" (*DK* 22B93; Plutarch, *On the Failure of the Oracles at Delphi These Days to Use Verse* 404d12–e1).

The search for inscriptions of the divine will in material objects or observable events was the primary form of divination in Mesopotamia, but was also practiced to some extent in ancient Israel and Presocratic Greece. Various inductive and intuitive means of receiving signs from the divine world were employed. The scrutiny of the authenticity and truth of these divine communications was not simply a concern of an Israelite prophet like Ezekiel. Mesopotamian kings challenged the work of diviners, and the diviners challenged one another. Inspired intermediaries and sages in Presocratic Greece began to explain the logic of the truth disclosed to them (Parmenides) or used the disclosed truth to provoke reflection on the order and movement of life. In each of these cultures, a critical spirit challenged the self-interest and self-deception to which divine intermediaries were prone.

Conflict: A Sign or Countersign of Divine Intervention

Ezekiel's opponents in Jerusalem and among the exiles discounted Ezekiel's oracles either as false or as applicable to some later generation. But after Ezekiel indicted the prophets of Israel for their false prophecies, he declared the verdict of the Lord—a form of divine intervention that would settle the debate:

Therefore, because you have spoken falsehood and have envisioned lies, therefore, I am against you—oracle of the Lord. My hand will be against the prophets who falsely report visions and diviners who lie. They shall not be within the assembly of my people, and in the register of the house of Israel they shall not be inscribed, and upon the land of Israel they shall not enter. Then you will know that I am the Lord God." (13:8–9)

The evidence that Ezekiel was a true prophet would come in the form of the Lord's personal intervention to remove the false prophets. The recognition formula in verse 9—"then you shall know that I am the Lord God"—highlights

⁵⁷ Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 10.

⁵⁸ Guthrie, "Heraclitus," 1.403–92, here 1.479, in *HGP*; Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 227.

the fact that the issue at hand was the revelation of the reality of this particular God named Yhwh.⁵⁹ The seriousness of the offense of false prophecy is evident by excommunication of these prophets, which means that they and their families would no longer belong to the community of Israel. Such blotting out of a person from the community is captured by the statement that the person's name would not appear in the register of the people of Israel (*kētāb bēt yisrā'el*, 13:9). This penalty resembles the *kārēt*, "the cutting off," which called for the death of the offender, an action usually carried out by the Lord himself (cf. Ezek 14:8).⁶⁰ Such drastic action was required because the false prophets were undermining the symbolic role of the prophet: one in which the prophet pointed beyond himself to the reality of the Lord. The false prophets were capitalizing on the people's search for God to further their own self-interests. The Lord would eliminate them and demonstrate that he was no mere idea conjured up in the human mind.

Ezekiel leveled another round of indictment and verdict against the false prophets by identifying these prophets as ones who covered over the danger facing Jerusalem. He charged that they were like delinquent shepherds when they would say: "peace, when there is no peace; they build a wall and cover it with plaster (*tāpēl*)" (13:10; cf. 22:28). Since the infrequently attested word *tāpēl* also means "vanity" (Lam 2:14; cf. Jer 23:13; Ps 109:4), Ezekiel might have been using this word in a metaphorical sense to emphasize that vanity was what motivated the prophets of Israel to prophesy.⁶¹ They operated as though their own self-image was more important than the communication of the Lord's truth. The Lord then commanded Ezekiel:

Say to the ones who cover with plaster (*tāhē tāpēl*): it will fall. And there will be a driving rain; I will cause hailstones to fall; and a storm wind will split it apart. Look, the wall will fall. Will it not be said to you: where is the plaster with which you plastered?" (13:11-12)

The whole structure that the prophets of peace constructed and kept patching together would be demolished by the Lord who intended to intervene by means of the storm wind. The participial phrase *tāhē tāpēl*, "the ones who cover with plaster (vanity)," points to this ongoing activity of the false prophets as they tried to keep their illusion alive. Because their interests were served by the status quo, they intended to keep the people thinking that all was in order. But the storm clouds rising on the horizon were not to be dismissed by their

⁵⁹ Michael Carasik, (*Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel* [Studies in Biblical Literature 85; New York: Peter Lang, 2006] 23) emphasizes (*contra* Walther Zimmerli, "I am Yahweh" [trans. D. W. Scott; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982] 35) that this knowledge of Yhwh includes an inward recognition and is not simply an observation of Yhwh acting in the midst of Israel.

⁶⁰ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 457–60.

⁶¹ William H. Propp, "The Meaning of *Tāpēl* in Ezekiel," *ZAW* 102 (1990) 404–8.

empty rhetoric. Ezekiel states that the storm winds that would bring down the wall were like an instrument in the Lord's hand, an instrument whose violent force symbolized the wrath of the Lord. The term used for the storm winds (*rûah šē'ārôt*, vv. 11, 13) is the same term used for the storm (*rûah šē'arâ*) that came from the north in Ezekiel's inaugural vision (1:4). The ominous sense borne by the storm wind in the inaugural vision has become more explicit here because it has been associated with the Lord's wrath. Through this storm, the Lord intended to level the wall of the false prophets to its foundations. Not only would the fabrications of the false prophets crash; they themselves would perish. The punishment of these false prophets would coincide with the realization of Ezekiel's prophecy of doom. For when the Lord said: "it will fall and you will perish in its midst" (13:14), the "it" (third fem. sing.) most likely referred to Jerusalem and not simply the wall (*haqqîr*) because *qîr* is a masculine noun. The Lord repeated his indictment and judgment in vv. 15–16 as if to drive home the fact that this action was sure to come.

The Mesopotamians were well aware of their vulnerability in a universe ruled by the gods. They believed that the gods inscribed in the world their signs of what they intended to do or of what was fated to happen. This attention to written signs, composed according to a divine code, may well have arisen in conjunction with the aura surrounding cuneiform signs. This complicated writing system was mastered only by an elite and thus could have appeared to have been the means for attaining secret knowledge.⁶² So the extispicist in the seventh to sixth century Mesopotamia, equipped with his cuneiform manuals of signs, had a system for deciphering the marks and configurations of the entrails of animals, one that had been developing since the early second millennium. These manuals included collections of celestial omens (*Enûma Ānu Enlil*), terrestrial omens (*Šumma alu*), and omens associated with unusual births (*Šumma Izbû*). Over the centuries, they collected omens that they associated with good or bad turns of fate. They expanded these collections in an attempt to cover all aspects of reality: from the movement of the stars (astrology) to the timing of events around certain points in the calendar (chronomancy), to the appearance of the human body (physiognomy), to dreams (oneiromancy).⁶³ Bottéro notes that these collections were not intended to provide answers to specific questions but rather were to function like grammatical paradigms.⁶⁴ Just as a sentence contains nouns and verbs that can be declined according to patterns that fit the

⁶² Cf. Laurie Pearce, "The Scribes and Scholars of Ancient Mesopotamia," 2265–78, here 2265–66, 2275–76, in *CANE*.

⁶³ Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (trans. T. Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 180; Marie-Louise Thomsen, "Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," 3–95, here 82, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Biblical and Pagan Societies* (ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark; University of Pennsylvania, 2001)

⁶⁴ Bottéro, *Religion of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 180.

nouns and verbs in all other sentences in that language, so also could the signs of a particular omen be placed within the patterns characteristic of a particular category of omens. With the assistance of his manuals, the diviner reduced the equivocal character of an omen to an actionable form of advice.

The Mesopotamians did not construct this complex system of divination over the generations simply to discover what fate lay in store for them. They wanted to know whether there was an ill-omen allotted to them so that they might take steps to have it changed.⁶⁵ Bottéro characterized the future envisioned by the Mesopotamians as a judicial future:⁶⁶ i.e., it was subject to review and possible change. The process of appealing a bad fate is reflected in the *namburbû* rituals. These rituals that were intended to undo portended evil are known through a collection of 140 texts dating from the late eighth to the late sixth centuries from Nineveh and Ashur. Caplice notes, however, that these rituals most likely originated in Babylonia.⁶⁷

The majority of the *namburbûs* were directed at situations triggered by terrestrial omens.⁶⁸ If then, for example, the omen threatening evil were a dog that moaned and howled in a man's house, the following *namburbû* ritual could be used to try to counteract its evil:

You make a clay image of a dog. Before [Šamaš] you recite an incantation three times. You go to the river and immerse yourself, [seven times facing upstream, seven times] facing downstream. [The evil of that dog will not approach the man and his house.] (#7, ll. 3–7)⁶⁹

Presumably the dog had escaped, for the exorcist had to make an image to represent the dog. Šamaš was implored because he was honored as the one who judges all fates. So if an ill omen had been sent by a particular god who was upset with a person, the way to counteract the portended evil was not to go directly to the offended god but rather to place the issue before Šamaš. Whatever Šamaš decided was final.⁷⁰ The following incantation to Šamaš, listed later on this same tablet, was probably similar to the one that the earlier ritual required to be recited three times:

Šamaš, ruler of heaven and earth, of the upper and lower regions, brilliance of the gods, guide of humans, the judge of the judgments of the great gods. I turn to you

⁶⁵ Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, 4.

⁶⁶ Bottéro, *Religion of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 181.

⁶⁷ Caplice, *The Akkadian Namburbi Texts*, 7; cf. Thomsen, "Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," 3–95, here 83.

⁶⁸ Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, 13.

⁶⁹ Edition and translation: Richard Caplice, "Namburbi Texts in the British Museum II (Tablets I–VI)," *Or* 36 (1967) 1–38, here 1–8; idem, *The Akkadian Namburbi Texts*, 16–17.

⁷⁰ Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, 60.

and seek you. To the gods, pronounce life for me. May the gods who are with you pronounce well-being for me. Because of this dog that has urinated on me, I am afraid, restless, and anxious. Make the evil of this dog pass by me, and I will sing your praise. (#7, ll. 24–33)⁷¹

The next step in the ritual was for the petitioner to go to the river and immerse seven times in each direction of the river's flow. Because the river reached down into the domain of Enki, the lord of the Apsû, this concluding incantation was recited by the exorcist while the petitioner was immersing himself in the river. "Enki, king of the Apsû, king of Eridu are you. May the evil omen of the dog that opposes you not approach him. May it not settle upon him" (#7, ll. 6–9). In an incantation addressed to the River on the same tablet, the River was petitioned to carry away the image of the dog: "Make that dog go straight down to the Apsû. Do not let it go free. Make it go straight down to the Apsû. Draw out the evil of the dog from my body. Give me laughter and life" (#7, rev. 15–18).⁷² Once the dog was taken into the depths, it could be disposed of by Enki. Enki (Ea) and his son Asalluhi were the gods who oversaw and made effective all magical acts.⁷³

In a typical *namburbû* ritual, Šamaš was flanked by Enki and Asalluhi. The offerings, incantations, and petitions directed to these three gods aimed to urge them to "release" the threads of evil portended by the evil omen.⁷⁴ The exorcist (*āšipu*) who carried out the *namburbû* ritual worked in tandem with the diviner (*bārû*) who had diagnosed the evil portended by the omen. Expecting that Šamaš, Enki, and Asalluhi would respond to their rituals and prayers, the exorcists served the people as well as the royalty. Displeasure with one exorcist's diagnosis and prescription probably led a person to seek out another. The king typically had teams of diviners and exorcists responding to his requests.⁷⁵

Heraclitus believed that humans can gain insight through realities that change. He regarded data gained through the senses as important. But how a person processed such data was vital, for he warned that appearances can deceive or give a distorted view of reality. He noted that "nature loves to hide" (*DK* 22B123; Themistius, *Speeches* 5.69b3). Claiming that such hiding occurs in the area of conflict, Heraclitus counseled that a "hidden harmony is better than manifest harmony" (*DK* 22B54; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*

⁷¹ Edition: Caplice, "Namburbi Texts in the British Museum II (Tablets I–VI)."

⁷² Edition: Caplice, "Namburbi Texts in the British Museum II (Tablets I–VI)."

⁷³ Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, 60.

⁷⁴ Bottéro, *Religion of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 195.

⁷⁵ Joel Sweek, "Inquiring for the State in the Ancient Near East: Delineating Political Location," 41–56, here 50, in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (Ancient Magic and Divination II; ed. Leda Cirraolo and Jonathan Seidel; Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2002); Starr, *Queries to the Sun god*, xxxiv–xxxv.

9.9.5.3). If one accepts this point, one would be probably be skeptical of the peace prophets whom Ezekiel condemned in Ezekiel 13:1-16. However, Heraclitus' view of conflict is counterintuitive. Most people try to resolve conflict and move back to what they regard as the more desirable and normal state of peaceful coexistence. But Heraclitus contended that engagement between opposing viewpoints was more truthful than a superficial harmony. In line with this positive assessment of conflict was Heraclitus' view of disease. He said: "It is not better for humans to get as much as they want. Sickness makes health delightful and good, as hunger does for satiety, and toil for rest" (*DK* 22B110; John of Stobi, *Anthology* 3.1.176, 177). For Heraclitus, conflict gives rise to knowledge. It is through the conflict of opposites that people perceive the unity that binds opposites together.

Heraclitus valued the emerging scientific way of thinking of the Milesians who based their reflections on what they observed.⁷⁶ As noted earlier, Heraclitus' view of the unity-in-opposites resembled the view of Anaximander that the tension between opposites gives rise to the cosmic order. This view of opposites creating a larger unity was also reflected in the way of thinking by way of polarities (hot versus cold, dry versus moist), which threaded its way through the works of *physiologoi* (e.g., Anaximander) and lyric poets (e.g., Archilochus) in Presocratic Greece.⁷⁷ This view of polarities giving rise to a larger unity or harmony is fundamental to the work of Greek physicians. Alcmaeon, a medical writer at Croton—a Pythagorean center in southern Italy—was the first Greek to write a book on medicine. His approach was to observe symptoms and by inference to speak of things not directly observable. He saw the qualities within the body arranged in contrasting pairs: "white and black, sweet and bitter, great and small."⁷⁸ When health reigned in the body, the opposing qualities were in a state of *isonomia*: i.e., qualities such as hot and cold, wet and dry, sour and sweet held equal rights.⁷⁹

The Hippocratic author, the anonymous author of numerous medical writings in the fifth century B.C.E, believed that diseases were to be cured by their opposites. Their remedies included regulation of diet and measures to shift the

⁷⁶ Kahn, *Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 16–18.

⁷⁷ Hermann Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jonanovich, 1962) 150, 262; G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966) 20, 38–42.

⁷⁸ Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, 340. G. E. R. Lloyd ("Alcmaeon and the Early History of Dissection," 164–93, here 174–76, in *Methods and Problems in Greek Science: Selected Papers* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]) argues that Alcmaeon regarded the sense organs as connected by *poroi*, "passages," to the brain (the seat of consciousness) and so his only use of a knife would have been to explore the links between the eye and the brain.

⁷⁹ Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, 341.

amount of dryness and moisture, heat and cold in the body.⁸⁰ In one of his treatises, the Hippocratic author sets out to demonstrate that the practitioners of magic were frauds; he argued that no one can influence natural phenomena by rituals.⁸¹ He presented his understanding of causality by a thought experiment on epilepsy. G. E. R. Lloyd recounts his argument as follows: “if goat skins are responsible [for epilepsy], then the Libyans would be expected to suffer especially from the disease [since they are shepherds]; but that is not the case; so goat skins cannot be held to be responsible.”⁸² Lloyd explains that this is an example of a *modus tollens* argument (later formalized by Aristotle); it takes the form, “if A, then B; but not B, then not A.”⁸³ The key point here is that the Hippocratic author held that there is a uniformity in nature in which there is a regular connection between causes and effects. Like the Milesians, the Hippocratic author regarded the whole of nature as divine.⁸⁴ Therefore, there are no causes that come from outside of nature; there is no divine intervention by way of supernatural causes. If the cause of a disease is knowable, it is to be discovered through its effects. Natural effects are the result of natural causes. The Hippocratic author thought within a different paradigm than the practitioners of magic.⁸⁵

This way of thinking about nature as an order sustained through the unity of opposites was foreshadowed in the political realm in the poetry of Solon in the early sixth century B.C.E. His view that “the revered foundations of justice” (*semna dikēs themethla*, 4.14) captures his understanding of the polis idea. The greedy ones who enslaved the poor defied the presence of *Dikē* and threatened to tear apart the fabric of the community. Therefore, Solon removed boundary-markers (*horous*) that showed that the poor Athenians had become enslaved through the loss of their land (36.5–7). He then referred to himself as a bound-

⁸⁰ G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience: Studies in the Origin and Development of Greek Science* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 22.

⁸¹ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 220; Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 47.

⁸² Hippocrates, “The Sacred Diseases,” par. 2, ll. 33–46, in *Hippocrates* (vol. 2; ed. W. H. S. Jones; New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1923) 142–44. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 25.

⁸³ Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 25.

⁸⁴ Hippocrates, “The Sacred Diseases,” par. 21, ll. 1–8, in *Hippocrates*, vol. 2, p. 182; Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 26. Nevertheless, appeal to the gods was not ruled out in this paradigm. M. J. Geller (“West Meets East: Early Greek and Babylonian Diagnosis,” 11–61, here 26, in *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine* [ed. H. F. J. Horstmanshoff and M. Stol; Leiden: Brill, 2004]) notes that “in Babylonian as in early Hippocratic medicine, the awareness of the role of gods and the supernatural was always recognized, but the focus was upon more immediate reasons for illness which could be identified through observation and deduction.”

⁸⁵ Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 26.

ary marker (*boros*, 37.10) who was taking his stand midway between the rich and the poor to maintain justice so that the polis could function as a political reality. He carried out this role of boundary marker as an arbitrator and showed that the polis can be a reality that transcends the interests of individuals.⁸⁶ Solon was able to use legitimate force to restore right relationship between the rich and the poor.⁸⁷ Even though Solon accepted class distinctions in Athens, he tried to cultivate in the citizens the consciousness of the city as a political community that was larger than the separate classes (fr. 4.30–39).⁸⁸ Thus, Solon was a teacher and a statesman who illustrated by his conduct how an arbitrator—a personal agent in addition to a written law—could play an essential role in creating the conditions for *eunomia*, “good order” (fr. 36.15–20).⁸⁹

The false prophets of Israel proclaimed peace when it did not exist. They created a “wall” or a structure to shield their own self-interests. The greedy ones in Solon’s Athens used their wealth to confiscate the property of poorer Athenians and enslave them. Ezekiel proclaimed that the Lord would intervene directly to punish the false prophets (13:8-9, 13-16). By means of a destructive, death-dealing storm, the sovereign Lord, who controlled the forces of death and life, would make his presence known. By contrast, Solon the statesman emphasized what humans should do to overcome social injustice. He assumed the ambiguous position of boundary keeper, where his decisions could either promote or undermine social harmony. But his actions were grounded in the conviction that harmony was present in the polis in a primordial way. If the polis ignored this preexistent order, it would cease to exist, for *Dikē* would win over time. Solon understood social justice to be like the natural order in the human body, which requires health if it is to survive. In an analogous way, the Mesopotamian diviner and exorcist tried to promote forms of divine intervention that would maintain physical and social balance in the community. He took aggressive steps toward those forces that threatened the existing social structure. For the Israelite prophet, the Mesopotamian diviner/exorcist, and the Greek sage/statesman, conflict may have been a positive sign that such justice was at work. Nevertheless, the primary goal of these prophets, diviners, and sages was to promote actions that would bring about justice and a well-grounded unity within their communities.

⁸⁶ Joseph Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea in Solon’s Political Poems: A Reading of the Fragments in Light of the Researches of New Classical Archaeology* (Mnemosyne 243; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 228; Brown, *Israel and Hellas*, 2.48.

⁸⁷ Ian Morris (*Archaeology as Cultural History* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2000] 162–63) notes that the archaeology of Athens indicates that the rich Athenians in the seventh century resisted the polis idea. See also Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea*, 151–53.

⁸⁸ Deborah Irwin, *Solon and Early Greek Poetry: The Politics of Exhortation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 183–90.

⁸⁹ Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea*, 231; Irwin, *Solon and Early Greek Poetry*, 221–29.

The Concept of God in the World of Natural Laws

Ezekiel portrayed the peace prophets as industrious. They constructed a wall (*hayiṣ*, 13:10; *qir*, 13:12, 14-15) and covered its outer part with plaster. He warned that their investment in the outer appearance rather than in the structural soundness of the wall would prove to be a foolish decision on the day when the Lord would put the wall to the test with strong winds, heavy rain, and battering hail. Their wall would be torn down to its foundations. Ezekiel informed them that if they had been honest to the prophetic task, they would have stood in the breaches and strengthened the wall (*gādēr*, 13:4) that was already there. Building upon what was already there (*gādēr*) would have provided guidance to the people rather than leading them astray by a construction of their own devising (*hayiṣ*; *qir*). This construction of a barrier to shield the people from the onslaughts of hostile forces was a task beyond the capacity of these so-called prophets. The strength of their wall was incommensurate with the force of the divine intervention that was to come against it. Instead of working with what the Lord had given and according to the Lord's command, these prophets of Israel pretended that they were working together with the Lord but then set out on their own. They lacked the discipline of waiting for the Lord. In protecting their fragile structure, they proclaimed peace when they should have been warning of an approaching danger. Thus, it was only a matter of time when the Lord would destroy their illusory protection. In the midst of such destructive actions, the Lord would declare that his sovereign power had become manifest: then they will know that "I am the Lord" (13:9, 14).⁹⁰ In particular, immediate circumstances, such as the destructive power of a storm, the Lord would reveal his name.

When threatened with an ill-omen, the Mesopotamians, as seen earlier, looked to Šamaš, Enki/Ea, and Asalluhi. They relied upon the traditional rituals and incantations of the exorcist to fend off threatening evils. The repeated and extended use of these rituals was intended to create a defensive shield for them. In their polytheistic tradition, the named gods were organized into a hierarchy with various specialties. Lambert claims that according to existing evidence there was no separation between the gods of popular and state religion in Mesopotamia.⁹¹ An important sign of success for this system was the extent to which it increased one's sense of security against the dangers of life.⁹²

Each of the gods was regarded as watching over a particular area or set of concerns.⁹³ As guarantors of the traditional rights of particular Mesopota-

⁹⁰ Zimmerli, "I am Yahweh," 30-31.

⁹¹ W. G. Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods: Superstition, Philosophy, Theology," *RHR* 207 (1990): 115-30, here 125.

⁹² Bottéro, *Religion of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 167-69.

⁹³ Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods," 120.

mian cities, the gods demonstrated their reality by promoting the well-being and order of the community. The reality of a god was assessed according to the justice maintained in the area overseen by this god (cf. the prologue to the *Code of Hammurapi*).⁹⁴ The ancient temple cities of Babylonia claimed certain time-honored privileges (*kidinnūtu*) for their citizens because of their association with the gods of the city and region. These privileges included exemption from corvée, military conscription, and certain taxes as well as their right to due process in legal proceedings and in the holding of property.⁹⁵ Because of the longstanding character of these privileges in the Mesopotamian tradition, anyone shaped by the Mesopotamian religious worldview would have treated these privileges as though they were “natural law.” Any new Babylonian or Assyrian ruler was expected by the citizens of these temple cities to honor these privileges.

Because the composition “Advice to a Prince” did not identify a particular king as the one who had ignored the *kidinnūtu*, it could have been used against Assyrian kings such as Sennacherib and Assurbanipal in their conflicts with Babylonia.⁹⁶ The talionic formulation of several of its provisions indicates that those who received this text saw their world as a balance between opposing forces.⁹⁷ The “if/then” form of the statements of the text is based on the normal course of things and thus deals with patterns that came to be known in the Stoic

⁹⁴ Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 54–55.

⁹⁵ Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 120–25; Barbara Nevling Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics: Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon's Babylonian Policy* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1993) 64–65.

⁹⁶ Lambert (“Advice to a Prince,” 110–15, here 111, in *BWL*) notes difficulties with scholars’ identifying the king in this composition as Merodach–Baladan or Sennacherib and indicates that the king referenced here could be any Babylonian king between 1000 and 700 B.C. Robert D. Biggs (“The Babylonian Fürstenspiegel as a Political Forgery,” 1–5, here 2, in *From the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea: Studies on the History of Assyria and Babylonia in Honour of A. K. Grayson* [ed. Grant Frame; Istanbul: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2004]) suggests on the basis of archaizing features, that the text is a pious fraud seeking to provide divine legitimation from ancient times for the *kidinnūtu* privileges of Sippar, Babylon, and Nippur.

⁹⁷ For the ME as a form of traditional law that was regarded as integral to the world-order, see cf. Wim van Binsbergen and Frans Wiggermann, “Magic in History: A Theoretical Perspective, and its Application to Ancient Mesopotamia,” 3–34, here 25, in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. Tzvi Abusch, Karel van der Toorn; Ancient Magic and Divination 1; Groningen: Styx, 1999). Moshe Weinfeld (“Ancient Near Eastern Patterns in Prophetic Literature,” *VT* 27 [1977] 178–95, here 195) compares “Advice to a Prince” to the law of the king in Deuteronomy 17:14–20. However, Victor A. Hurowitz (“Advice to a Prince: A Message from Ea,” *SAAB* 12 [1998]: 39–53, here 39–40, n. 3) accents the particularistic nature of the advice and argues that it conforms more to the genre of prophecy than to that of wisdom literature such that it is a divine message from Ea to the king.

writings (ca. 100 C.E.) as natural law.⁹⁸ For example, the opening section of “Advice to a Prince” states:

If a king ignores the law, his people will become perplexed. His land will be destroyed. If he does not pay attention to the law, Ea, the king of destinies, will change his destiny and will relentlessly pursue him.” (ll. 1–3)⁹⁹

According to the first sentence, the trouble the king seeks to impose on the people of the cities of Sippar, Nippur, and Babylon will rebound automatically onto his own city. The apodosis states a prediction in a way that makes its occurrence seem as likely as the regularities of nature.¹⁰⁰ The second sentence then expands on this regularity in the sociopolitical sphere to say that Ea will back up this “natural” justice. Another example from “Advice to a Prince” of the talionic principle at work against a king who disregards the *kidinnūtu* is following one concerning the city of Babylon:

If he takes the silver of the citizens of Babylon and deposits it with his own assets or hears a legal case of the Babylonians but turns it back in silence, Marduk, lord of heaven and earth, will set foes against him. He shall give his possessions and assets to his foes.” (ll. 15–18)¹⁰¹

Here the text explicitly says that Marduk will intervene to punish the king, but the fact that he is being repaid in kind for his injustice creates a picture of the city of Babylon in which the restoration of right order will be determined according to the criterion of reciprocity inherent in talionic justice. The text supports those citizens who claim that they hold the *kidinnūtu* privileges by divine right but also takes at least a small step toward claiming that they hold them by natural right.

Solon was an arbitrator between the various factions in the polis to persuade them of the partnership they held as fellow citizens. He imagined *Dikē* as a goddess who was immanent in the life of the city and functioned as a universal law guiding the integration of the citizen’s actions with the well-being of the city.¹⁰² Solon claimed that *Dikē*’s regulations for proper human behavior were as iron-clad as the physical laws governing bodily health. He regarded the law

⁹⁸ E.g., Epictetus, *Discourses* (2 vols.; trans. W. A. Oldfather; New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1926) 1.xxii, 1–21; Maryanne Cline Horowitz, “The Stoic Synthesis of the Idea of Natural Law in Man: Four Themes,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974) 3–16, here 9, 12.

⁹⁹ Edition: Lambert, *BWL*, 112.

¹⁰⁰ On the issue of laws built into the functioning of creation, see Klaus Koch, “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament,” 57–87, in *Theodicy in the Old Testament* (ed. James Crenshaw; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

¹⁰¹ Edition: Lambert, *BWL*, 112.

¹⁰² Werner Jaeger, “Solon’s Eunomia,” 77–99, here 91, in *Five Essays* (Montreal: Mario Casolini, 1966).

of talion as operating within the affairs of the city according to cosmic necessity (*anankē*): if one sins, one will eventually suffer the corresponding punishment. Therefore, Jaeger claimed that Solon was not a prophet but rather a political teacher who had deep insight into the forces that had to be balanced if the city was to survive as a political community.¹⁰³

The movement from a more personal understanding of *Dikē* in Hesiod to a more fixed, lawlike one in Solon may foreshadow the Milesians' conception of nature (*physis*) as a self-contained entity held together by relations of equilibrium, reciprocity, and symmetry.¹⁰⁴ Anaximander's famous fragment bears repeating:

. . . the principle (*archē*) of beings is the boundless (*to apeiron*) . . . from which is the genesis of beings and their perishing back into it according to necessity. For they give justice and repayment to one another for injustice according to the ordinance of time. (*DK* 12A9 ll. 7–8 + B1; Simplicius, *Commentaria in Aristotelem graeca* 9, 24.14–25)

Here Anaximander seems to say that existing things (*ta onta*) feed upon one another with the result that one is brought to life and the other dies in an endlessly repeating cycle.¹⁰⁵ It happens according to necessity (*kata to xreōn*) and thus reveals that the first law of nature is talion.¹⁰⁶ So for Anaximander, through the tension between opposites and the reciprocal destruction and generation of the elements, the cosmos arose as a sphere formed through the balance of the elements and forces that impinge upon one another.¹⁰⁷

According to the worldview of the fifth century B.C.E., there was a reality that surrounded the cosmos: for Anaximander, it was the *apeiron* ("the boundless"); for Pythagoras, it was air that the cosmos could inhale; for Heraclitus, it was a *logos*-fire. For Heraclitus, this rational fire had a physical form that was immanent in things and yet transcended them; as a *logos*, this fire gave limit, measure, and proportion to things.¹⁰⁸ Heraclitus says that: "The world order, the order for all, was made neither by a god nor by a human, but it always was and is and will be an ever-living fire, kindling according to measure and dying

¹⁰³ Jaeger, "Solon's Eunomia," 90; Gregory Vlastos, "Equality and Justice in Early Greek Cosmologies," 56–91, here 71, in *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of Philosophy* (ed. David J. Furley and R. E. Allen; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

¹⁰⁴ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 120.

¹⁰⁵ Charles Kahn (*Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1960] 182) claims that for Anaximander "existing things" (*ta onta*) are elemental powers that are generative and not simply individual things.

¹⁰⁶ Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, 183.

¹⁰⁷ Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, 188.

¹⁰⁸ Guthrie, "Heraclitus," 1.403–92, here 1.469, in *HGP*.

out according to measure” (*DK* 22B30; Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.104.2). Kahn argues that Heraclitus saw the world arising from and returning to fire. The natural cycle is a microcosm of the cosmic cycle in which there is the alternation of life and death.¹⁰⁹ For Heraclitus, this *logos*-fire is the divine principle that steers everything: it directs all the exchanges between things necessary for a stable cosmos.¹¹⁰ It surrounds the cosmos in its invisible and eternal form, but at the same time enters into the cosmos and directs it.¹¹¹

Xenophanes, the passionate reformer who strongly criticized Homer and Hesiod for attributing “to the gods everything that is shameful and blameworthy among humans—stealing, adultery, and deception of one another” (*DK* 21B11; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 9.193.3–5), regarded god as one, even though the senses may perceive this one being in multiple forms.¹¹² Xenophanes shaped his view of this cosmic deity along the lines of the Ionic tradition in which this one god was “a spherical body, living, conscious, and divine, the cause of its own internal movements and change.”¹¹³ This henotheistic view of god gave Xenophanes a rationale for jettisoning Homeric theology, which he regarded as plagued with moral problems.¹¹⁴ Xenophanes’ eternal, unchanging, non-anthropomorphic god thinks without bodily organs, for: “Whole he sees, whole he thinks, whole he hears” (*DK* 21B24; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 9.144.4).

Xenophanes’s cosmic god resembles the Lord, the one God of the Israelites, insofar as this being is sovereign. But the striking difference between the texts of Ezekiel and Xenophanes is that Ezekiel believes that the Lord confronts the Israelites with the mystery of his person and makes known his reality to them by name, whereas Xenophanes doubts that this god communicates with

¹⁰⁹ Kahn (*The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 137–38) notes, however, that most scholars (e.g. G. S. Kirk, *Heraclitus: the Cosmic Fragments* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954] 307–8) since the publication of Karl Reinhardt’s *Parmenides* in 1916 attribute this view of cosmogony and ecpyrosis to Theophrastus and the Stoics and claim that there is no explicit basis for it in Heraclitus’ fragments.

¹¹⁰ Kirk, *Heraclitus: the Cosmic Fragments*, 306.

¹¹¹ Guthrie, “Heraclitus,” 1.403–92, here 1.471, in *HGP*; Kirk, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments*, 316–18.

¹¹² Guthrie, “Xenophanes,” 1.360–402, here 1.376, in *HGP*. Karl Popper (“The World of Parmenides: Notes on Parmenides’ poem and its origin in early Greek cosmology,” 105–45, here 115, 118, 121, in Karl Popper, *The World of Parmenides* [ed. A. F. Petersen; New York: Routledge, 1998]) claims that Xenophanes believed in absolute truth and saw humans as searchers after this truth, which they would reach only accidentally and by guesswork.

¹¹³ Guthrie, “Xenophanes,” 1.360–402, here 1.382–83, in *HGP*.

¹¹⁴ H. S. Versnel, “Thrice One: Three Experiments in Oneness,” 79–163, here 96–99, in *One God or Many?: Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World* (Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute 1; Chebeague, Maine: Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, 2000); Guthrie, “Xenophanes” 1.360–502, here 1.383, in *HGP*.

humans.¹¹⁵ Such a view of a noncommunicating sovereign god is close to one in which the order of the world is believed to be maintained on grounds other than the interaction of gods and humans. The justice of such a world order is based more on laws than on personal relationships. Solon takes a step toward such a law-based cosmic order and so anticipates Anaximander and Heraclitus. In the Mesopotamian composition, “Advice to a Prince,” the intervention of a personal god to maintain cosmic order is primary, but the talionic principle shaping this work indicates that its logic has an affinity with those views holding that a principle of justice is written into the workings of the cosmic order. However, in Ezekiel 13:11-15, 20-21, the immediacy of Yhwh’s sovereign will is apparent. Justice will prevail because of Yhwh’s direct encounter with the peace prophets who tried to fabricate a social order according to their own desires.

Prophecy and Magic: The Clash between a Personal and a Mechanistic View of the World

The second panel of Ezekiel 13 (vv. 17–23) mirrors the structure of the first panel (vv. 1–16): vv. 17–18a form an introduction (cf. vv. 1–3); vv. 18b–19 state the charges against the female prophets (cf. vv. 3b-7); vv. 20-21 give the first announcement of judgment (cf. vv. 8–9); vv. 22–23 give the second announcement of judgment (cf. vv. 10-16).¹¹⁶ The prophet was once again addressed as “son of man/mortal.” The Lord then commanded him to confront “the daughters of your people who are prophesying from their hearts” (v. 17). Although these women were not given the title *nēbī’ā* (e.g., Miriam [Exod 15:20]; Deborah [Jdgs 4:4]), they were described as “acting like prophets” (*mitnabbē’ôt*, v. 17). As with their male counterparts, they were criticized for acting according to their own designs.¹¹⁷ Zimmerli points out that their activities were directed toward individuals whereas the male prophets dealt with national issues.¹¹⁸

The indictment of the female prophets opened with the word *hōy*, “alas,” just as the indictment against the male prophets had opened in v. 3. They were then charged with “sewing bands (*kēsātôt*) on all the joints of their hands”¹¹⁹ and “making coverings (*mispāhôt*) for the head of every height.” The word *kēsātôt* could be derived from the Hebrew verb *kāsā*, “to cover,” or from the Akkadian

¹¹⁵ Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, 335; Karl Popper, “The Unknown Xenophanes: An Attempt to Establish His Greatness,” 33–67, here 34, in *The World of Parmenides*.

¹¹⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 393–94.

¹¹⁷ On the use of words of “weaving” for scheming, see Michael Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel* (Studies in Biblical Literature 85; New York: Peter Lang, 2006) 134–35.

¹¹⁸ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 296.

¹¹⁹ Read *yādayim* with Syriac and Targums.

verb *kasû*, “to bind.” The word *mispāhôt* could be derived from the Hebrew verb *sph*, “to join, attach,” or from the Akkadian verb *sapāhu*, “to loosen, scatter.”¹²⁰ Since these objects were associated with (*‘al*, “upon, concerning”) the head of each height (*rōš kol-qômâ*, v. 18), they were most likely some kind of covering attached to the head. Common to both *kēsātôt* and *mispāhôt* is the fact that these objects were attached to a person; they were bindings of some sort.¹²¹ A key question would be whether these bindings functioned symbolically or mechanically. As symbolic objects, they would have participated in the reality toward which they pointed; the level of their effectiveness would have been heavily influenced by the intention of those who used them. As mechanical objects, they would have contained at least a portion of the reality to which they pointed; the level of their effectiveness would depend upon using the correct procedures. If these bindings on the hands and head functioned symbolically, they would have been like amulets or phylacteries, which pointed to a relationship with a deity. By contrast, if these bindings had been regarded as instruments, then skill in manipulating them would have been decisive for their effectiveness.¹²²

Korpel has argued that the female prophets in Ezekiel 13:17-23 were manipulating bird-nets. She renders the *kissētôt* as “coverings” (v. 20) on the hands; thus the women would have been holding the nets draped over their hands as they prepared to use them. She interpreted the *mispāhôt* as “bird-nets” from the Akkadian *musahiptu*. Apparently then, these nets would have been of various sizes to fit users of every height (*‘al rōš kol-qômâ*, v. 18). According to Korpel, the birds that the women would have been trying to catch would have been those believed to contain within them the souls of the dead.¹²³

Ezekiel condemned these techniques of the female prophets from the outset and did not even entertain the possibility that the bindings on the hands and head might have had some symbolic significance. He claimed that they were using these objects to trap *nēpāšôt*, “the life force of individuals.”¹²⁴ Ezekiel accused these female prophets of trying to manipulate intangible aspects of

¹²⁰ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 413–14.

¹²¹ Nancy Bowen (“The Daughters of Your People: Female Prophets in Ezekiel 13:17–23,” *JBL* 118 [1999] 417–33, here 423–25) argues that the women were involved with medical activities associated with pregnancy and childbirth.

¹²² Erica Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 85.4; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995) 124–26.

¹²³ Marjo C. A. Korpel, “Avian Spirits in Ugarit and in Ezekiel 13,” 99–113, here 102–3, in *Ugarit, Religion, and Culture* (ed. N. Wyatt, G. W. E. Watson, J. B. Lloyd; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996).

¹²⁴ Ann Jeffers (*Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* [Leiden: Brill, 1996] 93–94) argues that they would take this trapped personal life and embody it within a statue or image of the victim.

human existence through the techniques and materials of rituals. The stakes had been high in these rituals, for Ezekiel says that the female prophets had been able to put to death or to keep alive the *něpāšôt* that they had captured.¹²⁵ Through these rituals they profaned (*hillel*, v. 19) the Lord: i.e., they treated the Lord as though he were on the same level as ordinary human beings and their world.

Because these female prophets were within the Israelite community, they would have involved the Lord in their rituals. At the beginning of the ritual—as in analogous Mesopotamian rituals—there would have been offerings to the Lord. In the indictment in verse 19, the reference to “the handfuls of barley and the pieces of bread” probably referred to the portions that they had offered as a kind of buy-off of the Lord, who would then have been ignored in the remainder of the ritual.¹²⁶ Ezekiel concluded his indictment by noting that the Israelites were vulnerable to the deceitful techniques of these female prophets (*běkazzebken*) because they were a people who characteristically listened to lies (*šömē’ē kāzāb*, v. 19).

In the first announcement of judgment against the female prophets (vv. 20–21), the Lord used language similar to that which he had used in his first announcement of judgment against the male prophets: “I am now against” (*hinēni ’el*).¹²⁷ But the object that the Lord opposed was significantly different in each case: the Lord had confronted the male prophets directly; but with the female prophets, he was against their “bands” (*kissētôtēkenā*, v. 20). The power inherent in these bands enabled these prophets to trap the *něpāšôt*.¹²⁸ These *něpāšôt* appear to have been living humans who had been hunted down (i.e., members of the Israelite community). Ezekiel announced that the Lord would tear these bindings or nets off the female prophets’ arms and would set free the lives of his people. When this happens, the people would recognize that the Lord was acting. In his second announcement of judgment (vv. 22–23), the Lord prefaced his intervention with a rationale: “because you have troubled¹²⁹ the heart of the upright one falsely, when I have not troubled him, by strengthening the hand of the wicked so as not to turn him from his evil way and restore him to life” (v. 22). The manipulative rituals of these female prophets had

¹²⁵ M. Stol (*Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting* [Cuneiform Monographs 14; Groningen: Styx Publications, 2000] 82, 143) notes that at the time of the cutting of the umbilical cord an incantation determining the fate of the child’s whole life may have been recited.

¹²⁶ The preposition *be-* in *běša’ālē šě’ōrīm* would be interpreted as an instrumental *beth* rather than as a *beth pretii*; see Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 416–17.

¹²⁷ Read *’al* for *’el*.

¹²⁸ Korpel (“Avian Spirits,” 100, 107) retained the next word *lēpōrēhôt*, “for flying,” and thus translates that which the female prophets were trapping as “souls, in order to turn them into fledglings” (*’et-hanněpāšôt lēpōrēhôt*). These souls would have arisen from the Netherworld in the form of birds as paralleled in Ugaritic KTU 1.22 i (= iv), 4–11.

¹²⁹ Read *hak’ib*.

confused the way to life with the way to death. Such confusion had brought trouble to the mind of the upright—to the center of the person's perception of reality. The Lord seems to say here that if such confusion in a person's perception were to happen, it could only legitimately come from him. The apodosis of this second announcement of judgment (v. 23), addressed to the female prophets, actually fits better the prophetic activities of the male prophets in vv. 1–16: “you shall not envision falsehood and you shall not again divine falsely.”¹³⁰ Thus it seems that an editor aimed to tie together both panels (vv. 1–16 and vv. 17–23) through the addition of this part of v. 23. This announcement of judgment is also concluded with the recognition formula—its fourth occurrence in Ezekiel 13 (vv. 9, 14, 21, 23).

In Mesopotamian villages, domestic witches who were healers probably existed.¹³¹ But the witch's capacity to harm other humans was the one that drove the development of her image in the first millennium.¹³² The witch came to be defined against the exorcist (*āšipu*): she used her rituals and incantations in secret to harm other humans, whereas the exorcist worked in public to counteract all forms of evil, including demons and witches.¹³³ A witch most often worked by indirect contact.¹³⁴ For example, she may have stolen an object linked to a victim, such as hair or fingernails, and incorporated it into a figurine or an object representing the victim. She may have made a figurine of a victim and twisted its limbs or buried it or fed it to animals. But she could also have worked

¹³⁰ Read *kāzāb*.

¹³¹ Tzvi Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature* (Ancient Magic and Divination 5; Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2002) xvi, 65.

¹³² Yitschak Sefati and Jacob Klein (“The Role of Women in Mesopotamian Witchcraft,” 569–87, here 574, in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001* [ed. S. Parpola, R. M. Whiting; CRRRA 47; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002]) note that references to witches in texts from the first millennium B.C.E. are attested almost exclusively in incantation and scholarly literature and not in administrative or historical documents and typically refer to female rather than male sorcerers.

¹³³ Wim van Binsbergen and Frans Wiggermann, “Magic in History: A Theoretical Perspective, and Its Application to Ancient Mesopotamia,” 3–34, here 28, in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn; Ancient Magic and Divination 1; Groningen: Styx, 1999). N. P. Heeßel (“Diagnosis, Divination, and Disease: Towards an Understanding of the Rational behind the Babylonian Diagnostic Handbook,” 97–116, here 99, in *Magic and Rationality*) explains how the *āšipu*, “exorcist,” was summoned in medical diagnoses to determine what god was behind the illness as part of a rational process of finding the cause of the illness and making a prognosis for the future.

¹³⁴ Abusch (*Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 55) distinguishes witchcraft from sorcery as follows: “Witchcraft is predominantly the pursuit of harmful means by implicit/internal means. ‘Sorcery’ combines harmful ends with explicit means.”

directly on a victim. The rituals and incantations of the exorcist mirrored those of the witch. One of his responsibilities was to counteract whatever evil a witch had unleashed by a method of like working upon like. The services of the exorcist could probably only be secured by the upper classes; therefore, anyone who had no access to an exorcist would probably have had to develop his or her own means of battling against instances of witchcraft.¹³⁵

The main ritual that developed over the centuries to combat witchcraft was the *Maqlû*, “burning.”¹³⁶ According to Abusch, the exorcists consolidated and expanded this ritual under the influence of urban and imperial sociopolitical structures.¹³⁷ On the village level, the witch came to be seen as one who could persuade one’s personal god to abandon one.¹³⁸ Because the personal god reflected the identity of a person both as an individual and as a member of the clan, the deceitful actions by which the witch could drive off the personal god came to be seen as a cause of a person’s misfortunes (*Maqlû*, I:6; III:16).¹³⁹ It was not simply one’s sins in breaking the clan’s moral code. As urban society developed, the individual became more dependent on social structures outside of the household than had been the case in village life. The new threats from the urban social sphere came to be attributed to the machinations of witches. Then, as the empires of the first millennium developed, the threatening sociopolitical forces beyond the city came to be associated with witchcraft. This trajectory of increasing complexity in sociopolitical matters fostered, according to Abusch, an increasing demonization of the image of the witch.¹⁴⁰ Her powers were regarded as becoming stronger the more individuals felt that their lives were subject to hostile anonymous forces.

¹³⁵ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 4–8; Thomsen, “Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 3–95, here 36–45, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*.

¹³⁶ Sefati and Klein (“The Role of Women in Mesopotamian Witchcraft,” 569–87, here 580, 586, in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East*) note that of the ninety-one incantations in the *Maqlû*, thirty-four are explicitly directed only against witches. There was a tendency to add male sorcerers to the incantations in the later periods in order to cover all potential sources of harm.

¹³⁷ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 51–54.

¹³⁸ Thomsen, “Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 3–95, here 40, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Biblical and Pagan Societies*.

¹³⁹ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 46–47.

¹⁴⁰ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 55–56. For the blaming of a witch for a successful person’s decline into poverty and humiliation, see especially ll. 17–19, 34–36, 40–41 of the NA text of “The Righteous Sufferer’s Prayer to Nabû (STT 65),” 30–32, in *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (SAA 3; ed. A. Livingstone; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989); Sefati and Klein, “The Role of Women in Mesopotamian Witchcraft,” 569–87, here 575, in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East*.

An early form of the *Maqlû* ritual, as reconstructed by Abusch from Tablets I–V, consisted of ten incantations that were recited in the morning.¹⁴¹ This ritual was divided into four sections, which follow the ritual sequence of burning representations of witches, pouring water on them, and disposing of the ashes.¹⁴² In the first section, consisting of three incantations (*Maqlû* I:73–121, 122–34, 135–43), the petitioner brought images of the witch before Šamaš and filed his complaint.¹⁴³ Šamaš was asked to give a verdict of death by burning, and the fire-god Girra was petitioned to carry it out. The statues were then burned. In the second section, consisting of three incantations (*Maqlû* IV:96–104, V:89–94, 95–103), the speaker invoked Šamaš as judge while he tied and untied wool as a symbol of the witchcraft that was being defused. Then the petitioner allowed the rays of the sun to glance off his face, which positioned him to call upon Girra (pictured as the sun's rays) to make the fire blaze up (i.e., the fire in which the statues had been previously placed). He then called upon Ea and Asalluhi to cleanse and release him from the witchcraft. In the third section, consisting of two incantations (*Maqlû* V:118–38, 139–48), he poured water on the fire and addressed the witches as if they were ghosts as follows:

You are angry, enraged, furious, arrogant, wild, evil. Who other than Ea can calm you? Who other than Asalluhi can pacify you. May Ea calm you. May Asalluhi pacify you. May the waters of my mouth [defeat] the waters of your mouth. . . . May the curse of my mouth [overcome] the curse of your mouth. May the plans of my heart destroy the plans of your heart. (*Maqlû* V:139–48)¹⁴⁴

This burning and dousing aimed to turn the witches into incorporeal beings. In the fourth section, consisting of two incantations (*Maqlû* V:156–65, 166–84), a mountain stone was placed on the ashes of the statues and a circle

¹⁴¹ Tzvi Abusch, "An Early Form of the Witchcraft Ritual *Maqlû* and the Origin of a Babylonian Magical Ceremony," 1–57, here 5–6, in *Lingering Over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (ed. T. Abusch et al.; HSS 37; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990); Thomsen, "Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," 3–95, here 50–51, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Biblical and Pagan Societies*.

¹⁴² Abusch, "An Early Form of the Witchcraft Ritual *Maqlû* and the Origin of a Babylonian Magical Ceremony," 1–57, here 44, in *Lingering Over Words*.

¹⁴³ Steinkeller ("Of Stars and Men: The Conceptual and Mythological Setup of Babylonian Extispicy," 11–47, here 26 n. 38, in *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran*) quotes a Sumerian incantation against witchcraft that appeals to the sun god as the one who is judge of the upper and lower worlds.

¹⁴⁴ Edition: Gerhard Maier, *Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû* (AfO Beiheft 2; Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag, 1967) 39. See also Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 132; idem, "An Early Form of the Witchcraft Ritual *Maqlû* and the Origin of a Babylonian Magical Ceremony," 1–57, here 23, in *Lingering Over Words*.

of flour was drawn with the intention of disposing of the witches' remains and driving away their ghosts.¹⁴⁵

The killing of a witch's body and sending her ghost out to the steppe was analogous to the biblical *kārēt* penalty (*Maqlû* I:73–121).¹⁴⁶ This form of execution of the witch was characteristic of the early form of the *Maqlû* ritual. A second form developed in which the witch's body was killed, but then buried and sent to the Netherworld (*Maqlû* I:37–72).¹⁴⁷ The exorcist was probably responsible for this development, since he had influence in the Netherworld but not in the steppe. He could keep her ghost away from the inhabited regions if she were held secure in the Netherworld.¹⁴⁸ However, through her consignment to the Netherworld, the exorcist recognized that the witch held a place within the cosmic community that encompassed heaven, earth, and the Netherworld.¹⁴⁹ The cosmic inhabitants could move between these three spheres. At the end of the month of Abu (July/August), there was a festival analogous to Halloween; it was a time in which the ghosts visited the earth. The *Maqlû* was celebrated at this time to make sure that a ghost that had overstayed its welcome was returned to the Netherworld.¹⁵⁰

Abusch claims that in the early stages of the Mesopotamia tradition when the gods were closely linked with the forces of vegetation and fertility, the boundary between the earth and the Netherworld was blurred.¹⁵¹ The vegetation deities would die and rise such that there was a cyclical relationship between the forces of life and death. In this milieu, life and death were regarded as being on the same continuum rather than as antagonistic forces. But then a point was reached at which this structure was regarded as too threatening. From that point

¹⁴⁵ Abusch, "An Early Form of the Witchcraft Ritual *Maqlû* and the Origin of a Babylonian Magical Ceremony," 1–57, here 13–24, in *Lingering Over Words*; idem, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 17–20.

¹⁴⁶ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 69.

¹⁴⁷ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 69–70; Tzvi Abusch, "The Socio-Religious Framework of the Babylonian Witchcraft Ceremony *Maqlû*: Some Observations on the Introductory Section of the Text, Part I," 1–34, here 25–26, in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen* (ed. T. Abusch; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

¹⁴⁸ Abusch, "The Socio-Religious Framework of the Babylonian Witchcraft Ceremony *Maqlû*," 1–34, here 7–8, in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places*.

¹⁴⁹ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 76.

¹⁵⁰ Tzvi Abusch, "Ascent to the Stars in a Mesopotamian Ritual: Social Metaphor and Religious Experience," 15–39, here 25, 27, in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (eds. John Collins and Michael Fishbane; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); J. A. Scurlock, "Magical Uses of Ancient Mesopotamian Festivals of the Dead," 93–107, here 94–96, 105, in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki; Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 129; Leiden: Brill, 1995); Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 1993) 259–61, 319–21, 462–65.

¹⁵¹ Abusch, "Ascent to the Stars in a Mesopotamian Ritual," 15–16.

on, if a god was to depart from the earth, that god had to reside in heaven and not in the Netherworld—thus the creation of the tripartite cosmic structure of heaven, earth, and Netherworld.¹⁵²

The control that the exorcist tried to exercise over the ghost of a witch is analogous to the kinds of control that humans try to exercise over visible forces in their environment. Van Binsbergen and Wiggermann identified four domains in which humans try to exercise control: (1) the manipulation of nature through tools and instruments, (2) the exercise of control over one's body, (3) the interaction with one's immediate environment, and (4) the response to the power wielded by large political institutions.¹⁵³ Items 1–3 belong first of all to the domestic domain. In item 4, the domestic domain is a rival to the hegemonic political domain that tries to shape the material and biological spheres to its benefit. An important strategy by the hegemonic political domain is to use the religious system of deities as a way to get the populace to see reality as that in which the distinctions between ruler and ruled and between gods and humans are basic to the cosmic order. Magic—a term derived from the Persian magus, i.e., a priest bearing an aura of secrecy¹⁵⁴—is not usually employed in Mesopotamia as a means of controlling things that the domestic sphere wields against the political establishment. Rather magic in Mesopotamia takes its place within the hegemonic political domain as “a dislocated sediment of pre-hegemonic popular notions of control.”¹⁵⁵

One way of seeing how the hegemonic political system incorporated magic into its operations is the designation of Marduk, the city god of Babylon and a king of the gods in the Mesopotamian pantheon since the seventeenth century B.C.E., as the patron of magic. In the *Enūma Eliš* (a composition usually dated to the late second millennium¹⁵⁶), Marduk is identified as the son of Enki/Ea who controlled what were known as the ME (*parṣu*): i.e., “the unchanging rules

¹⁵² Abusch, “Ascent to the Stars in a Mesopotamian Ritual,” 16.

¹⁵³ Wim van Binsbergen and Frans Wiggermann, “Magic in History: A Theoretical Perspective, and Its Application to Ancient Mesopotamia,” 3–34, here 11, in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. Tzvi Abusch, Karel van der Toorn; Ancient Magic and Divination 1; Groningen: Styx, 1999).

¹⁵⁴ Walter Burkert, *Babylon-Memphis-Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004) 107–9; Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 56.

¹⁵⁵ Van Binsbergen and Wiggermann, “Magic in History,” 3–34, here 16, in *Mesopotamian Magic*.

¹⁵⁶ W. G. Lambert, “The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion,” 1–13, in *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of T. J. Meek* (ed. William S. McCullough; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964). Bill Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 83.

of tradition.”¹⁵⁷ The ME functioned as did natural law: they could be misused or ignored, but still remain intact. This view of the cosmic order as enduring and impersonal predated the third millennium. It was a view that anthropological myths serving the hegemonic political system had to take into account. Thus, in the *Enūma Eliš*, Marduk’s rise to power is engineered by his father Enki/Ea who uses magical means to conquer Apsū and then equips Marduk with magically enhanced weapons so that he can defeat Tiāmat. One of Marduk’s names was Asalluhi, a name frequently invoked in exorcistic rituals and incantations.¹⁵⁸

In the *Enūma Eliš*, Marduk also wrests the tablet of destinies from Kingu, the commander of Tiāmat’s forces of demons and monsters. This tablet contained the secret of heaven and earth, for the destinies (*šimtu*) inscribed on it have the power to change the ME—cosmic regulations that were traditionally regarded as unchangeable.¹⁵⁹ So the sovereign power that Marduk gained in the *Enūma Eliš* was distinctive in that he held not only the ME but also the means (i.e., the *šimtu*) of adapting or changing the ME. This capacity to change the ME was known as magic. It functioned as an important “logic of control”¹⁶⁰ within Marduk’s sovereign rule.

In Presocratic Greece, one important kind of magic took the form of curses, of which one was the verbal spell.¹⁶¹ In his struggles to return home to Ithaca from the Trojan war, Homer’s Odysseus encountered various supernatural figures who could manipulate particular forces of nature. Near the end of his journey, he was marooned on:

. . . an island flowed round by the sea where the navel of the sea is located. On this island covered with trees dwells a goddess, the daughter of malign Atlas, who knows the recesses of every sea and himself sustains the tall pillars that keep heaven and earth separate. His daughter restrains the wretched, lamenting one, and always with soft and flattering words she enchants (*thelgei*) him so that he might forget Ithaca. (*Od.* 1.50–57)

¹⁵⁷ Van Binsbergen and Wiggermann, “Magic in History,” 3–34, here 21, in *Mesopotamian Magic*.

¹⁵⁸ Graham Cunningham, *Deliver Me from Evil: Mesopotamian Incantations, 2500–1500 B.C.* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1997) 124–25, 161, 167; Caplice, *The Akkadian Namburba Texts*, 12; Thomsen, “Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 3–95, here 18–21, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*.

¹⁵⁹ Van Binsbergen and Wiggermann, “Magic in History,” 3–34, here 23, in *Mesopotamian Magic*.

¹⁶⁰ Van Binsbergen and Wiggermann, “Magic in History,” 3–34, here 15, in *Mesopotamian Magic*.

¹⁶¹ Daniel Ogden, “Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds,” 1–90, here 9, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Greece and Rome* (ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999).

The verbal spells by which Calypso detained Odysseus were a form of erotic curse.¹⁶² When Calypso was ordered by Hermes—both a messenger from Zeus and a well-known trickster—to let Odysseus leave her island, she planned to give him not only supplies but also “a favorable breeze after him” (*Od.* 5.167). Within Homer’s narrative, Calypso, in her status as daughter of Atlas, had influence over a number of elemental powers of nature.¹⁶³ However, Odysseus was skeptical of her intentions. He made her swear an oath that she was not simply toying with him (*Od.* 5.171–91).¹⁶⁴

A magical object from the Presocratic period predating the curse tablets was the voodoo doll, which was a figurine designed to represent a victim. Deposits of these dolls have been found at thirty-eight sites where Presocratic Greeks would have resided.¹⁶⁵ The binding power of these dolls was often depicted by their twisted limbs, contorted torsos, or the nails fixed in them.¹⁶⁶ While most of the dolls recovered archaeologically were made of lead, there is a significant written reference to a waxen doll from the fourth century B.C.E. concerning the foundation decree from Cyrene, a document that seems to reflect the original decree of 630 B.C.E. directing Greek colonists from the island of Thera to settle in this north African location.¹⁶⁷ The colonists entered into an agreement that they would not abandon the new settlement to return to Thera and signaled their commitment with the symbolic act of burning wax dolls.¹⁶⁸ It seems

¹⁶² Ogden, “Binding Spells,” 35; Christopher Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1999) 5–6, 17–18. Reinhardt (“The Adventures in the *Odyssey*,” 95) contrasts the words and charms of Calypso with the magic potion of Circe and says that “the spiritual replaces magic.” However, this distinction between the spiritual and magic does not take sufficient account of the magical impact of Calypso’s words.

¹⁶³ J. B. Hainsworth (“Book V–VIII” 249–385, here 251, in *A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey*, vol. 1, *Introduction and Books I–VIII* [eds. Alfred Heubeck, Stephanie West, J.B. Hainsworth; Oxford: Clarendon, 1988]) refers to her as “an enchanting goddess of an enchanted isle” and forms a parallel to Šiduri of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

¹⁶⁴ Reinhardt (“The Adventures in the *Odyssey*,” 93) notes how Calypso is a double of Circe and claims that Circe is portrayed as a sorceress and not a witch, for her magic puts the hero to the test.

¹⁶⁵ Ogden, “Binding Spells,” 71.

¹⁶⁶ Ogden, “Binding Spells,” 3; Sarah Iles Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters between the Living and Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 79. Proteus possesses magical and prophetic powers that Odysseus tries to take from him by wrestling and binding him (*Od.* 4.400–24).

¹⁶⁷ A. J. Graham, “The Colonial Expansion of Greece,” 83–162, here 135–36, in *CAH* vol. 3, part 3; idem, “The Authenticity of the *horkion tōn oikistērōn* of Cyrene,” *JHS* 80 (1960): 95–111, here 107–11; cf. Faraone, “The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells,” 3–32, here 7, 25 n. 32, in *Magika Hiera*.

¹⁶⁸ Ogden, “Binding Spells,” 78.

that the melting of the wax dolls activated the curse that would descend upon the one who was disloyal to the oath.¹⁶⁹

The use of a symbolic action to impress upon oath-takers the seriousness of their commitment is also found in an early scene in the *Iliad* that shows how in the process of committing themselves to a truce, the Achaeans and Trojans poured goblets full of wine on the ground and said:

Zeus, most glorious, greatest, and you other gods: whichever of the two should act contrary to the oaths, may their brains flow to the ground just as this wine, theirs and that of their children, and may their wives become subject to others. (*Il.* 3.297–301)

Analogous actions believed to activate curses associated with treaties can be found at Mari in Mesopotamia in the splitting of a donkey and the oath-takers passing through the midst (*ARM II* 37) and in the OT episode in which the Lord, symbolized by a torch, passed through the midst of severed animals to indicate his commitment to a covenant with Abraham (*Gen* 15:17–21; cf. *Jer* 34:18–20).¹⁷⁰

One of the oldest Greek voodoo dolls recovered was a terra-cotta centaur from Lefkandi in the tenth century B.C.E. The head of this centaur figurine had been removed and placed in a grave separate from that of its body. Ogden wonders whether this centaur represented a wild spirit that someone was trying to restrain.¹⁷¹ Another effort to control invisible forces impinging on one's life is that directed toward the destructive powers of war that took the form of the binding of Ares.¹⁷² When Aphrodite was injured by Diomedes in the Trojan war, the goddess Dione tried to console her by referring to the binding of Ares by humans:

Many of us who live on Olympus have undergone evil because of humans, by inflicting burdensome troubles on one another. Ares underwent evil when Otus and strong Ephialtes, the sons of Aloeus, fettered him in strong bonds. He was bound for thirteen months in a bronze-covered vessel. But then Ares, insatiable

¹⁶⁹ Ogden, "Binding Spells," 72.

¹⁷⁰ Abraham Malamat, "A Note on the Ritual of Treaty Making in Mari and the Bible," 168–71, in *Mari and the Bible* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 12; Leiden: Brill, 1998); A. Finet, "Le sacrifice de l'âne en Mésopotamie," 135–41, in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* (OLA 55; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1993); Theodore Lewis, "The Identity and Function of El/Baal Berith," *JBL* 115 (1996) 401–23, here 411–13; Moshe Held, "Philological Notes on Mari Covenant Rituals," *BASOR* 200 (1970) 32–34; Martin Noth, "Old Testament Covenant-Making in the Light of a Text from Mari," 108–117, here 108–9, in *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967).

¹⁷¹ Ogden, "Binding Spells," 79.

¹⁷² Ogden, "Binding Spells," 79.

of war, could have perished if his stepmother, the beautiful Eëriboea, had not informed Hermes. He stole away Ares, who was diminishing, for his burdensome fetters were overpowering him. (*Il.* 5.383–92)

This mythical remnant within the Homeric narrative seems to reflect an early time in Greek myth in which a god, although far superior to humans in terms of excellence, was regarded as one who could die. Because Ephialtes and Otos did not slay Ares immediately, it may be that they were gaining an advantage primarily by restraining Ares as the power of war.

The restraining rather than the killing of a victim was also the aim of the curse tablets in ancient Greece. Ogden has placed the curses inscribed on the tablets into the following five categories:

- (1) litigation, in which one tried to bind the tongue of an adversary,
- (2) competition, in which one tried to diminish the physical strength or skill of a rival,
- (3) trade, in which one tried to thwart the productivity of a competitor,
- (4) erotic, in which one tried to make another person strongly desire oneself, and
- (5) prayers for justice, in which one tried to pressure another to give back what was one's due.¹⁷³

Greek curse tablets, dating from the early fifth century B.C.E. into the imperial period, were identified as *katadesmos* ("binding") because of either their rolled up condition or their capacity to restrain a victim. The majority were written on lead because it could readily be inscribed, was durable and inexpensive, and had magical associations.¹⁷⁴ The earliest tablet is from Selinus in Sicily; the majority of the tablets originated in Attica.¹⁷⁵ As with the spells and voodoo dolls, the early Greek curse tablets aimed to restrain rather than to kill a victim.¹⁷⁶

The makers of the tablets tried to incorporate an object or substance associated with death or catastrophe, for this would enhance the tablet's magical power. The makers of curse tablets raided graves to take body parts from corpses and ashes from urns.¹⁷⁷ Among the most potent objects would be those drawn

¹⁷³ Ogden, "Binding Spells," 1–90, here 24–31; cf. Christopher A. Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 3–32, here 10, in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (ed. C. Faraone and D. Obbink; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁷⁴ Ogden, "Binding Spells," 10–12; Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 3–32, here 3, in *Magika Hiera*; H. S. Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers," 60–105, here 60–63, in *Magika Hiera*.

¹⁷⁵ Ogden, "Binding Spells," 4–5.

¹⁷⁶ Ogden, "Binding Spells," 22; Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 3–32, here 8, in *Magika Hiera*.

¹⁷⁷ Ogden, "Binding Spells," 19–20.

from the grave of one who had died prematurely, for it was believed that the soul of such a person would be restless through the deprivation of a short life.¹⁷⁸ Johnston argues that the curse tablets functioned as messengers to the dead to implore them to intervene on behalf of the petitioner; because the task was onerous, the petitioner would often call upon one of the dead with whom he or she had no previous relationship.¹⁷⁹ Another important factor in the potency of a curse tablet was its place of deposition. One of the Selinus tablets makes clear that it drew its magical power primarily from its deposition in a grave where it had absorbed the pollution of the dead. Besides graves, places of deposition were chthonic sanctuaries, bodies of water, and places relevant to either the victim or the curse.¹⁸⁰

In the hierarchical society of Presocratic Greece, spells and curses were most likely regarded as having limited effectiveness.¹⁸¹ Tambiah has argued that magical acts, which usually involve both an utterance and the manipulation of an object, were performative acts that aimed to transfer a property to a recipient analogically—in contrast to Western empirical standards of induction and verification.¹⁸² The ritual worked affectively rather than effectively in a society whose code legitimated such rituals as reality-producing.¹⁸³ In its own society, such magic had to produce visible results if it were to be credible, but it did so by analogical persuasion rather than by linear cause-and-effect reasoning in which the cause has an inherent potency.¹⁸⁴

The Hippocratic author scorned the techniques of the exorcist as merely fanciful and without effect.¹⁸⁵ He understood the process of healing as one of restoring balance to a body that suffered from an excess of one or the other quality. The doctor's remedies were material in character. But in the fifth century B.C.E. when the Hippocratic author was writing, the popularity of the doctors' methods was somewhat curtailed as evidenced by the fact that at that

¹⁷⁸ Johnston, *Restless Dead*, 9, 22; Ogden, "Binding Spells," 16.

¹⁷⁹ Johnston, *Restless Dead*, 72, 75.

¹⁸⁰ Ogden, "Binding Spells," 15.

¹⁸¹ Ogden, "Binding Spells," 70.

¹⁸² Stanley J. Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts," 340–57, here 340–41, in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (ed. Michael Lambek; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2002).

¹⁸³ Stanley J. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 82–83.

¹⁸⁴ Tambiah ("Form and Meaning of Magical Acts," 340–57, here 343, 347, in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*) illustrates this analogical transfer through the Azande practice of increasing the growth of bananas by means of the exhortation: "Teeth of crocodile are you, I prick bananas with them, may bananas be prolific like crocodiles' teeth."

¹⁸⁵ Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) 207–9; Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* [trans. F. Philip; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997] 31.

time temple medicine had reached the height of its appeal.¹⁸⁶ In temple healing rituals, the healer, working under the patronage of the god Asclepius who was pictured as having many of the traits of a Hippocratic doctor,¹⁸⁷ used exorcistic rituals in conjunction with material remedies for curing illnesses.¹⁸⁸ The ideological battle between the Hippocratic doctor and the temple doctor was fought over fundamental assumptions about nature: whether it was an autonomous entity subject to immanent laws (doctor) or a sphere in which divine intervention was a vital factor in achieving wholeness and balance (healer).¹⁸⁹ Here in the Hippocratic writings, the opposition between *physis* (“nature”) and *nomos* (“custom”) was stated for the first time in the Greek tradition.¹⁹⁰

The sage Empedocles (fifth-century B.C.E. in Sicily) straddled these two approaches to nature: (1) he was a scientist who tried to manipulate natural laws, and (2) he was a shamanlike figure who suspended natural laws through supernatural means.¹⁹¹ Kingsley argues that magic formed an integral part of Empedocles’ thought, and that passages such as the following, which Empedocles addressed to a disciple, must be taken seriously:

About all the medicines that exist as a safeguard against evils and old age you will inquire. I will realize all these things for you alone. You will calm the force of untiring winds, those which arise, blow over the earth, and destroy the tilled land. And again, if you so desire, you can make vengeful winds arise. Out of the dark rainstorm, you will bring about a seasonal drought for humans. You will also bring about from a summer drought, flowing, tree-feeding streams, ones which will abide through the ether. And you will bring back from Hades the life-force of the deceased. (*DK* 31B111; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 8.59.5–13)

¹⁸⁶ Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 57. Jacques Jouanna, “Hippocrates,” 649–59, here 657, in *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge* (ed. Jacques Brunschwig and Geoffrey Lloyd; Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000).

¹⁸⁷ Hector Avalos (*Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East* [HSM 54; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995] 39) summarizes the views of E. and L. Edelstein (*Asclepius* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945] 91–101) who claim that Asclepius was originally a human physician who was elevated to divine status in the sixth century B.C.E. Physicians’ guilds revered Asclepius as the son of Apollo and their patron. Asclepius became the most sought after healing deity by the fourth century B.C.E. See also H. F. J. Horstmannshoff, “Asclepius and Temple Medicine in Aelius Aristedes’ *Sacred Tales*,” 325–41, here 330–31, in *Magic and Rationality*.

¹⁸⁸ Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East*, 59–60.

¹⁸⁹ Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 54–56, 227; Graf (*Magic in the Ancient World*, 32) notes that “what distinguishes the purifier from the doctor is not rationality, but cosmology.”

¹⁹⁰ Jouanna, “Hippocrates,” 649–59, here 653, 657, in *Greek Thought*.

¹⁹¹ Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 35.

Because Empedocles regarded himself as a god (*DK* 31B112), he differed from the exorcist over the way in which divine intervention would occur in the healing process.¹⁹² The powers that Empedocles claimed to be able to transmit to his disciple were ones that put him in a position to manipulate elemental forces of nature: wind and rain, illness and aging, and raising the dead. He made no reference to Zeus who was believed to control the wind and the rain. Kingsley argues that Empedocles was like a magus who had been shaped by the central-Asiatic shamanic tradition.¹⁹³ It is understandable that Empedocles in this ancient period could function as both a scientific thinker and a magus, because magic and science had in common their objective of altering the material environment by working upon the impersonal regularities operative in the cosmos.¹⁹⁴

Ezekiel brought a message of judgment against Israelite female prophets who were carrying out rituals that had a binding power on other individuals. Their rituals had a profound impact on the community for they were in some way bringing death and life to members of the community. The threatening character of such ritual power in Mesopotamia led to the development of the exorcist's role from that of dealing with demons to include battling against witches. The Mesopotamian exorcist used rituals similar to that of the witch to neutralize her curses and to release the binding power of her spells and rituals. Although there are no extant texts of a witch's ritual, it is assumed that they can be reconstructed in outline from the rituals of the exorcist. Both would have fashioned figurines. Analogously in Presocratic Greece, voodoo dolls figured prominently in the rituals of sorcerers and witches who wanted to impose evil on a victim. When Ezekiel condemned the female prophets for hunting down individuals and holding them as prey, he noted that Yhwh would tear off the bindings by which these prophets controlled the lives of their victims. Thus, this hostile binding through utterance and ritual action in Ezekiel's community seems to have functioned analogously to the rituals of the sorcerers in ancient Mesopotamia and Greece.

As the Mesopotamian exorcist fought against witches as a representative of the urban-monarchical establishment, the witch was progressively demonized. In Ezekiel 13:17-23, the Israelite female prophets may have taken on characteristics of Mesopotamian witches who were regarded not only as living humans

¹⁹² Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and the Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) 220; Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 33.

¹⁹³ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 224-27; Guthrie, "Empedocles," 122-265, here 137, in *HGP*.

¹⁹⁴ Stanley J. Tambiah ("Sir Edward Tylor versus Bronislaw Malinowski: Is Magic False Science or Meaningful Performance?" 42-64, here 52, in *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990]) claims that James Frazer pushed the similarity of magic with science too far in stating that science and magic alike aimed to banish chance and accident from nature. Cf. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 14-15.

but also as ones with ties to ghosts in the Netherworld. Ezekiel's priestly mentality would have found the blurring of the boundaries between death and life unacceptable (vv. 18–19). In Ezekiel 13 the prophet does not explicitly mention pollution through contact with the dead, but such a threat may lie behind the strong condemnation he gives the female prophets for putting to death those who should live and allowing to live those who should die (v. 19). Their ritual actions seem to have created a high level of anxiety that probably had the effect of binding up and diminishing the life-force of the just. The negativity ascribed to witchcraft, voodoo dolls, and curse tablets arises from their association with the power of death. Those who were able through incantations and rituals to induce the forces of death to swallow living humans were a threat to the ancient societies of Mesopotamia and Greece as well as Israel. The exorcist used material as well as verbal means in his rituals to counteract witchcraft. However, Ezekiel simply pronounced the Lord's judgment against these practices.¹⁹⁵ He did not carry out an exorcistic ritual that could be seen as a way of counteracting the bands and coverings of the female prophets.

The use of magic by Babylonian priests and leaders shows that this means of controlling nature was important for the political establishment. By contrast, the Milesian *physiologi* were more interested in understanding nature than in controlling it.¹⁹⁶ The real pragmatists in Presocratic Greece were the doctors who observed nature so they could put it into an order that served humans. They were adamant in separating their craft from that of the exorcists, although the popularity of Asclepius shows that such a distinction hardly shaped popular practice in Presocratic Greece.

Conclusion

Skepticism was alive and well in ancient Israel, ancient Mesopotamia, and Presocratic Greece. It was not a capacity invented by some early Greek thinkers who set out to demystify the world in which they lived. The prophet Ezekiel tested other prophets; Mesopotamian diviners reviewed the omens of fellow diviners according to patterns in the written tradition; Homeric individuals such as Penelope were cautious toward prophets.

The human heart is the place of reason and integration in a person. It is the place where truth is discerned and the place from which deception issues. The heart is the place where a person receives knowledge and struggles to gain perspective. To have the heart in the right place was essential for Ezekiel's pro-

¹⁹⁵ In Ezekiel 4:1-3, Ezekiel acts out a siege against Jerusalem with a tablet on which Jerusalem is depicted; perhaps this sign action carried the power of a curse insofar as it threatened destruction against Jerusalem.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Guthrie, "The Milesians," 1.39–145, here 1.66, in *HGP*.

phetic role. To be given secret knowledge about life and death was essential for Gilgamesh's self-understanding; to be informed of the workings of violence and war within the world order was enlightening for Kabti-ilāni-Marduk in his composition of the poem *Erra and Išum*. To be given transcendent knowledge by the goddess was foundational for Parmenides' thought about being and logic. Such inspiration allowed him to see that Being is not overcome by the flux of everyday life.

There are diverse approaches to attending to divine communications. Intuitive approaches seem more appropriate for visionary exercises, whereas divination fits administrative tasks well. There is a logic operative in the interpretation of intuitively received messages as there is a logic in the interpretation of inductively derived messages. With regard to the reality of change, Parmenides denied it, whereas Heraclitus regarded awareness of change as essential to the discernment of reality. The approaches of both thinkers provide different points of access to the polyvalent, symbolic character of reality.

Conflict and destruction can be a sign of divine activity. Ezekiel proclaimed that the judgment the Lord would bring against the false male and female prophets would be an occasion for their recognizing the Lord. However in Mesopotamia, diviners and exorcists worked to create a safety net for their clients by taking deliberate action against perceived threats. In Presocratic Greece, poets, doctors, and thinkers strove to keep alive the dynamic of competing opposites in their thought. Such polarities were also formative in popular wisdom. The empirical approach of doctors to diagnosis was also guided by a mental model of competing opposite qualities in the body. Such a model may have been triggered in the doctors' minds by the dynamics of political debates in the polis assembly but may also have come from observing the behavior of the pairs of hot/cold and dry/moist in nature.

Ezekiel accused the false prophets of waiting on their own messages and attending to their own interests instead of attending to what the Lord was saying to them. He informs them that they would assist the community more through inactivity than activity—at least the duplicitous activity of proclaiming a false peace. Ezekiel made known that their shallowness would be revealed when the Lord intervened. The Mesopotamian diviners, and particularly the exorcists, founded their activities upon their capacity to discern and respond to divine intervention. Yet the people of the temple cities were aware of a justice in the world approaching the character of natural law: a justice that seems to have the potential to work itself out prior to divine intervention. With Solon, the awareness of a justice inherent in the fabric of the political community led him to exalt his role as arbitrator between rich and poor as a service of the foundation of justice in the community.¹⁹⁷ He still acknowledged the importance of divine

¹⁹⁷ Richard Bodeus, "The Statesman as Political Actor," 125–46, here 135, in *Greek*

assistance but placed more emphasis on human responsibility. The justice in the cosmos in Presocratic Greece seems to be viewed as a reality that requires a personal agent to reestablish harmony. If a community looks to a human arbitrator to restore harmony, its members may be changing from being more passive to more active citizens. However, such a view seems to regard personal agency as a finite quantity in the cosmic community. Such a line of argument claims that if humans look less to the divine to intervene, then they take over the personal agency in the community that previously was exercised by the divine. But there is nothing to prevent humans from taking more responsibility for justice in the community if God or the gods are called upon to intervene. The acceptance of the impersonal rule of cosmic law is not a necessary prerequisite to humans realizing their capacity as personal agents and responsible citizens in a political community.

When humans are aware of their vulnerability, they usually try to do something about it. Ezekiel points out how the measures of the Israelite prophets were misguided. He condemned the female prophets who tried to control the lives of members of the community. The bands and the veils were the locus of their power, for these were the objects that the Lord planned to destroy. Witches, who probably functioned as healers in Mesopotamian villages, were characterized by the exorcists from the urban-imperial establishment as individuals who secretly tried to bind their victims through magical means. The exorcist used the same methods to block the effect of witchcraft. It seems that as the people felt disempowered or alienated from the growing urban-imperial establishment, they were directed to project those feelings of alienation onto the maleficent activities of the witch. In Presocratic Greece, witchcraft gained its power through an alliance with the forces of death.

In Mesopotamia, magic per se was valued rather than condemned. It was a standard means of trying to manipulate natural laws to fit one's own needs or the needs of a community. In Presocratic Greece, the Hippocratic author condemned healers who used magic (e.g., Empedocles). Thus, those who followed in the way of the Hippocratic author tended to define medical science against magic. Both approaches, however, tried to manipulate the elemental forces of nature. Skepticism toward divine intervention would probably have led practitioners of magic and of science to extend their efforts. They acted in a more mechanical and impersonal cosmos than exorcists and healers by trying to manipulate the impersonal forces of nature. In contrast to the positivistic approach of the Hippocratic doctor, the prophet who waited for the intervention of a divine personal agent operated in a world in which personal agency

Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

by God/gods or humans was not regarded as a finite quantity. Ezekiel, Solon, and the Mesopotamian exorcist alike regarded personal agency as foundational to justice in a community. Ezekiel, particularly through his divine recognition formula, emphasized that personal agency rather than impersonal cosmic force is in charge of nature and history.



THE JUSTICE AND TRAGEDY OF A COMMUNITY BESET BY DIVINE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE

Paradox and contradiction reveal limitations to reason's capacity to comprehend the meaning of life. Life does not permit its mysteries to be coopted by the theories of thinkers and scientists who aim to control nature. Through his visions Ezekiel tried to create the understanding that invisible reality is more important than that which can be seen, touched, smelled, heard, and tasted. In line with the Israelite tradition, Ezekiel maintained that this invisible reality is manifested through the senses but transcends the Israelites' capacity to communicate the reality of the real.

The confusing circumstances of the landless exiles stretched the traditional categories by which they had understood themselves to be in right relationship with the Lord as the owner of the land. The trauma of the exile for Ezekiel's audience in the late 590s revolved around the issue of who had authorized and carried out the deportation of 597 and the impending destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel informed them that the Lord was working through Nebuchadrezzar and the Babylonians to punish the Israelites for their sins and to purify the exiles. However, many of the exiles regarded themselves as innocent victims of excessive divine violence.

So Ezekiel disputed with the exiles over the legitimacy and extent of the violence to which they had been subjected. The exiles questioned whether they were mere pawns in a cosmic process ruled by competing gods or by impersonal powers. Ezekiel refused to let the exiles view themselves as innocent victims. He

charged them as responsible agents before the sovereign God Yhwh to acknowledge their sins and to prepare themselves for the inevitable punishment. The place of violence within the divine organization of the cosmos can appear paradoxical and contradictory.

The concern over the freedom and responsibility of the human agent in the face of powerful natural and cosmic forces emerged in Presocratic Greece in the tragedies of Aeschylus. In Mesopotamia, this sense of being victimized by capricious forces beyond one's control was an underlying issue addressed by the poem *Erra and Išum*. This chapter examines the role that divine violence plays in bringing about justice or injustice in a community by comparing Ezekiel 22 with aspects of the Mesopotamian poem *Erra and Išum* and the *Oresteia* by the Greek tragedian Aeschylus according to the following seven topics:

- (1) Just as daily rituals unconsciously organize aspects of experience, so also religious rituals help people deal with conflicts in their relations with the gods on an ongoing basis.
- (2) As a symbol of life, blood is an important ritual substance in the maintenance of the boundary between life and death, which is obtained through the violent act of slaughter.
- (3) The subterranean, "savage energies" in humans can be either a source of vitality or a cause of chaos by linking them with the larger forces of life.
- (4) The channeling of aggressions is a fundamental creative task for human communities.
- (5) Catastrophic events tempt individuals to regard themselves as victims of overwhelming cosmic or social forces.
- (6) Those struggling to survive may try to redirect the aggression of a hostile divine force against a human scapegoat. And finally,
- (7) Divine violence can be a means of purification that prepares the way for restored communion of the human with the divine.

Ritual and Word: Individual and Communal Responses to Cosmic Violence

At the beginning of Ezekiel 22, the prophet is directed by Yhwh to arraign the city of Jerusalem. Ezekiel's exilic audience would have recognized that they too were identified with this city, even though they did not presently reside there. The Lord addressed Ezekiel as "son of man" to emphasize once again the difference in status between the divine and the human. As the sentinel for the Israelite community (Ezek 3:17-21; 33:1-9), he was to call them to account and make the city aware of "all her abominations" (*kol tô'ăbôtêhā*, 22:2).

Ezekiel created a courtroom scenario in which the Lord was both judge and prosecutor and the Jerusalemites were the defendants.¹ Because this courtroom scene took place on a cosmic scale (i.e., it spanned heaven, earth, and the Netherworld), the prophet Ezekiel served as a messenger from the divine judge and prosecutor. The ritualized sequence of actions in Ezekiel 22:3-16 reflect several steps that were probably typical in an Israelite legal hearing (*rib*): the prosecutor makes known the charge (v. 3) and then lists the particular transgressions substantiating his charge against them (vv. 6–12); then the judge pronounces his verdict and punishment (vv. 13–16). In a typical hearing the defendant would have had the opportunity to make his case, including the calling of witnesses on his behalf.² The verdict pronounced in vv. 15–16 was already previewed in v. 4, immediately after the initial statement of the charges. This foreshadowing of the outcome reinforces the fact that Ezekiel used the form of the legal process to bring the defendant to a new awareness of his transgressions. In Ezekiel 22, the defendant does not make a public defense of his position. In Ezekiel's presentation of the case in this chapter, the facts are clear such that the defendant has no grounds upon which to argue his case.

The formulation of the conflict between the Lord and the city of Jerusalem in the form of a legal contest showed how Ezekiel's understanding of the ordering of historical events was influenced by his belief in the Lord's attention to human behavior. The actions and language of this divine court shaped reality. If the words and actions of a human judge can shape the future of a defendant, then so much the more so can those of the divine judge. The ritualized actions of the divine judge and prosecutor working through his prophetic spokesperson conferred a solemnity upon his pronouncements: i.e., a level of seriousness consonant with words spoken under oath by an all powerful Deity (Ezek 20:3, 5-6, 15, 23, 28, 33; 22:14b). The form and the function of the courtroom scene made clear Ezekiel's conviction that the course of history operates in conformity with divine law. If humans are able to listen to the divine perspective on these events, they will see that the ambiguity about the nature and fairness of the forces that govern history arises from their own limited perspective rather than from a lack of justice in this divine governance. Ezekiel proclaimed that it was necessary for the exiles to understand their experience from the perspective of the divine lawgiver.

¹ Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 701; see also Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 454–56; Leslie Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC 29; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990) 33–34.

² Hector Avalos, "Legal and Social Institutions in Canaan and Ancient Israel," 617–31, here 619, in *CANE*.

The Mesopotamian poem *Erra and Išum*, composed in the first half of the first millennium B.C.E., tried to explain the devastation that came upon Babylonia through foreign invaders and insurgents who triggered civil chaos.³ Išaran, the city god of Der, expressed his chagrin over the trouble that erupted in his city as follows: “As for me, you did not set me free but handed me over to the Suteans. . . . The people abandoned truth and have taken up injustice. They have left behind righteousness and devised evil” (IV:69, 73–74). The text consists primarily of speeches that the divine characters Erra, Išum, the Sebetti, and Marduk addressed to one another. By listening to this divine dialogue, the audience is given an explanation of how excessive violence has beset Babylonia, of which one of the perpetrators is a group of Sutean nomads—identified by Cagni as bedouins from northeast of Mesopotamia (*Erra* IV:133, 139).⁴ The dialogue, although it is not part of a courtroom scene, describes and assesses the role of these divine speakers in carrying out acts of divine violence. All of the divine speakers have carried out acts of violence. From their differing perspectives, they advise one another as to whether the right amount of violence has been infused into the course of events. There can be too little (*Erra* I:81–87) or too much violence (*Erra* IV:104–27): it is a question of balance, as the give-and-take between Išum and Erra makes evident.⁵

As the god of famine, war, and pestilence, Erra was perceived primarily as a threat to the people.⁶ For those who heard or read this text, they would have wanted Erra, his adviser Išum, and his weapons the Sebetti to defend them against foreign and domestic foes rather than to intervene on behalf of their foes. However, the impulsive tendencies of Erra (*Erra* V:1–15) and the less than omnipotent power of Marduk (*Erra* IIID:1–12) in the poem *Erra and Išum* introduce an element of unpredictability into the divine governance of events, which would explain to the audience why they may have been victimized by the course of events. If they accepted the explanation of this poem, then they would probably have followed the advice given in its epilogue, which suggests that the words of this poem contain a power of their own (*Erra* V:49–61). To recite the words of the poem *Erra and Išum* would have won Erra’s favor and would have

³ Peter Machinist, “Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra,” 221–26, here 221, in *Studies in the Literature of the Ancient Near East by Members of the American Oriental Society Presented to Samuel Noah Kramer* (ed. Jack M. Sasson; AOS 65; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1984).

⁴ Luigi Cagni, *The Poem of Erra* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1977) 53–129, 57–153; Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* (OBO 104; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1991) 54–55.

⁵ Machinist, “Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra,” 221–26, here 225, in *Studies in the Literature of the Ancient Near East*.

⁶ J. J. M. Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon: A Study of the Semitic Deities Attested in Mesopotamia before Ur III* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972) 24–29.

used it as if it were an incantation to keep negative forces at bay. An additional step in sustaining the recitation of this poem was the inscription of parts of the poem on clay or metal as an amulet.⁷ These inscribed words would send a message on behalf of the wearer and thus through their performative power would have provided a measure of stability to a vulnerable existence. Given the wide popularity of the poem *Erra and Išum* in Babylonia in the first millennium B.C.E., this composition illustrates how the interplay between myth and ritual was a vital factor in the production of a Mesopotamian worldview.

Toward the end of the Archaic Age (700–480) in Greece, poets began to produce a new genre of public performance known as *tragōidia*, “tragedy,” an event linked with the sacrifice of a goat.⁸ This new genre, which was to flourish for only about one hundred years (the fifth century B.C.E.), grew out of the dithyramb: a choral lyric performed in a festival procession according to a mythic narrative.⁹ In the Great Dionysia (celebrated in late March in Athens), there were three or four processions from the border town of Eleutherai to the Acropolis. Initially, the dithyramb was performed in the procession; later, however, this performance centered around the altar at the Acropolis. In this more localized setting, the dithyramb became a performance to be assessed by the audience.¹⁰

The mask of the performers had a human rather than an animal form. It contributed to the identification of the tragic figure with Homeric and Hesiodic heroes. Therefore, the hero was regarded as belonging to another age while the dramatic action itself evoked the views and feelings of the contemporary audience.¹¹ In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, the elders of Thebes, masked old men who were skeptical about rumors of the fall of Troy, said toward the conclusion of their long opening chorus:

The speech of the citizens is heavy with anger. It pays the price of a publicly endorsed curse. My anxious thought waits to hear something veiled in darkness, for the gods are not heedless of those who have killed many. In time, the black

⁷ Cagni, *Poem of Erra*, 14.

⁸ Walter Burkert, *Savage Energies: Lessons of Myth and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001) 2–3.

⁹ Peter Levi, “Greek Drama,” 156–85, here 150, in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Classical World* (ed. J. Boardman, J. Griffin, O. Murray; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 290; Jean-Pierre Vernant, “The Historical Moment of Tragedy in Greece: Some of the Social and Psychological Conditions,” 23–28, here 24–25, in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

¹⁰ Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 240–42.

¹¹ Jean-Pierre Vernant, “The Historical Moment of Tragedy in Greece,” 23–28, here 24, in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*.

Furies will bring into gloom the one who prospers unjustly and reverse his prosperity to wear down his life. When he becomes invisible, there will be no help. The one making arrogant claims is heavily weighed down, for the thunderbolt of Zeus is formed from his glance. (456–470)

These elders were cautious about claiming that the Achaean forces had defeated Troy on the grounds that justice was on their side. They were fearful that someone among the Achaeans might have acted with hubris or that some of the gods might try to avenge the deaths of their favorites in the previous battles. These old men were painfully aware of the vulnerability of humans in the cosmic scheme of things. The performance of a play such as *The Agamemnon* shaped a tragic consciousness, which Vernant describes as consisting of two main convictions: (1) that the cosmos is caught in constant conflict and (2) that human perception of reality is inherently ambiguous because, as finite beings, humans are able to see only a part of the cosmic picture at any given point in time.¹² In the narrative of the tragedy, humans stand in the border zone where they are moved to reflect on the dilemmas that engulf them but recognize that the true meaning of their lives is caught up in an order that transcends them.¹³

In a tragic play, the justice of one character was locked in combat with the justice of another. For example, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* committed himself to leading the Achaean forces to victory over Troy, but his wife Clytemnestra regarded his sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia to the goddess Artemis as an act of murder rather than as a legitimate part of the war effort. Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, extended the cycle of violence in that royal household by inducing Apollo to command Orestes to avenge the murder of his father Agamemnon by killing his mother Clytemnestra. Tragedy goes beyond legal battles where questions of justice are settled by rhetorical means; instead tragedy depicts the flesh-and-blood struggles of the participants in ways that draw the audience into the movement of the plot so that they, in turn, are led to reflect on their own lives as though they were characters in the play. The tragic consciousness produced by the performance of such a play is introspective.¹⁴ The characters of the play show that the way to deal with the wrenching contradictions of their experience is to look inward for the resources to meet these overwhelming cosmic and social forces.

¹² Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," 29–48, here 43, in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. See also John Gould, "On Making Sense of Greek Religion," 203–34, here 226, in *Myth, Ritual Memory, and Exchange: Essays in Greek Literature and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹³ Vernant, "The Historical Moment of Tragedy in Greece," 23–28, here 27, in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*.

¹⁴ Vernant, "The Historical Moment of Tragedy in Greece," 23–28, here 26, in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*.

In Ezekiel 22, the poem *Erra and Išum*, and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, violence from the divine sphere has been experienced as a threat. The prophet Ezekiel called his exilic audience to stand humbly before the divine judge and learn about the charges that Yhwh had brought against Jerusalem. The poem *Erra and Išum* contains a mixture of cynicism and realism that says that humans are victimized in a world in which constrained violence is a necessary factor in cosmic equilibrium. In the *Oresteia*, the cycle of violence within the royal house of Atreus was spurred on by a combination of human and divine desires for vengeance. The intervention of the deities Artemis and Apollo perpetuated the self-destructive violence that passed from one generation to the next in the house of Atreus. In Ezekiel 22 the prophet makes clear his position that human sins are the cause of the violence that the exilic community and the city of Jerusalem must undergo. Protests and criticism of his viewpoint had to be expressed indirectly, which undoubtedly occurred (cf. Ezek 33:30-33). By contrast, the mythical narratives embedded in the poem *Erra and Išum* and in the *Oresteia* invite reflection on the extent to which divine intervention has been excessive or has treated humans as disposable parts within the cosmic scheme. Violence from forces bigger than human life have the potential to forge a new perspective on human life or to render such life meaningless. The prophet Ezekiel, the poet-scribe Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, and Aeschylus offer further materials for reflecting on this issue.

The Power in the Blood: Life in the Face of Death

Ezekiel called Jerusalem to account and claimed that divine intervention was imminent by charging its citizens with bloodshed and the manufacture of idols (*gillûlîm*, 22:3). The phrase "bloody city" (*ir šōpeket dām*, v. 3) occurs elsewhere in the OT only in Ezekiel 24:6 (cf. 7:23; 9:9; 11:6) and in Nahum 3:1. In the latter instance, the prophet Nahum ascribed the phrase to Nineveh, one of the capitals of the Assyrian Empire that prided itself on its reputation for violence.¹⁵ These categories of sin—bloodshed and idol-making—encompass a series of cultic and ethical transgressions that make the case that the time has arrived (*lābō' ittāh*, v. 3) for Jerusalem to undergo punishment. The "pouring out of blood" (*šāpak dām*) most likely involved not only the murder of humans but also the improper disposal of the blood of sacrificial animals.¹⁶ In the making of idols, Ezekiel charged the Jerusalemites with compromising their commitment to an exclusive relationship with the Lord. Therefore, according to Ezekiel 22:3,

¹⁵ Steven Holloway, *Aššur Is King! Aššur Is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 116–17, 121–22.

¹⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 704.

the Jerusalemites were about to undergo punishment for their transgressions against the categories of the animal, the human, and the divine. Their offenses had an impact on the three main components of the cosmic community and thus merited a corresponding response on a cosmic scale, evidenced by the fact that the destruction of Jerusalem would not come simply from a human adversary but from the Lord enthroned above the four cherubim with four faces (Ezek 10:1-5; 22:31).

When Erra stirred up war within Babylon, he ordered the human commander in a frenzied way to undertake the wholesale destruction of the population:

You are the man for that city to which I am sending you. Do not fear a god! Do not be afraid of a man! Put to death young and old alike! Do not save the nursing infant! Do not leave the young there! You shall plunder the accumulated wealth of Babylon. The king's army assembled and entered the city. With blazing spears and penetrating sword, you directed their weapons against the people of the protected area, one set apart for Anu and Dagan. You made their blood like drainage water in the quarters of the city. You opened their arteries and made the canals carry away the blood. (*Erra* IV:26–35)

The blood shed in Babylon was extensive; it polluted the waters and drove Marduk away from his temple Esagila. The violence inflicted at Erra's urging and the resulting defilement exceeded what Marduk could bear. Even if Erra thought that he was reenacting the punishment of humans that Marduk had carried out in primordial times when he brought a deluge against them (IIIC:39–44),¹⁷ the reaction of Marduk indicates that such wholesale slaughter was not in accord with his will.

In *The Libation Bearers* (the second play of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*), Electra and Orestes, daughter and son of Agamemnon, lamented the death and burial of their father, particularly the manner in which these actions were carried out. Electra expressed the wish that Zeus would bring retribution upon the murderers Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, but then went on to say concerning Zeus' intervention: "May trustworthy things happen in the land. That justice follow injustice, I demand. Listen, Earth and honored ones of the Netherworld!" (*Cho.* 397–99).¹⁸ To this request, the chorus of Furies responded: "There is a law that the pouring of blood drops on the ground requires other blood. The destruction of those murdered cries out to the Fury for another ruin to follow on ruin" (*Cho.* 400–404). In the following dialogue, Electra and the Furies stirred up feelings of vengeance within Orestes, making him realize how brutal the murder of Agamemnon had been (*Cho.* 429), how his corpse had been buried

¹⁷ Cagni, *Poem of Erra*, 47 n. 106.

¹⁸ Cf. M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 575.

in a mutilated state (*Cho.* 439), and how he had not been properly honored with the presence of the people of Thebes at his burial (*Cho.* 430–33). As the evidence mounted for the aggressive character of the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, Orestes resolved to repay the murderers: “Ares will engage Ares. Justice will engage Justice!” (*Cho.* 461). Once Orestes killed Clytemnestra, the Furies then cried out that this killing of a mother by her son was more heinous than a wife’s murder of her husband (*Eum.* 212). Thus, the calls for further violence in the house of Atreus grew more intense.

Blood is a substance closely associated with matters of life and death. The Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26), with which Ezekiel shows a strong acquaintance,²⁰ prohibits the consumption of blood “because the life of the flesh (*nepes habbāsār*) is in the blood” (Lev 17:11). Genesis 9:4 may be the command that initially established the practice of not eating the blood of slaughtered animals. If one generation refrained from eating blood because the previous generation did so, then such a ritualized practice would have moved toward becoming part of their social world.²⁰ It may be then that the rationale of Leviticus 17:11 was developed to shore up a practice that was already in place.²¹ To eat the blood of the animal may have been regarded by some as a way to absorb the life force of the animal.²² However, the priestly tradition suggests that to do so would have been a crime bordering on murder or cannibalism, for immediately following the prohibition against eating the blood of animals in Genesis 9:4 is the prohibition against shedding the blood of another human. “If anyone sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has the human been made” (Gen 9:6). If the shedding of human blood occurs, that blood will cry out from the soil (Gen 4:10; Ezek 24:8).

Blood’s close association with, or even identification with, the force of life in a living being makes blood into a powerful symbol in rituals that must negotiate the boundary between life and death or between the sacred and profane. In the consecration of Aaronite priests, blood was placed on the right earlobe, the right thumb, and the right big toe of each ordinand (Lev 8:23–24); this demarcation of the extremities of their bodies symbolized their incorporation into the sacred sphere. In the purification ritual (*ḥattāt*), the blood of the animal was placed on the horns of the altar; here the blood functioned as a detergent

¹⁹ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–23* (AB 3A; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 1362.

²⁰ William Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004) 20.

²¹ Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible*, 11, 16, 20.

²² Cf. Maurice Bloch, *Prey into Hunter: The Politics of Religious Experience* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 33–34, 37; Jean-Pierre Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice and the Slaying of the Victim in the Greek *Thusia*,” 290–302, here 293, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (ed. Froma Zeitlin; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

that removed the defilement that inadvertent sins had caused to accumulate at the altar, which was the central location for mediation between the Lord and humans in the priestly temple system.²³ In the domestic sphere outside of the temple, the blood of the Passover lamb was annually placed on the lintel and doorposts of the home in order to fend off the Destroyer (Exod 12:7). So blood in these Israelite rituals was used as a symbolic means for bringing about purification, consecration, and protection.²⁴ As such, blood was a means for maintaining and legitimately negotiating the boundary between life and death. To misuse blood was to violate this fundamental boundary and to undercut blood's symbolic function of showing that all life belongs to the Lord.²⁵

A few texts handed on through the generations in Mesopotamia give voice to the conviction that the blood of a living being is the carrier of its life force. According to a passage in the *Atrahasis* story (I, iv.206–26), which was then used as a source for a similar anthropogony in the *Enūma Eliš* (VI:1–38), humans were created to serve the gods by building their temples and supplying them with offerings. In the *Atrahasis* story, Enki and Mami were commissioned to create humans because the lower ranking gods had grown tired of such labor on behalf of the higher ranking gods and rebelled. To create humans, the creator gods Enki and Mami not only fashioned the human from clay but also mixed the blood of the leader of the rebellious gods into the clay. Here the Mesopotamians understood an important element of human vitality to be an ambiguous inheritance from the divine realm: it could be a sign of either the energy or the rebelliousness of humans (*riḡmu / ḫubūru*, *Atrahasis* I, vii.358–59; *Erra* I:41, 43, 73, 82; IIB:43; IIC:45; IIIA: 18; IV:68).²⁶

The task for which humans were created in Mesopotamia was to provide food and shelter for the gods. The provisioning of food included meat as well as grain offerings. There is no known prohibition on the consumption of blood

²³ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 254.

²⁴ Guilders (*Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible*, 2) also refers to “transformation” as a function of blood sacrifice, but here consumption of the flesh of the animal provides the means of communion with the deity that is transformative. It is the transfer of the blood to the divine sphere that marks the transition of the flesh from the profane to the sacred realm (cf. Vernant, “A General Theory of Sacrifice and the Slaying of the Victim in the Greek *Thusia*,” 290–302, here 293, in *Mortals and Immortals*).

²⁵ Cf. Dennis McCarthy (“The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 88 (1969) 166–76, here 169–70, 175; idem, “Further Notes on the Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 205–10, here 205–7, 210) argues that Greek blood rituals were associated with death and not with life as in Israel. However, it seems that, as a symbol, blood deals with the interplay between life and death. Burkert (*Greek Religion*, 59–60) notes that blood was manipulated in rituals in preparation for battle, for burial of the dead, and for purification.

²⁶ Machinist, “Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra,” 221–26, here 225; Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 129–59.

in Mesopotamia.²⁷ In those cases where rams, bulls, ducks, and other fowl are described as offered to particular gods, there was no concern with pouring out the blood. It seems that the ingestion of blood along with meat would not have been viewed by the Mesopotamians as drawing too close to cannibalism. However, for those gods who were protectors of particular animals, the offering of these animals as food to these gods was prohibited; it seems that the consumption of these animals in the cult of their protector gods would have been seen as analogous to cannibalism. Thus, beef was not offered to Ningublaga, the protector of cattle.²⁸

The Mesopotamian story of the creation of humans from the blood of a rebellious god is present in the early mythological traditions of Eridu and Nippur. Abusch contends that this mythologeme of the blood of a rebellious god was brought by the Amorites into Mesopotamia.²⁹ The notion of the blood as the carrier of personal identity fits well within a seminomadic social context where the genealogical relationship within families and clans defined a person rather than his location within a particular city or location. Abusch goes on to argue that the blood constitutes “the origin of the ability to plan.”³⁰ The human intelligence in this capacity to plan then came to be identified with the personal god of the family and clan, where this god was the social being inherent in all members of the clan and was not simply an isolated being. So through reproduction, the blood of the clan lived on from one generation to the next. As the Amorites moved into the Mesopotamian cities, their pastoral, kin-related customs had to adapt to the urban organization of these communities around a temple associated with agriculture.³¹ Texts on temple offerings emphasize the provisioning of the god and not the slaughter and consumption of an animal; thus, such texts do not treat blood as the carrier of the life of the animal.³²

In Archaic Greece, all slaughter was regarded as sacrificial in character. The very act of slaughtering an animal was seen to be an act of consecration

²⁷ W. G. Lambert, “Donations of Food and Drink to the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 191–201, here 194, in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* (OLA 55; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1993).

²⁸ Lambert, “Donations of Food and Drink to the Gods,” 199.

²⁹ Tzvi Abusch, “Sacrifice in Mesopotamia,” 39–48, here 45, in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience* (ed. Albert I. Baumgarten; Studies in the History of Religions 93; Boston: Brill, 2002).

³⁰ Abusch, “Sacrifice in Mesopotamia,” 39–48, here 45, in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience*.

³¹ Abusch, “Sacrifice in Mesopotamia,” 39–48, here 45–47, in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience*; Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 140–41.

³² Tzvi Abusch, “Blood in Israel and Mesopotamia,” 675–84, here 680, in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. Shalom Paul; VTSup 94; Leiden: Brill, 2003).

(*hiereuein ta hierieia*).³³ Thus, special care was taken in the slaughter of the animal to see that all the blood either fell on the altar, the hearth, and the sacrificial pit or was gathered into a bowl to be later poured on the altar. The blood was not simply to fall to the ground.³⁴ It seems that when blood fell upon the earth, it stirred up the chthonic powers to vengeance.³⁵ This chthonic reaction is clear in the case of human bloodshed, but echoes of this reaction can be heard in the care with which the blood was gathered and cast on the altar.³⁶ In addition to altars, blood was poured out at the shrines of chthonic deities and at the graves of divinized heroes.³⁷ For example, blood was regularly poured through a hole into the grave of Erechtheus (the deified founding king of Athens) below the Acropolis.³⁸ Such blood made it possible to communicate with the dead (cf. *Od.* 11.90–99). If such offerings were made from gratitude, they would have been gifts; but if they were given from fear of the deity, then such offerings would have functioned as apotropaic devices.³⁹

Blood was also used in Archaic Greece to purify from bloodguilt. Typically, the blood of pigs was used to purify someone from the miasma of murder.⁴⁰ In Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, Orestes claims to have been purified from the defilement of matricide and so could legitimately enter into Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi (280–83, 443–52). But the Furies who pursued him there did not believe that such a purification had happened. They sang a "binding song" (306–96) in which they cast a spell on his mental and verbal faculties (327–33) so that he would be impaired in the upcoming trial.⁴¹ Earlier in Apollo's sanctuary when Clytemnestra's ghost had stirred them, the Furies voiced their opposition to Apollo's protection of Orestes:

³³ Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 2.

³⁴ Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 5.

³⁵ With regard to human bloodshed, the chorus in Aeschylus' *The Libation Bearers* say: "Because the bloodshed has been drunk up by nurturing earth, the vengeful gore has congealed and will not seep away" (66–67).

³⁶ Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 11–12.

³⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 202, 205.

³⁸ Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 124; Sarah I. Johnston, *The Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 11.

³⁹ Johnston, *The Restless Dead*, 38.

⁴⁰ Walter Burkert, *Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (trans. M. Pinder and W. Burkert; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992) 56; Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) 370–74.

⁴¹ Christopher A. Faraone, "Aeschylus' *hymnos desmios* (*Eum.* 306) and Attic Judicial Curses," *JHS* 105 (1985) 150–54; idem, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 3–32, here 5, in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (ed. C. Faraone and D. Obbink; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

The younger gods do such things, exercising power beyond what is right: a throne dripping blood, around its foot and around its head. Present to see is the navel of the earth, which, bearing the terrible curse of bloodshed, is defiled. A polluted prophet at his hearth, self-motivated and self-called, has defiled its inmost place by honoring human things against the law of the gods. So he has diminished portions allotted long ago. (*Eum.* 162–72)

The Furies disputed the legitimacy of Apollo's purification by labeling it an innovation that went against the ancient divine law: i.e., the law of blood vengeance embedded in the structure of family/clan society. This same ritual of purification by pig's blood was ridiculed by Heraclitus: "When they are defiled, they purify themselves with blood, which is as if someone who has stepped into mud were to wash himself with mud" (*DK* 22B5; *Theosophia Tubigensis* 68). Parker explains that the logic of this ritual of cleansing like-by-like (i.e., shed blood by shed blood) is that the murderer could wash off the ritual blood, whereas the original blood of the murder could not be removed by profane washing with water.⁴² Heraclitus rejected this ritual by refusing to grant religious ritual its own unique logic,⁴³ whereas the Furies rejected the ritual because it undercut their traditional role as avengers of blood.

Ezekiel and the Mesopotamian and Presocratic traditions revere blood as a powerful ritual and symbolic substance. The consumption of blood was expressly prohibited in Genesis 9:4 and Leviticus 17:11. In Presocratic Greece, animal blood was to be deposited carefully in sacred space. In Deuteronomy 12:16, 23–25, the blood could be poured out on the ground if the distance from the central sanctuary was too great; the same practice that had been in force for the treatment of nonsacrificial wild animals was extended to cover the slaughter of domestic animals. In Mesopotamia, the prohibition against consumption of blood and the requirement of depositing the blood in sacred space were not in force. However, the symbolic significance of blood is acknowledged in the *Atrahasis* story and the *Enūma Eliš*. So in each of these traditions, there was a recognition of the capacity of blood to symbolize the force of life.

The "pouring out of blood" (*šōpeket dām*) in Ezekiel 22:3–4 clearly refers to murder (22:6, 12), but also most likely refers to the improper disposal of animal blood (22:9). The sacrificial ritual was a means of controlling the effects of the violence unleashed in the slaughter of a living being. The domestic animal that moved about with the Israelite herder was an important part of the life of

⁴² Parker, *Miasma*, 373. For the view that the blood of the substitute victim is offered to the ghost of the murder victim, see Froma Zeitlin, "The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 96 (1965) 463–505, here 479.

⁴³ Cf. Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 267.

the family unit.⁴⁴ The process by which one of the animals gave up its life for the nourishment of the larger group was a serious step. The pouring out of the blood and the avoidance of consuming the blood helped to distance the consumption of the flesh from a cannibalistic act. Nevertheless, it was an act of violence against a living being in the family unit in which the renunciation of life on the part of one being gave life to the whole. When the blood was consumed, it seems that the aggressor had taken over the essence of the life-force of the animal and without restraint had appropriated that life-force to himself.⁴⁵ Such unrestrained aggression against an animal was prohibited in the Israelite tradition (Lev 17:10-12). The respect with which the blood was treated shows an awareness of a larger network of relations of which animals and human beings are a part. For the domestic animal, the blood was to be poured out at the altar, unless it was impossible. The life force of the domestic animal belonged to the God of the family and was not to be appropriated by a human.

As seen earlier, this seminomadic sensibility about blood probably entered the Mesopotamian tradition through the Amorites but became subordinate to the sensibility of the agriculturalist who would have prioritized the life-force emanating from the fertility of the soil more so than from the blood of animals. So in texts that speak of the offering of animals in a particular Mesopotamian cult, there was no prescribed sacrificial ritual that paid special attention to the disposal of the blood of the animal.⁴⁶ The animals slaughtered for human consumption must have been regarded as more distant from the family of the agriculturalist than from the family of the herder. The violence against the animal seems to have been shielded from the people and did not raise questions of guilt—just as in modern Western societies, most consumers of meat do not think about how the life of the animal was violently taken from it to provide the meat that they eat.

The Hunter's Shedding of Blood: Legitimate or Illegitimate Violence?

Those whose hands must strike the life from an animal typically have a sense that a transgression has occurred. However, within nature animals devour other animals. The psalmist sees the predatory behavior of lions as part of the Creator's design for the cosmos: "You appointed darkness and night happens; all the beasts of the forest roam about in it. The young lions roar for prey; they seek their food from God" (Ps 104:20-21). When humans became hunters, they took on the characteristics of a predatory animal.⁴⁷ Such predatory character-

⁴⁴ Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 134–35.

⁴⁵ Cf. Bloch, *Prey into Hunter*, 37.

⁴⁶ Cf. Lambert, "Donations of Food and Drink to the Gods," 194.

⁴⁷ Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 19–20; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Hunting and Sacrifice in

istics came clearly into view when that which was hunted was another human being.⁴⁸

In Ezekiel 19:2-4, a lioness is described as one who “raised up one of her whelps; he became a young lion. He learned how to seize prey; he devoured humans” (v. 3). In this dirge (*qinā*, v. 1) over the misfortunes of recent kings of Judah, the lioness represents the Davidic dynasty, and the young lion, who was singled out by the lioness and became an aggressor, was almost certainly Jehoahaz (609 B.C.), for historically he was quickly deposed by the Egyptians and taken to their homeland.⁴⁹ The misfortunes of the Davidic dynasty continued, when the lioness raised up a second of her whelps to replace the deported one: “He walked back and forth among the lionesses; he became a young lion. He learned to seize prey; he devoured humans. He attacked their strongholds,⁵⁰ and laid waste their cities. The land and everyone in it were devastated by the sound of his roar” (vv. 6-7). This second lion may have been Jehoikim (609-598 B.C.E.), for the biblical narratives typically depict him as an aggressive tyrant.⁵¹ The helplessness of Jehoahaz, who was “caught in a pit and taken away with hooks” (v. 4), shows the futility of resistance by Davidic monarchs to their imperial neighbors. Jehoikim was similarly taken captive and brought before the king of Babylon (2 Kgs 24:1; 2 Chr 36:6): “they spread out their net over him; in their pit he was captured. With hooks, they put him in a cage” (vv. 8b-9a). The net of the enemy, symbolizing divine judgment upon rulers who rebel against Yhwh’s rule, was cast over the king who had broken his oath or treaty.⁵²

While Ezekiel lamented the misfortunes of these Davidic rulers, he also regarded the aggressive and arrogant behavior of these kings as foolish.⁵³ The acts of aggression by the Davidic rulers would be repaid in kind by political powers that were stronger than they. For Ezekiel’s audience prior to 586, this message about the futility of revolt by the Davidic dynasty applied also to the reigning king Zedekiah about whom Ezekiel had prophesied: “But I [the Lord]

Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*,” 141-59, here 144-45, in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

⁴⁸ Note Enkidu’s encounter with a hunter in *Gilg.* I:122-33.

⁴⁹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 595, 605; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (AB 22; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983) 355. See the description of Achilles as an enraged lion who has lost his cubs at the loss of Patroclus, which parallels that of Gilgamesh at the loss of Enkidu (*Il.* 18.318-35; *Gilg.* VIII:59-64).

⁵⁰ Read *wayyārōā’ armēnôtēhem* with LXX, Targ.

⁵¹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 605.

⁵² Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 165-74. For the net as an instrument of divine judgment, see *Erra* I:42; III C:33; IV:18, 19; IV:94; Lawrence Boadt, *Ezekiel’s Oracles against Egypt: A Literary and Philological Study of Ezekiel 29-32* (BibOr 37; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980) 133-35; West, *The East Face of Helicon*, 568-69.

⁵³ Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, 594-95) argues that Ezekiel is making a parody of the dirge here in which he judges these kings rather than sympathizes with them.

will stretch out my net over him, and he will be seized by my snare. I will make him enter the land of the Chaldeans at Babylon, but it he will not see, and there he will die” (Ezek 12:13). When Zedekiah was captured and fettered like an animal, he was also blinded prior to his deportation to Babylon (2 Kgs 25:5-7). Even though these two young lions can be linked with specific Davidic kings (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim), within this dirge these lion figures have a schematic character applicable to more than a single historical figure and event.⁵⁴

The aggressiveness of humans toward one another bears striking resemblances to the ways that animals prey upon other animals. The key difference for humans is that humans are aware of the violence they do to other humans and animals, and thus feel guilty about their aggressive actions—unless they have a rationale to shield them from such feelings. In line with earlier anthropological research by the classicist Karl Meuli⁵⁵ and the sociobiologist Konrad Lorenz,⁵⁶ Burkert argued that paleolithic hunters developed rituals to help them deal with the violence involved in taking the life of a wild animal.⁵⁷ These hunters became aware that they were capable of violence toward one another as ferocious as that of a lion toward other species. Furthermore, humans needed a sense of guilt to restrain them from violence toward other humans. Such aggression toward other members of their species was not a problem for lions, for instinctively they were restrained from attacking other lions.⁵⁸

In Mesopotamia, Assyrian kings were famous for their lion hunts. Assurnasirpal II (883–859 B.C.E.) reported in an inscription located in the North West Palace at Calah:

With my outstretched hand and enraged heart, I seized fifteen powerful lions from the mountains and forests. I carried away fifty lion cubs. In Calah and the palaces of my land, I put them in cages. I caused a large number of them to be born.”
(*RIMA 2 A. O.101.2, ll. 33–35*)⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 357.

⁵⁵ Karl Meuli, “Griechische Opferbräuche,” 185–288, in *Phyllobolia: Festschrift Peter von der Mühl* (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1946).

⁵⁶ Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression* (trans. Marjorie Wilson; New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1966) 67–72, 170–71, 277–78.

⁵⁷ Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 16. William W. Hallo (“The Origins of the Sacrificial Cult: New Evidence from Mesopotamia and Israel,” 3–13, here 8–10, in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* [ed. P. D. Miller Jr., P. D. Hanson, S. D. McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987]) explains how a section of the Sumerian Lugalbanda epic provides a legitimating rationale from the third millennium B.C.E. for the slaughter of animals and the consumption of their meat.

⁵⁸ Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 18–19; idem, “The Problem of Ritual Killing,” 149–76, here 170, in Walter Burkert, René Girard, Jonathan Z. Smith, *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (ed. Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

⁵⁹ Edition: A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC: I (1114–*

His successor, Shalmaneser III (858–823 B.C.E.), also celebrated his success against threatening beasts:

Ninurta and Nergal, who love my priesthood, gave me wild animals and told me to hunt. From my open chariot in a daring charge, I killed 373 wild bulls and 399 lions. I drove twenty-nine elephants into an encampment.” (*RIMA* 3 A.O.102.6, iv.40–44)⁶⁰

The Assyrian king typically cultivated his image as a lion hunter for it gave him stature as the champion who was securing the boundary between the wild and the civilized in Assyria (cf. *Gilg.* IX.5–18).⁶¹ These kings also stocked their royal gardens with exotic animals, including lions.⁶² Assurbanipal’s (669–627) inscriptions and reliefs portray him as a king who not only subdued lions in the countryside⁶³ but also protected the city of Nineveh by shooting eighteen

859 BC) (*RIMA* 2; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991) 226. See also G. T. M. Prinsloo, “Lions and Vines: The Imagery of Ezekiel 19 in the Light of Ancient Near-Eastern Descriptions and Depictions,” *Old Testament Essays* 12 (1999) 339–59, here 341.

⁶⁰ Edition: A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC: II (858–745 BC)* (*RIMA* 3; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996) 41.

⁶¹ Chikako E. Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia: A Contextual Approach* (WOO I; Wein: Institut für Orientalistik, 2002) 76–88. Peter Machinist, “Assyrians on Assyria in the First Millennium B.C.,” 77–104, here 86, in *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike: Die nahöstlichen Kulturen und die Griechen* (ed. Kurt Raaflaub and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner; München: Oldenbourg, 1993); Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Bare Facts of Ritual,” 473–83, here 477, in *Readings in Ritual Studies* (ed. Ronald L. Grimes; Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1996); Julian Reade, “Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art,” 329–43, here 332, 333, in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (ed. M. T. Larsen; Mesopotamia 7; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979). Irene Winter (“Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs,” *Studies in Visual Communication* 7 [1991] 2–38, here 11, 23–24) notes how the bands of the royal lion hunt on Assurnasirpal’s palace were omitted in those of his sons and indicate a shift from a mythological portrayal of royal power to a more historical one for the purpose of mass communication of royal propaganda. However, Luc Bachelot, (“La fonction politique des reliefs Néo-Assyriens,” 109–28, here 111, in *Marchants, Diplomates et Empereurs* [ed. D. Charpin and F. Joannès; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1991] contends that the audience of this royal iconography was the royal court and the king himself such that the images and texts functioned symbolically to strengthen the king in his maintenance of his royal identity and power.

⁶² Barbara Nevling Porter, “Intimidation and Friendly Persuasion,” 81–97, here 95–96, in *Trees, Kings, and Politics: Studies in Assyrian Iconography* (OBO 197; Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); Prinsloo, “Lions and Vines,” 340.

⁶³ Prism fragment 82–5–22,2 in the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum; see Elnathan Weissert, “Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph in a Prism Fragment of Ashurbanipal (82–5–22,2),” 339–58, in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project Helsinki, September 7–11, 1995* (ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997).

lions in succession: a number linked with the eighteen gates of the city. The king's profile as a subduer of lions also seemed to have been enhanced by the carefully orchestrated release of lions (from cages) that he could then confront in direct combat.⁶⁴ The message of the lion hunt, which the king wanted the popular imagination to hold, was that any ferocious, man-eating threat against the Assyrians was no match for the Assyrian king.

The poem *Erra and Išum* uses animal imagery drawn from the hunt to heighten the terror that the war-god should inspire. Like a self-reporting Mesopotamian king who wants to make his subjects fear him, Erra claims:

I am the wild bull of heaven, I am the lion on earth. I am king of the land; I am the furious one among the gods. I am warrior among the Igigi; I am the powerful one among the Anunnaki. I strike down wild animals. . . . Like a wild sheep, I go forth in the steppe. I enter deserted regions and make an encampment. (*Erra* I:109–12, 117–18)

After he has returned from battle, his vizier Išum reports:

These inhabitants of Babylon—they the birds and you the snare—you caught them in a net, pursued and destroyed them, warrior Erra. You demolished the city and went to its outer edges. You assumed the face of a lion and entered the palace. (IV:18–21)

Modeled upon the Mesopotamian king as warrior and lion hunter, the god Erra shows how the aggressiveness and power of a warrior-king can also be turned against humans and their civilization (*Erra* I:92–123).⁶⁵

Hunting metaphors to describe the violence of humans against other humans are repeatedly used by Aeschylus in his *Oresteia* to mark the transition between nature and culture. The animal dimension of the human hunter is emphasized when he is identified as the predatory lion or the cunning wolf. The hunt is the opposite of the sacrifice, which is a ritual action fundamental to the city.⁶⁶ Aeschylus picked up on depictions in the epic tradition of the warrior Agamemnon as a member of the dynasty of Pelops whose heraldic was the lion (*Il.* 11.113, 129, 175).⁶⁷ He referred to Agamemnon as “the savage lion, having leapt over the defensive walls, licked up royal blood to satiety” (*Agam.* 827–28; cf. 1259). The prophetess Cassandra refers to Clytemnestra as “this

⁶⁴ Weissert, “Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph,” 339–58, here 342–45, 354–56, in *Assyria* 1995.

⁶⁵ Machinist, “Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra,” 221–26, here 222–23.

⁶⁶ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, “Hunting and Sacrifice in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*,” 141–59, here 142–44, in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

⁶⁷ Bernard Knox, “The Lion in the House (*Agamemnon* 717–36 [Murray]),” *CP* 47 (1952) 17–25, here 20.

two-footed lioness [who] sleeps with a wolf [Aegisthus] since the noble lion is away [Agamemnon]" (*Agam.* 1258–59).

Earlier in the play, the old men of the chorus had given voice to a fable about Helen that described her as a lion cub growing to maturity and suddenly exercising its aggressive instincts against the Trojans who had received her:

A man raised a lion's offspring in his house without milk, though it desired the breast. Tame in these beginning parts of life, it was beloved of children and a joy to the old. It was many times held in the arms like a nursing infant with its brightly-shining face turned toward the hand and fawning as compelled by hunger. But with the passage of time, it manifested the nature it held from its parents. It freely exchanged for its upbringing a destructive slaying of sheep; though not requested, it made ready a banquet. The house was defiled with blood: an agony that those in the house could not curb. Great was the pain caused by the slaying of many. A priest of ruin according to the divine will, it was brought up in the house. (*Agam.* 717–36)

As a member of the royal house of Menelaus of Sparta, the image of a lion cub was appropriate for Helen. As a symbol of the Spartan royal house, her kidnaping was an aggressive act against the Spartans and their allies and thus triggered the Achaean expedition against Troy. The ferocity of this young lion existed initially only as a potential—one that was predictable yet hidden.⁶⁸ The fable suggests that the Trojans had an idea that they were inviting trouble by receiving Helen into their midst; nevertheless, they were shocked by the ferocity that emerged from this lion cub and what she symbolized when the war began. Thus the lion cub became "a priest of ruin" (i.e., an anti-priest) in the midst of the Trojans by triggering the Achaeans' hunting and slaughtering of them (i.e., anti-sacrifice).⁶⁹ But as Knox has pointed out, Menelaus also had brought the lion cub Helen into his house and had thus set the stage for great suffering for the Achaeans.⁷⁰

Just before Agamemnon was killed by Clytemnestra, Cassandra envisioned the scene as an encounter of the hunter with his prey: "No, No! Look, look! Keep the bull away from the cow! She has caught him in the woven cloth and strikes him with her black horn. He falls into the bathtub" (*Agam.* 1125–27).⁷¹ The hunting metaphors continue in the *Eumenides* in which the ghost of Cly-

⁶⁸ Knox ("The Lion in the House [*Agamemnon* 717–36 {Murray}]," 17–25, here 18, 22–23) notes that the lion cub image evokes a central issue of the *Oresteia* in illustrating the transmission of evil from one generation to the next. He argues that not only Helen but also Aegisthus, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Orestes can be identified as lion cubs.

⁶⁹ Vidal-Naquet, "Hunting and Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," 141–59, here 142–44, in *Myth and Tragedy*; Zeitlin, "The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," 463–505, here 467.

⁷⁰ Knox, "The Lion in the House (*Agamemnon* 717–36 [Murray])," *CP* 47 (1952) 17–25, here 19.

⁷¹ Burkert (*Savage Energies*, 20) refers to the slaughtering of a bull on the famous gold cup of Vaphio (ca. 1500 B.C.E., which was a table decoration of a Mycenaean prince who celebrated his victory over a bull.)

temnestra reproves the Furies by claiming that Orestes “has escaped and is gone like a fawn. He has nimbly darted from the midst of your net, scoffing greatly at you” (*Eum.* 111–13). Later, the awakening Furies second Clytemnestra’s image of Orestes when they say: “The beast has ducked our nets and has gone. Overcome by sleep, I lost my prey” (*Eum.* 147–48). When the prey is snared and the slaughter is referenced, the metaphor is strengthened by shifting from a wild animal to a domestic one: e.g., Agamemnon is a bull (*Agam.* 1125); Cassandra is an ox (*Agam.* 1297).⁷² The sacrificial character of the deaths recorded in the *Agamemnon* (viz., men of Troy, Iphigenia, Thyestes’ children, Agamemnon, and Cassandra) is spelled out through a series of interlocking images and allusions: e.g., the net and the slaughter of Agamemnon as a sacrifice (*Agam.* 1125–28, 1309–10), the eagles preying on the young hares (*Agam.* 108–20) as a forerunner of Agamemnon’s sacrifice of Iphigenia (*Agam.* 146–55, 228–47), the slaughter of the Trojans and of Cassandra (*Agam.* 1166–72) as preliminary sacrifices like that of Iphigenia (*Agam.* 239–40), and Clytemnestra’s libations of Agamemnon’s blood to the Olympians, Chthonians, and Zeus of Hades as acts of thanksgiving rather than of mourning.⁷³

Humans who hunt down one another legitimate this predatory behavior as necessary for the maintenance of justice. If the prey is a foreigner, the aggression against that person is justified as a way of protecting the community. If the prey is one within the community, then hunting that one down is pictured as a required act of vengeance and as a purging of the community of defilement. Animals instinctively avoid being aggressive toward members of their own species. But humans are aggressive toward one another when the other person is categorized as a threatening “other.” Thus, human aggression is channeled according to cultural constructions, an approach fraught with ambiguity, for it may advance or obliterate the practice of justice in the community.

The Channeling of Aggression and Violence in the Community

Rivalries between individuals can escalate to the point of fragmenting the community. The forms that such rivalries might take are multiple: e.g., competing for a wife, striving for prestigious prizes, and trying to accumulate material goods. Fueling these rivalries are aggressive energies that are essential to human life but need to be channeled so they do not become destructive of the individual or the community.⁷⁴ Effective channeling of these aggressive energies occurs

⁷² Vidal-Naquet, “Hunting and Sacrifice in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*,” 141–59, here 152, in *Myth and Tragedy*.

⁷³ Zeitlin, “The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*,” 463–505, here 464–73, 488.

⁷⁴ Glenn Most, “Foreward,” to Walter Burkert, *Savage Energies: Lessons of Myth and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001) xi.

to a great extent at the unconscious level.⁷⁵ Anxiety and ambition can cloud one's judgment. As important as rational planning is for the containment of violence, it will be insufficient to maintain communal order when unaccompanied by rituals that address the aggressions of individuals. In the majority of cultures, animal sacrifice is a fundamental ritual for channeling these aggressions.⁷⁶

After having charged the city of Jerusalem with sins involving the pouring out of blood and the worship of idols in 22:3, Ezekiel proceeded in 22:6-12 to list the evidence. The list is framed by the repetition of the phrase *šēpok dām*, "in order to pour out blood," in verses 6b, 9a, 12a. The blood poured out can be either human or animal blood; thus, the transgressions listed include both cultic and ethical sins. The assault on the vertical relationship between Jerusalem and the Lord, corresponding to the sin of manufacturing idols (22:3-4), is described as despising matters related to the holy (v. 8a), desecrating sabbaths (v. 9b), eating on the mountains (v. 9b), and forgetting the Lord (v. 12b). All of the other transgressions in verses 6-12 undermine the horizontal relationships within the city. These transgressions involved not only physical and economic coercion but also assaults on another's honor through slighting and slander.

The relationships within the household were undermined by the members ignoring the positions that each member held within the structure of the household: children dishonored parents (v. 7a); the father's wife had sexual relations with the sons (v. 10a); the sons of the household coerced a menstruant to have intercourse (v. 10b); the father defiled his daughter-in-law through depraved acts (v. 11a); and a brother forced his half-sister to have intercourse (v. 11b). The relationships between households were distorted through exploitation: the heads of households oppressed the resident alien, the orphan, and the widow (v. 7b); they took bribes (v. 12a); they charged interest and usury (v. 12b); and they forcibly exacted a profit from their neighbor (v. 12b). The infrastructure of the city had been undermined through these acts of unrestrained aggression. The members of the family had been robbed of their basic set of relationships. In such a rapacious environment, nothing was sacred: neither holy things, nor parents, nor contracts. All things were equally available for exploitation. In this context, the life-force of the people was drained away by depriving others of the necessities of physical life and personal honor and by violating bodily boundaries integral to the form of life of the Israelite covenantal community. Through this list, Ezekiel described a city awash in chaos.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Burton Mack, "Introduction: Religion and Ritual," 1-70, here 27, 31, in *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (ed. Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Walter Burkert, "The Problem of Ritual Killing," 149-76, here 170, in *Violent Origins*; René Girard, "Generative Scapegoating," 73-105, here 74, 78, 82, in *Violent Origins*.

⁷⁶ Mack, "Introduction: Religion and Ritual," 20-21, 67, in *Violent Origins*.

⁷⁷ Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, 456) claims that "for those in Jerusalem, Ezekiel 22 could only be an immense exaggeration."

The defilement emanating from these boundary violations clung to all members of the extended household. The negative impact of these transgressions would reverberate from one generation to the next with a ferocity resembling that of bloodguilt. It is little wonder then that Ezekiel framed his list by three times repeating the phrase, “in order to shed blood.” The distortion to family relationships from incest, adultery, and greed would haunt the household like spilt blood crying out from the soil. The transgression of forcing a woman to have intercourse during her menstrual period emphasized the link between unrestrained desire and violence done to others.⁷⁸

In Ezekiel 22:4, the prophet addresses the city of Jerusalem as one who was “guilty” (*’āšām*) because of the blood that it had poured out. The guilt—i.e., the aura of evil—that surrounded the city cried out for retribution.⁷⁹ But the repayment was one that the Jerusalemites could not make through repentance and the offering of the blood of domestic animals (Ezek 8:17; 9:7; 22:26). The time had passed in which such offerings might have helped to recalibrate the relationships within the community (cf. Lev 5:1–6:7). The renunciations required by such offerings could have called into question and perhaps restrained the aggressions at an earlier stage.⁸⁰ But now as Ezekiel described it in 22:1–12, irreparable damage had been done to the city. The infrastructure had been ruined through a list of transgressions that can be summed up in the final statement of the list: “they have forgotten me, says the Lord God” (22:12b).

In the poem *Erra and Išum*, the Sebetti urged Erra to go forth to battle. They said: “Warrior Erra, why did you leave behind the steppe to reside in the city? The animals of Šakkan⁸¹ and the other animals despise us” (1:75–77). Here the animals were charged with the same shortcoming as the humans (1:77, 120): neglect of the cult of Erra.⁸² Because the Mesopotamians did not pay attention to this vertical relationship with the god Erra, Erra resolved to sideline Marduk so that he would be free to sow discord in the land. When he felt dishonored by Marduk as though he were a mere servant who had stood guard for him while his statue was being refurbished, Erra proclaimed to Išum how he would go about manifesting his reality as a powerful agent of destruction. He said:

I cause a soldier to go from city to city. A son for his father and the father (parent) for the son, for the son has no concern for the other’s well-being. Mother plans evil for her daughter with a grin. Into the house of the gods, where evil should not

⁷⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 710.

⁷⁹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 456.

⁸⁰ Cf. René Girard, “Mimesis and Violence,” 9–19, here 10–11, in *The Girard Reader* (ed. James G. Williams; New York: Crossroad, 1996).

⁸¹ Šakkan is the Sumerian god of the wild animals (see Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon*, 51).

⁸² Cagni, *The Poem of Erra*, 29 n. 19.

draw near, I allow [evildoers] to enter. In the prince's dwelling, I allow the scoundrel to reside. . . . I set the wicked murderer at the highest rank. I alter the hearts of the people. Father pays no attention to the son. Daughter says hateful things to the mother. I make their expressions evil. They forget their gods. To their goddesses, they speak with great insolence. I make the robber arise; I block travel. In the heart of the city they rob one another's belongings. (IIC2:32; III:8–14)

Erra planned to make people fear the aggression that could break forth in their land. The aggression that would arise between Mesopotamian soldiers and among the members of families would demonstrate that they needed to pay more attention to the forces of aggression in their families and communities. Erra would create further trouble by causing the people to neglect the other deities, with the result that they would be angry with the people. Security in the land would become a major problem so that travel would be impossible and neighbors would steal from one another. This escalation of discord could be understood as the unraveling of a society in which one shortcoming engendered another such that there were no longer sufficient resources—human or material—for people to assist one another. Nevertheless, the poem *Erra and Išum* takes the stand that aggression and discord are integral parts of the cosmos that will burst forth if they, in the person of Erra, are not acknowledged and taken seriously (*Erra* I:120–21, 73, 77; cf. V:53). Erra and the Sebetti unleashed their campaign against the Mesopotamians because they had not offered sacrifice to Erra: an act of provisioning that would have honored the reality of Erra (*Erra* I:77, 120; IIID:15; IV:133).⁸³

The acts of defiance of children against parents indicated that the community was out of balance and its members had lost perspective. Nevertheless, this kind of energy of self-assertion had its place within the Mesopotamian worldview. In the poem *Erra and Išum*, Ištar, the god of the city of Der, declared when Erra had devastated his city: “You turned the city Der into a wasteland. You broke into pieces like reeds the people within it. For you extinguished their noisy vitality (*hubūršina*) like foam (*hubšu*) on the water's surface!” (*Erra* IV:66–68).

The noise (*hubūru*) of the people was a sign of their vitality.⁸⁴ But from the perspective of the gods of the underworld, such noise was problematic for these gods “love deathly stillness. The Anunnaki cannot fall asleep because of the noisy vitality of humans” (*Erra* I:81–82). To silence the noise of humanity

⁸³ Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, 61–62, 77.

⁸⁴ Piotr Michalowski, “Presence at Creation,” 381–96, here 389, in *Lingering Over Words* (ed. T. Abusch et al.; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990) 389; cf. Moran, “Some Considerations of Form and Interpretation in *Atra-Hasis*,” 245–55, here 252, in *Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner* (ed. Francesca Rochberg-Halton; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987).

was to put them to death. Part of this noise was an element of self-assertion.⁸⁵ As seen in the story of the creation of humans with the blood of a rebel god, the vitality of humans was, to some extent, inseparable from their very being. The issue was one of channeling and containing such self-assertion. When Erra had been driven in his warrior mania to assert himself so that both gods and humans took note of him, Išum told him: “You have altered your divine nature and made yourself like a human” (Erra IV:3). Išum challenges Erra to exercise a level of self-control in which he demonstrates that he is a god and not a human. But Erra’s pleasure at this rebuke (Erra IV:129) indicates that Išum’s challenge also affirms Erra, for Erra had manifested himself in the battle through his mania.

In his *Theogony*, Hesiod mapped out the hierarchy among the Greek gods. The rebellious Titans had been banished to Tartarus (720–45), and Typhoeus had been defeated, 820–80); then the Olympian gods received their positions by a form of mutual agreement.⁸⁶ The position of humans was introduced into the picture through the figure of the god Prometheus. He was a Titan who seems to have escaped the fate of banishment to Tartarus by not taking part in the rebellion of the rest of the Titans against Cronus (*Theog.* 617–719); nevertheless, he is depicted as a rival to Zeus who has been fettered and made to suffer like a human through the daily loss of his liver to a devouring eagle (*Theog.* 521–25).⁸⁷ Prometheus was a trickster who competed with Zeus by trying to outwit him.⁸⁸ On one occasion,

... when the gods and mortal humans separated at Mekone, then he [Prometheus] with an energetic spirit divided and distributed the great ox, hoping to beguile the mind of Zeus. The meat and the plump fatty innards he placed in the hide, concealing them in the ox’s stomach. But the white bones of the ox he arranged with skillful guile, concealing them in white fat, presented them, and then spoke to the father of gods and men. (*Theog.* 535–41)

Zeus was fully aware of Prometheus’ deception and went along with it because he had in mind a way that he would pay him back and win the contest between them when all was said and done.⁸⁹ So Zeus played along and took the portion

⁸⁵ Machinist, “Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra,” 225.

⁸⁶ Jean-Pierre Vernant, “At Man’s Table: Hesiod’s Foundation Myth of Sacrifice,” 21–86, here 27, in Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks* (trans. Paula Wissing; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989).

⁸⁷ See Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* 199–228; Jenny Strauss Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 113–16.

⁸⁸ Prometheus, as helper of humanity, is analogous to Enki/Ea, the problem-solving Mesopotamian god noted for his cleverness. See Jean Bottéro, *Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 239; S. N. Kramer and John Maier, *Myths of Enki, The Crafty God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 201; West, *East Face of Helicon*, 295.

⁸⁹ Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, 109–12.

of the white bones. This episode provides an etiology for Greek sacrifice in which the bones were burned in folds of fat to the gods, allowing humans then to consume the main part of the animal (*Theog.* 556–57).⁹⁰

The next episode in the stories about Prometheus in the *Theogony* speaks of Prometheus' theft of fire (558–69). Clay notes that Hesiod understands Zeus to have kept back fire from humans after Prometheus' deceptive sacrifice so that humans would have to eat meat raw and thus be reduced to the animal state. With Prometheus' retrieving the fire for humans, they were restored to their status intermediate between gods and animals.⁹¹

The final episode is the payback that Zeus had in mind when Prometheus had deceptively divided the portions of the sacrificial ox: he commissioned Hephaestus and Athena to make a young girl who was a marvel to behold. Hesiod related though that this creation of the first woman was a clever deception by Zeus, for women would be a burden for men thereafter. The men would work day after day, and the women would stay at home and reap the benefits (*Theog.* 571–601). Clay notes that this wife is like a fire who regularly consumes the fruits of the husband's labors and dries him up. Yet she is attractive and thus an ambiguous figure. She is not named in the *Theogony*, but in *Works and Days*, she is Pandora, the gift of all the Olympian gods to humans.⁹² Here she is symbolized by the jar that contains numerous ills but also hope, where the hope that remains in the jar can nurture positive anticipation or destructive illusions (*Op.* 90–105; cf. *Il.* 24.525–33).⁹³ But if a man chose not to marry, he would have no offspring and thus would have no one to look after him in his old age (*Theog.* 602–6).

In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Prometheus, who was trying to promote the interests of humans in his contest with Zeus, ended up complicating the lives of men. The trickster ended up being tricked, and humans shared in the consequences. The Prometheus story was Hesiod's account of the hierarchy between gods and humans: humans were regarded as married agriculturalists who were required regularly to give a portion of their offerings to the gods.⁹⁴ This story offered an explanation of the equivocal relation between gods and humans, which was distinct from that of the gods' relations with other animals. Humans cannot survive without attentiveness to the gods. Thus, the worship of the gods was vital to the integrity of the city.⁹⁵ Every time a sacrifice was offered, it brought to mind the separation between the gods and humans. The consumption of

⁹⁰ Vernant, "At Man's Table," 21–86, here 28–29.

⁹¹ Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos*, 102.

⁹² Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos*, 124.

⁹³ Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos*, 102–3, 122.

⁹⁴ Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos*, 104, 118.

⁹⁵ Vernant, "At Man's Table," 28.

the meaty portions of the sacrificial animal would also remind a person of Prometheus' promotion of human interests and his hidden hostility to Zeus.⁹⁶ Thus, in the performance of the sacrificial ritual, humans would be acknowledging the human condition but were at the same time vigilant for ways that they might escape its constraints.

The rivalry that Prometheus played out with Zeus gave an account of how competition found its way into the human condition. This competition between Prometheus and Zeus was a mere sideshow in comparison to the cosmic conflict between Zeus and the Titans and Typhoeus (*Theog.* 617–719, 820–80).⁹⁷ It indicates that humans could never overturn the human condition, but yet there was a positive place for the cleverness and intelligence that tried to find ways to elevate humans above their status.⁹⁸ This positive striving was the good kind of *eris* ("competition") that Hesiod urged his brother Perses to adopt in his *Works and Days* (11–15). Hesiod distinguished the bad form of *eris* that led to jealousy, quarrelsomeness, and war from the good form of *eris* that allowed rivalry to spur competitors on to give their best efforts. In his *Works and Days*, Hesiod envisioned such efforts as the cultivation of the soil, which, if faithfully done, was like an act of worship.⁹⁹ However, if bad *eris* was engaged, it could take the form of the exploitation of one brother by another such as Hesiod experienced from his brother Perses.

Ezekiel's charge that blood was poured out in Jerusalem by murder and improper sacrifice was expanded through the list of transgressions that included aggressive actions of the people toward one another and of acts of indifference toward the Lord. The war-god Erra's rationale for the violence he stirred up in Mesopotamian cities was the lack of respect that he had experienced from the people through their neglect of his cult. Hesiod's portrayal of Prometheus as a crafty god who pressured Zeus in his exercise of authority illustrates that there is a tension within humans to try to transcend their place on the cosmic hierarchy. Such efforts can incite hostility from Zeus or can lead to humans preying upon one another. Hesiod's advice in *Works and Days* is that humans should accept the daily task of work and honor the gods, for this will promote the required equilibrium in the cosmic community.

Victim or Free Agent: The Existential Challenge of Living in Violent Times

Ezekiel concluded his list of the transgressions in Ezekiel 22:6-12 with the

⁹⁶ Vernant, "At Man's Table," 29.

⁹⁷ Vernant, "At Man's Table," 31. Clay (*Hesiod's Cosmos*, 128) concludes from Hesiod's account of divine-human rivalry that "what is good for the gods is by no means necessarily good for mankind."

⁹⁸ Vernant, "At Man's Table," 31.

⁹⁹ Vernant, "At Man's Table," 36.

charge that “they have forgotten me” (v. 12b). This charge summarizes all of the preceding transgressions by claiming that all the boundary violations within and between households were imbalances that arose from inattentiveness to the Lord. Whereas the Mesopotamian god Erra felt affirmed when people were anxious about war and social discord, the Lord saw such problems arising through lack of attention to him. From the perspective of the Israelite tradition, the problem should be framed as the absence of the Lord’s integrating power rather than, as Erra would prefer to frame it, as the presence of the power of disintegration. From Ezekiel’s perspective, the Jerusalemites should fear the absence of the Lord (e.g., Ezek 8–11) rather than the presence of war. So the list of transgressions in 22:6-12 highlighted for the prophet the consequences for the people’s not keeping the Lord in their minds and hearts. In this list, the prophet drew upon the Decalogue and the Holiness Code to make his point that the chaos he saw in Jerusalem was the result of transgressions against well-known covenantal law.¹⁰⁰ The current chaos did not happen by chance but was the result of a series of choices over time. The guilt experienced by the people indicated that the ill effects of their transgressions continued to weigh them down.

The list of transgressions in Ezekiel 22:6-12 bears numerous similarities to that which is repeated in each of the three legal cases of Ezekiel 18. Of the nineteen transgressions listed in 22:6-12, five of them occur nearly verbatim in the list of the offenses of the unrighteous son in Ezekiel 18:10-13: one who sheds blood, eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor’s wife, oppresses the poor and needy, and lends with interest and takes a profit. In the disputation of Ezekiel 18, the prophet argued that each individual was responsible for his or her actions. Ezekiel tried to keep his exilic audience from regarding themselves as victims whose lives were determined by the sins of their ancestors. Ezekiel did not say that they were spared the ill effects of their ancestors’ sins; thus he avoided blatantly contradicting Exodus 20:5, which said that God would make sure that such ill effects happened up to the third and fourth generations. But Ezekiel did claim that such ill-effects would not determine whether a person was righteous or not—whether a person was living in the sphere of life or of death (Ezek 18:9, 19, 21). So in the cases of the righteous father (vv. 5–9), the unrighteous son (vv. 10–13), and the righteous son who has an unrighteous father (vv. 14-17), Ezekiel contended that a person would live or die by his or her own actions. The person who had an unrighteous father simply had to deal with the ill effects of his father’s transgressions. But Ezekiel contended that such a person was not fated to commit the same sins.

Ezekiel taught his exilic audience in 20:10-12 that the Lord had given his statutes, ordinances, and sabbaths to the first generation of Israelites in the wilderness. But they had rebelled against the Lord and refused to keep his laws.

¹⁰⁰ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 459; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 711.

Ezekiel went on to relate how the Lord refrained from destroying them and reiterated these statutes and ordinances to the next generation in the wilderness. But they too rebelled and disregarded these laws. However, the Lord delayed punishing them and eventually brought them into the land. Still, this punishment was hanging over this second generation: the Lord stated that they would be dispersed throughout the foreign lands because they had paid no attention to his laws and desecrated his sabbaths. Ezekiel urged his audience to identify with this second generation in the wilderness and thus to see their exile as a consequence of their sins in the wilderness. But such an identification would seem to contradict the claim in Ezekiel 18 that each individual of each generation would be judged righteous or unrighteous on the basis of his own transgressions, and not those of his ancestors.¹⁰¹ In this apparent contradiction—one that many of the exiles must have felt was confirmed by their experience—Ezekiel pushed his audience to recognize that even if they were weighed down by ill effects of the exile, they were not so enslaved by the consequences of their ancestors' sins that they could not choose to obey the Lord's statutes and ordinances. Yet at the same time, Ezekiel's narrative in Ezekiel 20 emphasizes the disobedience of the Israelites when they were in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the promised land, and in the exile. This story of repeated failures makes it seem like the generation of exiles in the late 590s was fated to repeat the behavior of its ancestors.

Ezekiel acknowledged that the exiles were weighed down by this pattern of rebellious behavior, but he was adamant that they were not determined by it.¹⁰² He announced that in spite of their sin history, Yhwh would gather the exiles into "the wilderness of the nations" to repeat the exodus experience in which they would individually be called to account before Yhwh (Ezek 20:34–38).¹⁰³ The weight of guilt that they felt was not to be an excuse for them to regard themselves as victims. The burden of the exile and Ezekiel's claim that the exiles were held responsible only for their own sins must have seemed contradictory to many of the exiles. However, Ezekiel commanded them to acknowledge their own sins, turn away from them, and make for themselves "a new heart and a

¹⁰¹ Michael Fishbane, "Sin and Judgment in the Prophecies of Ezekiel," *Int* 38 (1984): 138–50, here 142–43; Benjamin Uffenheimer, "Theodicy and Ethics in Ezekiel," 200–27, here 221, in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence* (ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman; JSOTSup 137; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?: The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel* (BZAW 301; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000) 41.

¹⁰² Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 196; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995) 176–78, 185; Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (JSOTSup 51; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989) 146; Gordon Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse* (SBLDS 126; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 191–92.

¹⁰³ Franz Sedlmeier, *Studien zu Komposition und Theologie von Ezechiel 20* (Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge 21; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1990) 350, 400.

new spirit” (18:31). The new perspective gained from such repentance would allow them to see that they were not pawns of impersonal cosmic processes but were free to choose life from a God who urged them to “return and live” (18:32).¹⁰⁴

In the *Enūma Eliš*, after Marduk had killed Tīamat, he captured Kingu and “took away from him the tablet of destinies (*tuppi šīmāti* [DUB.NAM.MEŠ]) that were not to be in his possession (*lā šīmātišu*). He placed a seal (*kišibbu*) upon it and fastened it on his chest (*EE* IV:120–22). The inscriptions on this tablet, functioning like a legal document, empowered the one who held it to determine the destinies of all creatures and things.¹⁰⁵ In compositions prior to the *Enūma Eliš*, Enki/Ea,¹⁰⁶ or Enlil¹⁰⁷ was believed to have held this tablet. It pointed to a world order that was independent of the will of a sovereign deity; it resembled what might be termed “fate.” Such a tablet indicated that there were conditions under which living beings and things exist. If such limits were not observed, then destructive strife or chaos would arise. In the poem *Erra and Išum*, Marduk noted the catastrophe that ensued when he left his throne in Babylon in the distant past: “When I rose up from my dwelling, the strict order of heaven and earth (*šipit šamê ú eršetim*) was relinquished” (*Erra* I:133). The importance of this regulation or bond for maintaining the world order was indicated in the *Enūma Eliš* in the description of Marduk’s fashioning of the earth and the heavens by dividing Tīamat’s carcass in two. To keep the separated halves of her carcass joined, Marduk “twisted her tail and tied it tightly together (*durmahiš urakkisma*)” (*EE* V:59). In the poem *Erra and Išum*, Erra persuaded Marduk that he would keep the world order intact while he went aside to refurbish his cult statue (*Erra* I:181–82). But the order (*šiptu*) that Erra intended to maintain was the order according to his own characteristic ways: i.e., famine, war, chaos. This bond or regulation of heaven secured by Marduk in primordial times was one that kept things in their place. Thus, the demons who served in Tīamat’s army were imprisoned in the Apsû (*EE* IV:116–17; V:73–76), from which location they functioned apotropaically to warn against anyone who might challenge Marduk’s power.¹⁰⁸ The Mesopotamian world order was

¹⁰⁴ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 711.

¹⁰⁵ Amar Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu* (SAACT 3; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001) xii; Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Austin: University of Texas, 1992) 173; cf. Shalom Paul, “Heavenly Tablets and the Book of Life,” *JANES* 5 (1973): 345–53, here 345–46.

¹⁰⁶ Bendt Alster, “Ninurta and the Turtle, UET 6/1 2,” *JCS* 24 (1972) 120–25.

¹⁰⁷ Enlil in the standard Babylonian version of *Anzu* III:36–73; however, Enki was the holder of the tablet of destinies in the earlier Sumerian version (see Anthony Green, “Ancient Mesopotamian Religious Iconography,” 1837–55, here 1852, in *CANE*).

¹⁰⁸ F. A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (Cuneiform Monographs 1; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992) 164.

a tensive one that could lapse back into chaos if not tended. One of Marduk's key steps in establishing this order was to create humans who would then be charged with maintaining the temples of the gods (*EE* VI:109–20).

According to Išum's lengthy account of Erra's rampage through the cities of Babylonia, Erra's rage was so great that he declared genocide in Babylon (*Erra* IV:26–30) and Der (*Erra* IV:76–87). Išum concluded his speech in Tablet IV by declaring:

Warrior Erra, you killed the just person. You killed the unjust person. The one who offended you, you killed. The one who did not offend you, you killed. The priest, who faithfully performed the offerings to the gods, you killed. The servant who was at the disposal of the king you killed. The old man at the entryway you killed. The young girls in their bedrooms you killed. (*Erra* IV:104–11)

Such indiscriminate slaughter was a danger inherent in war. If a warrior turned into a savage, he acted in the way that Erra did toward Babylonia. Laws and customs ceased to have any impact. Authorities were ignored, including the sovereign god Marduk, for Išum told Erra: “you are the one who did not fear prince Marduk's name” (*Erra* IV:1). Civilian survivors to a war would probably wonder how it was possible for the righteous and the unrighteous to perish alike. The poem *Erra and Išum* claims that Erra could only undertake his destructive campaign by tricking Marduk to retreat from his throne. Many of the Judean exiles with Ezekiel must have had war experiences similar to what the poem *Erra and Išum* describes and thus would most likely have been tempted to think that the Lord had retired from his throne.

In Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, the matricide Orestes passed through purification rites and fled from the pursuing Furies at Apollo's sanctuary in Delphi to Athena's sanctuary on the Acropolis at Athens. Orestes was the hunter who had become the hunted as he was pursued by the animal-like Furies, characterized as serpents, rabid ones, and accursed virgins (68–70).¹⁰⁹ Upon arrival in Athens, Orestes made intercession before Athena's statue (80, 235–43). When Athena appeared, Orestes described his situation and noted that Apollo had commanded him to murder his mother Clytemnestra (462–69). Athena diplomatically accepted Orestes' explanation but said that she was unable to rule on his case because the Furies had a strong traditional charge against him: the blood of his mother (476–79). Nevertheless, Athena decided to appoint judges who would hear the testimony of witnesses from both sides and render judgment under oath (482–89).

After Athena dismissed Orestes and the Furies so that they might assemble their witnesses and evidence, the chorus launched into a lengthy song in which

¹⁰⁹ Vidal-Naquet, “Hunting and Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*,” 141–59, here 157–58, in *Myth and Tragedy*.

they expressed their misgivings about a court procedure for murder cases:

Now is an overturning through new laws, if the wrongful claim of this mother-slayer prevails. Immediately this deed will allow all humans to adapt to their proclivities. Many actual sufferings inflicted by children await parents in the future. . . . There is a place where fear is appropriate, and it should be enthroned as an overseer of the mind. It is profitable to learn wisdom through want. Would any who educates his heart without fear—both human and city alike—be likely in the future to revere justice? (*Eum.* 490–98, 517–25)

The chorus argued that the threat of blood vengeance was a necessary deterrent for murder. They wondered what would happen if the level of the people's fear of retribution were lowered. Yet the chorus expressed a willingness to experiment, for they, giving voice to a recurrent theme in the *Oresteia*, claimed that even if this new measure increased injustice, the people would learn something.¹¹⁰

The chorus proceeded to express its respect for the ethical world order:

Let a person revere his parents first of all, and let him respectfully welcome guests to his home. The one who is righteous willingly and not due to necessity will not be wretched. He will never be utterly ruined. But I declare that the one who boldly attacks, overstepping while carrying his abundant mixed cargo acquired unjustly and violently, will lower his sail with time when trouble catches him as his yardarm is shattered. (*Eum.* 545–57)

So the question before the newly assembled court on the Areopagus would be whether Orestes had acted out of reverence for his parents. The Furies believed that the relation between the mother and the son was more important than that between husband and wife.¹¹¹ Therefore, Orestes' killing of his mother Clytemnestra was a more serious crime than Clytemnestra's killing of Agamemnon. But Orestes claimed that Clytemnestra incurred a "double pollution" in her killing of Agamemnon: she not only killed her husband, she also killed Orestes' father (*Eum.* 600, 602). Also, Apollo countered the Furies by claiming that the bond between father and son was more important than that between mother and son, for the mother was merely the incubator of the father's seed (*Eum.* 658–61). Apollo then pointed to Athena as an example of a being who had a father but no mother (*Eum.* 662–66). At this point, Athena asked whether a verdict should be brought (*Eum.* 674–75). The Furies were satisfied that their concerns had been aired; their prosecution was complete. In the tie vote of the jurors, Athena cast the deciding vote to acquit Orestes (*Eum.* 734–41, 752–53).

Aeschylus left his audience wondering whether the new court procedure would bring a higher level of justice to Athens. The jurors were deadlocked in a

¹¹⁰ Bernhard Zimmermann, *Greek Tragedy: An Introduction* (trans. T. Marier; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) 40.

¹¹¹ Johnston, *Restless Dead*, 263.

tie vote. Athena decided in favor of Orestes. In his case, she sided with the male god Apollo over the female deities the Furies. Apollo had cleverly appealed to her in his claim that Clytemnestra was not truly the parent of Orestes for he argued that the only parent a child has is its father.¹¹² Although Athena cast her vote for Orestes, she quickly tried to placate the Furies and wanted to honor them for their important role in maintaining the fertility of the community and the land (*Eum.* 794–807). Life would not be possible without the fertility of the earth. So Athena assured the Furies that they would be honored with a sanctuary near the temple of Erechtheus where the people would regularly bring them offerings (*Eum.* 802–6; 833–36; 853–56; 885–91). The Furies accepted the invitation of Athena to reside in her city and pledged to bring it safety and fertility.¹¹³

The question of how justice is realized in human experience is fraught with ambiguity.¹¹⁴ Ezekiel's exilic audience thought that the misfortunes that they were suffering were the consequences of others' sins—whether that be ancestors, others in the community, or foreign powers. Although the temptation to see themselves as victims must have been strong, he exhorted them to choose life rather than fatalism. He acknowledged that they were weighed down by their sin history: both that of their ancestors and of their own recent past. Taking account of the ambiguity of human experience, Ezekiel gave explanations on individual responsibility (Ezekiel 18) and communal solidarity (Ezekiel 20) that stood in tension, if not contradiction. Mesopotamians were urged to understand human misfortune as originating from Erra's trickery of Marduk and his vain ambition to be acknowledged as a serious god as related by the poem *Erra and Išum*. This narrative work used the mythical tradition to bring a measure of coherence to the excessive violence that at times invades human experience and defies rational explanation. Its narrative incorporated the irrational elements of history and gave them a voice. The poem *Erra and Išum* would have reflected the experiences of Mesopotamians whose cities had been overrun by a hostile

¹¹² Zeitlin ("The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*," 463–505, here 492) notes that Clytemnestra's love for Iphigenia leads her to abandon her love for Orestes such that in *The Libation Bearers* (e.g., 190–91) she is portrayed as having forfeited her maternal function.

¹¹³ Charles Segal, "Greek Tragedy and Society: A Structuralist Perspective," 43–75, here 54–55, in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory* (ed. J. Peter Euben; Berkeley: University of California, 1986). Zimmermann (*Greek Tragedy*, 54) notes that this adoption of a more rational form of justice in the *Eumenides* reflected the historical reforms of Ephialtes in Athens in 462 in which the powers of the aristocratic council were curtailed. Thereafter, this council could only hear murder cases and oversee religious matters.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," 29–48, here 42–43, in *Myth and Tragedy*.

foreign army. In contrast to Ezekiel 18, this narrative would encourage its audience—viz., Mesopotamians ravaged by war—to see themselves as victims.

Orestes, pursued by the Furies for killing Clytemnestra, claimed to have been acting at the command of Apollo. He dared to counter the principle of blood vengeance, one that seemed to be written into the order of nature and society, by arguing that there were circumstances that justified his murder of Clytemnestra. This move to adopt a more finely tuned mechanism in which a jury would entertain arguments for and against the justice of shed human blood was a major shift from tribal justice to polis justice—a transition not yet in place in the Homeric society of *Odyssey* 24.421–37 when the kinsfolk of the suitors tried to repay Odysseus and his men for their slaying of the suitors.

Along with trying to move his audience to reflection on the perceived contradictions of their experience, Ezekiel urged them to decide to move to a new self-understanding. He was more uncompromising than Aeschylus on the responsibility of the individual to choose the right path. Aeschylus was ready to consider circumstances that would mitigate the responsibility of an individual; he framed the contradictions that Athenians experienced so that they might relive important issues of their common life from a new perspective. But Ezekiel insisted that the individual was responsible regardless of the circumstances.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, Ezekiel was interested in reflection on human dilemmas as can be seen in the contradiction set up between individual and collective responsibility in Ezekiel 18 and 20. His first concern, however, was to move the exiles to accept responsibility for their situation and to be faithful to Yhwh even in the face of perceived contradictions.

The extent of the responsibility of the human agent in the poem *Erra and Išum* seems open to debate. Erra, Išum, and the Sebetti believe that the humans need to revere the gods or they will bring punishment. But punishment in the form of irrational violence seems less a corrective of human negligence than a celebration of the existence of Erra—a god who must be taken seriously. Mesopotamians responded to this warning by wearing parts of the poem *Erra and Išum* as amulets. They were ready to use ritual means to deal with the unpredictable and potentially harmful aspects of life in a polytheistic world in which irrational forces seemed to have more legitimacy.

Human Sacrifice: A Savage Means for Maintaining Order

¹¹⁵ Thomas Gould (“The Uses of Violence in Drama,” 1–13, here 2, 11, in *Violence in Drama* [ed. James Redmond; Themes in Drama 13; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]) notes that the kind of violence integral to a tragedy is “suffering or death told or staged in such a way that we feel the terrible unfairness of life.” However, Plato feared tragedy because he thought it would convince us that we are victims and not responsible for our own well-being.

The credibility of Ezekiel's message that the exiles stand firm in the face of contradiction hinged upon the Lord's intervention in their experience. The Lord could not simply be an idea in a persuasive scheme offered by Ezekiel for the survival of the Judahite community and its traditions. Ezekiel proclaimed to Jerusalem that "her time has come" (22:3). She had acted in a way that provoked the Lord to act (22:4). The time for restraining his anger had passed (cf. 20:8-9, 13-14, 22). In the concluding verse of Ezekiel 22, the Lord spoke about the judgment that he had already determined to bring to pass: "I have poured out (*wā'ēšpōk*) upon them my fury; I have brought them to an end in my fiery wrath; I have held them accountable for their behavior" (v. 31). The transgression highlighted in the list of 22:6-12 was the "pouring out (*šāpak*) of blood" (vv. 6, 9, 12). In retribution for this pouring out of blood, the Lord would pour out his fiery wrath. Such wrath had a frenzied character about it that would go to extremes to purge Jerusalem of its impurities. In the account of the smelting of Jerusalem (22:17-22), Yhwh is portrayed as the smelter who takes a molten mass of a lead-silver alloy and sends a stream of air over it to oxidize the lead and other impurities. This slag is then removed, and the silver remains. Ezekiel does not mention any remaining silver. He makes the point that the Jerusalemites are the slag to be removed,¹¹⁶ which means that this punishment was vital to the integrity of the Lord's relationship to Israel and was not a capricious expression of anger by a deity who was simply trying to make his presence felt. Through this punishment they would recognize him as their Lord (22:22b).

There is one point in Ezekiel's preaching at which the Lord's treatment of the Israelites seems to have become irrational. In 20:25-26, after the Lord decreed that he was going to scatter the second wilderness generation among the nations for their rejection of his statutes and ordinances, their desecration of his sabbaths, and their worship of their ancestors' idols, he said:

I have also given them statutes that are not-good (*lō' tōbīm*) and ordinances by which they cannot live. And so I have defiled (*wā'āṭammē*) them by their gifts by causing all the first born to cross over so that I might appall (them) so that they might know that I am the Lord.

This shocking statement seems to say that the Lord decided to punish the rebellious wilderness generation by setting them up for failure.¹¹⁷ This passage is the only place in the OT where the piel of *tāmē* has the Lord as the subject. Wong

¹¹⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 718.

¹¹⁷ Corrine Patton, "'I Myself Gave Them Laws That Were Not Good': Ezekiel 20 and the Exodus Traditions," *JSOT* 69 (1996): 73–90, here 79; Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 7.

has identified this use of the piel as factitive-declarative and renders the verb as “I declared them unclean” with the apparent purpose of distancing the Lord from causing any act of defilement.¹¹⁸ But the following purpose clause, “so that I might appall (them)” (*lēma’an ’āšimmēm*), indicates that Ezekiel wanted to shock his audience. According to this passage, the Lord wanted to punish the Israelites by deceiving them through “not-good statutes”¹¹⁹ into thinking that he required them to make all their firstborn pass through fire.¹²⁰ When they had done so and realized that this action was actually a serious transgression that defiled them and separated them from the Lord, then they would be devastated not only by the horror of their deed but also by the fact that they thought the Lord had required and sanctioned child sacrifice.

In 20:26, Ezekiel claims that this devastating action by the Lord was designed to make the Israelites recognize that the Lord was acting in their midst: “so that they might know that I am the Lord.” Deception leading to the murder of children would, under normal circumstances, be an unethical act. At first glance, it would seem that the Lord acted unethically in deceiving the Israelites on such a serious matter. Deception leading to death was an action that the Lord had sanctioned in the death of King Ahab (1 Kgs 22:22): he allowed a lying spirit to lead Ahab’s prophets to advise Ahab to go into a battle in which he would lose his life.¹²¹ The story contends that the morally ambiguous device of deception could be legitimately used to promote divine justice. In the story, the prophetic visions of Micaiah ben Imlah enabled the audience to see the deception of Ahab from a divine perspective and thus to see that justice was being

¹¹⁸ Ka Leung Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel* (VTSup 87; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 139.

¹¹⁹ The phrase *lō’ tōb* may indicate a form of evil that was not inherently evil: a kind of badness that was more circumstantial than *ra’*. For example, Psalm 36:4 states: They plot mischief while on their beds; they are set on a way that is not good; they do not reject evil. *Lō’ tōb* occurs in Ezekiel 18:18 and seven times in Proverbs (16:29; 17:26; 18:5; 19:2; 20:33; 25:27; 28:21) where it seems to be nearly synonymous with evil.

¹²⁰ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 369–70; Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 636–37; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 411; Day, *Molech*, 65–71. Alternatively, Scott Hahn and John Bergsma (“What Laws Were ‘Not Good’? A Canonical Approach to the Theological Problem of Ezekiel 20:25–26,” *JBL* 123 [2004]: 201–18, here 211–12) argue that the first-born who are to pass through fire (*bēhā’ābir kol pēter rāḥam*, v. 26) are animals and not humans and that the “not-good” laws are Deuteronomic laws. Kelvin Friebel (“The Decrees of Yahweh That Are ‘Not Good’: Ezekiel 20:25–26,” 21–36, here 30, in *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* [ed. R. Troxel, K. Friebel, D. Magary; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005]) argues that the “not good” statutes and ordinances are not the Sinai law but rather the decrees of punishment that Yhwh decreed would come against faithless Israel in 20:23.

¹²¹ Michael Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel* (Studies in Biblical Literature 85; New York: Peter Lang, 2006) 112.

rendered to a tyrannical king who had manipulated Naboth and others through his deceptive use of legal procedures and royal power.

But in Ezekiel 20:25-26, the consequences of the Lord's deception were extreme: the first born rather than a tyrannical king lose their lives. These agents who had shed the blood of children were the Israelites who believed that they were performing a pious act. But when they heard Ezekiel's message in 20:25-26, they realized that they were sinning against life itself: these were actions by which they could not live (v. 25b). From Ezekiel's perspective, violence against the newly born was not ethical (cf. 16:20-22; 23:37-39).¹²² The Lord said that the statutes enjoining such actions were "not-good" (*lō' tōbîm*)—an adjective that is roughly equivalent to "evil" but does not carry with it the sense of an inherent power of evil.¹²³ The perpetrators of these deeds would seem to have experienced the horror of taking the lives of the firstborn, but would have shielded themselves from guilt by claiming that this action was required by the God who had given them life. In the case of Ahab, God sanctioned the taking of life through war. But the working out of divine justice through war seems less morally questionable than working out divine justice through the slaughter of the newly born. At the moment of recognition of the sinfulness of this action, the perpetrators of these deeds realized that they had been sinning against themselves as well as against the Lord and the order of the world by sacrificing the firstborn. The misgivings, which they had at the time of the act but were countered by a 'divine' statute, were then revealed in all their deadliness. The so-called "calculating deception" by the Lord in this punishment indicated how much the social fabric had disintegrated. The Lord had given them statutes that they interpreted as a command to sacrifice their children. Whatever factors in their minds that led them to interpret these statutes as enjoining child sacrifice were sinful distortions for which they were responsible.¹²⁴ It is noteworthy that the Israelites, who are condemned for not obeying Yhwh's statutes (*huqqôt*, vv. 11, 13) and ordinances, were obedient to his "not-good" statutes (*huqqîm*, vv. 18, 25) and ordinances.

¹²² Cf. Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife* (SBLD 130; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 84.

¹²³ These death-dealing statutes (masculine plural, *huqqîm*, vv. 18, 25; cf. 11:12; 36:27) differed from the life-giving ones that YHWH had given previously (feminine plural, *huqqôt*, vv. 11, 13), for these statutes singled out a group or members within the community to take away the bad fortune that beset the community. Cf. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 640; George C. Heider, *The Cult of Molek: A Reassessment* (JSOTSup 43; Sheffield: JSOT, 1985) 372; Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, 94–95; Corrine Patton, "Pan-Deuteronomism and the Book of Ezekiel," 200–15, here 207, in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (ed. Linda S. Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 268; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse*, 177–78.

¹²⁴ Cf. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, 91–96.

In the poem *Erra and Išum*, Marduk was deceived by Erra and left his throne. The subsequent devastation of Babylonia was wrought by Erra. Marduk was aware of Erra's deception but went forward anyway.¹²⁵ The author of the poem *Erra and Išum* raised questions about Marduk's capacity to rule, but he did not charge Marduk with complicity in the schemes of Erra. The questions here about Marduk's behavior are not as probing as those of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, the righteous sufferer of the poem *Ludlul-bēl-nēmeqi*, a composition from the Kassite period (1595–1198). After losing his position and property, and suffering persecution by all around him, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan lamented and began to call into question divine governance of the world:

I did not know that these things would find favor with my god. What is appropriate for oneself may be an offense to one's god. What seems unclean to oneself may be appropriate for one's god. Who can know the mind of the gods in heaven? Who can understand the intentions of the gods of the Netherworld? Where might humans have learned the way of a god? He who lived by his brawn died in confinement. Quickly one is depressed; suddenly one is pleasantly surprised. When they inhale, they sing freely. When they exhale, they mourn like a lamentation priest. . . . Concerning these things . . . I do not grasp their meaning. (II:33-42, 48)¹²⁶

He questions whether the world has been turned upside down, where the wicked are rewarded and the righteous are punished.¹²⁷ Here, according to Jacobsen, the righteous sufferer regards the ways of the gods as too complex and baffling for his limited human mind. Later when he is restored to society, he understands in his heart how important it is to trust in the mercy of the gods.¹²⁸ However, Moran notes that this crisis and resolution occurs early in the composition and thus is subsidiary to what he regards as the central point of *Ludlul-bēl-nēmeqi*: Marduk is not only the inscrutable ruler of the universe but also the sufferer's personal god. Marduk is a god of darkness and light, of storm wind and gentle breeze, who can swiftly change from anger to mercy. He is a judicious god who knows when to curb his anger.¹²⁹

Anxiety over the course of events did not lead Mesopotamians to sacri-

¹²⁵ Note Zeus' awareness of Prometheus' deceptive sacrifice in Hesiod's *Theogony* 535–41.

¹²⁶ Edition: Lambert, *BWL*.

¹²⁷ Lambert, *BWL*, 22; William Moran, "The Babylonian Job," 182–200, here 190, 197, in *The Most Magic Word: Essays on Babylonian and Biblical Literature* (ed. Ronald Hendel; CBQMS 35; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 2002).

¹²⁸ Thorkild Jacobsen, "Mesopotamia," 125–219, here 213–16, in H. and H. A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, and William A. Irwin, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1946).

¹²⁹ Moran, "The Babylonian Job," 182–200, here 194–97, in *The Most Magic Word*.

¹³⁰ Cf. John Day, *Molech: A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Cambridge

fice their children to chthonic deities as occurred in the Canaanite-Phoenician cultures of the first millennium (cf. 2 Kgs 3:27).¹³⁰ The only forms of human sacrifice attested in Mesopotamia are that of the sacrifice of courtiers at the time of a king's funeral in Ur of the early third millennium and that of the substitute king. In Wooley's excavations at Ur in the early twentieth century, he uncovered evidence that several courtiers were entombed with the king of Ur.¹³¹ It seems that they were ritually sacrificed to serve him in the next life. In the substitute king ritual, which the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680–669) employed as many as eight times, an individual, referred to as the farmer, was temporarily installed as king, then was put to death after the danger threatening the real king had passed and the way was clear for him to return to the throne.¹³² The danger calling for a substitute king was signaled by such ill-omens as the eclipse of the moon or a portentous sign in the entrails of a sacrificial animal. The logic of the ritual seems to have been that the demon threatening the king would not be able to distinguish the substitute from the real king and would be satisfied by seizing the life of whoever was sitting upon the throne at that time.

Versions of substitute rituals were integral to the apotropaic rituals known as *Maqlû*. The clay, wood, or wax figurines that represented the sorcerer or sorceress attacking the petitioner were burned in the course of the ritual (*Maqlû* I:115; II:110, 112, 131, 203; III:168);¹³³ here human sacrifice was not involved. However, at the conclusion of the substitute king's time on the throne, he was put to death. Usually a commoner was selected for this role. But in Babylon in 671, a substitute king named Damqî was installed who was the son of a ranking temple administrator (*šatammu*). His execution stirred up a strong reaction

Oriental Publications 41; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 18–19; George Heider, "Molech," *ABD* IV: 895–97; Karel van der Toorn, "Theology, Priests, and Worship in Canaan and Ancient Israel," 2043–58, here 2054, in *CANE*.

¹³¹ Leonard Wooley, *Excavations at Ur* (London/New York: Ernest Benn/Barnes & Noble, 1954) 78–82.

¹³² Grant Frame, *Babylonia 689–627 B.C.: A Political History* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1992) 91; A. Kirk Grayson, "Assyria: Tiglath-Pileser III to Sargon II (744–705 BC)," 71–102, here 137, in *CAH* vol. 3, part 2; Marie-Louise Thomsen, "Witchcraft and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia," 3–95, here 76–78, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Biblical and Pagan Societies* (ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark: University of Pennsylvania, 2001); Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, Part I: *Texts* (AOAT 5/1; Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluy: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener Verlag, 1970), #134–36, p. 108.

¹³³ Tzvi Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft* (Ancient Magic and Divination V; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 17, 19–20.

¹³⁴ Frame, *Babylonia 689–627 B.C.: A Political History*, 92.

¹³⁵ Walter Farber, "Lamaštu," *RLA* 6 (1980–83): 439–46; Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses* (2 vols.; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 1.34, 59, 130–31; 2.864–65; J. A. Scurlock, "Baby-Snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth: Medico-Magical Means of Dealing with Some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia,"

from the populace.¹³⁴

The killing of babies was attributed primarily to the she-demon Lamashtu.¹³⁵ It was believed that her father, the sky-god Anu, had cast her out of heaven because of her unnatural appetites. The Mesopotamians developed incantations and rituals designed to keep her away from households where babies and pregnant women resided.¹³⁶ The following excerpts from an incantation provide a picture of Lamashtu and note some of the substitute offerings that she was encouraged to take:

She is furious, she is fierce, she is uncanny, she has an awful glamor, and she is a she-wolf, the daughter of Anu! Her feet are those of Anzu, her hands are unclean, the face of a ravening lion is her face. She stalks the cattle's tracks, she dogs the sheep's tracks, her hands are gory with flesh and blood. She comes in the window, slithering like a serpent; she enters a house; she leaves a house (at will). 'Bring me your sons, that I may suckle (them), and your daughters, that I may nurse (them). Let me put my breast in your daughters' mouths!' Ea his father heard her, 'O daughter of Anu, instead of trying to be the nursemaid of mankind, instead of your hands being gory with flesh and blood, instead of entering a house, leaving a house (at will), accept from the traveling merchant a cloak and provisions, accept from the smith bracelets as befit your hands and feet. (ll. 1–14)¹³⁷

Lamashtu was not a demon in the employ of other deities, but was a goddess who carried out her attacks against pregnant women and the newborn on her own initiative. Scurlock notes that Lamashtu's "behavior was less that of a demon who delighted in destruction for its own sake than that of a frustrated mother."¹³⁸ She is reported to have tried to touch a woman's stomach seven times in order to cause a miscarriage. Lamashtu was also believed to be the cause of typhoid fever—a frequent cause of infant deaths in that region to the present day. In addition to offerings of clothing, provisions, and jewelry to placate her, those in danger often wore amulets bearing the image of the demon god

Incognita 2 (1991): 135–83, here 135, 138. However, Black and Green (*Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 115–16) classify Lamashtu as a goddess rather than as a she-demon because her name in cuneiform was written like that of a goddess and she acted as an agent that was not in the employ of another deity.

¹³⁶ Anthony Green, "Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons: The Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia," *Visible Religion* 3 (1984): 80–105, here 81–82; F. A. M. Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu. A Profile," 217–49, here 225, in M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: its Mediterranean Setting* (Cuneiform Monographs 14; Groningen: Styx Publications, 2000).

¹³⁷ Translation: Foster, *Before the Muses*, 2.864. See also 1.59, 130–31.

¹³⁸ Scurlock, "Baby-Snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth," 135–83, here 154.

¹³⁹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 116, 147; Scurlock, "Baby-Snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth," 135–83, here 155, 157.

Pazuzu, who was believed to drive Lamashtu away.¹³⁹ Farber notes that three types of measures were used to fend off her attacks: (1) medical measures; (2) prophylactic means such as amulets, phylacteries, and necklaces; and (3) direct magical measures such as incantation.¹⁴⁰ Offering children to her, or any other deity, was not practiced in Mesopotamia.

The most well-known instance of child sacrifice in Archaic Greece is Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia to the goddess Artemis at Aulis. As the Achaean forces assembled at Aulis in Boeotia in preparation for sailing to Troy, an omen predicting an Achaean victory took the form of two eagles attacking a pregnant hare, which they tore to pieces and devoured (*Agam.* 113–21). The violent attack on the hare upset the goddess Artemis who retaliated by creating a deadly calm that stalled the Achaean fleet at Aulis for such a lengthy time that the forces were threatening to defect. Agamemnon learned from the prophet Calchas that Artemis required that he sacrifice to her his daughter Iphigenia. In the earliest version of this story in the *Cypria* of the Epic cycle, presumably composed by Stasinus of Cyprus around 650 B.C.E., the actual sacrifice of Iphigenia was prevented at the last moment by Artemis who whisked Iphigenia away to the Taurians and made her immortal. As a substitute offering Artemis supplied a deer (cf. Gen 22:11–14).¹⁴¹ But in the *Oresteia*, Aeschylus' Agamemnon carried out the sacrifice.

Aeschylus' chorus of elderly men recounted Agamemnon's words as he reflected on this dilemma of responding to both an angry Artemis and a collapsing Achaean coalition:¹⁴²

Grievous ruin it would be not to obey. And grievous if I split apart my child, the treasure of my house, defiling the father's hand through maiden's blood streaming at the altar. Which of these alternatives is without evil? How can I desert the fleet and sin against the alliance? For the stilling of the wind, the sacrifice of a virgin's blood is most eagerly desired. But right speaks against it. May all be well. (*Agam.* 206–17)

It was standard Greek practice to sacrifice to Artemis before entering into war

¹⁴⁰ Farber, "Lamaštu," *RLA* 6 (1980–83) 445. See also Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu. A Profile," 217–49, here 236–48, in Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible*.

¹⁴¹ Jan N. Bremmer, "Sacrificing a Child in Ancient Greece: The Case of Iphigenia," 21–43, here 22, 31–32, in *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and its Interpretations* (ed. Ed Noort and Eibert Tigchelaar; Leiden: Brill, 2002); cf. Diana Buitron-Oliver, "Stories from the Trojan Cycle in the Work of Douris," 437–47, here 437–40, in *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule* (ed. Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

¹⁴² Vernant, "Intimations of the Will in Greek Tragedy," 49–89, here 72, in *Myth and Tragedy*.

¹⁴³ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 149–52.

so that she might protect them from being caught in a savage encounter of total destruction. As the goddess of the hunt,¹⁴³ her particular concern was the boundary between savagery and civilization. She intervened in a battle to curb excessive violence by confusing the foes and moving them into a panic in which they would kill one another. She was the counterforce to Ares who symbolized the mania of battle. Usually a goat was sacrificed to Artemis so that the army might be protected from the frenzy of Ares and the panic of Artemis.¹⁴⁴

Vernant explains that when an approaching war posed a radical threat to civilized life, the Greek imagination projected that an important deity required an extreme, deviant, corrupted form of sacrifice that verged on murder.¹⁴⁵ The offering of an innocent virgin of marriageable age formed a shocking analogy with the unjust, savage brutality of war. Human sacrifice, in contrast to the way animal sacrifice was conducted in Greece, emphasized the savagery of killing.¹⁴⁶ Even if human sacrifice was not practiced in ancient Greece,¹⁴⁷ literary accounts of sacrifices such as that of Iphigenia bear the important message of how particular wars create savage violence that threatens to turn civilization into a wasteland.¹⁴⁸

In the continuing chorus of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the old men describe Iphigenia's entreaties to Agamemnon and his men in this scene of horror:

After praying, her father ordered the attendants to take her, wrapped in her robes with head fallen forward (pleading) with all her heart, to lift her like a she-goat high above the altar. With a guard on her lovely mouth to keep her from voicing a curse on his house, she was violently bridled and was speechless. As she let her saffron-dyed robe fall to the ground, she cast a glance from her eyes at each of her sacrificers, begging for mercy. She had an appearance like that in a picture, wishing to address them since she had sung many times at her father's banquets for men. With her awe-inspiring virgin's voice she had lovingly honored her beloved father's prayer for blessing at the third libation. (*Agam.* 231–47)

The violence of this scene is crushing: the beautiful daughter makes earnest entreaty with men whom she has known and entertained. The only response of

¹⁴⁴ Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Artemis and Preliminary Sacrifice in Combat," 244–57, here 254–55, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (ed. Froma Zeitlin; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁴⁵ Vernant, "Artemis and Preliminary Sacrifice in Combat," 244–57, here 255–56.

¹⁴⁶ Vernant, "Artemis and Preliminary Sacrifice in Combat," 244–57, here 256.

¹⁴⁷ Dennis Hughes, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 47–48, 185–89. Bremmer ("Sacrificing a Child in Ancient Greece," 21–43, here 34, in *The Sacrifice of Isaac*) states that "no evidence for human sacrifice in Greece in historical times has ever been produced."

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Segal, "Greek Tragedy and Society," 43–75, here 50, in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*.

the men described in the passage is their muting her so that she would not recite a curse against the ancestral house.¹⁴⁹ Agamemnon's love for battle and anxiety over the success of his forces won out over his love for his daughter. This choice by Agamemnon set the stage for Clytemnestra's revenge. As king, Agamemnon was charged with being a mediator of competing social and cosmic forces. His ambition, symbolized by his stepping on the purple carpet when Clytemnestra welcomed him home (*Agam.* 921–25, 947) distorted his self-understanding and led to great suffering for the Achaeans, Trojans, and his own family.¹⁵⁰

In return for Agamemnon's heartless killing of his daughter, Clytemnestra killed him like an animal in a net and sent him to Hades without an honorable burial (*Agam.* 1125–28). As Clytemnestra stood over the bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra, she forcefully expressed not only the troubles of the house of Atreus but also the social, political, and religious crisis that engulfed Argos (*Agam.* 1384–94).¹⁵¹ She proclaimed to the chorus that “Iphigenia, his daughter, shall gladly meet him, her father, as is necessary near the swift-flowing waters, the sorrowful ferry-crossing. She shall throw her arms around him and kiss him” (*Agam.* 1555–58). There is marked similarity between animal and human sacrifice in the killing of both Iphigenia and Agamemnon. However, a key difference is that animal sacrifice had the potential to curb human violence whereas human sacrifice could initiate a cycle of blood vengeance like that in the house of Atreus (*Agam.* 1214–31, 1280–84, 1396–98).

The collapse of the house of Atreus in the *Oresteia* points to the shortcomings of the monarchy and the household structure for providing justice in the fifth century polis.¹⁵² The demise of the “sacral kingship” of Agamemnon reveals “the crisis in the relation between the human, natural, and supernatural worlds that forms the starting point for the tragic action.”¹⁵³ Not only the corruption of the royal family but also the endless cycle of violence induced by the practice of blood vengeance pointed to the need for a new political structure that would recognize various leaders within the city and for a judicial process that would consider the circumstances of a murder rather than responding simply accord-

¹⁴⁹ Segal (“Greek Tragedy and Society,” 43–75, here 73, in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*) states that “the ‘bridling’ of Iphigenia’s mouth in the human sacrifice at the beginning of the *Oresteia* (*Agam.* 228–47) likewise couples the literally unspeakable nature of what is being done with the perverted communication between man and god: verbal communication and ritual communication are isomorphic.”

¹⁵⁰ Vernant, “Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy,” 29–48, here 47, in *Myth and Tragedy*; Segal, “Greek Tragedy and Society,” 43–75, here 51, in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*.

¹⁵¹ Segal, “Greek Tragedy and Society,” 43–75, here 70, in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*.

¹⁵² Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State*, 193, 205.

¹⁵³ Segal, “Greek Tragedy and Society,” 43–75, here 51, in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*.

ing to the principle of talion. However, it was imperative that the Furies, the enforcers of blood vengeance, not be alienated for they were also revered as the source of fertility.

For the city to exist, it needed families and households to reproduce and nurture its young as future citizens.¹⁵⁴ Dangers to women and the newly born would also be a threat to the polis. In the popular culture of Archaic Greece, anxieties over the vulnerability of pregnant women and children took the form of child-killing demons. Gello was believed to be a woman who died prematurely and so came back to haunt young children. Lamia had borne children, but they had all died at an early age. She was believed to be envious of women and children who were happy and so tried to steal those children and kill them. Mormo ate her children and so became a figure that frightened children. The appearance of these demonic figures was fearful and changing in shape. For example, Lamia was ugly, dirty, and bisexual: features that placed her outside “the standard of the desirable woman.”¹⁵⁵ Like the Mesopotamian Lamashtu, Lamia was regarded as having the claws of an eagle and the ears of a donkey and was often represented by a ship, which was to carry her back to the land of the dead.¹⁵⁶ Johnston notes that all three of these demonic figures were mortal women who had lost their place within the human community, not simply because they had killed children but also because they failed in bearing and nurturing children.¹⁵⁷ Any figure that injured pregnant women or killed children was extirpated from the civilized community and regarded as demonic.

According to Ezekiel 20:25-26, the Israelites sacrificed their children to the Lord because they thought that he had required them to do so. But such does not seem to have been the Lord’s expectation if they had worshiped him alone. Such a sacrifice may have been his intention as a punishment in the form of a self-inflicted extirpation in which idolaters were removed from the land. If they interpreted his laws as calling for child sacrifice, then such an action was a defiling transgression arising from their refusal to obey his statutes. Those who did sacrifice their children were, such as Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, swayed by anxieties associated with their own priorities that allowed them to treat their children as expendable. They regarded the substitution of valuable goods or persons as the way to appease the anger of the Lord. But the Lord expected them to obey his statutes, and in this way they would become a “pleasing offering to him”

¹⁵⁴ Johnston, *Restless Dead*, 256.

¹⁵⁵ Sarah Iles Johnston, “Defining the Dreadful: Remarks on the Greek Child-Killing Demon,” 361–87, here 373, in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki; Religion in the Graeco-Roman World 129; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

¹⁵⁶ Johnston, “Defining the Dreadful: Remarks on the Greek Child-Killing Demon,” 361–87, here 375, 377, 386, in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*.

¹⁵⁷ Johnston, “Defining the Dreadful: Remarks on the Greek Child-Killing Demon,” 361–87, here 368–69, in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*.

(Ezek 20:41). The shocking “not-good laws” of Ezekiel 20:25 brought to the surface what the Israelites truly valued.

In the case of Aeschylus’ Agamemnon, he showed in the moment of decision that the success of the military expedition against Troy was more important to him than the life of his daughter Iphigenia. The “unethical” command of child sacrifice unveils what the characters truly value. In most accounts of the Iphigenia story outside of tragedy, she was rescued at the last moment.¹⁵⁸ In those cases in Greek literature in which the sacrifice was carried out, the sacrificer had a tragic flaw for which he was nevertheless responsible. Analogously, for those who carried out child sacrifice in light of the “not-good” statute of Ezekiel 20:25, they may have been overwhelmed by the anxiety of their endangered community and swayed by the previous practices of their ancestors and neighbors, but they were nevertheless responsible for the choice they had made. They became defiled by the murder of their children. The methods of buying off a hostile deity or demon, which were operative in the popular culture of ancient Mesopotamia and Archaic Greece, were not applicable to the Lord. Ezekiel proclaimed that the Israelites’ failure to know the Lord led them to the painful awareness of their errors when they did recognize him (20:26).

Divine Violence as Purificatory and Sacrificial Processes within the World Order

Ezekiel explained to the exiles that they were undergoing judgment. Their dispersion among the nations was for the purpose of purging their defilements from them (Ezek 22:15). The exile itself made the Lord look less powerful: in 22:16, the Lord says, “I was desecrated¹⁵⁹ through you in the eyes of the nations so that you might know that I am the Lord.” Israel’s misfortunes made the Lord look weak. But the Lord’s main objective in acting was to remove defilement from his people and the land. Ezekiel noted in 20:34-35 that a time was coming in which he would lead the exiles into the wilderness to enter into judgment with them. So the exiles stood under judgment at the same time they heard Ezekiel speaking of the strong purificatory measures that the Lord intended to bring against Jerusalem.

In 22:17-22, the Lord identified the Israelites as the dross that would be gathered into Jerusalem, which in turn would function as a smelter. In removing the impurities from silver sulfide (the ore from which silver is extracted), a two-staged process is used. First, the silver sulfide is lightly heated to allow the sulfur to escape as sulfur dioxide gas and the lead to oxidize. Then, more heat is

¹⁵⁸ Bremmer, “Sacrificing a Child in Ancient Greece: The Case of Iphigeneia,” 21–43, here 32–33, in *The Sacrifice of Isaac*.

¹⁵⁹ Read *nihalti* with the Vrs.

applied to produce a metallic lead-silver alloy at the bottom of the furnace. In the second stage—the one described in Ezek 22:17-22—the lead is extracted: first by melting down the lead-silver alloy, then by sending a stream of air across the surface of the melted material to oxidize the lead and other impurities. The lead and impurities are discarded, and the silver is drained off.¹⁶⁰

To the Israelites, the Lord said: “When I have assembled you, I will blast upon you my fiery anger and you will be melted within it” (22:21). The Israelites were equated with the lead and impurities—i.e., the dross—that would be skimmed off. This removal of the Israelites meant that they would die. The imagery here speaks of burning and purification so that the corpses would presumably have been removed by fire—somewhat analogous to that of a funeral pyre except that no memorial of these defiled ones’ remains would be kept. They were to be treated like the meat in the cauldron in Ezekiel 24:10-13 that was boiled away, and then the cauldron itself was intensely heated to remove any remnant of the defiled meat from it. The anger of the Lord was not to be appeased by any ritual offerings or intercessions.¹⁶¹ The desire to do so by means of the sacrificial mechanism in Jerusalem, particularly the extreme measure of human sacrifice, would only lead to greater defilement.

In the midst of the exiles’ devastation by the loss of their loved ones, homeland, and freedom, they probably had questions about the origin and cause of this devastation. If all of the threatened devastation was projected to come from the Lord, they must have thought that something could have been done to lessen or avert it. But this is precisely what Ezekiel says was not possible. There were no rituals that they could perform that would purge them and the land of the heinous crimes they had committed against the Decalogue and the Holiness Code as outlined in 22:1-12. By the fact that Ezekiel repeatedly emphasizes Yhwh’s unrelenting anger indicates that this was a reality difficult for the exiles to fathom (cf. Ezek 20:1-3, 31).¹⁶² But Ezekiel went on to indicate in 22:23-29 how the entire society was corrupt (cf. Zeph 3:1-8). There was no alternative to a complete purge of the land. The leaders (v. 25) and the officials (v. 27) were like beasts of prey that devoured the people along with their property and households. Such violence resembled cannibalism. The priests did violence (*hāmās*) to Yhwh’s *tôrâ* (v. 26) by failing to distinguish between the clean and the

¹⁶⁰ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, 717; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 463.

¹⁶¹ Marvin Sweeney, “Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile,” 728–51, here 738, 742, in *SBLSP 2000* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); P. J. Harland, “A Land Full of Violence: The Value of Human Life in the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel,” 113–27, here 125–26, in *New Heaven and New Earth Prophecy and the Millennium: Essays in Honour of Anthony Gelston* (ed. A. Gelston, P. J. Harland, and Robert Hayward; VTSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 1999).

¹⁶² Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, 467) regards this prophetic reminiscence as addressed to a group of exiles after 586.

unclean and between the holy and the profane; therefore, the people suffered from lack of instruction.¹⁶³ The prophets (v. 28) were those who plastered over the dire straits of the people with lies. And the people of the land were violent robbers who oppressed the vulnerable. This picture of total corruption of the various segments of Israelite society matches Ezekiel's earlier description of Jerusalem as dross (22:17-18). The governmental leaders and the people treated one another violently. There was no priest or prophet who tried to call them to account; instead these religious leaders affirmed them in their exploitation. Ezekiel contended that the only way out of this corruption was through a radical divine intervention.

Excursus on the Meaning of Sacrificial Ritual

In Ezekiel's time, the legal and religious institutions in Judah and Jerusalem had malfunctioned to the extent that the people had no means to restore order and remove the ill effects of sin from the land. Had the priests functioned properly, there would have been a full array of sacrificial offerings and rituals that could have helped to check the people's aggressions and anxieties. The ritual slaughter of animals, including the proper disposal of the blood, could have helped to instill in the people a reverence for life that would have carried over in their dealings with one another. Four theorists—René Girard, Walter Burkert, Jean-Pierre Vernant, and Maurice Bloch—offer interpretations of how sacrificial ritual addresses the issue of violence within a community.

Girard argues that at the heart of the sacrificial ritual is a scapegoat mechanism.¹⁶⁴ He theorizes on the basis of patterns in the history of literature that human groups are composed of competitive individuals who are not fully aware of their desire to eliminate one another. He contends that after the group united against one individual and transferred all their aggressions onto him and put him to death, the group experienced a measure of solidarity—it was a primordial, founding moment.¹⁶⁵ Instead of slaying another human being each time the aggressions of the group reached the breaking point, the group agreed to substitute an animal as the living being to be slaughtered. Girard contends that

¹⁶³ P. J. Harland, "What Kind of 'Violence' in Ezekiel 22?" *ExpTim* 108 (1997) 111–14; cf. Andrew Mein, "Ezekiel as a Priest in Exile," 199–213, here 202, in Johannes de Moor, *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist* (OTS 45; Leiden: Brill, 2001).

¹⁶⁴ René Girard, "Sacrifice as Sacral Violence and Substitution," 69–93, here 73, and "Mimesis and Violence," 9–19, here 11–12, in *The Girard Reader*; idem, "Generative Scapegoating," 73–105, in *Violent Origins*.

¹⁶⁵ Girard, "Generative Scapegoating," 73–105, here 91–92, 98, in *Violent Origins*.

this scapegoat mechanism is at work in every sacrificial ritual to siphon off the aggressions of the group.¹⁶⁶

Burkert agrees with Girard that the death of the animal was a key moment in the sacrificial ritual. But he argues that the scapegoat complex may address the anxiety in the community but not the aggression and violence that a hunting-and-eating society would experience in the slaughter of an animal.¹⁶⁷ The fact that the sacrificial animal was eaten while the scapegoat was expelled from the community indicates that there was another level of meaning in the sacrificial ritual that the scapegoat mechanism did not address. The community assembled for the sacrifice to share the burden of guilt associated with taking the life of the animal. The paleolithic hunters recognized themselves in the animal and so needed to deal with a slaughter that to them resembled a murder.¹⁶⁸ Thus, they tried to conceal the violence of the slaughter through ritualized actions: they hid the knife in basket of barley during the procession to the altar; they regarded the animal as nodding its head in consent to be slaughtered; when the throat was cut and the blood gushed forth, the assembled women gave a loud shout (*ololugē*)—a mixture of triumph and anxiety at the killing.¹⁶⁹ This ritual means of dealing with aggression against animals also assisted the group in dealing with aggression against other humans.

Vernant also agrees that violence lies at the heart of the sacrificial ritual.¹⁷⁰ But he emphasizes that animal sacrifice was a unique way of communing with the divine. Because the sacrificial object must be completely destroyed to indicate its entry into the divine realm, humans could only participate indirectly in the sacrificial process. Instead of offering themselves directly, they provided an animal as a substitute. When this animal died and its life passed into the beyond, the sacrificer was elevated—to some degree—into greater communion with the divine by this action. This ritual is the only way that a human can participate in the sacred realm without leaving the profane.¹⁷¹ According to this understanding, sacrifice transforms the sacrificer through an exchange of

¹⁶⁶ Girard, "Sacrifice as Sacral Violence and Substitution," 69–93, here 73, in *Violent Origins*.

¹⁶⁷ Walter Burkert, "The Problem of Ritual Killing," 149–76, here 171, in *Violent Origins*.

¹⁶⁸ Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 20. Some Pythagoreans regarded this act as equivalent to taking a human life because they believed that human souls often regenerated after death into animal forms (*DK* 14A8a; *DK* 58C4); see Guthrie, "Pythagoras," 1.146–340, here 1.188, in *HGP*; idem, "Empedocles," 2.122–265, here 2.245, in *HGP*.

¹⁶⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 56–69, 254–55; idem, *Homo Necans*, 21.

¹⁷⁰ Jean-Pierre Vernant, "A General Theory of Sacrifice and the Slaying of the Victim in Greek *Thusia*," 290–302, here 293, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (ed. Froma Zeitlin; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁷¹ Vernant, "A General Theory of Sacrifice and the Slaying of the Victim in Greek *Thusia*," 293.

gifts.¹⁷² The more valuable gifts were those that required a greater degree of renunciation.¹⁷³ According to this criterion, human sacrifice would appear to have been the most valuable.¹⁷⁴

The anthropologist Maurice Bloch, in light of practices from the African Dinka society, describes the surrender to a supernatural force as the first stage in the sacrificial process.¹⁷⁵ The sacrificer identifies with the sacrificial animal in all the ritual actions leading to the altar and thus accepts the invasion of the supernatural force that will take away life. But at the moment of the slaughter, the sacrificer distinguishes himself from the animal and allows it to serve as his substitute. In the next stage of the consumption of the animal, the sacrificer is filled with new power not only through the nourishment of the meat but more significantly through the meat's having been transferred into the divine realm and so communicates divine power to the one who consumes it.¹⁷⁶ Thus, the violence of taking the life of the animal is subsumed in the larger goal of communion with the divine.

The purification of Jerusalem called for in Ezekiel 22 could only be effected by divine intervention. The sacrificial apparatus in Jerusalem had been non-functional and had been defiled. Any further use of it would only create more defilement, which would further alienate the Lord from the people and the land. The divine intervention called for renunciation on the part of the people (Ezek 24:21). If they repented and were found to be among the exiles who would eventually form an offering acceptable to the Lord (Ezek 20:41), then they would have had to accept the renunciation of homeland, loved ones, and freedom as a legitimate divine punishment. Upon their return to the land, they would enjoy a measure of communion that they had not experienced previously (Ezek 20:40-41). From this perspective, the humiliation and deprivation of the exile and the communion upon their return can be seen as having the characteristics of a sacrificial process.¹⁷⁷ The extreme violence in this imagined scenario matched that experienced by Judah and Jerusalem in the seventh to sixth centuries B.C.E.

¹⁷² Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 40.

¹⁷³ Marcel Detienne, "Culinary Practices and the Spirit of Sacrifice," 1–20, here 17–18, in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks* (ed. M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989).

¹⁷⁴ Bremmer, "Sacrificing a Child in Ancient Greece: The Case of Iphigenia," 27.

¹⁷⁵ Maurice Bloch, *Prey into Hunter: The Politics of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 31–32.

¹⁷⁶ Bloch, *Prey into Hunter*, 32–37.

¹⁷⁷ Sweeney, "Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile," 728–51, here 732, 738, 742, in *SBLSP 2000*.

Conclusion

To see one's property and person consumed by natural and social forces can call into question the meaning of existence. Ezekiel tried to keep the exiles faithful by summoning them to make an act of will to repent and live (18:30-31). He charged his audience with crimes of consuming the person and property of one another and of failing to honor the Lord through their worship of idols. The violence of their expulsion from the land was a consequence of their complicity as individuals in the collective violence that completely corrupted the society of Judah and Jerusalem. Ezekiel claimed that the lack of control and helplessness that they felt in the exilic situation was not the end of their existence if they would repent and acknowledge the Lord as sovereign and as deserving of their exclusive loyalty. Ezekiel sees violence as an experience of hostile power arising from the transgression of boundaries. The one who transgresses inflicts violence on another; but when this transgressor is forced back into his place, he experiences this corrective force as violent. If these forces of a person stay within their proper boundaries, they are experienced positively as vital energies. When these forces overrun their boundaries, they are experienced as savage energies. The more savage the energies one exerts toward others, the more savage will be the counterforce that will either return one to one's proper place or remove one from the scheme of things. The hierarchy in Ezekiel's world will be the final arbiter.

The disputation in Ezekiel 18 shows that members of the exilic community did not find sufficient Ezekiel's explanation that their exile and the threatened destruction of Jerusalem were a consequence of their sins. In their estimation, the hostile powers that had overturned their lives were too severe to be understood as punishment for their sins. But Ezekiel insisted that the violent power that was about to beset them would be the burning wrath of the Lord. He insisted that this violent power was not an anonymous cosmic force that strikes randomly. The author of the poem *Erra and Išum* agreed that violence is not an anonymous force. But he not only ascribed to violence the status of a personal power, he also regarded it as an independent agent. In this Mesopotamian poem, violence itself is a god and is not merely a form of power exerted by a deity. For Aeschylus, violence is an instrument of the world order and is exerted against those who transgress without having understood the full implications of their choices.¹⁷⁸ The tragic character is blindsided by fate and so is the victim of circumstances; nevertheless, he is treated as a responsible agent who is held accountable for his transgressions.¹⁷⁹ As a father, Agamemnon was a shocking

¹⁷⁸ Cf. *Agam.* 182, *charis biaios*, "violent grace." See Simon Goldhill, "Violence in Greek Tragedy," 15-33, here 26, in *Violence in Drama* (ed. James Redmond; Themes in Drama 13; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁷⁹ Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," 29-48, here 43-44, in *Myth and Tragedy*.

failure; but as a military leader who was ready to make the ultimate sacrifice of someone close to him, he had adherents, including Orestes, who regarded him as heroic. In sum, Ezekiel regarded cosmic violence as subject to divine law; the author of the poem *Erra and Ishtar* regarded cosmic violence as the capricious, arrogant god Erra who needed to be appeased through incantations and offerings; Aeschylus understood cosmic violence as the ironclad implementation of cosmic law, within whose processes shortsighted humans can be consumed.

The shedding of blood is a serious transgression of cosmic or divine law with potent consequences. As a symbol of the life-force of living beings, the shedding of this life-force is a transgression against life itself. Such a hostile act tries to take over the life-force of another being by consuming it or disposing of it. Through such aggressive action, the integrity of the living force pulsing through all beings is compromised. In biblical Israel and Archaic Greece, care was taken that the blood be returned to the divine sphere. The Amorite heritage in Mesopotamia also showed reverence for blood by regarding it as a sign of the protector god of the family. Ezekiel emphasized the crime of the pouring out of blood in Jerusalem to communicate how the cultic and ethical transgressions of the people had defiled them and desecrated their relationship with the Lord. Their aggressive actions against the life-force of other beings was an attack on the cosmic, divine order.

Ezekiel warned that humans who greedily try to increase their power and rank within the cosmic hierarchy by consuming others like predatory animals did so at the expense of undermining the order of that hierarchy: i.e., they confused the categories of the animal, the human, and the divine. The ambiguous status of humans between the animal and the divine means that humans share characteristics with these two other categories of being. The aggression of a human must be contained or channeled so that it does not break forth unimpeded, for then such energies are savage: i.e., enemies of civilization. A human who becomes a savage animal must be either subdued or banished. Such category confusion cannot be tolerated within the cosmic hierarchy. Humans who imagine the gods according to human and animal form can project a confusion of categories onto the divine. The Israelites who sacrificed their children to the Lord misinterpreted the divine wrath that was causing them anxiety to the point that they dared to sacrifice their firstborn. They imagined the Lord to be a being whose wrath was to be appeased by the pouring out of the life of one close to them. But Ezekiel claimed that the renunciation that the Lord was requiring of the Israelites was their obedience to his statutes and ordinances. Such category confusion in their way of imagining the character of the Lord revealed the collective guilt of the people: at issue was not only the greed of those who devoured the property and person of others but also the negligence of the priests to give instruction in the law and of the prophets to speak the truth from the Lord. In trying to understand the cause of the Israelites' literally sacrificing their first

born to Yhwh, it seems that the Israelites projected their desire for devouring one another onto the Lord when they experienced his purifying wrath in their lives. Ezekiel's descriptions of the Lord's burning wrath contain no reference to the Lord's consuming their blood. The Lord is not a blood-thirsty chthonic deity who wishes to drink the blood of their offerings. Rather the Lord is one who is honored by the proper offering of sacrifice. Because the temple was defiled in Jerusalem, such a proper offering of animal sacrifices was not possible until the Israelite exiles themselves were returned to Jerusalem as a purified remnant, which itself would be a sweet-smelling offering to the Lord (Ezek 20:41).

The offering of sacrifice to keep maintained the cosmic hierarchy, where the distinction between the human, the animal, and the divine would be intact, was the goal of the Promethean sacrifice recounted in Hesiod's *Theogony*. The aggressive energy of a human, who like Prometheus tries to press the limit between the human and the divine, can be contained through the regular offering of sacrifice in which the divine-human hierarchy is reestablished. The offering of sacrifice also upholds the distinction between the human and the animal insofar as the human sacrificer is prohibited from eating the blood of the victim like a beast of prey and so recognizing that the blood is the life-force of the animal that belongs to the deity. In both the Israelite and Presocratic Greek traditions, this practice of pouring out the blood to a deity rather than consuming it aimed at protecting the integrity of life and revering the cosmic order. However, the consumption of the flesh of the animal was regarded as a form of communion with the divine. The increase in vitality of humans through the consumption of meat at sacrificial gatherings reinforced the cosmic order by infusing and channeling new energy to humans without humans becoming savages toward animals or rebels toward the divine. Members of Dionysiac circles, as described in mythic texts, who tore animals apart and ate them raw—i.e., blood and flesh together—can be seen as staging an anti-sacrifice.¹⁸⁰ Seaford argues that these maenadic reversals of sacrifice through *ōmophagos* and *sparagmos* were techniques by Dionysian religion to draw the household into the matrix of the polis.¹⁸¹ Such savage scenes highlight the important role of sacrifice in taming the savage instincts of humans and channeling such energies as vital forces to operate within the categories of the cosmic hierarchy.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of some of its people were both acts of divine justice and experiences of human tragedy. If viewed from the per-

¹⁸⁰ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 293.

¹⁸¹ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 298. However, Dirk Obbink ("Dionysus Poured Out: Ancient and Modern Theories of Sacrifice and Cultural Formation," 65–86, here 80, 86, in *Masks of Dionysus* [ed. Thomas H. Carpenter and Christopher A. Faraone; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993]) points out that such lapses into savagery may have been more the subject matter of myths than descriptions of the actual rituals of Dionysiac circles.

spective of the poem *Erra and Ishtar*, the destruction of Jerusalem might appear to be a catastrophic event in which divine anger has manifested its full force. If viewed from the perspective of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, the catastrophes of 597 and 586 swept away numerous people and destroyed the lives of many survivors who were not fully aware of the seriousness of their transgressions. If viewed from the perspective of Ezekiel, this catastrophic event is the just judgment of a God who has restrained his anger to the breaking point. The Israelite community will be purged and the land cleansed of its defilement so that it might once again be inhabited by those who will honor their God.

DEATH AND AFTERLIFE THE JOURNEY INTO A NEW EXISTENCE OR INTO NOTHINGNESS

For humans, death is a fact of life. Although death may be eluded and delayed, in the end, it is inescapable. Thus, it is understandable that the ancient Israelites, Mesopotamians, and Greeks regarded death itself as natural. But premature or untimely death was dreaded. The death of a young woman in childbirth, the accidental death of children, the murder of a man in the prime of life, or the death of a young soldier are examples of individuals who have been deprived of the opportunity to live full lives. Just as in contemporary America where the remains of soldiers, who have been either recently killed or missing in action for many years, are treated with great respect, so also Homeric warriors would fight desperately to retrieve the remains of a fallen comrade so as to ensure him an honorable burial (e.g., *Il.* 4.470; 17.1–5).¹ In those cases in which individuals were not properly buried, the peoples of ancient Mesopotamia and Greece speculated that the untimely dead ones found ways to return to earth to make their presence known. How they were believed to be able to do so can only be answered by describing the structure and dynamics of the afterlife for these ancient peoples. Such a description reveals the value that each of these cultures placed on the embodied life of the individual.

¹ See also the account of the public funeral for the war dead in Thucydides 2.34 in *The History of the Peloponnesian War: Books I and II* (ed. Charles S. Smith; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991) 316–18; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 429–44. On the culpability of the Athenian generals who failed to recover the corpses of those who fell in a sea battle with Sparta, see Plato's *Apology* 32b.

Prophesying during a time of war and exile, Ezekiel predicted and saw the premature deaths of many, ranging from oppressed women and children to the powerful kings of Tyre and Egypt. Death often presents itself as a powerful force with which one must negotiate. Ezekiel stands in the Israelite priestly tradition that is adamant in its stance that the forces of life and death are under Yhwh's control; therefore, one does not negotiate with these forces apart from Yhwh. The human challenge is to discern and accept the limits that are imposed upon collective and individual existence. This chapter first examines Ezekiel's response to his wife's death (Ezek 25:15-23), to the demise of Tyre and its king (26:15-21; 27:26-36), and to the death of Pharaoh (Ezek 31:15-18; 32:17-32) to discover Ezekiel's understanding of the finality of death. To what extent did individual consciousness live on after a person has drawn his or her last breath? Ezekiel's view will be elucidated in light of parallels from Mesopotamian and Greek texts, particularly those of the Gilgamesh and Homeric epics. A description follows of Ezekiel's understanding of the potency of death on the basis of the narrative of the defeat of Gog in Ezekiel 38-39. Parallels from Mesopotamian and Greek texts will show how these two cultures tried to domesticate death. Finally, the chapter examines Ezekiel's dry bones' vision (Ezek 37:1-14), which celebrates the power of life over death through the dramatic intervention of Yhwh who goes so far as to place the divine spirit within the individuals of the community who are raised up from a moribund state. Parallels from Mesopotamian and Greek texts on the ways in which divine life infuses material or bodily substances will highlight the unique features of Ezekiel's vision. Although life and death are distinct phenomena, the reality of each becomes most clearly defined through their struggle with one another, which reveals the limits of individual lives.

To Mourn or Not to Mourn: What Will This Decision Signify?

The Lord directed Ezekiel to prepare himself for the sudden death of his wife. When this happened, Ezekiel was not to "mourn or weep or shed any tears" (24:16).² Instead, he was expected to express his anguish inwardly. His outward appearance was to be the opposite of a mourner: he was to put on his turban and sandals and refrain from eating "the bread of mourners" (v. 17)³ and from covering his beard. He was not to give any indication that he had entered into the traditional seven-day period of mourning (Gen 50:10; 1 Sam 31:13).⁴ Ezekiel was not given much time to reflect on these divine directives, for that very

² See *Gilg.* XII.23-26.

³ Read *leḥem 'ōnīm* with Tg. and Vg. (cf. Hos 9:4).

⁴ Saul Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 35.

same evening Ezekiel's wife, the "delight of [his] eyes" (24:16), died. Ezekiel 24:18 reports that Ezekiel carried out the sign-action as directed on the next morning.

According to Ezekiel 24:21, the exiles wasted no time in questioning Ezekiel about his cold, detached reaction to his wife's death and of what he was trying to get across to them. Ezekiel repeated to them the interpretation of this ritual action that the Lord had communicated to him:

Thus says the Lord God: I will now desecrate (*mēḥallel*) my sanctuary (*miqdāš*), the stronghold of your pride, the delight of your eyes, the desire⁵ of your soul. The sons and daughters you left behind shall fall by the sword. Ezekiel shall be a sign (*môpēt*, v. 24) for you: all that he did you shall do when it happens. Thus you shall know that I am the Lord. (24:21-24)

Just as Ezekiel dearly loved his wife, so also the exiles were strongly attached to Jerusalem and its inhabitants to whom they were closely related. But they were to follow Ezekiel's example of cold detachment. The deep anguish that they would feel was not to be brought to expression in their community. Each of them was commanded to bear this burden. Objectively, this action would cut off the memory of the deceased Jerusalemites; subjectively, this severing of relationships between the exiles and the Jerusalemites would be one more form of punishment. The Lord tells them: "You shall not mourn or weep, but you shall rot away (*nēmaqqōtem*) because of your sins (*āwônôtêkem*) and groan (*nēhamtem*) one to another" (24:23). The transgressions that led to this cutting off of the Jerusalemites were not simply those of the Jerusalemites; the exiles also shared in this national guilt (cf. Ezek 4:17; Lev 26:39). Their unresolved anguish would gnaw away within them like the growling of a hungry lion (cf. Isa 5:29; Prov 28:15).⁶

Ezekiel is identified as a sign (*môpēt*, v. 24) for the people. Because the people were expected to imitate him, they also would become signs. The failure to mourn for one's wife and children would have been unheard of among the ancient Israelites. Priests were not allowed to defile themselves by mourning for their wives, but they were permitted to mourn for a father, mother, son, daughter, brother, or maiden sister (Ezek 44:25; cf. Lev 21:1-12).⁷ In the priestly legislation, such a defiled priest had to wait seven days before reentering the sanctuary—to which Ezekiel added seven additional days (44:25-27)—and they were to offer a purification (*ḥaṭṭāṭ*) offering. Perhaps Ezekiel and the exiles were being asked to keep themselves free from the defilement associated with

⁵ Read *maḥmad* with a few MSS.

⁶ Cf. Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 793.

⁷ Marvin Sweeney, "Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile," 728–51, here 745, in *SBLSP 2000* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000).

mourning for the dead. If the Lord was a little sanctuary in their midst (Ezek 11:16), there may have been an expectation that the exiles observe all of the purity regulations so as not to drive this divine presence away (cf. 4:12-15).⁸ Nevertheless, the primary sign value of refraining from mourning for wife and children was the severing of one's relationship with them. The person who omitted funerary rituals for wife and children made no attempt to honor them by laying them to rest in the family tomb. The one who refused to enter into the liminal state of mourning clearly indicated his refusal to empathize with the dead.⁹ Furthermore, such a refusal meant that person would not try to keep the memory of the deceased alive through funerary offerings.¹⁰

One is left to speculate on how the burial of Ezekiel's wife was carried out. If she had died in Jerusalem, she most likely would have been buried in a bench tomb, which increasingly from the late eighth to the sixth centuries B.C.E. became the preferred form of burial chamber over that of the cave tomb.¹¹ The bench tomb for a nuclear family typically consisted of a five-meter square chamber with benches on all four sides at a height of approximately one meter. The corpse was laid out on its back on the bench with a stone for a headrest. When additional space in the tomb was needed, the remains of a previous burial, along with some of its provisions, were moved to a repository pit hollowed out further inside the tomb. The most common form of grave goods recovered from these tombs were bowls for foodstuffs. But there were also oil lamps for light and jars for scented oils, perfumes, and spices. Frequently, jewelry, particularly in the form of amulets, was placed in the tombs. In light of what seems to have been the typical practice, the body of Ezekiel's wife would have been wrapped in a cloak and placed on one of the benches.¹² Her body would not have been embalmed.¹³

The avoidance of public mourning by Ezekiel and the exiles signaled that the Jerusalemites had been completely cut off from the Israelite community.

⁸ Andrew Mein ("Ezekiel as a Priest in Exile," 199–213, here 205, in Johannes de Moor, *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist* [OTS 45; Leiden: Brill, 2001]) notes that Ezekiel's protest against eating cakes baked with human excrement leads to an accommodation in which he may use cow dung as fuel; here purity regulations are respected but implemented in light of exilic conditions.

⁹ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 41–42.

¹⁰ Theodore Lewis, "How Far Can Texts Take Us? Evaluating Textual Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Israelite Beliefs about the Dead," 169–217, here 186, 196, in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (ed. Barry Gittlen; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

¹¹ Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "The Cult of the Dead in Judah: Interpreting the Material Remains," *JBL* 111 (1992) 213–24, here 217.

¹² Bloch-Smith, "The Cult of the Dead in Judah," 213–24, here 218.

¹³ Paolo Xella, "Death and Afterlife in Canaanite and Hebrew Thought," 2059–70, here 2066, in *CANE*.

They had become as though they had never existed. Their elimination was a means of removing defilement from Jerusalem. It seems that because many of the transgressions of the Jerusalemites, which called for their death and for the destruction of Jerusalem, were cultic in character, the response of Ezekiel and the exiles had to be one of dissociation. Just as Moses and Aaron refrained from attending to the corpses of Nadab and Abihu after they were struck down for defiling the sanctuary by offering incense on unauthorized coals (Lev 10:1-5),¹⁴ so also Ezekiel and the exiles were to break off their relationship with the Jerusalemites. The priestly legislators treated transgressions of the boundary between the sacred and the profane with objective strictness. Even unintentional mistakes required measures of purification and reparation (Lev 4:1-35). As a purificatory act, the removal of the dead Jerusalemites would eliminate the ill effects of the sins not only of the Jerusalemites but also of the exiles (24:23). Thus the death and removal of the Jerusalemites functioned for the exiles analogously to the purification offering: a “gift” for the deity that would promote reconciliation after the sinner had repented of his sins.¹⁵ By letting go of their relationship with Jerusalem and its inhabitants, Ezekiel and the exiles signaled that they were ready to move on. In accord with this movement toward renewal, the Lord commanded Ezekiel and the exiles to put “turbans” (*pě’erim*) on their heads and “sandals” (*na’ălāyim*) on their feet (v. 23) : actions that were typically associated with assuming a new status (*pě’erim*, cf. Zech 3:5; Isa 61:10) and with taking possession of property (*na’ălāyim*, cf. Ps 60:10; 108:10).¹⁶ When Jerusalem finally fell, the exiles were expected to renew their common life on a new basis.

In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* when Enkidu learned that the gods had decreed death for him as a punishment for slaying the Bull of Heaven and Ĥumbaba, he grew deeply distressed. He not only pleaded with Enlil and Šamaš to alter this fate, he also began to curse the prostitute Šamḥat for introducing him to civilized society (VII:94-132).¹⁷ But Šamaš reproved Enkidu for his curses against Šamḥat and reminded him that she had given him not only bread, beer, and clothing but also his friend Gilgamesh. Šamaš continued:

¹⁴ Odell, “Genre and Persona in Ezekiel 24:15–24,” 195–219, here 200–201, in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives* (ed. Margaret Odell and John Strong; SBL SymS 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000).

¹⁵ Roy Gane (*Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005] 142) concludes in a number of cases the *ḥaṭṭā’r* cleanses the offerer from sin and thus challenges Jacob Milgrom’s (*Leviticus 1–16* [AB 3; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1991] 254) interpretation that the *ḥaṭṭā’r* cleanses from physical impurity but not from sin.

¹⁶ Odell, “Genre and Persona in Ezekiel 24:15–24,” 195–219, here 204–5, in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*.

¹⁷ Andrew R. George (*The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic* [2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003] 1.480) notes that Enkidu was angry with Šamḥat not only for her introducing him to civil society but also for taking away his innocence (*Gilg.* VII:127–31).

Now Gilgamesh, the friend who is a brother to you, will lay you on a large bed, on a bed of loving care, and make you sit on a comfortable chair to the left. Princes of the earth will kiss your feet. He will cause the people of Uruk to cry and lament over you. A proud people he will fill with distress over you. And after you are gone, he will let his hair become filthy. He will put on a lion's skin and roam the steppe. (*Gilg.* VII: 139-47)¹⁸

These words of Šamaš brought peace to Enkidu's heart. Enkidu, the civilized wild man, who gave up familiarity and acceptance with the animals to enter into human company, was ready to accept that this transition had been worthwhile and meaningful when he realized that his relationship with Gilgamesh, the people of Uruk, and the princes of the earth was important to them. The impact that he had made on their lives was signaled by the care and honor that they would bestow on him at his death. Then he reversed the curses he had called upon Šamḫat by pronouncing a series of blessings on her (*Gilg.* VII: 148-61).

When a person died in Mesopotamia, burial rites were enacted to usher the person from the earthly sphere into a new kind of existence. These rites were a prerequisite for the transition to existence in the afterlife. Scurlock notes that the first step in tending to the deceased was to move the person into a special funerary bed with a chair set to the left of it. This chair was to be the first resting place for the soul once it was released from the body through the recitation of a special formula. On this chair, the deceased would receive its first funerary offerings.¹⁹ The corpse was first washed, and the mouth was tied shut. Then it was oiled and dressed in clean clothing. The family supplied the corpse with as many personal items as it could afford. These items, which the public were allowed to see, were regarded both as provisions for the journey to the Netherworld and as gifts to be presented to the deities of the Netherworld. The corpse was then placed in a coffin, a sarcophagus, or a tomb, along with its provisions.²⁰ If the person was poor, the body was wrapped in a cloth or reed mat and given a few simple provisions and goods. Among the burial rituals were the apotropaic measures that called for circling the corpse three times with torches and

¹⁸ Edition: George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*.

¹⁹ Jo Ann Scurlock, "Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought," 1883-93, here 1883-84, in *CANE*.

²⁰ Jean Bottéro, "La Mythologie de la mort en Mésopotamie ancienne," 25-52, here 37-38, in *Death in Mesopotamia* (CRRRA 26; Mesopotamia 8; ed. B. Alster; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1980).

²¹ On mourning rituals used to plead for the removal of sin to the Netherworld, see J. A. Scurlock, "Magical Uses of Mesopotamian Festivals," 93-107, here 95-96, in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki; Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 129; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

then burning incense.²¹ Also some of the vessels for the offerings were smashed, which may have indicated that the offerings were totally handed over to the dead person and were not subject to reuse.²²

Gilgamesh did not allow the death of Enkidu to pass unnoticed. In Enkidu's last moments, Gilgamesh listed all of the people, animals, and natural forces that would weep over his death (*Gilg.* VIII:1–43). Gilgamesh promised that he himself would mourn for Enkidu like a professional mourning woman (*Gilg.* VIII:44). When Enkidu expired, Gilgamesh “circled like an eagle over him; like a lioness whose cubs have been trapped, he kept going back and forth. While tearing out and casting away his curled hair, he tore off and cast away good things as if they were taboo” (*Gilg.* VIII:60–64). When daylight came, he summoned the statue-maker, the coppersmith, the goldsmith, and the jeweler so that they might make a statue of Enkidu (*Gilg.* VIII:65–72). Such a statue was regarded as localizing the spirit of the deceased so that it might represent the deceased at the funerary banquet and at interment be the point at which funerary offerings were received.²³ On the following day, Gilgamesh prepared the gold treasures and other goods to be interred with Enkidu. He then arranged for food offerings and gifts to be given to the various Netherworld deities on Enkidu's behalf and for intercession to be made to these deities, including Ištar, Nam-rašit, Ereškigal, Dumuzi, Namtar, ̜ušbišag, Qāssa-ṭābat, Ninšuluḥḥatumma, Bibbu, and Dumuzi-abzu (*Gilg.* VIII:131–88).

In his great distress over the death of Enkidu, Gilgamesh ignored the customary time limits of the mourning process in Mesopotamia. In retrospect, Gilgamesh related to the ale-wife Šiduri:

For six days and seven nights I wept for him. I did not give him over for burial until a worm fell from his nose. I was afraid. I dread death, so I roam about the steppe. The words of my friend are heavy upon me. On distant paths, I roam about the steppe. How can I keep quiet? How can I be silent? (*Gilg.* X:58–67)

Not only did Gilgamesh delay the burial of Enkidu, he also extended the period of mourning indefinitely and refused to accept the reality of death.²⁴ He acknowledged that he was afraid of death and tried to deal with it by remaining in the liminal state of mourning rather than reentering the sphere of human life where lifespans are of limited duration and the potential of individuals is limited. Gilgamesh's relationship with Enkidu had become so entwined with his

²¹ Scurlock, “Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought,” 1884.

²² Scurlock, “Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought,” 1889; George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1.487.

²⁴ George (*The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 483–85) outlines four days of mourning in Tablet VIII: day one (ll. 1–64) the lament near the dying Enkidu; day two (ll. 65–91) fabrication of funeral statue and other preparations; day three (ll. 92–212) showing of grave-goods to the public, prayers, rituals; day four (ll. 213–end) further rituals.

own self-understanding that he was unable to accept the end of that relationship and, by extension, the limits of human life.²⁵ But Šiduri, according to the OB version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, warned Gilgamesh that he was destroying himself in his refusal to accept these limits.²⁶ She urged him to forsake the ways of the mourner who seeks everlasting life at the cost of forfeiting the life that has been allotted to humans:

When the gods created humankind, they established death for humankind, but held back life for themselves. As for you, Gilgamesh, let your belly be full. Day and night you should be glad. Daily make room for merry-making. Night and day, dance and play. Let your clothes be cleaned, your head washed, and you bathed. Look upon the child who grasps your hand. Let your wife be glad in your lap. (*Gilg.* OB VA + BM iii.3-13)²⁷

Šiduri informs Gilgamesh that humans were created only to live a limited number of years—a viewpoint not shared by the authors of the Sumerian “Death of Bilgamesh” (M 72–77, 162–67) and the OB *Atrahasis* (III, iv.47–48) in which antediluvians were regarded as immortal.²⁸ But Gilgamesh refused to accept her advice and pressed on in his effort to regain his relationship with Enkidu and thereby to overcome the unnatural intrusion of untimely death.

In Homer’s *Iliad*, Achilles brutalized the corpse of Hector and refused to return it to his father Priam and the Trojans. In the Homeric world, death occurred when the *psychē*, “breath, soul,” separated from the *sōma*, “body.” If the *sōma* was not properly buried, then the *psychē* could not enter the house of Hades and find rest.²⁹ The ghost (*psychē*) of Patroclus appeared in a dream to Achilles and questioned Achilles why he had delayed in cremating him and burying his remains (*Il.* 23.65–92). In Homer’s *Odyssey*, one of Odysseus’s men Elpenor died and was not buried immediately. Elpenor’s *psychē* confronted Odysseus on his trip to the entrance of Hades and pleaded with him to waste no time in burying his remains (*Od.* 11.51–83). Although Homer understood the *psychē* to represent the personality of an individual and to separate from the *sōma* at death, the treatment of the deceased *sōma* still had an impact on the individual. Achilles regarded the vengeance that he was enacting against the

²⁵ Tzvi Abusch (“The Development and Meaning of the Epic of Gilgamesh: An Interpretive Essay,” *JAOS* 121 [2001] 612–22, here 617) claims that as Gilgamesh wandered in the wilderness, he assumed the identity of Enkidu.

²⁶ George (*The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 32) claims that Šin-lēqi-unninni (either OB or Kassite scribe) transferred Šiduri’s advice to the counsel given to Gilgamesh by Utnapištim (XI:266–322).

²⁷ Edition: George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1.278

²⁸ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1.507.

²⁹ Jan Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 89–94.

corpse of Hector as an action brought against the person of Hector himself. In his dying words, Hector had begged Achilles:

Do not allow the dogs to devour me by the Achaeans' ships. But accept the abundant gold and bronze, gifts that my father and my queenly mother will give you. And give my body to be taken home again so that the Trojans and the Trojan wives might assign to me, the deceased, a portion of fire. (*Il.* 22:339–43)

Yet Achilles, in his great rage, refused to return the corpse of Hector until the gods intervened. Thetis informed Achilles that Zeus was upset with him for not returning Hector's corpse (*Il.* 24:102–37).³⁰ Achilles also reasoned that Priam could have penetrated to the inner parts of the Achaean camp only with the assistance of a deity (*Il.* 24:563–67). In light of this divine lobbying, Achilles let go of his savagery against the corpse of Hector and was prepared to return it to Priam and the Trojans. But when he decided to do so, he also addressed the deceased Patroclus and insisted that his leniency toward the corpse of Hector was not to be interpreted as a weakening of his resolve to avenge Hector's slaying of Patroclus (*Il.* 24:592–95). Like Gilgamesh's refusal to let go of his relationship with Enkidu, Achilles fought for ways to maintain his relationship with the deceased Patroclus.

As he prepared to turn the corpse of Hector over to Priam, Achilles ordered his bodyguards to prepare the corpse so that Priam might peacefully take it home. Achilles feared that Priam might be overcome with anger upon seeing the corpse of his son and lash out against Achilles—an action that Achilles feared would compel him to retaliate against Priam and so put him at odds with the gods (*Il.* 24:581–86). Therefore, Achilles gave his bodyguards and maidservants directions to prepare Hector's corpse as one would do at the beginning of the funeral rites. The bodyguards took two great cloaks from the ransom that Priam was paying for his son's remains and used these as a shroud for the corpse. Two maidservants then washed Hector's corpse and anointed it with olive oil. After they put a tunic and cloak about the corpse, Achilles lifted it on the bier and then went inside to speak with Priam (*Il.* 24:587–90). To persuade Priam to let go of his grief and share a meal with him, Achilles related the story of Niobe whose twelve children had been killed by Apollo and Artemis as punishment for Niobe's imagining herself superior to Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis. Niobe made such a hubristic statement because she had borne twelve children, but Leto only two (*Il.* 24:602–9). Even though Niobe was in great anguish at the loss of all her children at one time, she had remembered to eat. It was this point that Achilles used to persuade Priam to set aside his grief and join him in

³⁰ The Scamander returned the corpses of Trojans killed by Achilles to the plain, for it would not tolerate unburied corpses polluting its water (*Il.* 21.235–39). See also J. E. G. Whitehorn, "The Background to Polyneices' Disinterment and Reburial," *Greece and Rome* 30 (1983) 129–42, here 134.

a meal (*Il.* 24:610–20). This meal had the character of a funeral meal in which the mourners join together to prepare themselves to reenter normal life.³¹ It was the first food that Priam had tasted since his son's death (*Il.* 24:641–42).

Several features of the funeral rite in Archaic Greece are mirrored in this episode of Achilles' handing over the corpse of Hector to Priam. The *prothesis*, "laying out," of the corpse lasted one day and was to occur within a house. The burial was to take place on the third day. The *ekphora*, "carrying out," of the corpse from the house to the tomb was to happen before dawn. Then offerings were to be made at the grave, followed by a supper. At a later date, a monument was set up over the grave.³² These rites were designed not only to move the mourners through the grieving process but also to bring a measure of peace to the dead.³³

In Homer, the personality of the dead person was identified with the *psychē*, which Bremmer interprets as "the free-soul" or "breath," which only becomes active when all the other body-souls associated with life and consciousness (*thymos*, "heart"; *noos*, "mind"; *menos*, "might") shut down. Toward the end of the Archaic Age when there was a growing concern for the individual, the multiple body-souls of Homer were conceptualized as a *psychē* of the living person: i.e., a center of consciousness.³⁴ This living soul—in contrast to the free soul—did not separate from the *sōma* at death.³⁵ Anacreon (sixth to fifth century B.C.E.) anticipated the tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides by identifying this *psychē* of the living as the seat of the emotions.³⁶ This *psychē* in Anacreon and the tragedians was the life-force of the person and was ontologically on the same level as the *sōma*. From this understanding as a life-force, the *psychē* could then develop into the notion of the *psychē* as an emotional, psychological agent.³⁷

³¹ Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 10; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Death to the End of the Classical Period* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) 111–13.

³² Emily Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) 12.

³³ Sarah I. Johnston, *The Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 39–41; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "To Die and Enter the House of Hades: Homer, Before and After," 15–39, here 26–28, in *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death* (ed. Joachim Whaley; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).

³⁴ Jan Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 68.

³⁵ Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, 124; idem, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London: Routledge, 2002) 2.

³⁶ Anacreon, fr. 360 cited by Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*, 2.

³⁷ David Claus, *Toward the Soul: An Inquiry into the Meaning of ΨΥΧΗ before Plato* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 99–102, 110.

Therefore, when individuals died, they lost their life-force and were characterized in some cases as corpses without a *psychē*: i.e., *apsychē*.³⁸

The epinician poet Pindar (ca. 498–446 B.C.E.) used the song of praise to summon the dead to be part of his audience along with the living (*Pythian* 5.83–104).³⁹ He regarded the *psychē* as the character of the living person and as a gift of the gods, which continued after death.⁴⁰ Pindar's unitary understanding of the *psychē* as the center of consciousness that survived after death foreshadowed the Platonic doctrine of metempsychosis (*Olympian* 2.68–74; fr. 133, Plato, *Meno* 81B).⁴¹ Empedocles, who regarded the *psychē* as the principle of life and thought centered in the blood around the heart, edged closer to metempsychosis when he referred to the *egō* (*DK* 31B117) as continuing from one incarnation to the next.⁴² But he did not use the term *psychē* for describing this continuity.⁴³

The profile of the dead *psychē* in the Homeric Hades was an *eidōlon*, “image,” which reflected characteristics of the person when he or she was alive. Still, the Homeric dead were seen as weak and lifeless and tended to merge into an undifferentiated mass.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, for Homer, as seen in the case of the corpses of Patroclus and Hector, the corpse was a privileged point of access to the deceased person's *psychē*. Therefore, if the dead person's remains were neglected, this person might become angry and bring trouble against the living. Further evidence

³⁸ Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*, 2–3.

³⁹ Charles Segal, “Messages to the Underworld: An Aspect of Poetic Immortalization in Pindar,” 133–48, here 139–41, in *Aglaia: The Poetry of Alcman, Sappho, Pindar, Bacchylides, and Corinna* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

⁴⁰ Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*, 2.

⁴¹ Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*, 12; Johnston, *The Restless Dead*, 19. Alternatively, Claus (*Toward the Soul*, 116–18) argues that in Pindar there is no clear designation of *psychē* as an occult self in a living person and no link between the *psychē* after death and the *psychē* of the living person. Bremmer (*The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, 48, 80) admits that scholarly opinion moved beyond the claim of E. R. Dodds (*The Greeks and the Irrational* [Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1966] 210) that Plato transformed the occult self into a rational *psychē* and now maintains that the Greek notion of the free soul was not influenced by shamanism. Nevertheless, in Pindar's fr. 133, the *eidōlon*, “the image,” of the person during life, which is given by the gods, survives after death. This term *eidōlon* was never used in Homer for the souls of the living. Walter Burkert (*Greek Religion* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985] 298–99) claims that accounts of the creation of humans (anthropogony) based on the transfer of the soul from a previous existence (metempsychosis) into a new existence was a notion imported from outside Greece, probably India.

⁴² Ake Hultkrantz (*Soul and Native Americans* [Dunquin series 23; Woodstock, Conn.: Spring Publications, 1997] 76) refers to an “ego-soul” that underlies the integrating functions of consciousness but is not identical with the personality of the individual.

⁴³ M. R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 138, 273–76.

⁴⁴ Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, 124.

that they believed the deceased to have a sentient life was their practice of bringing food offerings to the grave on the third, ninth, and thirtieth days after the burial and again on the first year after the burial.⁴⁵

As noted earlier, Achilles was concerned that Priam, upon seeing the corpse of his son Hector, might be moved to strike out against Achilles (*Il.* 24.581–86).⁴⁶ This potential for violence in the mourning ritual led Solon in the early sixth century to place restrictions on lamentation at funerals. Only women over sixty years of age or women closely related to the deceased could take part in the *ekphora* and lament. Also prohibited were self-laceration, the bewailing of a deceased person at the funeral of another, the sacrifice of a bull to the dead, and the burial of a person with more than three garments.⁴⁷ Solon's legislation aimed at undercutting the competitive display produced by aristocratic families, which resulted in divisiveness and violence among factions in the city. Solon's funeral legislation was consistent with his general objective of trying to keep the rich from exploiting the poor. Also funeral rituals, especially where a murder was involved, could be the occasion for stirring up tensions between rival kinship groups. Thus restrictions on lamentation in funerals sought to prevent private, household conflicts from undercutting the public harmony.⁴⁸ The way the people treated the remains of the dead brought to light important ways that they treated one another, in terms of social processes and structures.

The traditional funeral rites in ancient Israel, Mesopotamia, and Greece were designed to assist those affected by death to deal with the sense of loss and make the transition to a new way of existence. For the dead person, this meant entering the Netherworld; for the living, this meant letting go of the dead person and reshaping their relationship to dead. Ezekiel and the exiles were asked to treat the Jerusalemites who were about to die as though they had never existed. Gilgamesh was asked to let go of Enkidu and accept the transient, limited character of human existence. Achilles was called upon to step back from his efforts to avenge the death of Patroclus and to allow Priam and the Trojans to provide an honorable burial for the remains of Hector.

Mourning was a way of honoring and remembering a dead person such that the person—took on a new form of existence in which the relationship was changed but still intact. Ezekiel and the exiles were commanded not to mourn

⁴⁵ Johnston, *The Restless Dead*, 42–43. Whitehorn (“The Background to Polyneices’ Disinterment and Reburial,” 129–42, here 137) notes that “to bury the dead was properly the duty of the immediate male next of kin” (see Walter K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece* [London: Thames & Hudson, 1968] 148).

⁴⁶ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 87.

⁴⁷ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 74–75; William Blake Tyrrell and Larry J. Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles’ Antigone* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998) 8–10, 15–17.

⁴⁸ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 84–85.

the death of the Jerusalemites as a way of severing their ties with a sinful past. The book of Ezekiel does not address the question of how Ezekiel's wife and the deceased Jerusalemites gained entry to Sheol. Gilgamesh honored Enkidu and set up a statue of him so that offerings could continually be given to him. With his heroic mindset of all or nothing, Gilgamesh refused to make the adjustment that Enkidu's absence demanded so that he himself could return to the land of the living. Achilles likewise was driven to deny an honorable burial to Hector as a way of bestowing honor upon Patroclus. Zeus and the other gods, however, made it clear to Achilles that this way of honoring Patroclus was wrongheaded. Through divine intervention and Priam's supplication, Achilles came to empathize with Priam's anguish and so moved out of his state of savagery to once again take up his place in the human community.

Mourning is an essential transitional state for both the living and the dead. To neglect this ritual marks a point of major discontinuity in the relationships within a community. Ezekiel dramatized this discontinuity to sustain the covenant community; Gilgamesh pushed his liminal state of mourning to the extreme in his efforts to overcome death; Achilles extended his savagery toward the corpse of Hector to create through his actions a type of funeral monument for Patroclus but through the visit of Priam came to see the humanity of the foe he had demonized.

The Journey to the Netherworld: One-Way or Round-Trip?

In contrast to his silence about the journey of his wife and the Jerusalemites to Sheol, Ezekiel describes the destruction of Tyre and its entry into the Netherworld. A month after he received news of the fall of Jerusalem (i.e., February 3, 585), Ezekiel learned that Tyre was rejoicing over Jerusalem's misfortune because of the prospect that it might take over Jerusalem's trade routes (Ezek 26:2). But Ezekiel made known that the Lord had informed him that he was bringing judgment against Tyre. He describes its destruction with Netherworld imagery:

When I make you into a desolate city, like cities that are uninhabited, when I cause the deep (*têhôm*) to rise up over you and the many waters cover you, then I will make you descend with those who go down into the pit to a people of an ancient era. I will make you dwell in the Netherworld (*'eres tabtiyyôt*, v. 20), which are like the ruins of an ancient era, with those who go down into the pit so that you will not return⁴⁹ and take a place⁵⁰ in the land of the living. I will make you into an object of fright and you will no longer exist. You will be sought out, but you will never again be found. Oracle of the Lord God. (Ezek 26:19-21)

⁴⁹ Read *tāšubî*.

⁵⁰ Read *wētiyaššēbî* with LXX.

This sudden death of Tyre will lead those associated with its commercial enterprises to mourn its demise. Ezekiel predicts that princes of the sea (26:16) and sailors and mariners (27:29) shall either sit on the ground (*hā'āreš*, 26:16) or stand on the ground (*hā'āreš*, 27:29) as they engage in the mourning ritual—a location that suggests a connection with the Netherworld (*'ereš tahtiyyôṭ*).⁵¹ The princes will exchange their royal attire for the clothes of mourning (26:16). The sailors and mariners will cry out in lament, place dust (*špār*) on their heads, roll in the soil (*šper*), shave their heads, and gird on sackcloth (27:30-31). The sudden collapse of this maritime empire had a direct impact on those who shared in its enterprises.⁵² This mourning ritual, as quickly as it was taken up by these onlookers, would mark a definitive stage in Tyre's history. Ezekiel claims that once Tyre descends to the Netherworld, it will not return. It will take up residence with a people who have been gathering there since ancient times.

Another example of a fall from power and preeminence in Ezekiel's "Oracles against the Nations" (chaps. 25–32) concerns Pharaoh who is depicted as a lofty cedar of Lebanon rooted in the waters of the deep (*tšhôm*, 31:4) and providing shelter for beasts and birds. But this cedar, like all the other trees of Eden that are fed by water, "are destined for death (*māwet*) in the Netherworld among mortals who descend into the pit" (31:14). The deep, which had nourished him during his earthly growth, would be the reality that would close over him when he descended into Sheol. The deep was an instrument in the Lord's hand and was not to be relied upon as if it were an independent force. The Lord would create a drought in Lebanon that would not only bring down the lofty cedar of Lebanon but also the other select trees of Lebanon. Death (*māwet*) seems to be depicted here as an active power in the Netherworld, although it is clearly under the Lord's control.⁵³ The Lord said:

At the sound of his fall, I made the nations quake. When I brought him down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit, all the trees of Eden, the select and choice trees of Lebanon, all those that drink water, were comforted in the Netherworld. They also had descended with him to Sheol among those slain by the sword. Those who resided⁵⁴ under his protection will be dispersed⁵⁵ among the nations." (31:16-17)

⁵¹ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 102.

⁵² Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 46. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel* 2, 40) regards 26:19-21 as an elaboration by Ezekiel's "school."

⁵³ Lawrence Boadt, *Ezekiel's Oracles against Egypt: A Literary and Philological Study of Ezekiel 29–32* (BibOr 37; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980) 117.

⁵⁴ Read *yōšēbē* with LXX.

⁵⁵ Read *ūzōrē'ū*; see G. R. Driver "Linguistic and Textual Problems: Ezekiel," *Bib* 19 (1938): 179. For the motif of Egypt's dispersion among the nations, see Ezek 29:12; 30:23, 26.

When Pharaoh descends to Sheol, he will take along his allies: i.e., the choice trees of Lebanon. It appears that they will be consoled because they will not descend alone but will be accompanied by the Pharaoh. Ezekiel claims that the historical event that will bring about Pharaoh's death and that of many of his allies will be a battle in which ruthless nations, led by the mightiest nation (i.e., Babylonia), will bring them down (31:11-12).⁵⁶ The conquerors are depicted as lumberjacks who fell the lofty cedar of Lebanon and the trees of Eden.⁵⁷ They will disperse the peoples who had sought protection from Pharaoh.

The descent into Sheol/Netherworld of the king of Tyre (28:8) and the Pharaoh of Egypt (31:15-18) brought them into a place from which there was no exit. The descent was a defining moment in the histories of these two empires, with whom the Israelites had made alliances at various times in their history. Ezekiel identifies Tyre as a city that humans will search for but not be able to find. On the earthly plane, Tyre will be a city that will no longer exist. But from a cosmic perspective, Ezekiel claims that Tyre has not vanished into thin air but rather has changed locations. Nevertheless, existence in this place will be almost like nonexistence, for it is a place of ruins. In Ezekiel's account of Pharaoh's descent to the Netherworld, the emphasis is upon the precipitous fall from a stately height to an ignoble death. The collateral damage to Egypt's allies through its fall from power shows how fragile earthly networks of power are that are not grounded in the Lord's sovereign rule. The rapid descent of Egypt to Sheol will reveal the Lord's power.

When Enkidu was about to descend to the Netherworld in Tablet XII of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to retrieve a *pukku*, "ball," and a *mekku*, "mallet," Gilgamesh counseled him to maintain a low profile: i.e., to look like a mourner who belongs to the realm of the dead.⁵⁸ Otherwise, the inhabitants of the Netherworld would try to keep him there. Enkidu ignored Gilgamesh's warnings.

He put on clean clothes. They identified him as a stranger. He rubbed fine oil from the flask on himself. Because of its scent they assembled around him. He cast a stick at the Netherworld, and the ghosts trembled. Those struck by the stick encircled him. He carried a staff in his hand. The ghosts trembled. He put sandals on his feet. He made noise in the Netherworld. The wife he loved he kissed, but the wife he hated he hit. The son he loved he kissed, but the son he hated he hit. The complaint of the Netherworld took hold of him. The one who lay down, the one who lay down, the mother of Ninazu who lay down, her gleaming shoulders were not covered by a garment. Her uncovered breast was like a stone jar. At that time, Enkidu did not ascend from the Netherworld to the upper world. Namtar did not hold him. Asakku did not hold him. The Netherworld held him. The

⁵⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 191.

⁵⁸ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 191; Boadt, *Ezekiel's Oracles against Egypt*, 100–101; cf. Gilgamesh as a hero who fells the cedars of Lebanon (*Gilg.* V.291).

merciless guard Nergal did not hold him. The Netherworld held him. He did not fall in the place where men fight. The Netherworld held him. (XII:33–54)⁵⁹

The Netherworld is personified as an active power that seized Enkidu and refused to let go of him. It is this active power of the sphere of death that engulfs all visitors to the Netherworld and makes it a land of no return. It was not a decree by the rulers of the Netherworld that kept Enkidu there. Rather it is the very nature of the sphere of death to swallow up all that comes within its vicinity.⁶⁰

After Enkidu has been seized by the Netherworld, there is a reference to the mother of Ninazu—i.e., Ereškigal—who lies frozen in a posture of perpetual mourning, with her garments torn and her breast uncovered. A cold, statuelike mourner contradicts the typical picture of a mourner who melts away from tears. The frozen aspect of the mourning indicates that her responsibility to weep for all her citizens is endless.⁶¹ This description of Ereškigal is more developed in the Sumerian source “Bilgamesh and the Netherworld,” which informs Tablet XII of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.⁶² It is this source that explains why Enkidu, who has died in Tablet IX of the standard Babylonian version of the epic, is now regarded as once again alive at the beginning of Tablet XII.⁶³ Clark argues that this descent of Enkidu to the Netherworld, which reflects the older Sumerian version of the journey to the dead, forms the basis upon which the epic poet fashioned Gilgamesh’s journey to Utnapishtim.⁶⁴

Gilgamesh’s journey to Utnapishtim began at Mount Mashu, the pair of mountains that mark the place of sunrise and sunset in Mesopotamian thought.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991) 75.

⁵⁹ Edition: George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1.728–30.

⁶⁰ Death as swallower in *KTU* 1.5.4–8; cf. Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* (vol. 1; VTSup 55; Leiden: Brill, 1994) 18–19. John Pairman Brown (*Israel and Hellas* [3 vols; BZAW 231, 276, 299; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995–2001] 2.191) claims that necromancy is dangerous because the practitioner can become trapped in the Netherworld.

⁶¹ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1.529 n. 297.

⁶² George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1.13.

⁶³ Tzvi Abusch, “The Development and Meaning of the Epic of Gilgamesh: An Interpretive Essay,” *JAOs* 121 (2001) 612–22, here 620.

⁶⁴ Raymond J. Clark, “Origins: New Light on Eschatology in Gilgamesh’s Mortuary Journey,” 131–45, here 139, in *Gilgamesh: A Reader* (ed. John Maier; Wauconda, Ill.: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1997).

⁶⁵ Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998) 331–33; Wolfgang Heimpel, “The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts,” *JCS* 38 (1986) 127–51, here 140–43. On the spherical shape of the universe with a lower hemisphere for the dead and an upper one for the living, see Piotr Steinkeller, “Of Stars and Men: The Conceptual and Mythological Setup of Babylonian Extispicy,” 11–47, here 18–19, in *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran* (ed. A. Gianto; BibOr 48; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005).

Here he encountered two pairs of male and female monsters, half-human and half-scorpion. One pair guarded the gates through which the sun rose on the eastern horizon, and the other pair the gates through which the sun set on the western horizon. One of these scorpion-men warned Gilgamesh about the deep darkness that engulfs the cosmic circuit and takes twenty-four hours to traverse (IX:78–90)—a circuit later identified as the pathway that the sun traverses daily (IX:136–39). The scorpion man said that no human has ever traveled this route. Nevertheless, Gilgamesh set out on this tunnel-like route⁶⁶ on an adventure that George characterizes as “a race against time.”⁶⁷ According to this interpretation, Gilgamesh had to set out in the darkness from the gates of sunset—not the gates of sunrise as stated in IX:39—to race ahead of the pursuing sun toward the gates of sunrise. But George refrains from emending IX:39 because he claims that this notion of the sun beginning its journey far in the east, passing over uncharted territory, and tunneling through a mountain of cosmic dimensions has well-established roots in the earlier Mesopotamian tradition. Therefore, the text gives evidence for Gilgamesh’s journey starting either in the east or in the west and does not resolve the tension between the two views.⁶⁸

When Gilgamesh emerged from the mountain, he found himself in a magical garden with jeweled trees situated near a vast ocean.⁶⁹ Here he encountered the ale-wife Šiduri who informed him that the boatman Urshanabi might be able to ferry him to the place of Utnapishtim, which was on the other side of the ocean—a body of water that was regularly passed over only by the sun and included within it the Waters of Death. Prior to speaking with Urshanabi, Gilgamesh thoughtlessly smashed the Stone Ones: sailors whose role it was to power Urshanabi’s boat with disposable punting poles, devices that enabled them to move through the Waters of Death untouched. Gilgamesh was able to get Urshanabi to assist him only if he himself went to the forest and made three hundred punting poles, which could then be used and discarded one after the other in the course of the journey. These lethal Waters seem to have been like the River Hūbur—i.e., the Babylonian Styx—that lies outside the gates of the Netherworld. After Urshanabi and Gilgamesh set out, the first part of the trip was carried out in record time. But as they moved through the Waters of Death, they ran out of punting poles. Gilgamesh improvised by making a sail from the clothing of Urshanabi and himself. As they drew near to the shore, Utnapishtim was puzzled by the absence of the normal crew and the presence on board of the

⁶⁶ Thorkild Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) 204.

⁶⁷ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 495.

⁶⁸ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 497.

⁶⁹ George (*The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 497) notes that echoes of this garden in the land of sunset may be found in Greek mythology in the garden of Hesperides and in the daughters of Atlas, and also in the *Arabian Nights*.

stranger Gilgamesh. Upon landing, Gilgamesh thought that his life of sorrow was about to end. But Utnapishtim proceeded to instruct Gilgamesh on the limits that shape the human condition. He challenged Gilgamesh by describing him as a king who had been acting like a fool by trying to evade death. Utnapishtim emphasized that a king should live a balanced life so that he can both care for the defenseless in his kingdom and tend the sanctuaries of the gods. He states unequivocally that death is the fate of humankind.⁷⁰

Just as Gilgamesh received wise guidance from Utnapishtim in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, so also did Odysseus from the seer Teresias at the entrance of Hades (*Od.* 11.97–137).⁷¹ Odysseus journeyed in a cosmos in which the river Ocean encircles the inhabited world (*Il.* 18.607). The sun rises out of this Ocean and also sets in it. Marinatos pictures this cosmos as divided into two hemispheres: an upper hemisphere of day and a lower hemisphere of night.⁷² Two key locations in this cosmic circle are the island of Circe in the east (“the house of the rising sun, *Od.* 12.3–4) and the island of Calypso in the west (*Od.* 1.52–54; 7.245). Marinatos notes that Circe’s island occupies a paradoxical position by lying in the lower and upper hemispheres (see figure 6.1).⁷³ Odysseus passes this island on the way to Hades then passes it again on his return from Hades.

Odysseus set out on his journey in the lower hemisphere—the path of night—and came first to the Cicones in the land of Thrace (*Od.* 9.39–61). Next, he traveled to the Lotus-eaters (*Od.* 9.82–104). The lotus was a flower prominent in Egyptian funerary cult, which also suggests a link with the pomegranate that Hades gave to Persephone to detain her in the Netherworld.⁷⁴ Then Odysseus reached the Cyclopes who lived in caves, an environment mirroring many aspects of the Netherworld (*Od.* 9.105–15).⁷⁵ Next, Odysseus came to the floating island of Aeolus (*Od.* 10.1–27) and to the gate of Telepylos, “the far away gate” (*Od.* 10:82) of the Laistrygones. Finally, he came to Aiaia, which was Circe’s island (*Od.* 10.135). Odysseus’s first encounter with Circe showed her dark side when she turned some of Odysseus’s men into pigs (*Od.* 10.233–43), an animal with chthonic significance and associated with the cult

⁷⁰ George (*The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 508) points out how the wise Utnapishtim communicates here the central message of the poem: the greatest of humans must acknowledge that human life is subject to the will of forces too powerful to resist.

⁷¹ Sourvinou-Inwood (*Reading Greek Death*, 86) notes that it is ambiguous in *Odyssey* 11.586–627 whether he is offering sacrifice on the surface of the earth or is in some way already part of Hades or is in no-man’s land between Hades and the upper world.

⁷² Nanno Marinatos, “The Cosmic Journey of Odysseus,” *Numen* 43 (2001) 381–416, here 395.

⁷³ Marinatos, “The Cosmic Journey of Odysseus,” 381–416, here 399.

⁷⁴ *Theognis* 1.703; 1.973; Douglas Frame, *The Myth of Return in Early Greek Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978) 75–78; Marinatos, “The Cosmic Journey of Odysseus,” 381–416, here 402.

⁷⁵ Frame, *The Myth of Return in Early Greek Epic*, 65–66.

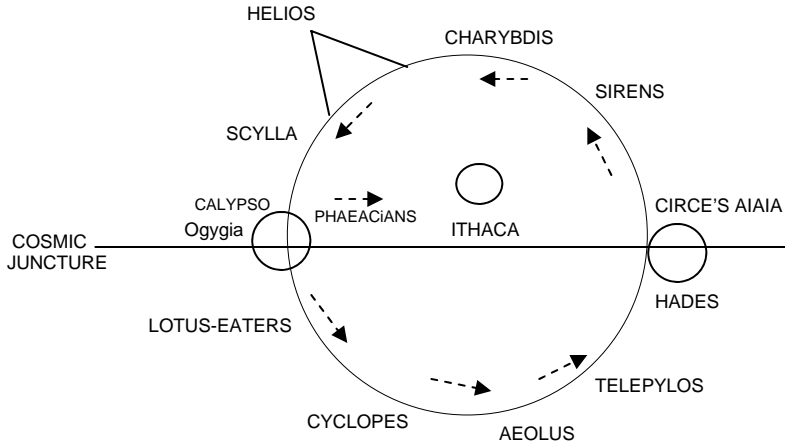


Figure 6.1: The Cosmic Journey of Odysseus

of Persephone.⁷⁶ But Circe's bright side was evident on their return journey from Hades when she gave them crucial advice on how to proceed through the upper hemisphere to position themselves for a return to Ithaca (*Od.* 12.25–26, 37–140).

Hades was located at the end of the pathway of night in the lower hemisphere and close to the place of dawn (see figure 6.1). Upon reemerging from the area near the gate of Hades and equipped with directions from Circe, Odysseus was ready to sail to the west through the upper hemisphere. They passed along the shore of the Sirens (*Od.* 12.165–200) and through Scylla and Charybdis (*Od.* 12.234–59) where many of the crew perished. Odysseus and his remaining men then sailed to the island of Helios, which both Tiresias and Circe had warned him to avoid (*Od.* 12.260–76).⁷⁷ However, when Odysseus's crew became mutinous, he landed on the island, only to be stranded there by unfavorable winds for more than a month, which then led to the crew's sacrilegious slaughter of cattle from Helios's herd (*Od.* 12.355–65). In his anger, Helios threatened to descend to the Netherworld and shine there among the dead instead of in the upper world with mortals and immortals (*Od.* 12.383). In retribution for the slaughter of Helios's cattle, Zeus shortly thereafter sent a storm that wrecked Odysseus's ship and drowned the entire crew except for Odysseus (*Od.* 12.405–19). Odysseus then returned through the Scylla and Charybdis and floated for

⁷⁶ Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (trans. Paul Cartledge; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 137.

⁷⁷ Marinatos ("The Cosmic Journey of Odysseus," 401) points out that the island of Helios on the western side of the cosmos parallels Hades on the eastern side.

ten days until he reached the island of Ogygia, the home of Calypso (*Od.* 12: 448). Odysseus's dangerous journey to the land of death and back provided him with a distinctive form of experiential knowledge, which he would then be able to draw upon as a leader within Ithaca upon his return.

Toward the end of the Archaic Age, the Greeks began to fear that the dead would not find their way to Hades or would escape and return to become a troublesome presence among the living.⁷⁸ In *Odyssey* 24, Homer gives the earliest portrayal of the god Hermes as a *psychopompos*, an escort for the deceased souls to Hades:⁷⁹

Hermes of Cyllene summoned the souls (*psychas*) of the suitors. He held a wand of beautiful gold in his hand, with which he casts spells on the eyes of whom he wishes or wakes those who are sleeping. Moving them with this, he led them forth and squeaking they followed him. As when bats in the innermost part of an eerie cave squeak and fly about when one has fallen from the chain they form with one another on the rocks, so these, squeaking, went along with him. Then Hermes, the Healer, led them along dank paths. They went by the streams of Oceanus and the rock of Leucas, and then they passed the gates of Helios and the land of dreams. Quickly they came to the meadow of asphodel. There the souls (*psychai*) dwell, the images (*eidōla*) of the exhausted ones. (*Od.* 24.1–14)

The souls of these unburied suitors—in contrast to the practice of the late eighth century B.C.E.—were able to converse with Agamemnon, Ajax, and others who had been properly buried.⁸⁰ Hermes' role was to make sure that these souls found their way to Hades so that they were not like Sisyphus who had been able to reenter the earthly sphere because proper burial rites had not been granted to him.⁸¹ In the tragic plays of the fifth to fourth centuries, the intrusion of unburied dead was a frequent topic (e.g., Aeschylus, *Eum.* 93–138; Euripides, *Heracles* 605–10; *Alcestis* 840–60, 1008–1150).⁸²

The descent into the Netherworld of the personified city of Tyre, the Egyptian Pharaoh, Enkidu, and the suitors in *Odyssey* 24 was a one-way journey. However, from the perspective of Gilgamesh in Tablet XII, Enkidu could have

⁷⁸ Johnston, *The Restless Dead*, 15; Sourvinou-Inwood, "To Die and Enter the House of Hades: Homer, Before and After," 38.

⁷⁹ Johnston, *The Restless Dead*, 15; Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Death*, 354.

⁸⁰ Johnston (*The Restless Dead*, 14) argues that *Odyssey* 24 was an addition to the Homeric epic in the fifth century B.C.E. See also Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Death*, 94–103.

⁸¹ Alcaeus, fr. 38. David Mulroy, *Early Greek Lyric Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992) 79–80; Johnston, *The Restless Dead*, 9, 64; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 197. M. L. West (*The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1997] 153) speculates that the notice that the souls of the suitors "passed the gates of Helios" may be an indication that they were descending to Hades at the place of sunset on the western horizon.

⁸² Johnston, *The Restless Dead*, 23–24.

retrieved the ball and mallet and returned to the land of the living if he had concealed his identity as one from the land of the living. Even though the dead whom Hermes escorted would not have been able to participate in the life of the land of the living, they were believed to have had the capacity to intervene in human activities. In ancient Mesopotamia and Greece there were festivals (Abu; Anthesteria) designed to call upon the gods to return the wandering dead to their proper home in the Netherworld.

Ezekiel's dirges over the city of Tyre and the Egyptian Pharaoh make known that their transition to the world below was definitive. They would not be able to come back and have an impact on the upper world. By contrast, the cosmic journeys of the heroes Gilgamesh and Odysseus were designed to confront the outer limits of human existence and then to bring back knowledge gained from this extreme perspective. Gilgamesh and Odysseus both traveled from west to east in the initial part of their journeys; they sailed through dangerous waters and traversed darkness. While Gilgamesh's journey was completed in a single day, Odysseus wandered for twenty years. The heroic dimension of such portrayals is that Gilgamesh was the superhuman warrior-king who could outrun the sun and beat time but still not escape death and that Odysseus was the faithful husband-king who would use his cleverness and strength to overcome forgetfulness and return home to Ithaca. Utnapishtim's immortal life on the other side of the cosmic ocean has some similarities to the immortality offered to Odysseus on Calypso's island but more closely resembles that of the Isles of the Blessed to which Menelaus was transported (*Od.* 4.167; Hesiod, *Op.* 167).⁸³ The knowledge gained by Gilgamesh and Odysseus had the potential to make them wiser rulers because they, traversing issues of life and death, would have gained a cosmic context within which to judge how limits and boundaries were to be maintained within a human community.

Rank in the Netherworld: Reward and Punishment in the Afterlife

Ezekiel was most likely aware of the elaborate mortuary cult dedicated to Egyptian royalty reaching back into the early third millennium B.C.E. (Ezek 30:13-19). Thus, in the oracle of judgment in 32:17-32, there is a strong note of irony or sarcasm in Ezekiel's opening question to Egypt: "Who is more attractive (*nā'amtā*) than you?" (v. 19). The root *n'm* carries the sense not only of "beauty" and "goodness" but also of "pleasure." The person or thing that is *n'm* has a quality of beautiful goodness that draws people. Boadt points out that *n'm* can be a title for Adonis/Tammuz, a deity who seasonally went down into the

⁸³ Clark ("Origins: New Light on Eschatology in Gilgamesh's Mortuary Journey," 139), argues that Utnapishtim's abode is an alternative land for the dead from that of the Netherworld.

Netherworld and returned (cf. Ezek 8:14). Thus, here Ezekiel was identifying as an illusion any notion that the Pharaoh might have entertained that he could escape death.⁸⁴

Ezekiel immediately announced judgment against Pharaoh and the Egyptians: “Go down and recline with the uncircumcised. They will fall into the midst of the ones killed by the sword” (vv. 19-20a). The Egyptians, along with the Edomites and Sidonians, practiced circumcision.⁸⁵ Thus the rank that will be assigned to the Egyptians puts them into the category of the uncircumcised, whether or not they have actually been circumcised. The other dishonorable category, “those killed by the sword” will also apply to them. Later in verses 21 and 27 military heroes are acknowledged as holding a central place in Sheol. Therefore, the dishonorable aspect of being killed by the sword cannot be that they have fallen in battle; it must refer to the way that they have been buried. In verse 27, the heroes of old are those who have their weapons of war placed with them in a tomb that rises over them. This type of honorable burial contrasts with the anonymous mass graves in which soldiers who fall in battle are buried. From the Israelite perspective, one who was uncircumcised was probably one who had to be buried outside of the family tomb. So the common denominator between the dishonorable categories of the uncircumcised and those killed by the sword is that these individuals did not receive an honorable burial by being placed in the family tomb.⁸⁶

The reception of a proper burial is important for a person of any rank. But it was of particular significance in cultures that gave funerary offerings to its dead. Throughout the ancient Near East, archaeological evidence indicates that families typically gave offerings to the dead at the time of the funeral and on regular occasions thereafter.⁸⁷ Although the textual data for such offerings in ancient Israel is sparse, the archaeological evidence indicates that such funer-

⁸⁴ Boadt, *Ezekiel's Oracles against Egypt*, 154; Leslie Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC 29; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990) 137.

⁸⁵ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 218; Boadt, *Ezekiel's Oracles against Egypt*, 123, 162–63.

⁸⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 218.

⁸⁷ Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 48–52; Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (trans. David Lorton; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005) 343–55; Akio Tsukimoto, “Aspekte von *Kispu(m)* als Totenbeigabe,” 131–33, in *Death in Mesopotamia*; Aaron Skaist, “The Ancestor Cult and Succession in Mesopotamia,” 126–27, in *Death in Mesopotamia*. D. Charpin (“Maisons et maisonsnées en Babylonie ancienne de Sippar à Ur,” 224, in *Houses and Households in Ancient Mesopotamia* [ed. K. Veenhof; CRRRA 40; Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1996] 224) notes that the eldest son was not always designated to carry on the family line by receiving the largest share of the inheritance and taking responsibility for the offerings to the ancestors.

ary offerings were customary in Israel.⁸⁸ For the king of Egypt, such offerings had a sacramental character in that they endowed the rigidified mummy with freedom of movement.⁸⁹ So for Ezekiel to claim that the king of Egypt would descend to the lowest regions of the Netherworld would have been a shocking reversal to the expectations in that culture.

Funerary offerings given to heroes or to ancestors were commonly regarded in the ancient Near East as increasing the happiness and the status of the dead person who was being honored.⁹⁰ In 32:17-32, Ezekiel describes the dead as ones who have a head and skeleton and thus have a physical dimension to their existence in Sheol. They are also ones who recognize others around them: e.g., “The pharaoh will see them and be comforted for his horde” (v. 31).⁹¹

At the beginning of this oracle of judgment, the Lord commanded Ezekiel and “women from the mighty nations” to wail over the horde of Egypt (v. 18). These women may have been representatives from the nations among whose deceased multitudes the king of Egypt with his hordes was about to descend. Boadt indicates that the number of nations listed in this oracle seems to be seven.⁹² The following six nations or political entities can be named with certainty: Assyria, Elam, Meshek-Tubal, Edom, Sidon, and the princes of the North. The seventh nation was probably Egypt itself. The reason for Ezekiel’s selecting these particular nations is not clear. Perhaps, as Block notes, the three—some of Assyria, Elam, and Meshek-Tubal represent traditional powers in the northern part of the Fertile Crescent, whereas Egypt would be the imperial power to the south. Edom and Sidon would be included because they were close neighbors to Israel.⁹³ Of these nations, each is categorized as occupying the rank of the uncircumcised and those killed by the sword, with the exception that Assyria is not identified as being placed among the uncircumcised.⁹⁵ Assyria, Elam, Meshek-Tubal, and Egypt are also cited as nations that have terrorized the

⁸⁸ Bloch-Smith, “The Cult of the Dead in Judah,” 214–19; Van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, 48–52.

⁸⁹ Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, 349.

⁹⁰ Lewis, “How Far Can Texts Take Us?” 169–217, here 196, in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place*, 196.

⁹¹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 233. However, Boadt (*Ezekiel’s Oracles against Egypt*, 162) quotes approvingly the statement of Bernhard Duhm (*Das Buch Jesaja* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902] 119): “[Ezekiel’s] Sheol is only a collection of graveyards.”

⁹² Boadt, *Ezekiel’s Oracles against Egypt*, 151.

⁹³ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 224.

⁹⁴ Boadt (*Ezekiel’s Oracles against Egypt*, 161) points out that Assyria’s graves are located in the *yarkêṭê bôr*, “the innermost recesses,” of Sheol, in which case then there would be three tiers to Sheol rather than only an inner (valiant ones) and an outer circle of graves (uncircumcised).

earth (vv. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30), a practice for which Assyria was legendary.⁹⁵ Elam, Meshek-Tubal, and the princes of the North are singled out as nations who have “borne shame with those who have descended into the pit” (vv. 24, 25, 30). Even though the Sheol described in 32:17-32 does not have a king or a queen, it does have a hierarchy in which the ancient warrior heroes are located at the center and have the highest rank. Far distant in the recesses of Sheol are the seven nations listed above. Ezekiel notes that these inhabitants of Sheol know that their rank is linked to their former conduct in the land of the living (see *kēlimmâ*, “shame,” 32:24, 25, 30).

When Enkidu did not return from the Netherworld in his search for the ball and mallet, Gilgamesh asked Enlil and Sin for assistance, but they refused (*Gilg.* XII.57–71). So he turned to Ea who helped him by asking Šamaš, who regularly descended to the Netherworld,⁹⁶ to open a crevice so that the ghost (*eṭemmu*) of Enkidu could escape (XII.79–84). When the breath (*napištu*) departed from a person, that one turned into a “phantom, ghost” (*eṭemmu*). But the *eṭemmu*, which was closely linked with the corpse, still existed and could visit humans in their dreams and fears.⁹⁷ The ghost of Enkidu embraced Gilgamesh and related how his mortal remains were decaying there (*Gilg.* XII.88–99). Then in response to Gilgamesh’s desire to learn more about the Netherworld, Enkidu described the various categories of people who were there:

“Did you see the man with one son?” “I did. Before a nail fastened to his wall, he weeps bitterly.” “Did you see the man with two sons?” “I did. He sits on two bricks and eats bread.” “Did you see the man with three sons?” “I did. He drinks water from a skin.” . . . “Did you see the man with seven sons?” “I did. He sits on a throne among the younger gods and listens.” (*Gilg.* XII:102–7, 115–16)⁹⁸

In these examples, the point is made that a larger family increases the likelihood that more funerary offerings will be given to the deceased and thereby increase his or her happiness.⁹⁹ So although life in the Netherworld was bleak, it

⁹⁵ Barbara Nevling Porter (“Intimidation and Friendly Persuasion,” 81–97, here 86, in *Trees, Kings, and Politics: Studies in Assyrian Iconography* [OBO 197; Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003]) argues that Assurnasirpal, noted for descriptions of brutal treatment of conquered peoples in his Annals, alternated messages of intimidation and persuasion rather than simply trying to terrorize any who might oppose him.

⁹⁶ *Šamaš Hymn*, lines 31–44, in *BWL* 126, 128.

⁹⁷ Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (trans. T. Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 106–7. Scurlock (“Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought,” 1889, in *CANE*) notes that in addition to the *eṭemmu*, the *zāqīqu*, a birdlike reality that could slide through small openings, descended to the Netherworld at death, but it was not perceived as a potential danger like the *eṭemmu*.

⁹⁸ Based on the text reconstructed by George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1.732.

⁹⁹ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1.530; Scurlock, “Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 1888, in *CANE*.

was not totally miserable; it was a place in which the inhabitants could eat bread and drink water; it seems that some sunshine came there through Šamaš's daily circuit among them.¹⁰⁰ Enkidu's description of the inhabitants of the Netherworld indicates that one's quality of life in the Netherworld was contingent not only on one's behavior on earth but also on the quality and quantity of relationships that one established during earthly life, relationships that would continue when one descended to the Netherworld.¹⁰¹ Even though special royal cults were set up for deceased kings, the offerings contributed appear to have been no guarantee that a king would maintain his status in the Netherworld, for the amount of respect given to kings, priests, and other notables in the Netherworld appears to have been a dim reflection of what was showered upon them during their earthly existence.¹⁰²

The extant text of Enkidu's description of the Netherworld concludes with examples that can be categorized as follows:

- (1) The one who died a sudden death is contrasted with one who died naturally.¹⁰³ The latter lies on a bed drinking clear water whereas the former wanders about (*Gilg.* XII:144–47);
- (2) The one who was killed in battle and honorably buried is contrasted with the one whose corpse was left in the countryside. The latter does not rest in the Netherworld whereas the former is one honored by his father and mother and lamented by his wife (*Gilg.* XII:148–51);
- (3) The one who has no funerary offerings given to him is described as a destitute person “who eats food broken in pieces from the pot (and) bread tossed into the street” (*Gilg.* XII:152–53).

This data concerning the social structure of the Netherworld would be vital information for one charged with adjudicating disputes among the inhabitants

¹⁰⁰ *Šamaš Hymn*, lines 31–44, in *BWL* 126, 128. Jerrold Cooper, “The Fate of Mankind: Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 19–33, here 26, in *Death and Afterlife: Perspective of World Religions* (ed. H. Obayashi; New York: Greenwood Press, 1992); Scurlock, “Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought,” 1885, in *CANE*. However, the description of life in the Netherworld is more grim in the following excerpt from *The Descent of Ishtar*: “To the house where those who enter are robbed of light; the place where their sustenance is dust and their food is clay. They do not see light; they sit in darkness. They wear feathered garments like birds” (Borger, *BAL*, 96).

¹⁰¹ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1.530.

¹⁰² Cooper, “The Fate of Mankind: Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 25.

¹⁰³ W. G. Lambert (“The Theology of Death,” 53–66, here 64–65, in *Death in Mesopotamia: XXVIe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* [Mesopotamia 8; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1980] claims that the distinction between natural and violent death was fundamental to the Mesopotamians' theology of death. The gods do not age and die, but they can die a violent death.

of the Netherworld.¹⁰⁴ However, as George argues, there is no explicit description of Gilgamesh's judicial functions among the dead in Tablet XII.¹⁰⁵

The Mesopotamian Netherworld was organized like a city-state. Its hierarchical organization reflected that of the upper world. Steinkeller, drawing primarily upon Sumerian texts from the third and second millennia, identifies the chief executive power of the Netherworld as a group of former rulers and high priestly officials over whom Gilgamesh and his deputy Etana presided. He notes, however, that this executive power of the Netherworld was subject to the executive power of Šamaš who governed both the upper world and the Netherworld.¹⁰⁶ But several literary texts designate the rulers of the Netherworld as a king (Nergal) and a queen (Ereškigal) where Ereškigal was originally the one who exercised sovereignty.¹⁰⁷ In the poem "Nergal and Ereškigal," Nergal, through the scheming of Ea, descended to the Netherworld to gain a share of the rule with Ereškigal.¹⁰⁸

An example of Ereškigal's way of ruling the Netherworld is related in the Akkadian poem *The Descent of Ištar*, which relied upon an earlier Sumerian version, *The Descent of Inanna*.¹⁰⁹ In this poem, Ištar, the goddess of sexuality and war, demanded to be allowed into the Netherworld to visit her sister Ereškigal (ll. 14–20). Typically, when someone arrived at the gate of the Netherworld, the female scribe *Belet šēri* would check to see whether the person's name appeared on the master list; if not, the person was turned away.¹¹⁰ In trying to gain entry to the Netherworld, the aggressive Ištar was trying to extend her power. Ereškigal directed the gatekeeper to allow Ištar to enter on the condition that she follow "the ancient regulations" (*paṣṣi* [GARZA.MEŠ] *labirūti*, l. 38) for passing through the seven gates. One of Ereškigal's primary roles was to greet each new arrival and instruct that person on the rules of the Netherworld.¹¹¹ As Ištar passed through each of the gates, an article of jewelry or clothing was

¹⁰⁴ Abusch ("The Development and Meaning of the Epic of Gilgamesh," 621) argues that Tablet XII was added to the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to explain Gilgamesh's role as a deity of the Netherworld in the Mesopotamian tradition.

¹⁰⁵ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 50.

¹⁰⁶ Piotr Steinkeller, "Of Stars and Men: The Conceptual and Mythological Setup of Babylonian Extispicy," 11–47, here 23, in *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran* (ed. A. Gianto; BibOr 48; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005).

¹⁰⁷ Lambert, "The Theology of Death," 53–66, here 62, in *Death in Mesopotamia*.

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 1.410–28; Lambert ("The Theology of Death," 53–66, here 62, in *Death in Mesopotamia*) notes that Nergal's status rises in the OB period.

¹⁰⁹ Borger, *BAL*, 1.95–104; Foster, *Before the Muses*, 1.404–9.

¹¹⁰ Bottéro, *Religion of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 108–9; Scurlock, "Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamia," 1883–93, here 1886–87, in *CANE*.

¹¹¹ Scurlock, "Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamia," 1883–93, here 1886–87, in *CANE*.

removed until Ištar was reduced to nakedness at the final door (ll. 61–62). At this point the text says: “When Ištar first descended into the Netherworld, Ereškigal saw her and trembled angrily before her. Ištar impulsively took a seat above her” (ll. 63–65). Then Ereškigal ordered that sixty diseases beset Ištar’s body (ll. 69–75).

With Ištar imprisoned in the Netherworld, fertility vanished from the earthly realm above.¹¹² In this emergency situation, Papsukkal, the administrative assistant of the great gods, interceded with Sin and Ea. Ea created a male prostitute (Asušunamnir) who was charged with deceiving Ereškigal into swearing an oath that would lead to the release of Ištar (ll. 93–99). But upon her return to the upper world, Ištar found her lover Tammuz dallying with prostitutes and so she offered him to the Netherworld.¹¹³ With this development, Tammuz’s sister Bēlili lamented:

When she heard the lamentation for her brother, Bēlili struck the jewelry of her body—the beads which filled the face of the Wild Cow. “Do not take away my only brother!” On the day that Tammuz ascends, the lapis lazuli flute and the carnelian ring will ascend with him. The mourners, male and female, will ascend with him. Let the dead ascend and smell the incense.” (ll. 133–39)¹¹⁴

Here, the lamentation of Bēlili is linked with a cultic lamentation that, according to a common pattern of ancient Near Eastern lament, shifts at a strategic point from mourning to rejoicing.¹¹⁵ This shift symbolizes the rising of Tammuz out of the land of death to the land of the living.¹¹⁶ The participants in the ritual seem to express the wish that the other dead in the Netherworld will rise up with him.¹¹⁷ The dying and rising of Tammuz, associated with the

¹¹² Ištar is presumably dead and decaying as a carcass as in the Sumerian *Descent of Inanna* (ll. 164–69). Jacobsen (*Treasures of Darkness*, 62–63) interprets Inanna/Ištar as the storehouse of the late winter when its supplies dwindle and it comes to resemble a grave vault. A single carcass of tainted meat would have communicated a sense of death.

¹¹³ Foster (*Before the Muses*, 409 n. 1) presumes a gap in the narrative here and supplies the material in the sentence above about Ištar’s sending Tammuz to the Netherworld from the *Descent of Inanna*, ll. 333–42.

¹¹⁴ Edition: Borger, *Babylonian-Lesestücke*, 2.86–91; cf. Foster, *Before the Muses*, 1.409.

¹¹⁵ Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981) 36–51, esp. 39. Paul Ferris, *The Genre of the Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (SBLDS 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 43, 59–60, 66–67; Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*, 100–101. Piotr Michalowski, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1898) 5–6.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*, 87–91, 95–97. See alternative explanation, J. A. Scurlock, “Magical Uses of Ancient Mesopotamian Festivals of the Dead,” 93–107, here 96–100, in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki; Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 129; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

¹¹⁷ Foster, *Before the Muses*, 1.409 n. 2.

fertility of plants, animals, and humans, here symbolizes the movement from the realm of death to that of life. This interplay between the forces of death and life is associated with the agricultural cycle and so has more to do with the continuation of this cosmic cycle than with the renewal of the individual lives of the residents of the Netherworld (cf. *Gilg.* VI:46–47).¹¹⁸ However, during the Dumuzi festival on the 27–29 Du'uzu (June–July), the dead were believed to come to the upper world to receive food offerings before they were sent back to the Netherworld.¹¹⁹

When Odysseus came ashore to the dark land of the Cimmerians where there was a grove of trees and two rivers flowing together (*Od.* 10.509–15), he poured out offerings in a pit: first a series of three libations of honey, milk, wine, and water with barley and some of the blood of the sheep (*Od.* 11.26–34). At this point,

the souls of the perished dead gathered from Erebus: brides, young men, miserable old men, tender virgins with the sorrows of a young heart, many wounded by brass-tipped spears, men killed in battle wearing their blood-stained armor. These came up around the pit from every side with a deafening cry. Pallid fear seized me. (*Od.* 11.36–43)

These inhabitants of Hades are depicted as restless souls that long for the life they had while on earth. With the exception of the elders, those listed above had been snatched out of life prematurely. In their condition in Hades, they seemed to continue the identity they had in earthly life: e.g., the virgins still had young hearts and the fighting men carried their armor.¹²⁰ Elpenor, who had not been buried, was able to speak to Odysseus without drinking the blood (*Od.* 11.59–78). Odysseus did not allow a shade to drink from the blood, even his mother Anticlea, until he had consulted with Tiresias (*Od.* 11.84–96). When Odysseus allowed a particular shade to drink of the blood, then that one was able to speak and her or his individuality came to expression (*Od.* 11.99–149). But without the blood, the shades existed in a lifeless condition within the darkness and gloom of Hades (*Od.* 11.145–49).

Persephone, the queen of the Netherworld and the wife of Hades, was

¹¹⁸ Thorkild Jacobsen, "Religious Drama in Ancient Mesopotamia," 65–97, here 72, in *Unity and Diversity* (ed. H. Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 473; Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 477–81. However, Alan F. Segal (*Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* [New York: Doubleday, 2004] 82) contends that the *Descent of Inanna* has more to do with the commemoration of the dead than with the seasonal agricultural cycle.

¹¹⁹ Scurlock, "Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamia," 1883–93, here 1889, in *CANE*.

¹²⁰ West, *The East Face of Helicon*, 164.

¹²¹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 198. Helene Foley, ed., *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* [Princ-

the true executive force among the dead.¹²¹ Hades' personality and behavior reflected well the meaning of his name: "invisible, unseen."¹²² When Odysseus tried to communicate with Tiresias and other individuals in Hades, Persephone was described as one who directed the hordes of shades (*Od.* 11.226–28). Persephone was also the one whom Odysseus imagined to be deceiving him when he was unable to embrace his mother in her shadowy existence (*Od.* 11.213–14). This powerful Persephone symbolized the terror of death. She inspired so much fear that the Archaic Greeks typically used categories (e.g., "the goddess") and circumlocutions (e.g., *dōmata Haidou*, "halls of Hades") when referring to her rather than pronounce her name.¹²³

According to the widely known myth of Hades' rape of Persephone, it was believed that Hades burst open the earth and charged forth with his horses and chariot to sweep Persephone away. The Kyane spring in Sicily, a land in which the Demeter-Persephone cult was highly regarded, was identified by the locals as the place in which this abduction occurred.¹²⁴ During Demeter's mournful search for her daughter Persephone, the grain did not grow. Crop failure ended when Demeter found Persephone and brought her back from Hades.¹²⁵ But while Persephone was in Hades, she ate of the pomegranate and so was irreversibly tied to the sphere of Hades. Therefore, she had to reside in Hades for one third of every year.¹²⁶

Persephone's return to the upper world in the spring of the year does not match the growing season for corn in the Mediterranean region, where the corn germinates shortly after the fall rains and grows throughout the winter season. Nevertheless, the association of Demeter and Persephone with the corn crop has persisted since antiquity. Burkert argues that the Demeter-Persephone myth

eton: Princeton University Press, 1994] 89) notes (1) that through Persephone's descent to and ascent from the Netherworld she makes mortal prayers find their way to Hades for the first time and (2) that Hades received offerings usually in the name of Persephone.

¹²² Susan Cole, "Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields," 193–217, here 106, in *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults* (ed. Michael Cosmopoulos; London: Routledge, 2003). Burkert (*Greek Religion*, 196) states that this interpretation of Hades as an invisible one is debatable.

¹²³ Susan Cole, "Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields," 193–217, here 196, in *Greek Mysteries*.

¹²⁴ Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) 97.

¹²⁵ Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, 135–36.

¹²⁶ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 160. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood ("Festivals and Mysteries: Aspects of the Eleusinian Cult," 25–49, here 39, in *Greek Mysteries*) notes that Kore stayed in the Netherworld for one-third of the year according to the Athenian calendar, but it seems that in the Syracusan calendar she stayed there for one-half of the year. Nevertheless, there was probably not a major divergence in the rites of this cult in the Mediterranean region.

does not deal with the germination of corn in the agricultural cycle. Rather it gives an explanation of how death, through Hades' rape of Persephone, has entered into the earthly realm and forever altered it: "a dimension of death is introduced into life, and a dimension of life is introduced into death."¹²⁷ Thus, a key concern of the Demeter-Persephone cult was the way in which the fertility of the cosmos necessarily involved a struggle between the forces of life and death. For these gods—who are by definition immortal—their experience of death could only be temporary.¹²⁸

The hero Heracles was a humanlike champion who was never defeated, yet he underwent death. However, there were no graves for Heracles in ancient Greece, and he was not honored by a hero cult. By contrast, human heroes like Agamemnon and Achilles were given regular offerings because they were regarded as a supernatural presence that could give assistance to a city. These hero cults were promoted by the polis as a way to get the diverse clans/families to cross traditional social boundaries and forge bonds with one another in their worship of a common hero.¹²⁹ Thus the hero cult sufficiently resembled the ancestor cult to be able to coopt it.¹³⁰ The heroes honored in these cults were not gods—just as Christian saints are not gods.¹³¹ However, the hero Heracles was a god: a unique kind of god who by his death threatened to undercut the traditional definition of a god as an immortal. His exploits against the Centaurs and Amazons, his legendary twelve labors, his fetching of Cerberus from Hades (*Od.* 11:622–26), and his sacking of Troy established his reputation as a hero of divine proportions. Not only his superhuman strength but also his shamanlike characteristics made him a figure who triggered in humans the idea that, given the right circumstances, humans could become immortals.¹³²

¹²⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 161.

¹²⁸ Foley (*Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, 88–90) notes how the experiences of the deities Persephone and Demeter in the *Hymn to Demeter* come as close as possible to mortal existence.

¹²⁹ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 113; Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Greek Religions, Ancient Religions," 269–89, here 278–79, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹³⁰ Jane Carter ("Ancestor Cult and the Occasion of Homeric Performance," 285–312, here 304–7, in *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule* [ed. Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995]) argues that the *marzēah* symposium was the ritualized setting in which poems about heroic ancestors were recited (*KTU* 1.21, 161; Amos 6:4–7; Jer 16:5–7).

¹³¹ Ian Morris (*Archaeology as Cultural History* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2000] 231) argues that the funerary cult that raised a man to heroic status developed at the end of the eleventh century B.C.E. He suggests that between 1025 and 925 that the Greeks added the race of heroes and iron to the other three metallic races known in the older eastern Mediterranean tradition. But it was from 750–700 B.C.E. that much more energy was expended in promoting heroes, particularly the bodies of heroes (p. 273).

¹³² Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 208–11. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Death*, 86.

Empedocles equated Hades with fire in which the vast subterranean fires were seen not only as a destructive but also as a creative force. So just as Heracles underwent death and heroization through immolation on a wooden pyre (*Od.* 11.602–3), so also Empedocles is said to have demonstrated his divine status by jumping into the volcano of Mount Etna, which later spewed out one of his bronze sandals (*DK* 31A; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 8.67.8–69.8).¹³³ The bronze sandal was associated with Netherworld ritual and magic in the Orphic literary tradition, the mysteries of Persephone and Demeter, and Pythagorean thought. In the context of these traditions, Empedocles' leap into Etna was a sign of his descent into the Netherworld and his rebirth at a new level of identity.¹³⁴

The idea that humans might escape death began to grow in significance in the late Archaic Age as the development of the polis and the retreat of the family/clan as the all-embracing social unit declined and the place of the individual began to receive more attention.¹³⁵ The sense of resignation to the inevitability of death promoted by the Homeric vision of life began to give way to the idea that the afterlife may offer blessings to more than the select few who were transported to the Isles of the Blest. Pindar—"the first poet to draw sharp boundaries between underworld realms"¹³⁶—noted that those who are wicked will be punished, but those who are good will be taken to a place where they will live a peaceful existence with an equal amount of day and night. And for those who live uprightly through three cycles of life and death, they will be ushered into the Isles of the Blest (*Olympian* 2.56–77). However, in the sixth to fifth centuries, the Pythagoreans began to think of the *psychē* as transported into the *aithēr* (i.e., the fiery upper air), apart from the Netherworld altogether.¹³⁷

With regard to parts of Hades as a place of punishment, Homeric Zeus had threatened any disobedient Olympian deity that he would banish him or her to the lowest region of Hades: i.e., Tartarus (*Il.* 8.13–16). This notion of Tartarus as Zeus' prison came to be equated in the thought of the Pythagorean Philolaus with a place of fire that imprisoned not only the Titans but also the human damned.¹³⁸ Kingsley explains that Philolaus' identification of Tartarus with a

¹³³ Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 15–17. Kingsley (*Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 236–38) argues that the original legend of Empedocles' jumping into the volcano probably circulated in the late fifth century B.C.E.

¹³⁴ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 238–40, 250–53.

¹³⁵ Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*, 25; Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 13, 233, 256.

¹³⁶ Cole, "Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields," 193–217, here 196, in *Greek Mysteries*. See also Johnston, *The Restless Dead*, 12; West, *The East Face of Helicon*, 536–39, 561.

¹³⁷ Guthrie, "Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans," 1.146–340, here 1.201–2, in *HGP*; Brown, *Israel and Hellas*, 3.50.

¹³⁸ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 188, 193, 203.

mass of fire fits together with Pindar's description of the volcanic Mount Etna in Sicily as a giant pinned down in Tartarus (*Pythian* 1.15–28). With Pindar's differentiation of the locales to which the righteous and the wicked were sent in the afterlife, Hades came to be equated in the sixth century B.C.E. with Tartarus as a place of fiery punishment.¹³⁹

The Egyptian king and his hordes in Ezekiel 32:17–32 were banished to the far reaches of the Netherworld. But their primary form of punishment was shame and a loss of status. They were not subjected to fiery torment as envisioned by Philolaus. Yet there was a differentiation of status within the Netherworld of Ezekiel 32:17–32 in which the heroes held a higher status than the seven demoted nations. These heroes, within the cultic traditions of the ancient Near East, would have received regular offerings.¹⁴⁰ In the view of the Netherworld communicated by Enkidu in Tablet XII of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, such offerings had an impact on one's happiness in the afterlife—not just for heroes but for everyone who entered the Netherworld. Those who died childless or with few offspring were likely to be quickly forgotten and so be unhappy. This unhappy condition of those who died prematurely is also reflected in Odysseus' description of the shades who swarmed around the offering that he gave to the inhabitants of Hades in *Odyssey* 11.35–50. But in Odysseus's description, the war-dead and the elders, those who would presumably have been honored by the people still alive, seem despondent. The Netherworld in ancient Mesopotamia and in the Homeric world was an unhappy place; it was a prison from which everyone would want to escape. But Ereskigal in Mesopotamia and Persephone in Archaic Greece maintain strict control over the gateway to their realms. In Ezekiel 32:17–32, the Lord is fully in charge of who enters the Netherworld; there is no mention of anyone leaving that place.

In ancient Mesopotamia and Archaic Greece, Ištar, Persephone, and Heracles are able to descend into the Netherworld and return from there. Such dying and rising gods helped to explain the tensions involved in sustaining the fertility and vitality of the earthly sphere. According to the popular religion, human shades were also believed to be able to leave the Netherworld and feast with humans at particular times of the year, but then had to return—almost as if they had been on parole. Toward the end of the Archaic Age in Greece, there was a growing belief that individuals could influence their status in the afterlife, just as the inhabitants of the Netherworld in Ezekiel 32:17–32 realized that their conduct in life determined their rank in the Netherworld. In Pindar and Philolaus, the different locales in the afterlife for the righteous and the wicked were more sharply drawn than in previous Greek poets and thinkers.

¹³⁹ Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, 74.

¹⁴⁰ B. A. Levine and J.-M. De Tarragon, "Dead Kings and Rephaim: The Patrons of the Ugaritic Dynasty," *JAOS* 104 (1984) 649–59, esp. 655–57.

Disposal of Human Remains: Fear of Corpse Contamination or Respect for Life?

Ezekiel envisions the exiles returning to a land that has been emptied of its inhabitants (11:8-12; 24:10-11; 33:27-29; 36:8-15; 36:33-38). Those who return will dwell in unfortified villages (Ezek 38:11). To reassure his audience that such a pacifistic way of life was not foolhardy for a people whose history from the eighth to the sixth centuries had been shaped by the invasion of one imperial power after another (Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon), Ezekiel related to them a series of four prophecies (38:2-13, 14-23; 39:1-16, 17-20) that he had been directed by the Lord to deliver to Gog, “the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal” (Ezek 38:2, 14; 39:1).¹⁴¹ Meshek and Tubal were the eastern Anatolian kingdoms whom Ezekiel envisioned in 32:26 as one of the seven nations that were to descend with their “hordes” (*hāmônāh*, 32:26) to the lowest parts of the Netherworld (*’ereš taḥtiyyôt*, 32:18). Now they are seen as part of a future military alliance led by Gog, a shadowy figure who may be named after Gyges, king of Lydia (668–631).¹⁴² Ezekiel says that this alliance will include other nations from “the far-reaches of the north” (*yarkēte šāpôn*, 38:6): viz., Gomer and Bethogarma. Joining these northern kingdoms will be the southern kingdoms of Patros (Upper Egypt),¹⁴³ Cush (Ethiopia), and Put (Libya), which will give Gog’s forces worldwide reach.¹⁴⁴ This formidable force out of the dark regions of the north looks as if it is poised to eliminate the vulnerable returned exiles (38:10-12). Just as imperial conquerors before were summoned by the Lord to invade Israel and Judah (Ezek 16:37-41; 21:18-23), so also is Gog summoned by the Lord. But he is summoned in order to suffer total defeat on the mountains of Israel (39:2-4) so that Israel and all the nations might know that the Lord is sovereign (38:23).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Cf. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel* 2, 296); Allen (*Ezekiel* 20–48, 203). Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 431) identifies the structure as a cartoon strip of eight frames (38:2c-9; 38:10-13; 38:14-16; 38:17-23; 39:1-8; 39:9-10; 39:11-16; 39:17-20).

¹⁴² Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 428) claims that closer attention to the social environment of this chapter reveals that it is prophetic rather than apocalyptic in character. For attention to the apocalyptic dimensions of this passage, see Stephen Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 104–20. Paul E. Fitzpatrick (*The Disarmament of God: Ezekiel 38–39 in its Mythic Context* [CBQMS 37; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 2004] 87) claims that Gog is a transhistorical representative of the powers of returned cosmic chaos.

¹⁴³ Michael Astour, “Ezekiel’s Prophecy of Gog and the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin,” *JBL* 95 (1976) 567–79, here 576, note 59.

¹⁴⁴ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 441.

¹⁴⁵ Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 456) claims that Gog invaded Israel at his own initiative and therefore called down Yhwh’s wrath on him (39:1-6). But Ezekiel 38:14-16 clearly says that it is Yhwh’s initiative to bring Gog against Israel and predicts the

The total defeat of Gog's forces will fill the land of Israel with corpses (39:12-16). When Ezekiel earlier prophesied judgment against idolatrous Jerusalem, he declared that the Lord would kill them and cast their corpses (*peger*) before their idols and their bones (*ʿšem*) around their altars (Ezek 6:4-5; cf. 9:7). Now the land was filled with the remains of foreign soldiers. Ezekiel prophesies that two means of eliminating these human remains from the land will be employed: (1) burial (39:11-16) and (2) the consumption of the flesh and blood of the corpses by birds of prey and wild beasts (39:17-20). With such an overwhelming number of fallen soldiers, both measures could take place simultaneously with the burial procedure extending over the long-term to ensure burial of the bones left by the birds and animals or after the decay of the flesh.¹⁴⁶

The Israelite tradition regarded it as a horrendous curse to have one's body devoured by birds and animals (Deut 28:26). It was a fate that prophets decreed only for the most notorious sinners in the land (e.g., Jeroboam, 1 Kgs 14:11; Ahab, 21:23-24; Jezebel, 2 Kgs 9:10, 36). Yet the Lord directed Ezekiel to summon the birds and the beasts with the words:

Assemble and come together from all sides for a sacrifice that I am preparing for you, a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel. You shall eat flesh and drink blood. The flesh of warriors you shall eat, and the blood of the princes of the earth you shall drink.¹⁴⁷ You shall eat your fill of fat (*hēleb*), and you shall drink blood to the point of drunkenness, from my sacrifice that I have prepared for you. You shall be sated at my table with horses and horsemen,¹⁴⁸ with warriors and soldiers of every kind. Oracle of the Lord God. (Ezek 39:17-20)

The blood and the fat of sacrificial animals were reserved for the Lord (Lev 3:2-5; 4:8-10). Those animals that regularly fed on carrion were regarded as unclean (Lev 11:13-19; Deut 14:11-18, 21). The shocking image of the Lord preparing a sacrifice in which humans were slaughtered for food was probably known to Ezekiel from Zephaniah 1:7 where it appears that the syncretists in the royal household were to be killed as sacrificial victims on the day of the Lord:¹⁴⁹ "Yes, the Lord has made ready a sacrifice, he has made holy the ones he has summoned." The magnitude of the sacrificial feast envisioned in Ezekiel 39:17-20

thoughts of aggression that will arise in his mind (38:10-12). From a human perspective, Yhwh manipulates Gog (cf. Exod 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10).

¹⁴⁶ Allen (*Ezekiel 20-48*, 203) finds the sequence of devouring the corpses in 39:17-20 after the burial of corpses in 39:11-16 to be logically incoherent. But the vast number of corpses and the extended time that the burial process required (39:14) indicates that both devouring and burial could be simultaneous processes of eliminating the corpse contamination.

¹⁴⁷ Omit 39:18b as a gloss.

¹⁴⁸ Read *wērōkēb* with LXX, Peshitta, and Vg.

¹⁴⁹ Marvin Sweeney, "Zephaniah," 2.493-526, here 2.504, in *The Twelve Prophets* (2 vols.; Berit Olam; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000).

is made all the more shocking by the invitation to birds and animals and by the encouragement that they indulge to the point of surfeit.¹⁵⁰

The returned exiles, who are envisioned as surviving untouched by the onslaught of Gog's forces, are the ones who will be called upon to purify the land by removing all traces of the human remains of Gog's forces (Ezek 39:9-16). The Lord has designated "for Gog a well-known place as a grave, which is in Israel, in the 'Valley of the Ones Who Cross Over' (*gê hā'ōbērim*), east of the sea" (39:11). Odell has argued that this mass grave is located in the Hinnom Valley next to Jerusalem where the *gê hā'ōbērim* is understood to be the "Valley of the Dead."¹⁵¹ The large number of corpses to be buried in this grave may be sufficient to explain the naming of the valley as *Gê Hāmôn-Gôg*, "the valley of the hordes of Gog." But the riddling manner in which Ezekiel presents this name—particularly his identification of the city near which the grave is located as *Hāmônâ* (39:16)—leads to the question why Jerusalem would not be named directly. Boadt argues that Ezekiel refrained from naming Jerusalem in his restoration oracles and visions (chaps. 33-48) to highlight the new situation of the returned exiles living directly under the Lord's sovereign rule (Ezek 34:11-16; 35:8-12; 36:26-30; 37:27-28).¹⁵² The process for making sure that all the human remains were buried would last for seven months. "All of the people of the land" (*kol-'am hā'āreṣ*, v. 13) were expected to assist. But there was to be an inspection team, assisted by those who would bury the remains recovered. This team was to scour the entire land.¹⁵³ If a bone were discovered, it was to be visibly marked until it could be taken to the mass grave and buried (vv. 14-15).

Corpse contamination, which was one of the most potent forces of defilement in the priestly system (Num 19:11-13), also occupied Ezekiel in his vision of the restored Jerusalem: priests were to refrain from entering the sanctuary for fourteen days after attending to the burial of a near relative (44:25-27). The concern for the defiling force of a corpse may have been driven by the need to have the dead buried quickly and properly. But the special provisions for the priest avoiding contact with a corpse may point to a battle with ancestral and

¹⁵⁰ Fitzpatrick (*The Disarmament of God*, 99 n. 62) notes that the animals are acting in accord with the biblical created order in their consumption of humans who have died.

¹⁵¹ Margaret Odell, "The City of Hamonah in Ezekiel 39:11-16: The Tumultuous City of Jerusalem," *CBQ* 56 (1994) 479-89, here 485.

¹⁵² Lawrence Boadt, "Rhetorical Strategies in Ezekiel's Oracles of Judgment," 182-200, here 193, in *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literary Criticism and Their Interrelation* (ed. J. Lust; BETL 74; Leuven: Leuven University/Peeters, 1986). With regard to the enigmatic phrase: "Also the name of the city shall be *Hāmônâ*" (39:16), Odell ("The City of Hamonah in Ezekiel 39:11-16," 479-89, here 486-89) claims that the circumlocution of *Hāmônâ* was used because the returned exiles were demonstrating their renewed relationship to the Lord by purifying the land of corpse contamination.

¹⁵³ Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 108.

hero cults where the corpse was placed in sacred space and offerings were presented to the deceased person at this point of contact between the physical and metaphysical worlds.¹⁵⁴ Such a concern for avoiding the worship of royal ancestors seems to be the issue that Ezekiel addresses in 43:7 where he reports the Lord declaring that “never again shall the house of Israel and its kings defile my holy name with their harlotries and their memorial stelae for their kings (*pigrê malkêhem*) at their deaths.”¹⁵⁵ Just as Gilgamesh erected a statue of Enkidu to receive funerary offerings, so also did the Ugaritic royal family make sure that offerings were given to its deceased ancestors.¹⁵⁶ Such a royal ancestor cult in preexilic Judah may be the object of condemnation in Ezekiel 43:7.¹⁵⁷

In the Mesopotamian *Cuthean Legend*, the speaker Naram-Sin purports to be Naram-Sin of Akkad (2254–2218) and regrets that his royal ancestor Enmerkar did not erect a stele that would have led him to pray for Enmerkar and, more importantly, to learn from him.¹⁵⁸ Enmerkar could have inscribed the lesson on the stele of how important it is not to ignore omens from Šamaš, particularly those about refraining from battle. The punishment for Enmerkar was that “the ghosts (*eṭemmū*) of his family, the ghost(s) of his offspring, the ghost(s) of his offspring’s offspring . . . will drink muddy water and not drink clean water” (ll. 25–27). The point here is that Enmerkar’s sin would make restless the ghosts of his descendants through the generations.¹⁵⁹

In Naram-Sin’s own experience, he went into battle against King Anubani and his hordes of birdlike human invaders (seven kings with 360,000 troops) from the north who first devastated eastern Anatolia and Syria and then invaded Mesopotamia.¹⁶⁰ Naram-Sin ignored omens telling him not to

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 234–37.

¹⁵⁵ Margaret Odell, “What Was the Image of Jealousy in Ezekiel 8?” 134–48, here 140–41, in *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis; London: T&T Clark, 2004). Steven S. Tuell (*The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48* [HSM 49; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992] 40) claims that the problem is the erection of royal stelae to commemorate Israel’s royal dead.

¹⁵⁶ Levine and Tarragon, “Dead Kings and Rephaim,” 649–59.

¹⁵⁷ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 583–84; Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 257.

¹⁵⁸ Astour, “Ezekiel’s Prophecy of Gog and the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin,” 567–79, here 572–73. Joan Goodnick Westenholz (*The Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997] 264) notes that Enmerkar was the second king of the dynasty of Uruk according to the *Sumerian King List*. Tremper Longman III (*Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: A Generic and Comparative Study* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1991] 115) summarizes the various proposals for the identity of the speaker: Naram-Sin of Isin or of Ešnunna or of Assyria.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Bottéro, “La Mythologie de la mort en Mésopotamie ancienne,” 25–52, here 28–29, in *Death in Mesopotamia*.

¹⁶⁰ Astour (“Ezekiel’s Prophecy of Gog and the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin,” 576) notes the similarities of the storyline of the *Cuthean Legend* and Ezekiel 38–39 and claims

enter into battle with these invaders. After losing 120,000 troops the first year, 90,000 the second year, and 60,700 the third year, Naram-Sin was confused and depressed. He sought omens from Ea, who then apparently approved his going out to battle against this superhuman foe. When Naram-Sin brought back prisoners of war, he again sought direction from omens. He was instructed by Ištar not to harm the prisoners but to leave vengeance to Enlil who would annihilate them at an undetermined future date (ll. 132–33). In light of what Naram-Sin learned in this experience, he wrote a message for future kings on a stele and deposited it in the sanctuary of Nergal in Cutha (ll. 151–53). This message contained the following surprising exhortation to pacifism:

Do not be perplexed! Do not be confused! Do not fear! Do not tremble! Let your fundamentals be sound. Do your task within the lap of your wife. Fortify your walls. Fill your canals with water. Your storage bins, your grain, your silver, your goods, your possessions, bring them into your fortified city. Bind your weapons and put them in the corners. Maintain your capacity for battle. Keep your head up. Let him range through your land. Do not go forth. Let him disperse the cattle. Do not test him. Let him devour the flesh of your followers. Let him murder. Let him go home. Stay in your place. Be disciplined. Answer them: “Here, my lord.” Repay them good for their hostile acts. Surpass them in the value of gifts and desired objects (that you give). (ll. 156–74)¹⁶¹

According to this text, Naram-Sin learned to pay attention to oracles, which led him progressively to turn from war toward pacifism. For he took prisoners but did not mistreat them and then instructed future rulers not to go to battle against a foe. It seems highly unlikely that such a utopian message would come from a royal court;¹⁶² nevertheless, Neo-Assyrian copies from the courts of Essarhaddon and Assurbanipal and a Neo-Babylonian copy from the time of Nebuchadrezzar indicate that these kings valued the *Cuthean Legend*.¹⁶³ Parpola argues that the *Cuthean Legend*'s promotion of extispicy as the preeminent method for gaining information on the divine will supported Esarhaddon's desire to ignore domestic criticism on his Babylonian policies. He employed groups of harus-pices whom he knew would supply him with competing forms of advice. This

that Ezekiel knew the *Cuthean Legend*. Lawrence Boadt (“Mythological Themes and the Unity of Ezekiel,” 211–31, here 223–25, in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* [ed. L. J. de Regt, J. de Waard, J. P. Fokkelman; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1996]) agrees and argues that Ezekiel intended to create a mythopoetic account in chapters 38–39 that shows how the final cosmic battle restores the world as a critical step in bringing about a new order like the first creation.

¹⁶¹ Edition: Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *The Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997) 326–31.

¹⁶² Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (Writings from the Ancient World 19; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004) 22.

¹⁶³ Westenholz, *The Legends of the Kings of Akkade*, 263.

ambiguous form of advice then pushed decision-making away from the place of the haruspices to the royal court where Esarhaddon would have had greater freedom to choose the alternative he favored. This method was used in deciding the issue of whether or not to remake the statue of Marduk.¹⁶⁴

If Assurbanipal was aware of this instruction from the *Cuthean Legend*, there were numerous circumstances under which he chose to ignore it or to counter its message with oracles that directed him to go to war.¹⁶⁵ The following passage from his annals shows him taking vengeance upon disobedient vassals as a way of pacifying the great gods and not leaving such brutal action to one of the gods:

[Through the direction of] the *šēdu* protector god and the *lamassu* protector goddess, according to whose direction my grandfather Sennacherib had ploughed them under, I have now ploughed under the living remainder of the people as a funerary offering to him. I fed their torn flesh to the dogs, pigs, vultures, eagles, the birds of the heaven, and the fish of the deep. After I had done these things and calmed the hearts of the great gods, my lords, I took the corpses of the people—whom Erra had brought down or who had lost their lives through hunger and famine and the remains that were fed to the dogs and pigs, which blocked the streets and filled the square—and I cast their bones from Babylon, Kutha, and Sippar. I heaped them in piles. Through the art of exorcism, I purified their thrones and cleansed their filthy streets. Their angry gods and furious goddesses I pacified through offerings and lamentations. Their regular offerings, which had diminished, I completely restored as in the days of the distant past. (*Assurbanipal's Prism A* #40, IV, 70–75; #41, IV.77–89)¹⁶⁶

Assurbanipal tried to remove not only their human remains but also any vestige of their existence; by destroying their bones, he made their ghosts ineffective in the earthly sphere who then could no longer serve as “guardian spirits” for a future generation of rebels. If their bones remained intact in the land, the ancestors were believed to be able to intervene in the lives of their people. Merodach-Baladan was so concerned that his ancestors remain with his people that he had reverently dug up the bones of his ancestors and carried them with him into exile in Elam when he was pursued by the Assyrians around 700 B.C.E.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Simo Parpola, “Synthesis,” 45–49, in Hayim Tadmor, Benno Landsberger, Simo Parpola, “The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib’s Last Will,” *SAAB* 3 (1989) 3–51.

¹⁶⁵ Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 22.

¹⁶⁶ Edition: Rykle Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: Die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J and T sowie andere Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996) 44–45, 235; Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 232; Tzvi Abusch, “The Socio-Religious Framework of the Babylonian Witchcraft Ceremony Maqlû: Some Observations on the Introductory Section of the Text, Part I,” 1–34, here 15, 17, in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen* (ed. T. Abusch; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

¹⁶⁷ Cooper, *The Fate of Mankind: Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 19–33,

These brutal, desecrating actions against a foe by Assurbanipal followed the pattern not only of his grandfather Sennacherib, as noted earlier, but also that of his father Esarhaddon. For Esarhaddon claimed in his inscriptional account from Nineveh that, at the command of Aššur, Sin, Šamaš, Nabu, Marduk, Ištar of Nineveh, and Ištar of Arbela, he had subdued arrogant enemies: “the kings who dwelt in the sea” (Nineveh A–F, episode 18, l. 82)—among whom most likely was the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:1-10).¹⁶⁸ He states: “I let the jackals eat the unburied corpses of their warriors.”¹⁶⁹ These brutal actions by the seventh-century kings of Assyria were the antithesis of the pacifism promoted by Naram-Sin on his *narû*-stele in the *Cuthean Legend*. The act of crushing the bones was aimed at reducing the existence of the deceased from an *etemmu*, “ghost,” to a *zaqīqu*, “phantom,” so that the deceased was incapable of intervening in earthly affairs.¹⁷⁰ Because of the wars and disorders of their time, the Neo-Assyrians and Neo-Babylonians devoted more time than their predecessors to reflecting on the power of death.¹⁷¹

The act of destroying ancestral bones so as to silence ancestral spirits finds an analogue in the Mesopotamians’ burning of the figurines of witches in order to banish the hostile spirit of the witch. The exorcist’s burning of a witch’s figurine was designed to destroy her so as not to allow her a place of rest in the Netherworld.¹⁷² The figurine of the witch was a substitute for her

here 27, in *CANE*. Grayson (“Assyria 668–635 B.C.: The Reign of Ashurbanipal,” 142–61, here 148, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2: *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.* [ed. John Boardman et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982]) notes that Assurbanipal in 653 had the bones of a Gambulaean rebel, Nabu-šuma-ereš, brought back to Nineveh and crushed in the gate.

¹⁶⁸ Riekle Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* (AfO Beiheft 9; Graz, 1956) 57. Tzvi Abusch (“The Socio-religious Framework of the *Maqlû*: Some Observations on the Introductory Section of the Text, Part II,” 467–94, here 491–92, in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots* [ed. Z. Zevit, S. Gitin, M. Sokoloff (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995)]) notes that Esarhaddon’s making a treaty with Baal of Tyre in 676 may have influenced the composer of the text of the *Maqlû* ritual, for *Maqlû* III:133–37 is a duplicate of IV:10–13 of Esarhaddon’s treaty with Tyre. The composer of *Maqlû* may have seen the Tyrians as the enemy from the ocean who wished to regain control of the timber trade on the mainland.

¹⁶⁹ Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, 57–58. See also *Maqlû* IV:42–44; VIII:85–89; Delbert Hillers, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (BiOr 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964) 68–69. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 116–22.

¹⁷⁰ Scurlock, “Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 1883–93, here 1892, in *CANE*.

¹⁷¹ Jacobsen (*Treasures of Darkness*, 230–32) refers to an increasing level of harshness and violence in the imagery and behavior of the gods and kings in Mesopotamian literature of the first millennium B.C.E. See also Bottéro, “La Mythologie de la mort en Mésopotamie ancienne,” 25–52, here 42, in *Death in Mesopotamia*.

¹⁷² Tzvi Abusch, “The Socio-religious Framework of the Babylonian Witchcraft Ceremony *Maqlû*, Part I,” 1–34, here 12–14, in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places*.

physical reality. To burn her figurine was like burning her alive: a fate regarded by the Mesopotamians as the worst imaginable because it meant being thrust into nonexistence.¹⁷³ Cremation as a burial practice was unheard of among the Mesopotamians.¹⁷⁴

In Mesopotamia, the exposure of a corpse to birds and wild animals was regarded as a curse to be visited upon one's enemies. When Sargon II fell in battle and his body "was not properly interred in his house" (*ina bitišu lā qerub*, l. 9')¹⁷⁵—which von Soden interpreted as exposure as carrion¹⁷⁶—Sennacherib was greatly troubled about what great sin his pious father had committed that might have led to such an ignominious end.¹⁷⁷ In the ancient Near East, it was only with the Persian Zoroastrians that corpses of their own people were routinely exposed so that birds and animals might devour the dead flesh.¹⁷⁸ The Zoroastrians regarded such a means of elimination of human remains as the normative way to remove corpse contamination because they valued fire as the preeminent life-giving, pure substance that should not come into contact with the defiling power of death in the corpse.¹⁷⁹ For the Zoroastrians, the feast on the flesh of slain enemies to which the Lord invited the animals and birds in Ezekiel 39:17-21 would have seemed commonplace.

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, the new ruler of Thebes, Creon, the brother of Queen Jocasta, took the throne after Eteocles and Polyneices, the sons of Oedi-

¹⁷³ Tzvi Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature* (Ancient Magic and Divination 5; Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2002) 67–69.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Bottéro, "La Mythologie de la mort en Mésopotamie ancienne," 25–52, here 27–29, in *Death in Mesopotamia*; Jean-Pierre Vernant, "India, Mesopotamia, Greece: Three Ideologies of Death," 75–83, here 78–79, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (ed. F. Zeitlin; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁷⁵ Tadmor, Landsberger, Parpola ("The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib's Last Will," 3–51) publish here K.4730 (+) Sm. 1876.

¹⁷⁶ Tadmor, Landsberger, Parpola ("The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib's Last Will," 3–51, here 4, 28) quote from von Soden's *Herrscher im alten Orient* (Berlin: Springer, 1954) 103–5. However, Tadmor speculates that Sargon's body may have fallen into the hands of the enemy, was lost on the battlefield, or was cremated.

¹⁷⁷ Simo Parpola ("Synthesis," 45–49 in Hayim Tadmor, Benno Landsberger, Simo Parpola, "The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib's Last Will," 3–51, here 48–49) argues that Sargon, at the urging of the clergy of Marduk, broke a treaty that he had made with Mero-dach-Baladan II in the presence of Aššur and Marduk.

¹⁷⁸ Bernhard Lang, "Street Theater, Raising the Dead, and the Zoroastrian Connection in Ezekiel's Prophecy," 297–316, here 309–10, in *Ezekiel and His Book* (ed. J. Lust; BETL 74; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986); Alan F. Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004) 187.

¹⁷⁹ Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) 14, 44–45; idem, "Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism," *ABD* 6:1168–74, here 1170–71.

pus who were directly in line to inherit the throne, had killed one another in battle.¹⁸⁰ Polyneices led Argive forces against Thebes. Regarding Polyneices as a traitor and a threat to Thebes, Creon issued the following directive:¹⁸¹

Eteocles, the most skilled of all with the spear, the one who perished defending this city, shall be buried in a grave with all the burial rites owed to the noblest of the dead below. But as for his blood-brother—I am speaking of Polyneices—the fugitive who returned to his fatherland—and to the gods who were his kin—and wanted to burn it with fire from top to bottom and make us slaves, it is announced that no one in this city is to bury this one or mourn for him. But let him remain unburied, a corpse to be eaten by the birds and dogs and mutilated for all to see. (ll. 194–208)¹⁸²

Creon's decree that Polyneices could not receive a proper burial but whose corpse was to be exposed to the birds and beasts as an example of what happens to traitors was ignored by his sister Antigone.¹⁸³ She regarded both of her brothers as born from the same womb and so as equally deserving of a proper burial. Antigone's loyalty was above all to her family.¹⁸⁴ She was not yet married and now her only sibling still alive was her sister Ismene, who had decided to obey Creon's decree (ll. 61–69).¹⁸⁵

A guard reported to Creon: "Just now someone came and buried the corpse by strewing thirsty dust upon the skin, performing what is ritually required" (ll. 245–47). To discover who had performed the funeral rites on the corpse of Polyneices, the guard and his helper uncovered the corpse to see whether someone would try to bury it again. They apprehended Antigone carrying handfuls of dust to cover the corpse.¹⁸⁶ The text does not say who covered the corpse the

¹⁸⁰ Bernhard Zimmermann (*Greek Tragedy: An Introduction* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991] 65) notes that the action in *Antigone* (106–7) begins with events one day after those of Aeschylus's *Seven against Thebes*.

¹⁸¹ Tyrrell and Bennett (*Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*, 43–44) note the ambiguity around Polyneices' fight against his brother Eteocles: was it traitorous action or part of struggle over succession to the throne? Eteocles had promised to abdicate the throne after one year but reneged.

¹⁸² Edition: Hugh Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson, *Sophoclis Fabulae* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

¹⁸³ Tyrrell and Bennett (*Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*, 4–5) believe that Sophocles' audience in 438 B.C.E. would have recalled Pericles' execution and exposure of the remains of Samian generals as disloyal citizens in their attack on Miletus in 440–439.

¹⁸⁴ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy*, 29–48, here 40–41, in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988); Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*, 18–19, 28.

¹⁸⁵ Tyrrell and Bennett (*Recapturing Sophocles' Antigone*, 27, 38) note that Creon's actions toward Antigone resemble those of the Athenian governing class who have curtailed women's role in mourning the dead by insisting on public funerals.

¹⁸⁶ Morris (*Archaeology as Cultural History*, 289–90) notes that in Archaic Greece both

first time and leaves open the possibility that the gods had intervened, for the corpse had not been touched by animals nor was there a sign of tools working the ground loose that was to be used to cover the corpse.¹⁸⁷ “Whoever was the doer left no sign” (251). This initial action was too abbreviated to merit the label “burial.”¹⁸⁸ Rather as Tyrrell and Bennett argue, it was perhaps an action by the gods to preserve the corpse from corruption (cf. *Il.* 24.418–23).¹⁸⁹ When the dust flew around the corpse the second time, it occurred at noon and blinded the sentinels. The chorus described the scene: “And then suddenly from the ground rose up a dusty whirlwind, an awful distress (*ouranion achos*), filling the plain, tormenting all the forest leaves on the level ground, and inundating the upper air. With closed eyes, we endured this divine malady (*theian nosos*)” (*Il.* 417–21). The towering whirlwind and heaven-sent distress point to divine assistance for Antigone in her efforts to honor her brother (cf. *Il.* 24.113–14).¹⁹⁰ Segal sees within *ouranion achos*, “awful distress or celestial grief,” a reference to collaboration of the Olympian gods with those of the Netherworld.¹⁹¹

When confronted by Creon, Antigone showed that her primary allegiance was to her family who had died and gone to Hades (*Il.* 893–99). She said that her act of burying her brother was not a crime, for “death still longs for these customs” (*l.* 519). Creon’s son Haemon, who was engaged to Antigone, could not persuade Creon to alter his death sentence for Antigone. Her mode of death was to be entombed alive with sufficient food to clear the city of guilt for her death (*Il.* 74–76).¹⁹² Antigone’s response to this fate shows not only her loyalty to her family but also her attention to the gods of the Netherworld:

inhumation and cremation were practiced. Different cities at various points in their history favored one practice over the other. For example, Athens used inhumation from 750–700 when most Greek cities at that time were using inhumation; then it went back to cremation from 700 until 550, at which time it returned to inhumation.

¹⁸⁷ On divine intervention in both the first and second burials, see S. M. Adams, “The Antigone of Sophocles,” *Phoenix* 9 (1955) 47–62, here 52, 54; Whitehorn, “The Background to Polyneices’ Disinterment and Reburial,” 129–42, here 132; Charles Segal, “Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus,” 152–206, here 160, in *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge, Mass.: For Obelin College by Harvard University Press, 1981).

¹⁸⁸ Whitehorn, “The Background to Polyneices’ Disinterment and Reburial,” 129–42, here 130.

¹⁸⁹ Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles’ Antigone*, 57–59; Whitehorn, “The Background to Polyneices’ Disinterment and Reburial,” 129–42, here 132–33.

¹⁹⁰ Tyrrell and Bennett, *Recapturing Sophocles’ Antigone*, 65; Whitehorn, “The Background to Polyneices’ Disinterment and Reburial,” 129–42, here 135.

¹⁹¹ Segal, “Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus,” 152–206, here 171, in *Tragedy and Civilization*.

¹⁹² Segal (“Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus,” 152–206, here 174, in *Tragedy and Civilization*) points out the Creon is the leader charged with removing pollution, but he does not understand what pollution and purity are.

O tomb, o bridal chamber, o everlasting habitation, where I go to my family, of whom the largest number are among the dead. Persephone has taken the ones who have perished, of whom I am the last and the worst. I am going down to the depth before the allotted portion of my life has run out. As for going there, I now live in hope to arrive as a beloved one of my father, dearly beloved of you, my mother, and beloved also of you my brother. For when you died, I washed and prepared your bodies with my own hands, and I poured libations over the tomb. But now, Polyneices, for covering your corpse, I have received this. (ll. 891–904)

Her love for her family led her to be betrothed to Hades: “Acheron is my fiancé” (l. 816).¹⁹³ This combination of the themes of love (*erōs*) and death (*thanatos*) developed further when her betrothed, Haemon, came to her tomb to release her and found that she had hung herself (ll. 1220–22).¹⁹⁴ At this point, Creon changed his mind after being counseled by Tiresias of the evil omens in store for him and his household (ll. 1108–14). As recounted by a messenger, Creon came to the tomb and heard the voice of his son. Haemon, with eyes filled with rage (*agrios*, “savage, wild,” l. 1231), tried to kill his father Creon but missed and so turned the sword on himself.¹⁹⁵ He died embracing his betrothed Antigone (ll. 1210–40).

Earlier at the point when Creon had changed his mind about his death sentence for Antigone but before he went to her tomb, the Chorus sang the following message about the god Dionysus:

O god of the many names, the delight of the young wife of the Cadmeian clan, child of loud-thundering Zeus, the one who looks after renowned Italy, you rule the hollows of Eleusinian Demeter, accessible to all; O Bacchus, you who reside in Thebes, mother city of the Bacchic women along the flowing stream of Ismene on the ground where the dragon’s teeth were sown. You are seen in the smoky flame over the double-crested mountain where the Corycian nymphs of Bacchus dance by Kastalia’s stream. And the Nysaeian hills with ivy-colored slopes and the green coastlands rich in grapes send you forth, while followers give voice to immortal cries. You oversee the ways of Thebes. You with your mother, the one struck by lightning, honor this city as the highest of all. And now, as the city and its people

¹⁹³ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 351. Segal (“Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus,” 152–206, here 177, 180, in *Tragedy and Civilization*) states that Antigone sacrifices everything to the justice of the gods below and does not pay attention to the Olympian justice that upholds the civic order. As the bride of Hades, Antigone identifies herself with Persephone, who was associated with funerals for girls who died young. Antigone’s death “is eternal, not part of a cyclical rhythm of loss and rebirth” (203).

¹⁹⁴ Segal (“Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus,” 152–206, here 183, 197–98, in *Tragedy and Civilization*) notes that “Eros takes his [Creon’s] son from him and gives him to Antigone for an inverted union in the realm of the dead (1240–41).”

¹⁹⁵ Segal (“Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus,” 152–206, here 159, 165, 187, in *Tragedy and Civilization*) notes the breakdown of the boundary between human and beast in this savagery.

deal with the violence of disease, come with your cleansing step over renowned Parnassus or over the sighing straits. O you, choreographer of the fire-breathing stars, overseer of the nightly sayings, offspring of Zeus, appear. O lord, together with the attendants who worship you and with raving throughout the night dance for generous Iakchus. (ll. 1115–51).

Dionysus was the patron god of Thebes.¹⁹⁶ Yet at the same time he was a god who belonged to the countryside.¹⁹⁷ On festivals such as the Agrionia festival of the Doric and Aeolic areas, he took the women out of the confines of the households in the city and led them to the hillsides where they engaged in wild rituals that included tearing apart animals (*sparagmos*) and eating the flesh raw (*ōmophagos*).¹⁹⁸ The myth about Pentheus, king of Thebes, relates that he was torn limb from limb by raving maenads.¹⁹⁹ But at the conclusion of these Bacchic festivals, the women returned to their households in the city.

Dionysus functioned as a god of disorder within the civic and domestic order overseen by Hera.²⁰⁰ He tended to the life-forces that exist outside of reason and ensured that humans' fundamental connection with the earth was not ignored by the patriarchal, rationalistic order of the polis.²⁰¹ Also he was a god who did not belong to a household. He was the god who made clear that men cannot build a political community without paying attention to the forces of nature. Creon tried to promote the *nomos* of the city to the exclusion of the demands of *physis* (175–91),²⁰² whereas Antigone championed the demands of nature and earth and the *nomos* of the family as revealed by the gods (450–59). Locked in a life and death struggle, Antigone and Creon represented the opposite ways of dealing with the tension between *physis* and *nomos*.²⁰³ In the ode to

¹⁹⁶ Vernant ("Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," 29–48, here 40–41, in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*) states that Dionysus and Eros—the only two deities mention by the chorus—are associated not only with death but also with life and renewal.

¹⁹⁷ Seaford (*Reciprocity and Ritual*, 237, 246, 250, 362) notes that the cult of Dionysus functions at both the center and the periphery; nevertheless, Dionysus is a god of the wilds, a foreigner who constantly crosses boundaries.

¹⁹⁸ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 164–65; Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 257–60.

¹⁹⁹ Euripides, *Bacchae*, ll. 1099–1148; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 165; Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 284.

²⁰⁰ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 165; Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 259–60, 362.

²⁰¹ Segal ("Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus," 152–206, here 165, 202, in *Tragedy and Civilization*) notes that the "Ode on Man" (ll. 332–75) extols reason to the exclusion of myth as the way of understanding reality, but the "Ode to Dionysus" (ll. 1118–51) celebrates the mysterious, tensive unity of opposites within Dionysus.

²⁰² Segal, "Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus," 152–206, here 164, in *Tragedy and Civilization*.

²⁰³ Segal, "Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus," 152–206, here 190–91, in *Tragedy and Civilization*. Vernant (*Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy*, 29–48, here 40–41, in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*) claims that one must respect not only the family religion but also the public one.

Dionysus quoted above, the tension between opposites is constructive: light and dark, reason and madness exist together in a cosmic setting. Humans are aware that they are finite and subject to change and so must be open to learning, which is not merely a matter of intellect but also of experience. Creon collapsed because of his rigidity.²⁰⁴ Dionysus represents the balancing act that requires ongoing attention to bring *nomos* and *physis* into a tensive harmony in the polis.²⁰⁵

The power of death makes itself known within vital human relationships. Yet Ezekiel did not grant this power divine status. Its elemental force was not to distract one's attention from the universal sovereignty of Yhwh over heaven, earth, and the Netherworld. The death-dealing battle of cosmic proportions with Gog and his forces was to be left in the hands of Yhwh. The Israelites were to bury the remains respectfully and cleanse the land. Such a pacifistic attitude toward a threatening, supernatural foe was also enjoined on the Mesopotamian king Naram-Sin in the *Cuthean Legend*. His lesson of a king obeying oracles that limit human hostility often gave way to their opposite: a hostility so intense that injury was inflicted on another by desecrating the corpse or the bones of the deceased. In the *Antigone*, Creon battled against the chthonic forces that challenged the rigid rationality of his tyrannical rule. But his aggressive stance toward the elemental forces of nature and the household was self-destructive and undermined the polis he was trying to defend. Dionysus embodies the interplay between the forces of order and disorder; in his sphere, death and destruction give way to rebirth and new order. The Netherworld is a reality for Ezekiel, but he does not give its power divine status. Thus, Ezekiel appeals to the will of his audience to put their trust in Yhwh who will protect them from death-dealing forces. His concern about corpse contamination reveals that death was a powerful, invasive force within the Israelite community and serious efforts were required to contain it. In the *Antigone*, the Dionysian force indicated that human rationality was limited and needed to acknowledge and negotiate with elemental forces beyond its control. Ezekiel called his audience to acknowledge their limitations in defending themselves against death-dealing forces and to submit to Yhwh's sovereign rule. How such submission and negotiation plays itself out in the texts of each culture is fundamental to the way each culture understands the human vocation.

Respect for the remains of the dead was elemental law in ancient Israel, Mesopotamia, and Greece. It was sometimes suspended in the cases of heinous criminals and foreign foes. The Lord's delivering over the corpses of Gog's army to the birds and beasts for a joyous feast seems shocking, particularly since

²⁰⁴ Segal, "Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus," 152–206, here 156–57, in *Tragedy and Civilization*.

²⁰⁵ Segal, "Antigone: Death and Love, Hades and Dionysus," 152–206, here 184, 204–206, in *Tragedy and Civilization*.

the Lord encourages his carrion-eating guests to indulge gluttonously. Yet such harshness was part of the reality of warfare and called for an explanation. This savage harshness to the corpses is countered by their burial or that of their bones in a mass grave. When the Assyrian kings of the seventh century turned over the corpses of their foes to the birds and animals, they were acting as warriors who did so to humiliate their foes and diminish the power of their ghosts. The Assyrians were anxious about how to control such ghosts through exorcisms and other apotropaic rites. This sense that the dead person felt the consequences of what was done to his or her corpse explains why Antigone was ready to give her life to go against Creon's directives and perform the burial rites for her brother Polyneices. But above all, Antigone felt that her life was united with those who had descended to the grave.

Bones and The Renewal of Life

When Ezekiel was transported by "the hand of the Lord" and brought by "the Spirit of the Lord" into a valley filled with dry bones, he looked upon a scene similar to that confronting those returned exiles who were commissioned in Ezekiel 39:11-16 to bury the remains of the forces of Gog. Just as the number of bones after the birds and animals had devoured the flesh from the hordes of Gog's soldiers would have been great, so also were the number of dry bones on the surface of the valley in 37:2. Here no provision seems to have been made to provide a mass grave for these bones as in the case of Gog's hordes.²⁰⁶ The fallen ones in 37:2-10 were neglected and not given a proper burial. If, however, 37:12-13 is added to the picture, then there were also a significant number that were buried.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, many were left unburied, leaving the process incomplete in comparison with that carried out for Gog's forces.

The dry bones of 37:1-14 were first identified as those of the house of Israel in 37:11.²⁰⁸ This verse reports the beginning of a disputation with the exiles (vv. 11-14). The Lord informed Ezekiel that the exiles had been saying: "Our bones are dried up; our hope has perished; we have been cut off" (v. 11). The Lord

²⁰⁶ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37* (AB22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 748.

²⁰⁷ Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 2*, 257–58) regards the vision report of 37:1-14 as Ezekiel's words, consisting of an image (vv. 1-10) and an interpretation (vv. 11-14). Verses 11-14 are a disputation in which the people's words are quoted (v. 11) followed by a divine response (vv. 12-14). On the unity of Ezekiel 37:1-14, see Lawrence Boadt, "The Dramatic Structure of 37,1–14," 191–205, here 192–93, in *Palabra, Prodigio, Poesía: In Memoriam P. Luis Alonso Schökel, SJ* (AnBib 151; Roma; Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2003). For a summary of redactional proposals for verses 11-14, see Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 184.

²⁰⁸ Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann (*Ezekielstudien: zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Buches and zur Frage nach den ältesten Texten* [BZAW 202; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992] 122–24) notes that Ezekiel 37:1-14 along with Ezekiel 1–3; 8-11 privilege the group of exiles deported in 597 as an elite.

instructed him to prophesy (*hinnābē'*, v. 12) and say: "Thus says the Lord God. Look, I am about to open your graves and bring you up (*ha'ālēti*) from your graves, my people" (v. 12). This action of prophesying to the people mirrors that which Ezekiel was directed to perform toward the bones on the surface of the valley. The dispirited exiles were to see themselves as the dry bones of the valley. Just as the prophetic word triggered the reconstitution of the various individuals of the fallen army (*hayil*, v. 10) in the vision of the valley of the dry bones (vv. 2-10), so also the prophetic word would bring about the raising up the Israelites from their graves (v. 12).²⁰⁹ In the vision of the dry bones, the prophet saw the rattling bones join together to form skeletons on which the sinews took their place, the flesh went up (*ālā*, v. 8) over them, and the skin covered them.²¹⁰ The physical reconstitution of the members of the fallen army in the vision of the dry bones is paralleled by the raising up of the despairing exiles from their tombs in verses 11-14.

The rhetorical challenge facing Ezekiel was to persuade the exiles that this vision was from the Lord and was not mere wishful thinking.²¹¹ The reconstitution of the individuals in the valley of dry bones was not finished when the skin covered them. They were like lifeless statues; they had no breath (*rūah*, vv. 5, 6, 8). So the Lord instructed Ezekiel to "prophesy (*hinnābē'*) to the spirit" (*hārūah*, v. 9).²¹² *Rūah* with the definite article signals a shift in the meaning of *rūah*, which previously meant "breath" or "human spirit," but now seems to involve the wind as a symbol of the divine Spirit.²¹³ Ezekiel was then instructed to say: "Thus says the Lord God, from the four winds (*rūhôt*), enter, O spirit, and infuse these slain ones that they might live." The divine character of this Spirit is made explicit in

²⁰⁹ Stefan Ohnesorge (*Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu: zur Sicht der Zukunft Israels nach 11, 14-21; 20, 1-44; 36, 16-38; 37, 1-14, 15-28* [Forschung zur Bibel 64; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1991] 420-21) claims that because 37:17 refers to "graves" in the plural, those remaining in the land could possibly be among those to be raised up as part of the reconstituted community of exiles. Cf. Jonathan Z. Smith ("The Bare Facts of Ritual," 473-83, here 478, in *Readings in Ritual Studies* [ed. Ronald L. Grimes; Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1996] notes how among the northern hunters bones are treated like seeds, which give birth to new life after death.

²¹⁰ As a process mirroring the creation of a cultic statue, see John Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 137. As a process reversing the slaughtering procedure, see Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, 376.

²¹¹ Michael V. Fox ("The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones," *HUCA* 51 (1980): 1-15, here 7) claims that Ezekiel's strategy was to get the exiles to believe in "the reality of the irrational" or in the "plausibility of the absurd."

²¹² Boadt ("The Dramatic Structure of Ezekiel 37,1-14," 191-205, here 204-5) argues that in the ten instances of *rūah* in chap. 37, Ezekiel dramatically withholds the true nature of the spirit until the end: he moves from "spirit" (v. 6) to "the spirit" (v. 9) to "my spirit" (v. 14).

²¹³ Boadt, "The Dramatic Structure of Ezekiel 37,1-14," 191-205, here 204.

v. 14 at which point the Lord says: "I have put my Spirit in you that you might live." The fusing of the divine Spirit with the human spirit that would bring new life to the exiles was, it seems, the reality that would persuade Ezekiel's audience that his vision was actually from the Lord and would be effective. The entry of the Spirit into the individual fallen ones would bring the personal identity of these people back up out of their graves to the land of the living. The rising up of these reconstituted skeletons would be like the return from the Netherworld/Sheol: the place usually regarded in the Israelite tradition as the land of no return.²¹⁴

In Mesopotamia, the worst imaginable fate for someone would be that his body would not be properly buried. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the monster H̄umbaba of the Cedar Forest expressed an ill-wish and a curse against Enkidu:²¹⁵

I wish I had carried you and hung you on a sapling at the entrance of my forest. I wish I had allowed your flesh to be eaten by the birds of the forest, roaring ones, eagles, and jackals. . . . Other than his friend Gilgamesh, may Enkidu have no one to bury him!" (V:177–78; 257)

Whether it was the burning of the body or the exposure of it to birds and animals, this neglect of the body prevented the *etemmu* (the continuing personal identity of the human) from properly taking its place in the Netherworld.²¹⁶ As a resident in the Netherworld, the *etemmu* was a citizen of the cosmic community including heaven, earth, and the Netherworld. During the summer months, when the land was parched stubble and resembled the deathly environment of the Netherworld, the *etemmu* were believed to make their way into the earthly world. The most significant festival for the return of these spirits was the festival of Abu (July/August). In ritual meals, families would entertain the *etemmu* at this time.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Lang, "Street Theater, Raising the Dead, and the Zoroastrian Connection in Ezekiel's Prophecy," 297–316, here 313, in *Ezekiel and His Book*) argues that it is highly likely that Ezekiel was influenced by Zoroastrian teachings in his formulation of the dry bones passage and thus understands Ezekiel to be communicating a message about the resurrection of the individual and not simply about national restoration. Block (*The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, 385) agrees that the Zoroastrian belief that dry bones will be drawn together into individual living beings could be a factor influencing Ezekiel, but notes that there is no reliable attestation of Zoroastrian belief in the resurrection of the dead prior to the Greek writer Theopompus in the first half of the fourth century B.C.E. Joseph Blenkinsopp (*Ezekiel* [Louisville: John Knox, 1990] 173) also indicates that the resurrection of the individual is possibly referenced in Ezekiel 37.

²¹⁵ Brown (*Israel and Hellas*, 3.131) claims that H̄umbaba represents those realities that impede the Mesopotamian king's heroic conquest of the Mediterranean coastland.

²¹⁶ Tzvi Abusch, "etemmu," 588–94, here 588, in *DDD*.

²¹⁷ Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 463–64; Van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel*, 48–52.

The *Maqlû* ritual became important in the festival of Abu (July/August) as a ritual means for ensuring that the *etemmu* returned to the Netherworld and did not stay on earth to trouble humans. The following words of an incantation from the opening section of this ritual relate the commissioning of the exorcist to serve as a cosmic gatekeeper: “My city Zabban, my city Zabban. Concerning my city Zabban, it has two gates: one for the sunrise and another for the sunset. . . . As I cleanse you, may you cleanse me” (*Maqlû* I:42–44, 48–49). Zabban (cf. *Šāpôn*, Ps 48:3) was situated on the cosmic shore and served as the axis mundi. This exorcist was equipped by first gaining protection from the heavens and was then believed to be able to function in the Netherworld.²¹⁸ The prayers and incantations of the exorcists were important in directing this cosmic traffic and trying to make clear the boundary between earth and the Netherworld.

Ištar, the goddess who had descended and returned from the Netherworld, proposed marriage to Gilgamesh upon his return with Enkidu from slaying *Ḫumbaba*. But Gilgamesh refused her proposal with derogatory descriptions of her as a failed spouse such as the following:

. . . bitumen that [makes filthy] the one who carries it; a waterskin that [soaks] the one who carries it; a limestone block . . . stone wall; battering ram that destroys the [walls of] a hostile land, a shoe that bites the foot of its owner! What spouse of yours will exist forever? What powerful one of yours has ascended to [heaven?]” (*Gilg.* VI:37–43)

Ištar, the goddess of war and of sex, was regarded as the spouse of kings in sacred marriage ceremonies in the third millennium B.C.E.²¹⁹ As a goddess of the extremes of sexuality and violence, she was a paradoxical character unfit for marriage. Committed domestic relationships did not appeal to her.²²⁰ Gilgamesh then proceeded to list her numerous lovers and to describe their sorry fates, of whom the first was Dumuzi: “For Dumuzi, the husband of your youth, you have decreed for him a repeated wailing from year to year” (*Gilg.* VI:46–47). Beginning with the Sumerian tradition, Dumuzi was a fertility god who was the *élan vital* in plant and animal economies: e.g., the date palm; the herds of cattle, sheep, and goats; and barley. The dry, barren fields and pastures in the summer were regarded as the time Dumuzi was in the Netherworld: i.e., dead. He ascended when the autumn rains began.²²¹ Just as Dumuzi was fated

²¹⁸ Tzvi Abusch, “Ascent to the Stars in a Mesopotamian Ritual: Social Metaphor and Religious Experience,” 15–39, here 20–21, in *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys* (ed. John Collins and Michael Fishbane; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

²¹⁹ Jacobsen, “Religious Drama in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 65–97, here 65–66, 70, in *Unity and Diversity*.

²²⁰ Rivkah Harris, “Inanna-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites,” *History of Religions* 30 (1991) 261–78; George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 472.

²²¹ Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 26–27.

to spend a half year in the Netherworld because of problems in his marriage relationship with Ištar—according to the *Descent of Inanna* ll. 332–40—so also would she probably have enslaved Gilgamesh as the keeper of her earthly estate instead of bringing him into heaven. Thus, Gilgamesh rejected her proposal with abusive descriptions of her as a failed wife. In her anger, Ištar appealed to her father Anu to unleash the Bull of Heaven against Gilgamesh. In Anu's reluctance to grant her request, Ištar threatened to bring up the dead (*mitūti*) from the Netherworld to ravage the earth (ll. 96–100): a power traditionally ascribed to her.²²² The dead would presumably bring trouble by assuming the form of “ghosts” (*eṭemmū*) rather than being reincarnated.

An important way in which the divine joined with the human in Mesopotamian cultic practice was the fabrication of divine statues followed by the ritual of opening their mouths. The making of these statues in special workshops was described in the texts concerning the mouth-opening ritual.²²³ This fabrication process, as noted by Kutsko, seems to parallel the description of the reconstitution of the humans from the dried bones in Ezekiel 37:2–10.²²⁴ The initial carving of the statue from wood was then overlaid with silver and gold and adorned with jewels: steps that parallel the assembling of the skeletons and the attachment of sinews and the overlay of the flesh and the skin. The key moment of the vitalizing of these reconstituted bodies in Ezekiel 37:9 came with Ezekiel's prophesying that the divine Spirit enter them. Analogously, the Mesopotamian ritual specialist pronounced sacred words that were regarded as bringing the divine statue to life.²²⁵

Through prayer and ritual, the Greek Eleusinian mysteries aimed to equip their participants with the knowledge necessary to journey to the Netherworld and to give the right answers to Persephone.²²⁶ Concern with death and afterlife came, according to Sourvinou-Inwood, to occupy a more important place in the Eleusinian mysteries in the early sixth century B.C.E. as a consequence of Epimenides' purification of the Cylonian *agos*: i.e., the blood defilement resulting from the Alcmaeonids' slaying of the family of Cylon because of Cylon's

²²² George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 474. It seems then that Ištar was able to release the spirits of the dead from the Netherworld even though Šamaš wielded chief executive power over the Netherworld and the crossing into the upper world (see Steinkeller, “Of Stars and Men: The Conceptual and Mythological Setup of Babylonian Exispicy,” 11–47, here 27–28, in *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran*).

²²³ See pp. 133–36.

²²⁴ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 67, 102.

²²⁵ See p. 135.

²²⁶ Fritz Graf (“Dionysian and Orphic Eschatology: New Texts and Old Questions,” 239–58, here 242, in *Masks of Dionysus* [ed. Thomas Carpenter and Christopher Faraone; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993]) notes that the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries converge around the view that Persephone decides the destiny of a deceased person.

attempt to become ruler of Athens around 630.²²⁷ The concern of the cult of Demeter-Kore with the fertility of the earth and the growth of grain made it an integral part of the civic religion of Athens, even though its main sanctuary was located eleven miles from Athens at Eleusis. With an increase in the importance of solidarity within the polis at the expense of solidarity within the family, there was a heightened sense of the vulnerability of the individual in the late sixth century B.C.E., particularly when faced with death.²²⁸ Thus the Eleusinian mysteries adapted their concern with the dying and rising goddess Kore (i.e., Persephone) to provide special knowledge for the initiates that would ensure them a happy afterlife. The main festival of initiation on the nineteenth Bedromion (a month in autumn) took place in a room that could accommodate up to 3,000 people. Even though these rituals communicated sacred knowledge that only the initiated could carry with them, they were social events that created solidarity in the polis by addressing concerns of fertility and a happy afterlife.²²⁹ The climactic moment in the initiation ritual was the revelation of the *hiera*, “the sacred object.” Because it was a secret, the nature of this *hiera* is not known. Sourvinou-Inwood speculates that it was “an unseasonable ear of corn”—a sign of fertility on earth that came to symbolize a happy afterlife.²³⁰

Another cult that focused upon a dying and rising god was that of Dionysus. This concern for the afterlife in the Dionysian cult arose no later than the fifth century B.C.E.²³¹ Like the Eleusinian cult of Demeter, Dionysus’ cult was a civic institution concerned with fertility. Whereas Demeter was concerned with grain, Dionysus promoted the growth of the vine. Although Greek myth portrayed him as a stranger who had migrated to Greece from Phrygia, Lydia, or Thrace, Dionysus was an ancient Greek god mentioned in the Linear B tab-

²²⁷ Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, “Festival and Mysteries: Aspects of the Eleusinian Cult,” 25–49, here 26–27, in *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults* (ed. Michael B. Cosmopoulos; London/New York: Routledge, 2003). See Thucydides I.126.11–22. M. L. West (*The Orphic Poems* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1983] 45) gives the following dates for Cylon’s attempt to seize power: 632, 628, 624. Seaford (*Reciprocity and Ritual*, 94) notes that this purge involved not only the expulsion of the Alcmaeonids for shedding the blood of the Cylonians but also the disinterment of their ancestors’ bones in order to remove all their ties to the city.

²²⁸ Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*, 25.

²²⁹ Zaidman and Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, 138–40.

²³⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood, “Festival and Mysteries: Aspects of the Eleusinian Cult,” 25–49, here 37, in *Greek Mysteries*. Burkert (*Greek Religion*, 285) notes that a Gnostic author wrote that the high point of the Eleusinian celebration was cutting an ear of corn in silence.

²³¹ Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) 21–22; M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983) 18.

lets.²³² He was giving oracles from the tripod at Delphi prior to the arrival there of Apollo.²³³

According to the later canonical Orphic creation story titled the *Rhapsodies* (compiled no earlier than the second century B.C.E.²³⁴), the Titans covered their faces with gypsum and drew the boy king Dionysus, the son of Persephone, from his throne by offering toys to him. When he was off his throne, the Titans cut him to pieces. They boiled his flesh and roasted his innards, except for his heart, which was snatched away by Athena while it was still beating. Zeus used this heart to give birth to the second Dionysus, the son of Semele (Euripides, *Bacch.* 88–100, 519–36).²³⁵ In the earlier ritual at Delphi, Apollo took the limbs of Dionysus, which had been torn and scattered by the Titans, and buried them by his tripod.²³⁶ Here his flesh was not consumed. This ritual in which an animal representing Dionysus was torn and scattered took place in the winter when Dionysus was the primary god at Delphi. The other ritual of the burial of Dionysus' remains was enacted in the spring when Apollo held sway in Delphi.²³⁷ In the later account of the *Rhapsodies*, the burial of Dionysus was replaced by the cooking and eating of him as symbolized by a sacrificial animal.²³⁸ These rituals illustrate a distinctive feature of the traditional Dionysus: his manifestation of his divinity to humans by identifying with them without losing his distinctiveness or otherness.²³⁹

²³² Albert Henrichs, "'He Has a God in Him': Human and Divine in the Modern Perception of Dionysus," 13–43, here 31, in *Masks of Dionysus* (ed. Thomas Carpenter and Christopher Faraone; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Fritz Graf, "Dionysus," 480–90, here 480, in *DDD*.

²³³ Noel Robertson, "Orphic Mysteries and Dionysiac Ritual," 218–40, here 223, in *Greek Mysteries*; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 224.

²³⁴ Robertson, "Orphic Mysteries and Dionysiac Ritual," 218–40, here 218, in *Greek Mysteries*; West (*The Orphic Poems*, 250–51) identifies the compiler of the *Rhapsodies* as Theognetus who worked in Pergamum in the first third of the first century B.C.E. Walter Burkert (*Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004] 96) argues on the basis of the Derveni papyrus that an Orphic theogony was in written form by 400 B.C.E.

²³⁵ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 165. Radcliffe Edmonds ("Tearing Apart the Zagreus Myth: A Few Disparaging Remarks on Orphism and Original Sin," *Classical Antiquity* 18 [1999] 35–73, here 37) argues that modern interpreters read into the Zagreus myth [epithet for Dionysus from Callimachus and Euphorion] the notions that humans inherit both a divine element from Dionysus' remains and guilt from the Titans's slaying of Dionysus. He claims that these elements are first attested in Neoplatonic sources.

²³⁶ *Callimachus*. Vol. 1: *Fragmenta* (ed. Rudolfus Pfeiffer; Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) fr. 643, pp. 430–31.

²³⁷ Robertson, "Orphic Mysteries and Dionysiac Ritual," 218–40, here 223–24, in *Greek Mysteries*.

²³⁸ Henrichs, "'He Has a God in Him,'" 13–43, here 29, in *Masks of Dionysus*.

²³⁹ Henrichs ("'He Has a God in Him': Human and Divine in the Modern Perception

In other local myths about Dionysus, nursing women were visited by Dionysus and sent into a fit of madness during which they tore apart a child whom they were nursing. These myths reflected a biennial cycle of rituals concerned with the fertility of the vines.²⁴⁰ In the first winter, the vines are dead; thus the ritual has the women nursing a newborn child so as to bring the vines to life. In the spring, the women are not needed because the vines are full of grapes. In the second winter after the grapes have been harvested and crushed, the women enact the ritual of the tearing and scattering of a young male animal. In the spring, just before the fermented wine is opened, there is a ritual by the community to gather the remains of the victim. The animal victim was ritually equated with Dionysus who was regarded as transferring his vitality to nature.²⁴¹

Dionysus came to be regarded as the god who would oversee the journey of the deceased into the Netherworld to stand before Persephone.²⁴² Since 1835 more than forty gold tablets have been recovered from burials on which were inscribed directions for the person when he or she arrived in the Netherworld.²⁴³ One text from Hipponion in southern Italy in the late fifth century B.C.E. gives the following description and instructions:

Into the broad halls of Hades, there is to the right a spring; and standing next to it a white cypress tree; arriving down there, the souls of the dead grow cold. Do not go near this spring at all. But in front of it you will find the cold water flowing forth from the lake of Memory; and guardians pass above. But they will surely ask you, with their crowded thoughts, for what reason you seek out the darkness of dank Hades. Say: "I am the child of Earth and of starry Sky, and I am parched with thirst and I am perishing. But give me quickly cold water to drink from the lake of Memory." And above all, they will announce you to the king under the earth. And above all they will give you to drink from the lake of Memory. And what is more, when you have drunk, you will travel a road, a sacred road, which other famous *mystai* and *backhoi* also have tread."²⁴⁴

of Dionysus," 13–43, here 29, in *Masks of Dionysus*) cautions against reducing Dionysus' reality as a god—as the Greeks would have regarded him—and merely treating him as a force in social structures or in the human psyche.

²⁴⁰ Robertson, "Orphic Mysteries and Dionysiac Ritual," 218–40, here 223–24, in *Greek Mysteries*; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 224.

²⁴¹ Robertson, "Orphic Mysteries and Dionysiac Ritual," 218–40, here 230–32, in *Greek Mysteries*.

²⁴² Graf, "Dionysian and Orphic Eschatology: New Texts and Old Questions," 239–58, here 242, in *Masks of Dionysus*.

²⁴³ Cole, "Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields," 193–217, here 200, in *Greek Mysteries*.

²⁴⁴ Translation by Cole, "Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields," 193–217, here 200, in *Greek Mysteries* from the text established by G. Sacco, "Ges pais eime, Sul. V. 10 della laminetta di Hipponion," *ZPE* 137 (2001) 27–33. See also Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 293.

On this meadow on which the souls of these initiates (*mystai*) and bacchic followers (*bakchoi*) arrive, there are critical, irreversible decisions to be made concerning the correct route.²⁴⁵ Later, the soul will come before officials of the Netherworld and must give the proper response; the soul must also identify itself. According to the gold tablets, it is imperative that the soul remind the gods of its special status as one initiated into the mysteries. If the soul's memory or voice fails, it can simply put forward the gold tablet that will speak for it.²⁴⁶ On this meadow, the soul is protected by the rituals it has undergone in the cult of Dionysus, for Dionysus will share with them his divine status.²⁴⁷ A fourth-century vase shows Dionysus shaking hands with Hades to conclude a deal on behalf of his Theban cousins. The meadow on which the souls enter is a transitional space. They, like Orpheus, would have looked forward to further incarnations.²⁴⁸

The Orphics, who attributed their writings to the poet Orpheus, seem to have comprised two schools: (1) the Athenian-Eleusinian school, which aligned with the Demeter-Persephone myth and its mystery rites; (2) the Italian Pythagorean school, which focused upon the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. The Bacchic cults overlapped with the Orphic concerns about burial and afterlife. The Pythagoreans shared with the Orphics concerns with asceticism and the doctrine of metempsychosis. So the distinct groups of the Orphics, Bacchics, and Pythagoreans had overlapping areas of interest.²⁴⁹ Their view of the *psychē* as immortal was of fundamental significance. Such a view contrasted markedly with the weak, almost unconscious *psychē* that formed the shade in Homer's Netherworld. With this higher valuation of the soul, the individual associated with these cults began to see a markedly higher value in his or her own existence independent of the city and the clan. At the same time, the higher valuation of the soul tended toward a lower valuation of the body, since this entity had to account for the troubles experienced by the person who had a soul joined with the gods.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis*, 81–87.

²⁴⁶ Cole, "Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields," 193–217, here 208–9, in *Greek Mysteries*.

²⁴⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 295.

²⁴⁸ Cole, "Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields," 193–217, here 213, in *Greek Mysteries*. West (*The Orphic Poems*, 26) claims that the possessors of the gold tablets cannot be labeled Orphics; nevertheless, he says that the possessors of the tablets would have been drawn to Orphic revelations and mystery cults. On the basis of two new gold lamella from Pelinna at the end of the fourth century B.C.E., Graf ("Dionysian and Orphic Eschatology: New Texts and Old Questions," 239–58, here 244, in *Masks of Dionysus*) claims that these "Pelinna tablets are the first nonliterary, epigraphic attestation of the doctrine of Persephone determining the destiny of the soul and Dionysus affecting her decision."

²⁴⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 300.

²⁵⁰ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 139.

When Ezekiel prophesied to the bones, the whole field of bones began to rattle. The corporate character of the revival of the dead bones was evident. When Mesopotamian ritual specialists were concerned with wandering spirits during the feast of Abu, their rituals were aimed at all the visiting spirits from the Netherworld to return them to their proper place in the cosmic order. What the words of Ezekiel and the words of the Mesopotamian ritual specialist have in common is their capacity to move persons between the realms of death and life. The effectiveness of Ezekiel's word in summoning the divine Spirit to bring the exiles to life finds an analogy in the Mesopotamian ritual specialist to bring the divine presence into a statue. Despite the differences between the two examples, the use of the linguistic medium to invite the divine reality to merge with corporeal objects is a significant similarity. The merging of divine with physical reality is also evidenced in the coming of Dionysus to join with the bodily reality of humans: e.g., drunkenness, madness, ecstasy. These manifestations of Dionysus in local civic cults then took on an eschatological dimension as individuals in the fifth century began to experience greater anxiety in the face of death, since social change had weakened their sense of identity as tied to a family that extended through the generations. So the followers of Dionysus called upon this dying and rising god to oversee their journey in the afterlife; they were often also initiates in the Demeter-Persephone cult, such as that at Eleusis, which enabled them to appeal to these fertility deities who had strategic connections to the authorities in the Netherworld.

Conclusion

The Lord told Ezekiel not to mourn for his deceased wife and to have the exiles imitate him upon news of the fall of Jerusalem. This shocking act of dissociation from deceased people to whom one is closely related means that they are thrust into nonexistence. But Ezekiel's harsh message is joined to a promise of a new existence. By letting go of their sinful past with all the relationships bound up with it, the exiles can open themselves to be revived as a new people through the action of the Lord's Spirit. Gilgamesh had difficulty letting go of his friend Enkidu. Yet his wanderings in the wild and his journey to find immortality led him to see the wisdom of Šiduri, the ale-wife, who warned him that he was squandering his earthly existence by trying to find immortality. Achilles also was squandering his humanity by refusing to let go of his rage against Hector for killing his friend Patroclus. Priam's supplication for the body of his son Hector in order to give him an honorable burial transformed Achilles from his savage state of anger into a renewed human, civilized way of being. Dying to hatred gives way to new life.

The descent into the Netherworld involves not only the deceased but also draws down those associated with him or her. With the rapid sinking of the ship

of Tyre and its king, the commercial partners and allies wept bitterly. With the precipitous collapse of the Pharaoh, many of his allies were swept into the Netherworld with him. Ezekiel declares that they will not return. Even if Pharaoh's allies take consolation in his company, they are imprisoned in the land below. Enkidu also was snared by the power of the Netherworld and was not able to reascend as Gilgamesh and Odysseus did in their journeys into the regions of the afterlife. Gilgamesh went to the blessed isle of Utnapishtim after a dangerous journey in which he could have been snared by the Waters of Death or other mortal dangers. There, Utnapishtim instructed him on the true way of life as a king. Odysseus went to the meadow near the entry to Hades in his effort to gain direction from Tiresias. Odysseus was the hero who wanted to get home; Gilgamesh was the hero who tried to overcome the limits of the human condition—the finality of death. These two shamanlike heroes brought back an otherworldly message in their dangerous journeys toward the afterlife.

Ezekiel conceived of a Netherworld of deceased persons who were conscious of rank. Those soldiers who did not receive the proper funerary rites were sent to the lowest regions of Sheol, while those who were honored as heroes held the central position. As dark and lifeless as Sheol was, Ezekiel still speaks of an inhabited place whose inhabitants have been influenced by the earthly conduct of themselves and their people. In Mesopotamia, Enkidu's description of the residents of the Netherworld emphasizes that the deceased one's relationship with the living has an ongoing impact on his or her happiness. In Presocratic Greece, the residents of Hades whom Odysseus sees guided by Persephone are lifeless shades until they are given sacrificial blood to drink; then their memory and consciousness revive. Like a city-state, the Mesopotamian Netherworld was ruled by Ereškigal along with her husband Nergal and a bureaucracy. The Greek house of Hades was administered by Persephone along with her husband Hades and a bureaucracy. There are hints of different places in the afterlife in Homer (*Od.* 4.561–69) and Hesiod (*Op.* 167–73) with regard to the Isles of the Blest. But the first clear articulation of different locations for which humans could try to qualify appears in Pindar's *Olympian* 2.56–77 around 476 B.C.E.: the place for the heroes and the place for the damned flanked the traditional area of lifeless, neuter existence.

Ezekiel assured his audience that trusting in the Lord's protection would be rewarded against even the most formidable worldwide coalition. The pacifistic way of life of the returned exiles in Ezekiel 38–39 finds a parallel in the way of life enjoined upon the Mesopotamian king Naram-Sin when confronted with the aggression of the northern hordes of Anubanini. Naram-Sin was to trust in the intervention of Enlil just as the Israelites were to trust in the protection of the Lord. Naram-Sin instructed later kings through his *nārû*-inscription that failure to heed divine omens was a recipe for disaster. The disaster that befell the forces

of Gog in their advance against Israel was their annihilation. Not only did all the soldiers fall, but their homes in Magog were consumed by fire (Ezek 39:6).

The corpse contamination resulting from the demise of Gog's forces was answered by two measures: (1) the desecrating action of birds and animals feeding on the corpses and (2) the careful survey of the land of Israel to make sure that every bone was buried in the mass grave in the valley of *Hāmôn-Gôg*. The first measure of the animals and birds' feeding on the corpses was a punishment that warriors from Mesopotamia (e.g., Enkidu) and Homeric Greece (e.g., Hector) would have dreaded. Improper burial rites in Mesopotamia and Greece denied one entry into the Netherworld. The bones, which in the long run would have preserved a trace of the human form, were regarded as the point of access to the dead by those they had left behind. In cremation in Archaic Greece, the bones were carefully drawn from the initial fire to be properly buried (*Il.* 23.252–54). So the burial of the bones of Gog's forces would not only have purified the land of Israel but also would probably have assisted the foreign soldier in gaining access to the Netherworld. Antigone's performance of the burial rites for her brother Polyneices, in spite of the prohibition decreed by Creon, shows how important the treatment of the corpse was for the afterlife of the deceased and the renewal of the life of those left behind.

Although Creon tends to be demonized for his rigid refusal to listen to his son Haemon and others in their request that he roll back his prohibition on the burial of Polyneices, his efforts to promote loyalty to the city were not without some basis. Nevertheless, the key point in Sophocles' play is that the ruler who refuses to recognize the "beast within" the humans in his civic community, including the beast within himself, will pay a heavy price for trying to control what should rather be tended. The beast that surfaced in Creon's son Haemon and played itself out in the collapse of his family shows that Dionysus, the god of order and disorder, has a vital role to play in keeping the civic community in tune with nature and its forces.

The *novum* in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones is the fusing of the Lord's Spirit with the reconstituted Israelites. This act of the Creator placing *rūah* in the creature fashioned from the earth reflects the creation story of Gen 2:7. But the identification of the *rūah* as *rūhi*, "my Spirit," in Ezekiel 37:14 indicates that a measure of divine life has been given to these reconstituted exiles. In the Mesopotamian tradition, the *etemmu* was alive in the Netherworld and could communicate with the living at particular festivals and on occasions when called upon by the living. But the proper place of the *etemmu* was the Netherworld and so could offer only a very subdued, melancholy form of existence. In the cult of Dionysus, the worshippers were moved to ecstasy or madness by the infusion of Dionysus' reality into them. As the Bacchic rites of these cults took on the form of mystery cults in certain places, this advent of Dionysus in the lives of the initiates was also a means of guiding them to a happy afterlife.



SPIRIT AND HOLINESS THE EMBODIMENT OF DIVINE ORDER

Many important lessons in life can only be grasped by personal change or transformation. The alcoholic must learn those factors and situations that pressure him to take a drink and thus put him at risk in the ways he relates to others and to his own body. The athlete must remain faithful to a training program that regulates diet and exercise. He must listen to his body at the same time he tries to push his performance to new levels. The scholar must accept criticism along with affirmation of his work if he is to see his work as a contribution to a larger common effort of understanding nature and culture, the human and the divine.

Humans are embodied beings who observe reality from particular times and places. The capacity to think and reason takes place within an embodied self. However, Parmenides claimed to have transcended the prison of the senses through a shamanlike chariot ride upward to the goddess who then instructed him on the way of truth. Parmenides then offered a deductive argument on unchanging truth, which he claimed was the true reality in contrast to the way of opinion. This quest for objective truth is commonly regarded as the activity of reason. For Parmenides, the reasoning activity (*nous*) first of all was based on and shaped by the apprehension of what was real; this visionary, intuitional element was primary and formed the basis for including logical reasoning within the *nous*. Logical reasoning is a process of clarifying and cleansing what was in

the reason from the beginning.¹ A perennial philosophical question is the extent to which the reasoning process leads to the discovery of objective truth or is merely the construction of a rationale reflecting the values of the thinker. Even though reason cannot operate on a completely objective basis, one can distinguish reason from affection through reason's capacity to deliver a higher level of objective truth. The standing place from which we exercise reason shapes what we see.² Thus, the problems posed by the body to the reasoning process must be addressed by working with the body and not escaping from it.

Ezekiel's visionary experiences created a larger context for the renewal of the exiles. His visions and oracles laid the groundwork for the proper functioning of the noetic and affective capacities of the exiles. His provocative rhetoric (e.g., Ezek 23:5-21) and extreme oracles (e.g., Ezek 20:26) aimed to move his hearers to a new standing place from which to use their noetic capacity. Ezekiel addressed the distortions that embodied experience can bring to one's perception by dealing with the body. To ignore the body only further distorts the proper functioning of the rational or noetic capacity.

When Ezekiel spoke of Israel's receiving a new heart (i.e., a new locus for noetic and affective capacities), he announced Yhwh's promise to restore a harmonious relationship between thinking and feeling by a divine gift. The exile highlighted the fact that there was a fundamental flaw in the way that the Israelites perceived reality. It was a flaw that had plagued them from the time of their election in Egypt and was one that they were unable to overcome. The only way to correct it was to receive a new heart. Yhwh promised to give Israel this new heart; Israel was challenged to accept it (Ezek 18:31).

For the exiles, their removal from the land of Israel, as traumatic as the experience may have been, was nevertheless an opportunity for them to reevaluate their way of life and their relationship with Yhwh. The changes they experienced in terms of geography, culture, and political circumstances made them question the extent of Yhwh's power and justice. Their restoration to the land would lead to self-examination (Ezek 36:31-32). These alterations in understanding how one fits into the larger scheme of things are most often triggered by shifts in one's environment and by factors beyond one's control. Yet the acceptance or rejection of the change facing one remains a personal choice.

The exiles' acceptance of a new heart would be the first step in their renewal as symbols of Yhwh. The second step would be their reception of a new spirit, which would be a participation in Yhwh's Spirit. This participation in Yhwh's Spirit would be essential to their transformation into authentic symbols of Yhwh

¹ Kurt von Fritz, "Nous, Noein, and Their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy (Excluding Anaxagoras): Part I. From the Beginnings to Parmenides," *Classical Philology* 40 (1945) 223-42, here 241-42.

² Von Fritz, "Nous, Noein, Part I," 223-42, here 235.

in the sight of the nations. A symbol is a visible, material reality that signifies an absent or invisible reality by participating in the signified reality. The visible embodied character of the symbol is essential to its capacity to communicate. Such a symbol can be either animate or inanimate. Yhwh chose Israel in Egypt to be a living symbol of his presence in the world, and thereby accepted the risk that a symbol may function poorly. Ezekiel informed the exiles that their plight and that of the people in Jerusalem was a consequence of their sins and was a means of purifying them. He counseled the Israelites that when they are renewed through purification and the reception of a new heart and a spirit that shares in Yhwh's Spirit, they will be able to use their reason and emotions in an integrated and constructive way.

The primary objective of this capstone chapter is to present Ezekiel 36:16-38 as a passage that draws together the key themes of Ezekiel 1-36 and anticipates those of Ezekiel 37-48. Two additional objectives of this chapter are: (1) to continue the comparative approach of this study by presenting thematic parallels to Ezekiel 36:16-38 from Mesopotamian and Presocratic texts and (2) to use Ezekiel 36:16-21 and 22-38 and its parallels as a basis upon which to summarize key themes from the Ezekielian, Mesopotamian, and Presocratic texts used in this study. The material of this chapter will be arranged according to the following five sections:

- (1) an analysis of Ezekiel 36:16-21 titled, "The Foundational Significance of Yhwh's Fidelity to his Promise in His Governance of Israel";
- (2) a presentation of Mesopotamian parallels to Ezekiel 36:16-21, accompanied by a summary of related themes from the Mesopotamian material presented in the first six chapters of this study, entitled, "The Central Role of Marduk's Divine Names in Shaping the Governance Structure of the Mesopotamian Community";
- (3) a presentation of Presocratic parallels to Ezekiel 36:16-21, followed by a summary of related themes from the Presocratic material presented in the first six chapters of this study, entitled, "The Politics of Status within the Emerging Greek Polis";
- (4) an analysis of Ezekiel 36:22-32, along with Mesopotamian and Presocratic passages addressing related themes, entitled, "An Authentic Symbol of the Ruler of the Cosmos: A People or a Statue?"; and
- (5) a concluding section titled, "The Return to Yhwh's Holy Mountain, which deals with Ezekiel's presentation of the restored exiles as symbols of Yhwh insofar as they present themselves as a "sweet-smelling offering" (20:40) on Yhwh's holy mountain, a scene which along with Ezekiel 37:26-28 anticipates Ezekiel's final vision of restoration in chapters 40-48.

The Foundational Significance of Yhwh's Fidelity to his Promise in His Governance of Israel

Israel's defilement, which resulted in the desecration of Yhwh's name, caused Yhwh to purify Israel so that Israel might once again function as an authentic symbol of Yhwh among the nations. Ezekiel 36:16-21 summarizes key themes of Ezekiel's preaching: defilement of the land by idolatry and the pouring out of blood, the punishment of such defilement through the anger of the Lord, the exile, and the Lord's acting for the sake of his name. In this passage, the Lord describes the house of Israel as a group that has defiled the land by its ways and deeds as though it were a menstruant (*hanniddâ*, 36:17). Such provocative imagery calls to mind the priestly legislation demanding that measures be taken to contain this common form of contagion lest the accumulation of defiling actions make it impossible for the Lord to remain in the land (Lev 15:31; 16:16, 21, 33).³ The normal character of these bodily emissions of blood associated with reproduction is not at issue; rather the important concern from the priestly perspective is whether or not the people are attentive to the Lord dwelling in their midst and so carry out the necessary purificatory procedures.⁴ As Milgrom has argued, the priestly rationale for categorizing menstruation as defiling is that it is a sign that the woman's reproductive capacities were not at that time employed in producing offspring; therefore, the bloody emissions were associated with the force of death and needed to be contained.⁵ If measures were not taken, the contagion could spread throughout the land and show that the Israelites did not take seriously that such defilement was incompatible with the holiness of the Lord. So this highly charged imagery of the house of Israel as a menstruant gives an explanation for the Lord's removing Israel from the land.

The exile was a drastic measure that the Lord took reluctantly (Ezek 20:17, 23). In his account of the origin of the Israelite people in Egypt, Ezekiel noted how the Lord had refrained from striking down the first generation of Israelites even before they had been brought out of Egypt. The Lord said: "I acted for the sake of my name by not desecrating it in the sight of the nations among whom they were, in whose sight I would make myself known by bringing them out of the land of Egypt" (20:9). Ezekiel notes that the Lord exercised the same restraint toward this first generation in the wilderness (20:14) and their offspring (20:22). The manifestation of the Lord's name—i.e., his reality, power, or being (cf. Exod 3:14)—was to occur in his fidelity to his promise to be the God of the Israelites. The Lord's fidelity to his promises indicated not only the extent

³ Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17–26* (VTSup 67; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 86, 117.

⁴ Tarja S. Philip, *Menstruation and Childbirth in the Bible* (Studies in Biblical Literature 88; New York: Peter Lang, 2006) 70–71.

⁵ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 733, 953.

of his power but also the depth of his commitment to the Israelites.⁶ Ezekiel explains here that although the Israelites were no longer deserving of the Lord's care, the Lord would follow through on his promise to be their people.

The Lord's capacity to carry out his promise became a central issue. This point is strongly emphasized in 20:32-33 in which the Lord insists that the exiles will not assimilate to the nations by adopting idolatrous practices of worshiping statues of wood and stone. Rather he swears: "As I live, oracle of the Lord God, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm, with poured-out wrath, I will be king over you" (20:33). The use of the oath formula emphasizes again the Lord's commitment to his word; his integrity demands that he follow through on his original promise that he would be their God. Therefore, the Lord's action of bringing the exiles out from the nations is due first of all to the Lord's commitment to his word.⁷ It is in this connection between promise and fulfillment that reality is revealed.⁸ Ezekiel emphasizes the objective character of the Lord's fidelity to his promise. It is not for the sake of the Israelites that the Lord acts—a subjective relationship—but rather for the sake of his name: i.e., his reputation as one who has the power and the will to follow through on his promises (Ezek 36:22). The objective character of the world that Ezekiel describes is anchored in the divine promise. What is real rests upon the speech act of a sovereign Deity.

The opinion of the nations is important insofar as it is shaped by what they see. If their misperception of the reality of the Lord had arisen from their own imaginations (cf. Ezek 13:3), then their errors would have recoiled on themselves. But because their perception that the Lord was not able to prevent the exile of his people was based on observable facts, the Lord had to act to reveal the truth of his power and being (Ezek 36:21-24; cf. 20:9, 14, 22). The exiles entry into other lands provoked the nations to say: "These are the people of Yhwh, and from their land they have gone out" (36:20). The Lord had exiled the Israelites because it was necessary to punish them for their failure to recognize him as their God. The Lord knew that the exile would reflect poorly upon him, yet he had to act to correct the infidelity of the Israelites (20:8, 13, 21). This Lord, whose speech acts determine what is real, is also the God who manifests his reality through symbols. Israel became a symbol of the reality of

⁶ The concern for the name is more than reputation (*pace* Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997] 629). The revelation of Yhwh's reality is integral to his Being (Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969] 48; cf. Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus* [Louisville: Westminster, 1974] 74; Karl Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 221–52, here 224, in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, *More Recent Writings* (trans. Kevin Smyth; Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966)

⁷ Franz Sedlmeier, *Studien zu Komposition und Theologie von Ezechiel 20* (Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge 21; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1990) 337, 397.

⁸ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 408.

the Lord on the world stage. Because he had promised to be their God, their welfare pointed beyond themselves to the power and character of the Lord. Their embodied existence made a statement about the reality of the Lord. Ezekiel makes clear that the Lord does not retreat from the authority of the facts (36:20). He will use the stage of history to make manifest what is truly real: the reality of his character as a faithful God who has power over the forces of life and death (36:26-31).⁹ In Ezekiel 36:21, the Lord says: "I relented on account of my holy name (*šēm qōdšī*), which the house of Israel had desecrated among the nations to which they had come." It was the embodied presence of the Israelites in foreign lands that drew the Lord's name out of the sphere of the holy and treated it as though it were common or profane. The reality of the Lord was present in this corporate body of the house of Israel in more than a figurative way. The Israelites pointed beyond themselves to the God who is present with them in a partial way. A locative manner of describing such presence is through the term *qādōš*, "holy." Porthuis has described the term "holy" as one whose meaning is to be interpreted somewhere between the literal and the figurative.¹⁰ The reality it communicates is intertwined with the physical. Just as a thing is composed of matter and energy, so also is a body composed of material and an animating force: i.e. a *rūah*. To claim that the *rūah* is simply a metaphor for the energy that animates the body is to gloss over the impact that the *rūah* ("breath, spirit") with its directive powers has on the body. There is a crossover between the material and immaterial in the human body that eludes definition.¹¹

So also the "holy" designates a reality that becomes intertwined with the material, but eludes definition. The "holy" is an emanation of the ineffable reality of the Lord.¹² Metaphors such as light, brilliance, and glory point to this transcendent, yet immanent reality. However, the locative use of the term "holy" in the priestly worldview designates the temple as a special place in which the Lord may be accessed. Whatever persons or objects in which the holy becomes entwined must be kept separate from what is impure. By definition, the holy is "the separate"; in practice, it defines itself over against the profane and the impure, where contact of the holy with the profane is neutral but with the

⁹ Walther Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh* (trans. D. W. Scott; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982) 35–36, 89.

¹⁰ M. J. H. M. Poorthuis, "Introduction," 3–26, here 5, 9, in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (ed. M. Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

¹¹ Poorthuis ("Introduction" 3–26, here 5, in *Purity and Holiness*) frames the issue in terms of the polarity between the literal and the figurative understandings of "the holy": the truth about the holy is somewhere in between for it is neither literally a material substance nor merely figuratively a material substance. Another way to state the issue is that sacred rituals make the metaphysical tangible.

¹² Baruch Schwartz, "Israel's Holiness: The Torah Traditions," 47–59, 53, in *Purity and Holiness*; Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 123.

impure is forbidden.¹³ As Milgrom points out, the holy designates the sphere of life, whereas the impure designates the sphere of death.¹⁴ According to the priestly worldview, these two spheres must be kept separate. There is to be no mixing or intermingling of the holy with the impure: the sphere of life with the sphere of death. Although the intermingling of the forces of life and death occur in the profane sphere, the individuals who enter into the holy place must take preventive measures to remove the impure from their persons prior to entry. Through their attention to the ongoing tension between the holy and the impure, the Israelites were making concrete the irresolvable tension between the physical and the metaphysical, a practice that acknowledges the distinction and the continuity between the divine and the human in the cosmic hierarchy.¹⁵

When the Israelites were exiled into foreign lands, their symbolic presence sent a message to the nations that the Lord was not to be taken seriously as a powerful deity. His status as sovereign ruler of the nations was contradicted by their plight. Yet the Lord had decreed the slaughter of the Jerusalemites and the defilement of the temple (Ezek 9:5-7) to make clear that he required exclusive allegiance from the Israelites. Compromises to the principle of worship of “Yahweh alone” would not be tolerated, for such worship constituted a rebellion against the Lord’s sovereignty and distorted a true understanding of the cosmic hierarchy. The necessary purge of the land required that the Lord depart from the temple and bring along exiles, from whose number he would reestablish the nation (36:24-28).

The exile would supply data to a ruler such as the king of Tyre to claim that he was a more powerful ruler than the king of Jerusalem and his protector deity Yhwh. The symbolic system of the Phoenician mercantile empire had created an illusion of power to the extent that the king of Tyre was claiming to be a sovereign answerable to no one higher than himself (Ezek 28:2). This Tyrian symbol system from coinage to luxurious ships had been designed to accumulate and display wealth. Now Ezekiel proclaimed that such a self-serving, idolatrous system would begin to weaken from within by the king’s violence against his subjects and partners (28:16) and from without by the assault of imperial Babylonian armies (28:7-8). It was important that Ezekiel criticize the king of Tyre and his self-aggrandizing statements, for his continuing rule after the fall

¹³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 732. David P. Wright (“Unclean and Clean (OT),” *ABD* VI:729–41, here 738–41) points to a further gradation in identifying a communicable impurity as a more dangerous pollutant than a noncommunicable impurity.

¹⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 46–47.

¹⁵ For Ezekiel’s formative influence on the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26), see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 46–52. For Ezekiel’s dependence on the Holiness Code, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–23* (AB 3A; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 1362; Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1982) 46–48.

of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. could have given ammunition to those skeptical of Yhwh's sovereignty.

Yhwh exercised his sovereign rule through his promises and pronouncements. Would-be human usurpers of Yhwh's sovereignty would try to find ways to manipulate material and human resources to demonstrate a measure of control over nature and history (28:4-5; 29:9; 31:10; 32:2). Such a manipulative use of power entailed a diminishment in the role of the personal agent. Here, the acknowledged powerbrokers were those who had economic, military, and magical power at their disposal. By contrast, Yhwh invested in human beings. He committed himself to the Israelites, even though the risk was high that they would be unmindful of him. The Israelite prophets were charged with keeping before the Israelites their relationship with Yhwh in the midst of the contradictions and setbacks of their experience. The prophets' intuitive reception of divine messages highlighted the person-to-person character of their relationship with Yhwh much more so than that of extispicists or astrologers. Controversies provoked by prophecies would lead to greater attentiveness to the ways in which Yhwh was intervening as a personal agent in the events of Israel's history. Those prophets who backed away from the contradictions in Israel's life under Yhwh's rule and tried to create an illusion of peace would find that their duplicitous constructions would tumble under Yhwh's onslaught (13:10-16). For those female prophets who used manipulative techniques akin to magic, Yhwh would intervene personally to disable such techniques (13:20-21). Ezekiel taught that the protection of the exiles against hostile forces could be gained only if Yhwh had not sent such forces as a punishment and if Yhwh saw fit to intervene (13:22). It was through such interventions—either for punishment or for rescue—that Yhwh brought the Israelites to recognize the reality of his sovereign power (13:23).

The judgments that Ezekiel announces as events in which Yhwh makes himself known typically include extensive destruction of human life and property. Yet Ezekiel never ascribes the term *hāmās*, "violence," to Yhwh's actions, but rather reserves it for those unjust, destructive actions that humans carry out against other humans (7:11, 23; 8:17; 9:9; 12:19; 28:16; 45:9) along with their property and sacred traditions (22:26). Yet the exiles had questions (18:2, 25, 29) about the justice of the Babylonian onslaught against them. Repeatedly in chapters 1–24, Ezekiel reports that punishment is coming against the Israelites and then concludes: "then you shall know that I am the Lord" (7:4) or "then you shall know that it is I, the Lord, who strike" (7:9). For many, these actions by the Babylonians would qualify as *hāmās*. But Ezekiel repeatedly names these painful actions as punishments rather than as meaningless acts of violence (11:10, 12; 12:20; 15:7; 17:21; 22:22; 23:49). These punishments were brought against murderers and those who transgressed the cultic and ethical laws essential to honoring Yhwh and maintaining the social fabric. The purging of transgressors

from the community by physical force was equivalent to a cultic act of purification. This act of elimination on the physical level is analogous to the removal of impurities on the metaphysical level by a *ḥattā't* sacrifice. When the disequilibrium wrought by transgressors has reached a breaking point, divine intervention is required to restore a just order in the community. Such destruction is aimed at making a new start. For the Lord, destruction is not an end in itself.

The distortions in Israel's relationship with Yhwh were rooted in its early history, yet duplicated in every generation (20:5-32). The capacity of the Israelites to make good moral judgments was impaired.¹⁶ The service of idols and the shedding of blood were transgressions that fed upon one another. Those who served idols believed that they were doing something to cultivate relations with the powers that they regarded as running the world. But Ezekiel judges them mistaken. They have placed attention on idols that should have been directed to the Lord. Such a mistake was fundamental, for it allowed the human and animal dimensions of the human person to take over the perceptual apparatus without any input from the divine. Ezekiel makes this clear in the case of the king of Tyre who became enamored of his own beauty (28:2-5). Among the exiles, those who secretly worshiped idols and also wanted to consult Yhwh were condemned as ones whose "heart" the Lord must seize (14:4-5). The Lord threatened to confront such persons directly (14:7-8). Such an encounter would give a person direct knowledge of the Lord's reality and of his intolerance for the attention given to other so-called gods. Ezekiel refers to idols as *gillūlim*, "shit gods," and refrains from using any term that might give a hint that these fabrications carried some divine reality.¹⁷ Any "lifting of the eyes" to these idols was an action that stirred up the fury of the Lord (18:6, 12, 15; 20:7, 14; 33:25).

Among the Jerusalemites were those whose worship of idols so distorted their perception that they interpreted the Lord's laws calling for the offering of the firstborn as literal commands for the sacrifice of their firstborn (20:25-26; cf. 16:20; 23:36). The sacrifice of both male and female children was practiced in Canaanite-Phoenician cults, and so the transfer of this practice to the worship of Yhwh perhaps seemed logical in the eyes of those who engaged in this practice. Ezekiel refers to these laws as "not-good" (*lō' tōb*, 20:25). The problematic character of these laws seems to arise more in the way they were interpreted rather than in the ambiguity of their formulation.¹⁸ The Israelites' obedience to

¹⁶ Jacqueline Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live? The Problem of the Moral Self in Ezekiel* (BZAW 301; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000) 26, 110.

¹⁷ Daniel Bodi, "Les gillūlim chez Ézéchiél et dans L'Ancien Testament, et les différentes pratiques cultuelles associées à ce terme," *RB* 100 (1993) 482-83; John Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 32-39.

¹⁸ See the discussion on pp. 270-72.

these “not-good” laws and their disobedience to the Lord’s laws points to major deficiencies in their capacity to discern right from wrong.¹⁹ The Lord intended to defile them and horrify them to bring their worship of idols to the fore. Their punishment came through actions at their own hands because their relationship to Yhwh and their understanding of what he required of them were skewed. Yet this practice of child sacrifice was not a momentary aberration, but one that the Lord says the Israelites continued to practice in Ezekiel’s time (20:31).

The expulsion of the Judahites from their land made it impossible for them to carry on a sacrificial cult. They were deprived of one of the primary ways of gaining a measure of communion with the Lord and interceding with him to remove the ill effects of their sins. The consumption of the meat of the sacrifice was much more than the physical act by which the human participants gained nourishment. As meat offered to the Lord, it had been transferred into the sphere of the holy. Therefore, those who ate this meat had to be free from all impurities and had to follow the laws governing the consumption and disposal of the sacrificial meat. This act of eating before the Lord was a way of communing with the Lord. This sacramental act was an important avenue within the priestly cultic system for cultivating one’s relationship with the Lord, but it was not the only way. For Ezekiel, obedience to the statutes and ordinances of the Lord was primary. This emphasis on obedience to laws is corroborated by the absence of exhortations to pray in the Book of Ezekiel. The direction of communication is almost exclusively one-way in the Book of Ezekiel: the Lord speaks and Ezekiel and the Israelites are to listen and obey.²⁰ In a few isolated instances, Ezekiel raises a question about what Yhwh asks of him. But the muted Ezekiel is usually unhesitating in his obedience. Thus, Ezekiel does not function as an intercessor, but rather as one who communicates the unalterable fate that awaits the house of Israel. Within such a fated universe, there is still an element of choice for the individual Israelite: whether to accept or reject the events of judgment and salvation that Ezekiel has communicated to the Israelites.

The expulsion of the exiles from the land and the diminishment of their freedom under Babylonian rule was an experience of death for the exiles. Figuratively, they descended into the Netherworld through their deportation. But Ezekiel’s ministry, which was focused on judgment, indicated that the exiles’ descent into the Netherworld did not end with their deportation. The destruction of Jerusalem would also mean severing ties with their relatives and loved ones left behind. The Lord demanded of Ezekiel and the exiles that they not mourn over the deceased Jerusalemites (24:15-24). This may indicate that they were to act like priests who kept themselves free from corpse contamination

¹⁹ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, 88, 91, 95.

²⁰ Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (VTSup 76; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 17.

(Ezek 44:25-27), but it also may have indicated a participation in a version of the *kārēt*, “cutting off,” that the Lord was executing against the Jerusalemites. Their ties with the living were to be severed; their memories would be celebrated no more because of their idolatrous actions and their pouring out of blood. Such an act of separation was an even more severe form of punishment than burial in a mass grave or burial without honor. In both cases, the memory of the person was not celebrated. But in the *kārēt* penalty, which seems to be extended into the injunction that the exiles are not to mourn over the fallen Jerusalemites, the Lord takes extra steps to ensure that the memory of the person is wiped out. The harshness is somewhat moderated when the Lord’s prohibition on mourning is seen as only the first part of the sign action upon hearing of Jerusalem’s destruction (24:17aα); the second part of the action is for the exiles to put on a turban and sandals and thus to make a new start (24:17aβ-b). It is a time of transition: they are to rise up out of their figurative Sheol and begin a new life.

The Central Role of Marduk’s Divine Names in Shaping the Governance Structure of the Mesopotamian Community

Just as Ezekiel proclaimed that the revelation of the true reality of the name of Yhwh was Yhwh’s primary reason for restoring the Israelite exiles, so also Babylonian theologians organized the fifty names of Marduk at the end of the *Enūma Eliš* to make known the sovereign character of Marduk’s rule (*EE* VI:121–VII:144). These names give us a wide-ranging knowledge of this deity. The name of a person or thing in ancient Mesopotamia was not merely a superficial label but rather an emanation of the person or thing itself.²¹ Bottéro states that Marduk’s name materializes and makes precise his destiny.²² This priority of the word or name in determining a destiny is illustrated by the tablet of destinies, which had the potential to alter the ME, i.e. the traditional order of heaven and earth.²³ This unique tablet illustrates the symbolic power of a written document in Mesopotamia. At the origin of writing, the first words were pictographs, showing a strong relationship between the sign and the concrete thing. To make the writing system functional, a sign had to represent things that

²¹ Jean Bottéro, “Les Noms de Marduk, l’écriture et la ‘logique’ en Mésopotamie ancienne,” 5–28, here 26, in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein* (ed. Maria de Jong Ellis; Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts & Sciences; Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1977).

²² Bottéro, “Les Noms de Marduk,” 5–28, here 26, in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*.

²³ Wim van Binsbergen and Frans Wiggermann, “Magic in History: A Theoretical Perspective, and its Application to Ancient Mesopotamia,” 3–34, here 11, in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. Tzvi Abusch, Karel van der Toorn; Ancient Magic and Divination 1; Groningen: Styx, 1999).

were similar and not simply individual things. Thus, the meaning of a sign had a symbolic character in which the relationship between the sign and the thing was both concrete and polyvalent.²⁴

Marduk's names not only recapitulate the central actions of the preceding narrative of the *Enūma Eliš*, they also identify key salvific functions that he regularly carried out to keep the universe intact and to bring it abundance: e.g., to make vegetation flourish, to provide honorable dwelling places for the gods, to maintain justice and peace. Vanstiphout has characterized this composition as a "theological didactic poem" that has synthesized various traditions to proclaim the sovereign rule of Marduk.²⁵ The centralization of divine functions in Marduk proposed by this text results in a form of henotheism.²⁶

Of Marduk's fifty names, five are Tutu names (nos. 13–17). The homophones of the phoneme TU (e.g., TU = "effect," TU = "restore," TU = "purify," TU = "devise," TU = "spell," TU = "be angry," TU = "rise," TU = "assembly") provide the basis for the commentary on the name Tutu, which elaborates several of Marduk's salvific actions:²⁷

Tutu, the architect of their renovation, may he purify (*lillil sāgīšunu*) their holy rooms that the gods might find rest. May he produce an incantation (*šipti*) that the gods might find peace. . . . Tutu is Ziukenna, life of [his] workforce, the one who made firm the holy heavens for the gods, took hold of their ways, and assigned them their places. May he not be forgotten among the multitudes. May they hold firm his deed. . . . Tutu is thirdly called Ziku. He maintains the purification rites (*mukil tēlilti*). The god of the good spirit (*il šāri šābi*), the lord who hears and responds (to prayers); the one who creates riches and wealth and makes prosperity endure. . . . Fourthly, as Agaku may, the multitudes glorify Tutu. The lord of the pure incantation (*bēl šiptu elletim*), the one who gives life to the dying (*muballiṭ mīti*), the one who restores the imprisoned gods. . . . Fifthly, Tutu is Tuku. May his pure incantation be always on their lips. He by his holy incantation (*šiptišu elletim*) has rooted out all the evildoers. (*EE VII:9–11, 15–17, 19–21, 25–27, 33–34*)

Marduk is honored as the god who would keep the dwellings of the gods free from defiling influences by his powerful word. Because of Marduk's interventions, the gods would maintain their status in the cosmic order. Human beings

²⁴ Bottéro, "Les Noms de Marduk," 5–28, here 26–27, in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*.

²⁵ H. L. J. Vanstiphout, "Enuma Elish as a Systematic Creed: An Essay," *OLP* 23 (1992) 37–61, here 52.

²⁶ Vanstiphout, "Enuma Elish as a Systematic Creed: An Essay," 37–61, here 49.

²⁷ Also the rhyming phoneme DU gives rise to another shorter series of homonyms in the commentary on the name Tutu (e.g., DU = "shrine," DU6.DU (?) "relieve, TU+DU = "turn back"). See Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses* (2 vols.; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 1.392 n. 4; Bottéro, "Les Noms de Marduk," 5–28, here 16–17, in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*.

would be urged to remember and honor them. The winds, which factored strongly as a power under Marduk's control in his battle against Tiamat (*EE* IV:96-99), are represented here in their favorable state as a sign of Marduk's attentiveness to prayer and his provision of abundance. The power of Marduk's word is emphasized in his capacity to raise the dying and banish evildoers by his incantations. The emphasis upon humans' remembering Marduk's deeds and praising Marduk for his assistance supports the view that worship played an integral role in the maintenance of cosmic equilibrium for the ancient Mesopotamians. Humans' failure to acknowledge Erra was the rationale given in the poem *Erra and Išum* for the devastation of Babylon (I:120; IIID:15).

The radiance that emanated from the gods was vital to the well-being of the land.²⁸ The purification that Marduk effected in their sanctuaries was an important element in the gods' ability to communicate their vitality to the land. The radiance (*melammu*) and brilliance (*namru*) that shone forth from the gods was not only perceived visually but also felt.²⁹ The blinding radiance of the gods had a physical impact on humans that would make them shrink back. The communication of this divine vitality to the land and its people demanded attention to the integrity of the god's cultic space. Prayers to Marduk in royal inscriptions (e.g., VAB 4 122 [Nbk 15-Stein Tafel X] I:51-71, *Erra* IX:45-65) and elsewhere implored his favor. Marduk's incantations, which played a vital role in separating the sacred from the profane (e.g., *Erra* VII:11, 26, 34), would have been recited by various cultic functionaries who called upon Marduk for assistance.³⁰ For the imparting of holiness to a person or a thing, Akkadian literature, according to Wilson, demarcates this action as a divine function; however, the maintenance of purity requires human involvement.³¹

In the poem *Erra and Išum*, Marduk was persuaded by Erra to leave his throne in Babylon to have his cultic statue refurbished (IIAB:1-3). Marduk knew from experience that his departure from the throne would bring chaos to the land and to the cosmos (I:131-37). Nevertheless, Marduk acceded to this cleansing process. To reveal his character as the god of war and pestilence, Erra thrust the land into chaos (IIC2:38¹-IIIA25). He felt that he had been over-

²⁸ Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (trans. T. Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 117.

²⁹ Foster, *Before the Muses*, 1.31-32; Irene J. Winter, "The Eyes Have It: Votive Statuary, Gilgamesh's Axe, and Cathected Viewing in the Ancient Near East," 22-44, here 36-38, in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing As Others Saw* (ed. Robert S. Nelson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³⁰ Graham Cunningham, "Deliver Me From Evil": *Mesopotamian Incantations, 2500-1500 B.C.* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1997) 124-26; Walther Sommerfeld, "Marduk," 360-70, here 368, in *RLA* 7 (1987-1990).

³¹ E. Jan Wilson, "Holiness" and "Purity" in *Mesopotamia* (AOAT 237; Kevelaer/Neukirchen: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener Verlag, 1994) 87.

looked not only by Marduk, whose stay in the refurbishing workshop he had overseen, but also by humans who had neglected to offer him sacrifice (I:120; IIC2:29'–35'; IID:15). So Erra planned to show the gods and humans that they would pay a heavy price for slighting him. This example of the politics of sacred space echoes the all-too-human form of competition for honor in which the participants believe that there is no clear winner unless a corresponding loser is identified.

The Assyrians' quest to establish their rule over Babylonia in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. fired up resistance, particularly among the Chaldean and Aramean tribal elements of the Babylonian population. To counter the tribal threat, the Assyrian kings tried to court the favor of the Akkadian population in the Babylonian cities, particularly by observing the time-honored *kidinnūtu* privileges. The author of "Advice to a Prince" (seventh century B.C.E. through an "if/then" omen style) warned any tyrannical king of the consequences of imposing taxation, conscription, or other burdens on cities exempted by the *kidinnūtu* privileges. He invoked Marduk, Erra, Addu, Ea, and Nabû to repay such a king and his realm with punishments of the same kind and intensity. In 689, the Assyrian king Sennacherib (704–681) devastated Babylon as part of his campaign to subdue the resistance in Babylonia and probably also to repay the Babylonians for the earlier abduction of his son Ashur-nadin-shumi.³² At this time, Sennacherib also took the statue of Marduk to Assyria and destroyed many cultic sites in Babylonia, actions that were regarded as sacrilegious not only by the Babylonians but also by many Assyrians.³³ Sennacherib's son Esarhaddon (680–669) invested heavily in trying to defend his father's actions and to repair the damage done to the Babylonian sites. It was not until the first year of Assurbanipal (669–627) that the repairs on the temple of Esagila were far enough advanced for the statue of Marduk to be returned there. As the central symbol of Babylonia in the first millennium B.C.E., the statue of Marduk factored heavily into the literary and theological rationales explaining the rise and fall of Babylonia's fortunes, as illustrated by the poem *Erra and Išum*.³⁴

The Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal were particularly attentive to the messages that the gods might be communicating to them. Intui-

³² A. K. Grayson, "Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 BC)," 103–41, here 107, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2: *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.* (ed. John Boardman et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

³³ Barbara Nevling Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics: Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon's Babylonian Policy* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1993) 6–7, 151–52.

³⁴ Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics*, 6–7, 151–52; Angelika Berlejung, *Die Theologie der Bilder: Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik* (Frieburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) 151.

tive prophecy rose in status under Esarhaddon's rule to the point that prophets began to be perceived by well-established astrologers and diviners as rivals.³⁵ The collections of oracles from the cult of Ištar of Arbela testify that certain messages were regarded as having continuing significance. As written messages, these oracles could be reinterpreted in application to new circumstances.³⁶ Ištar, the goddess of war and sexuality, wielded increasing influence in the seventh century as her guidance was sought by kings and commoners alike.

The primary form of intermediation with the divine realm remained that of inductive divination through extispicy and hepatoscopy. Ezekiel 21:26-27a refers to the Babylonian king's use of extispicy, along with divining by arrows and teraphim, to decide whether to advance against Jerusalem or Rabbat-Ammon.³⁷ These methods of divination produced oracles that were induced by humans. The non-induced terrestrial and astral omens were taken seriously, but they were much less useful in providing specific, timely advice on questions that the king or others might pose.

Reading the signs given by the gods alerted humans to bad fates. The next step was to employ an exorcist to try to move the gods to alter such a fate. Incantations were addressed to gods and not to objects and forces. Even though figurines representing the maleficent force might be used, the powers that countered such a force were the gods.³⁸ So Ea and Marduk were revered as the patrons of magic; these personal divine agents were believed to have at their disposal the power to alter the ME: the traditional or natural order of the world.³⁹ The services of diviners and exorcists by the king (and by others who could afford them) showed how Mesopotamians tried to create a sacred canopy to shield themselves from hostile powers that would bring premature death. When an

³⁵ Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (SAA 10; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993) 8; Martti Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources* (SAAS 7; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998) 101.

³⁶ Karel van der Toorn, "Mesopotamian Prophecy between Immanence and Transcendence: A Comparison of Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Prophecy," 71–81, here 75, in *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (SBL SymS 13; Atlanta: SBL, 2000); Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (SAA 9; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997) LIII.

³⁷ Moshe Greenberg, "Nebuchadnezzar at the Parting of the Ways: Ezek 21:26-27," 267–71, here 270–71, in *Ah, Assyria. . . Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph'al; Scripta Hierosolymitana 33; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991).

³⁸ Stefan Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung: eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituelle (Namburbi)* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994) 60.

³⁹ Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 237.

ominous astral omen threatened Esarhaddon, he installed a substitute king.⁴⁰ After this individual functioned for a short time as king, he was put to death. The logic of this form of human sacrifice is that the threatening supernatural force would be satisfied with the life of the one who was on the throne, whether or not he was the legitimate king. Other rituals aimed at countering unnamed maleficent forces were those associated with witchcraft. The Mesopotamians' conception of the witch changed as the culture developed from that of the rural village to that of the imperial city. In the village, the witch was revered initially as a healer; later, she began to be scapegoated as the one who drove away a person's protector god. In the urban and imperial settings, the anxieties attendant upon the decreasing influence of the family and the increasing complexity of social life in the city led to the demonization and blaming of witches for these troubles. The exorcist adapted his rituals to banish the witch to the Netherworld where he could exercise some influence on her travels to the upper world.⁴¹

The poem of *Erra and Išum* probably became one of the most widely known Mesopotamian literary works because it placed a name on the violence that increasingly threatened Mesopotamian society during the first millennium B.C.E. Erra sends a clear message in this poem that if he is not honored, he will make people recognize his reality: i.e., the reality of war and famine. Sections of this work were transcribed onto amulets that people could wear to appease Erra's desire for recognition.⁴² The violence of Erra in this poem offered an explanation for the harsh measures used by the Assyrians to keep the Babylonians in line. The massive destruction of Babylon described in the poem would probably have resonated with those Babylonians who experienced Sennacherib's onslaughts against Babylon.

If Erra was to be recognized and honored by the Mesopotamians, this would indicate that the people understood that the forces of violence in the human person and in the society could not be banished. The challenge was to hold these forces in check. Išum challenged Erra that he had become carried away by the mania of his assault upon Babylon and so had become more like a human through his lack of restraint than like a god (*Erra* IV:3). In the *Enūma Eliš*, Marduk's imprisoning of the demons from Tiāmat's army in the Apsū left them as a potential threat to the earth (IV:115–18; V:73–76). When Marduk split and secured Tiāmat's carcass, he established a great cosmic bond (*durmahiš urakkis*,

⁴⁰ Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, Part I: *Texts* (AOAT 5/1; Kevelaer/Neukirchen: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener Verlag, 1970) #279, 280.

⁴¹ Tzvi Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and Literature* (Ancient Magic and Divination 5; Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2002) xvi, 4–8, 65.

⁴² Luigi Cagni, *The Poem of Erra* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1977) 61 n. 171.

EE V:59). It seems that this bond is analogously referred to in the poem *Erra and Išum* as the “regulation of heaven and earth” (*šipit šamê u eršetim*, I:133), which was undone when Marduk left his throne at an earlier time of a cosmic deluge. Thus, when Marduk did not exercise his sovereign rule, chaotic forces such as Erra and the Sebetti overran the inhabited earth. The battle against the forces of chaos were also symbolized by the Assyrian crown through the royal lion hunt.⁴³ Foreign foes or anxieties about the unknown were summed up in the figure of the lion, which the king then subdued and thereby enhanced his profile as the protector of the realm.

Marduk's forty-ninth and fiftieth names listed in the *Enūma Eliš* describe his function of maintaining the boundaries between heaven and earth and between the earth and the Netherworld. “May Nebiru take hold of the passageway between heaven and earth so that they may not cross from above to below without paying heed to him. Nebiru is his star, which he has made appear in the heavens” (*EE* VII:124–26). This star of Marduk is identified in the text *Astrolabe B* as the last month of the year (Adar, i.e., February–March) or the first month of the new year (Nisan, i.e., March–April).⁴⁴ It is associated with Marduk's capacity to regulate the movement of the stars. Marduk's final name refers to his control over the boundary between the earth and the Netherworld: “Because he created places and formed the Netherworld, father Enlil has declared his name ‘Lord of the World’” (*EE* VII:135–36). Here Marduk absorbs functions previously carried out by Šamaš as the deity that regulated the cosmic traffic between the earth and the Netherworld (*Šamaš Hymn*, 33–34; cf. *EE* VI:127–28).⁴⁵ Here Ea also acknowledges Marduk's power over the “procedures” (*riksu*) of his “offices” (*paršu*, *EE* VII:141), whereas previously in the Eridu tradition, as articulated in the Sumerian text *Enki's Ordering of the World*, Enki/Ea was sovereign.⁴⁶ Marduk's control over the movement of the stars points to his influence on the activities of the exorcist: a practitioner who

⁴³ *RIMA* 2 A. O.101.2, ll. 33–35; *RIMA* 3 A.O.102.6, iv.40–44.

⁴⁴ Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998) 116.

⁴⁵ Lambert, *BWL*, 128. *EE* V:25–45, where Marduk assigns duties to Šamaš, is an unreadable section of the tablet. See Wolfgang Heimpel, “The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts,” *JCS* 38 (1986) 127–51, here 127; Piotr Steinkeller, “Of Stars and Men: The Conceptual and Mythological Setup of Babylonian Extispicy,” 11–47, here 24, in *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran* (ed. A. Gianto; BibOr 48; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005).

⁴⁶ Vanstiphout, “Enuma Elish as a Systematic Creed: An Essay,” 37–61, here 45–46; F. A. M. Wiggermann, 1857–70, here 1868–69, in *CANE*; Samuel N. Kramer and John Maier, *Myths of Enki, The Crafty God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 43–44; Gertrud Farber, “Inanna and Enki,” *COS* 1.161.

was strengthened by the “stars of the night” in his dealings with the forces of the Netherworld (*Maqlû* I:42–49).⁴⁷

An honorable burial was a necessity for a Mesopotamian if he or she was to take up residence in the Netherworld and thus remain a member of the cosmic community. The mourning ritual was designed to facilitate the separation between the dead person and his or her loved ones. If a deceased person’s bones were not properly entombed, then the survivors would have no place to bring offerings.⁴⁸ Gilgamesh assured Enkidu that he would be honored greatly at his death (*Gilg.* VIII:44; cf. VII:134–47). Yet Gilgamesh found it impossible to let go of Enkidu. As he remained in this liminal state, he began to try to find a way to escape the fate of death. Thus he journeyed beyond the Waters of Death in the cosmic ocean to the island of Utnapishtim to try to find the secret of eternal life (*Gilg.* X:212–XI:285). The lot of those in the Netherworld is disclosed in Tablet XII of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Enkidu describes how those who receive offerings tend to be happier than the others (*Gilg.* XII:102–10); however, the general picture of the Netherworld is that of a place of darkness and gloom. It was a land of no return organized like a city-state. Seasonal returns of ghosts at the festival of Abu were only temporary. Appeals were made in the *Maqlû* ritual for Šamaš, who ruled over the upper and lower worlds, to return the ghosts to their proper abode below.

The honor that humans show to the gods was a practice fundamental to the maintenance of cosmic harmony in Mesopotamia. Worship, the search for direction through oracles and omens, and recognition of divine rule in sociopolitical affairs were vital actions by which the Mesopotamians made sense of the positive and negative forces that shaped their environment. The fragile equilibrium between the forces of life and death in the Mesopotamian world demanded that humans understand their place and role in the cosmic hierarchy.

The Politics of Status within the Emerging Greek Polis

The importance of honoring the gods for the well-being of the Greek city-state is manifest in the widespread construction of temples in seventh-century Greece, the time of the emergence of the polis. Influenced by the monumental architecture of Egypt, the city-states competed with one another to construct imposing statues of their deities and proceeded to build more elaborate temples

⁴⁷ Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft*, 69–70; Steinkeller, “Of Stars and Men: The Conceptual and Mythological Setup of Babylonian Extispicy,” 11–47, here 12, in *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran*.

⁴⁸ Jo Ann Scurlock, “Death and Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought,” 1883–93, here 1883–84, in *CANE*; Jean Bottéro, “La Mythologie de la mort en Mésopotamie ancienne,” 25–52, here 37–38, in *Death in Mesopotamia* (CRRRA 26; Mesopotamia 8; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1980).

to house them.⁴⁹ This practice gradually led to the displacement of the altar as the center of the sanctuary; thereafter, the temple and the cult statue came to share the spotlight with the altar.⁵⁰ The city assembly exercised oversight in the construction and maintenance of the temples.⁵¹ The priests did not form a hereditary caste with control over the religious affairs of the polis.⁵²

The honor shown to the Greek gods by cultic offerings can be traced back to the second millennium.⁵³ Such a practice was well established by the time the Homeric texts were formed. So in the following excerpt from the *Iliad*, the value ascribed to such offerings is made clear by the offended Poseidon:

Father Zeus, is there any mortal left on the limitless earth who informs the immortals of his thoughts and schemes? Do you not see that the long-haired Achaeans have again built a wall to defend their ships and have dug a trench around it but have not offered glorious sacrifices to the gods? Now the fame of it will be as far as the light of dawn scatters, and the wall that Phoebus Apollo and I toiled to build for the hero Laomedon will be forgotten. (*Il.* 7.446–53)

Zeus assured Poseidon that his status would not be impaired by the lack of recognition by the Achaeans. Yet Poseidon was not convinced. Thus, Zeus made a concession to Poseidon by promising him that he could destroy the wall after the war with Troy ended and the Achaeans returned home (*Il.* 8.458–63). Later, Poseidon and Apollo diverted the waters of all the rivers that flowed from Mount Ida to the sea, which had risen through heavy rains sent by Zeus, and channeled their waters for nine days against the wall (*Il.* 12.12–33). So even though Zeus knew from his cosmic perspective that Poseidon was overreacting to the lack of recognition shown him by the Achaeans, he nevertheless made provision in the near future for Poseidon and Apollo to remove whatever competition the Achaeans' wall might pose to the wall of Poseidon and Apollo at Troy. The amount of

⁴⁹ R. A. Tomlinson, *Greek Sanctuaries* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1976) 29; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space: Fragments of a Discourse," 1–17, here 10, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches* (ed. Nanno Marinatos and Robin Hägg; London: Routledge, 1993); Helmut Kyrieleis, "The Heraion at Samos," 125–53, here 126, 150, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*.

⁵⁰ Birgitta Bergquist, *The Archaic Greek Temenos. A Study of Structure and Function* (Skriver Utg. Av Svenska institutet in Athen. 4. 13; Lund: Gleerup, 1967) 122.

⁵¹ Nanno Marinatos, "What Were Greek Sanctuaries? A Synthesis?" 228–33, here 229, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985) 91.

⁵² Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 95; Robert Garland, "Priests and Power in Classical Athens," 75–91, here 75–80, in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. Mary Beard and John North; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁵³ Walter Burkert, "From Epiphany to Cult Statue: Early Greek *Theos*," 15–34, here 24, in *What is God? Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity* (ed. Alan B. Lloyd; London: Duckworth, 1997).

praise given by humans had an impact on the Olympian gods, although it seems unlikely that such praise would have altered the hierarchy among the Olympian gods. Poseidon's protest against the wall makes clear that he was interested in the very act of receiving recognition, for it was important to him that his personal reality be disclosed in the public arena.⁵⁴ Zeus' questioning of Poseidon's all-too-human concern for recognition points to a deeper reality of truth (*alētheia*) and justice (*dikē*) that will prevail in due course.

The belief that the world was ruled by a more objective order than the personal, anthropomorphized rule of the Olympian gods characterizes the Milesians in sixth-century Ionia.⁵⁵ Anaximander's view of the world as a geometric drumlike cylinder held together and sustained in its place by the tension between opposite forces posited that the principle (*archē*) by which this equilibrium was maintained was "the boundless" (*to apeiron*). In contrast to Poseidon or Zeus, this abstract governing force (*to apeiron*) would not be swayed by the amount of praise or recognition given it by humans. This depersonalization of cosmic rule removed an element of arbitrariness from its functioning, but at the same time distanced its functioning from the world of human interaction.

The language of the personal rule of the gods dominated in both the cultic and political spheres in Presocratic Greece, for the scientific views of the Milesians and their successors were primarily those of an intellectual elite. The cultic terms *pure* and *impure* communicate the notion of more objective realities than do the terms *praise* and *blame*. Yet the efforts that humans exert to keep impurities away from sanctuaries are ways in which they honor the deities resident there. This overlap between the objective and the subjective character of the cosmic governing forces is evident in the thought of Empedocles.⁵⁶ He described the world as being shaped by varying combinations of the basic elements of fire (*pyr*), water, earth, and air (*aēr*; *DK* 31B17, l. 18). He accounted for the change from life to death of an animal as a rearrangement of these basic elements.⁵⁷ Yet when he described the forces struggling to bring order into the cosmos, he spoke of the tension between the forces of love and strife. He believed that the

⁵⁴ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Atlantic Heights, N.J.: Humanities, 1980) 103–4; Karl Reinhardt, "The Adventures in the Odyssey," 83, 89, 131, in *Reading the Odyssey: Selected Interpretive Essays* (ed. Seth Schein; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Ruth Scodel, "The Achaean Wall and the Myth of Destruction," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982) 48; Jenny Strauss Clay, *The Wrath of Athena* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 205; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 139.

⁵⁵ H. S. Versnel, "Thrice One: Three Greek Experiments in Oneness," 79–163, here 89, in Barbara N. Porter, *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World* (Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute 1; Chebeague, Maine: Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, 2000).

⁵⁶ Guthrie, "Empedocles," 2.122–65, here 2.156, in *HGP*.

⁵⁷ M. R. Wright, "Introduction," 62, in *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

force of *erōs* was operative in inanimate as well as animate objects. The two main sections of his extant works stand in tension: (1) in “On Nature,” Empedocles explains the order in nature according to what he has observed; (2) in “Purifications,” he prescribes ritual actions (e.g., lustrations, libations, sacrifices) by which a person can be freed from further incarnations in animals and rejoin the company of the gods (*DK* 31B115).⁵⁸ Empedocles’ anthropology in these two works stands in tension: in “On Nature,” humans are regarded merely as a combination of the four basic natural elements that by chance had evolved into this particular human form; in “On Purifications,” he regards humans as containing a divine element that remains untouched at death when the corpse disintegrates into the four natural elements.⁵⁹ Guthrie captures the uniqueness of Empedocles when he states that Empedocles created a picture of the universe that aimed to balance the Apollonian qualities of proportion, symmetry, and order with the Dionysiac experience of ecstatic possession by the divine.⁶⁰

Honor, symbolized and quantified by the amount of war spoils apportioned to a warrior in the *Iliad*, illustrated how personal reality can become reified in a social system. Poseidon’s feeling of having been slighted by the Achaeans who did not sacrifice to him at the time of their construction of the seawall at Troy was so marked out in his consciousness that he would not let go of it until he reciprocated by destroying the seawall after the conclusion of the Trojan war. Deliberate attacks on the honor of another person, known as acts of *hybris*, were regarded as crimes in Athens in the sixth century B.C.E.⁶¹ Such personal attacks seem to have been regarded as analogous to assaults against a person’s body.⁶²

The giving of a gift was a way of honoring a person. However, the personal dimension of the exchange of goods in gift-giving was reified and quantified when monetary value was assigned to this exchange. This depersonalization of the exchange of goods was augmented by the creation of coinage: an invention that also facilitated the accumulation of wealth at the expense of its circulation. The use of coinage in commercial exchange helped to abstract the exchange of material goods from the personal relationship between the parties. The greed driving the accumulation of gold and silver coins threatened to widen the gap between the rich and the poor and undermine the social fabric of the polis.

An analogous movement toward abstraction was essential to the development of the polis: leadership roles were shaped into political offices that could

⁵⁸ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.122–65, 2.244, 249, in *HGP*; Wright, “Introduction,” 22–30, in *Empedocles*.

⁵⁹ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.142, 157, in *HGP*.

⁶⁰ Guthrie, “Empedocles,” 2.122–65, here 2.265, in *HGP*.

⁶¹ The formulation of this law is preserved in its form from the fourth century B.C.E. in a speech of Demosthenes against Meidias [21] 47. See N. R. E. Fisher, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1992) 36–37.

⁶² Fisher, *Hybris*, 135.

be held only for a term and then rotated to others. Thus, the political office was an abstraction from the leadership role. Another crucial form of abstraction in the government of the city-state was the act of drawing an essential aspect out of personal relationships and stating how it should be a norm for all personal relationships: i.e., the act of promulgating a written law. Written laws had been inscribed on stelae and tablets for public viewing in Mesopotamia by their kings since the early second millennium B.C.E. But, in the Greek polis, such laws were created by the polis assembly and were not regarded as divinely revealed, as were the written laws of Hammurapi (*CH XLVIII:95-98*).⁶³ Such written laws, as with coinage, persisted through the various personal relationships in the polis in which they were embodied. Seaford has singled out coinage and the public display of written polis law as two developments essential to the emergence of the polis.⁶⁴ However, it was in the context of these developments that Solon in the late seventh century put himself forward as the boundary keeper who tried to curb the excesses of greed and competition (frs. 13:7–16; 36:18–22). The polis was founded upon a contradictory dynamic: competition engaged its citizens in the debates of the assembly, in athletic competitions, and in commerce, but the polis could only hold together when there was an overarching sense of cooperation, such as occurred in the hoplite phalanx of the polis' military.⁶⁵ This balance between conflicting tendencies was the harmony (*eunomia*, fr. 4) that required the vigilance of human agents, among whom stood out the arbitrator of the conflicts between the rich and the poor. Solon promoted this role of the arbitrator as indispensable to the integrity of the polis.⁶⁶

The critical spirit pervading the debates of the city assembly found an analogue in the speculations of the Ionian rationalists about the order in nature.⁶⁷ The skepticism of Xenophanes about divine communications (*DK 21B34*) would have facilitated greater reliance on the collective wisdom of the assembly.⁶⁸ However, oracular consultation, particularly at the Panhellenic sanctuary

⁶³ Karl-Joachim Holkeskamp, *Schiedsrichter, Gesetzgeber und Gesetzgebung im archaischen Griechenland* (Historia 131; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1999) 282.

⁶⁴ Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 204.

⁶⁵ Joseph Almeida, *Justice as an Aspect of the Polis Idea in Solon's Political Poems* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 148; Ian Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 111, 116.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Irwin, *Solon and Early Greek Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 91–96.

⁶⁷ G. E. R. Lloyd, "The Social Background of Early Greek Philosophy and Science," 121–40, here 131, in *Methods and Problems in Greek Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁶⁸ Karl Popper, *The Unknown Xenophanes: An Attempt to Establish his Greatness*, 33–67, here 47, in *The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1998).

of Delphi, continued to have its place.⁶⁹ The need for a transcendent perspective—one that would rise high enough above the particularities of the moment to persist through time—was evident in the thought of Parmenides. He defined knowledge as the apprehension of that which does not change (*DK* 28B8). He speaks of his access to this realm of truth as a shamanlike journey into the goddess' domain where he was instructed in the truth that is not distorted through faulty interpretation of sense data (*DK* 28B1). From such a transcendent perspective, Parmenides then proceeded to develop the first sustained deductive argument in Greek thought.⁷⁰

Heraclitus regarded truth to be revealed in the unity-of-opposites (*DK* 22B50). Just as tension on a bowstring is created only by pulling the string simultaneously in opposite directions, so also the truth about life is best revealed in the tension between conflicting opposites (*DK* 22B51). The conflicted engagement of persons or things was more real for Heraclitus than a harmony that covered over the tensions (*DK* 22B54). The unity that courses through Heraclitus' cosmos was that of fire (*DK* 22B30). The transformation of one thing into another effected by fire revealed the rule of cosmic law for Heraclitus. The exchange between things in this cosmic fire at the macrocosmic level explained the changes that had to occur at the microcosmic level of the polis if the *eunomia* of the polis were to occur.

In the spirit of Ionian rationalism, the Hippocratic author regarded nature as a self-contained entity. Supernatural causes were excluded from his paradigm of cause and effect.⁷¹ As a medical practitioner, the Hippocratic author tried to remove or balance out excesses in the bodily organism. He would apply heat, draw off blood, or use similar techniques aimed at restoring the equilibrium of elements in the body, a condition that constituted health.⁷² The Hippocratic author seems to have defined himself over against another practitioner who tried to manipulate aspects of nature: the magician.⁷³ The magician operated out of a paradigm in which material substances along with linguistic formulas could be used to trigger supernatural intervention to bring about a desired result. The

⁶⁹ Heraclitus (*DK* 22B93); Morris, *Archaeology as Cultural History*, 166; A. J. Graham, "The Colonial Expansion of Greece," 83–162, here 135–36, 308–9, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 3.

⁷⁰ Guthrie, "Parmenides," 2.1–80, here 2.29–30, in *HGP*.

⁷¹ For the view that the Hippocratic paradigm did not exclude the action of the gods, see M. J. Geller, "West Meets East: Early Greek and Babylonian Diagnosis," 11–61, here 26, in *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine* (ed. H. F. J. Horstmanshoff and M. Stol; Leiden: Brill, 2004).

⁷² G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience: Studies in the Origin and Development of Greek Science* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 22.

⁷³ Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and the Pythagorean Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 220; Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 47.

scientific logic of the Hippocratic author differed from the linguistic logic of the magician over the possibility of supernatural intervention. The healing practice that flourished in Greece in the fifth century B.C.E. was that overseen by the god Asclepius who combined the techniques of the medical practitioners with that of the exorcists.⁷⁴ In the popular culture, various forms of black magic were practiced to bring harm against adversaries in athletics, business, or legal cases. The impact of curse tablets, voodoo dolls, and witchcraft often was heightened by linking curses to objects drawn from tombs or the sphere of death.⁷⁵

Greed was only one of several human desires that could become distorted and so upset the web of relationships constitutive of polis society. The restraint of these animal passions within the social organism was addressed in Hesiod's *Theogony* in which figures, such as the Hydra of Lerna and the Nemean lion, were slain by Heracles (*Theog.* 313–32). The Hydra, offspring of Typhoeus and Echidna, was a serpentlike monster that threatened the civilized world. The Nemean lion hunted down humans. Hesiod's account makes the point that Heracles' defeat of the Nemean lion restored the natural order in which the higher-ranking humans in the cosmic hierarchy should be the hunter rather than the hunted.⁷⁶ These mythical composite figures provide an intelligible form for understanding aggressive, violent tendencies that surface in the human community. Heracles, who wielded power similar to that of the Hydra and Nemean lion, was able to subdue these hostile forces and harness their energy for the good of civilization.

The capacity to channel the dark passions of the human *psychē* made Greek tragedy a constructive means of dealing with social contradictions. Vernant noted that Greek tragedy treats the cosmos as one constantly in conflict and humans as creatures that only partially perceive the state of affairs that engulfs them.⁷⁷ Therefore, for the Greek tragedians, ambiguity is a constant feature of the human condition. The unleashing of these dark forces in a family is illustrated in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* in the cycle of violence that plagues the house

⁷⁴ Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East* (HSM 54; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995) 59–60; Lloyd, *Magic, Reason, and Experience*, 57. H. F. J. Horstmanshoff ("Asclepius and Temple Medicine in Aelius Aristedes' Sacred Tales," 325–41, here 337, in *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine*) argues on the basis of texts from the second century B.C.E. to the second century C.E. that "there was no opposition or rivalry between temple medicine and Hippocratic medicine."

⁷⁵ Daniel Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds," 1–90, here 19–20, in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Greece and Rome* (ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1999).

⁷⁶ Jenny Strauss Clay, "The Generation of Monsters in Hesiod," *CP* 88 (1993) 105–16, here 111–12.

⁷⁷ Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," 29–48, here 43, in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988).

of Atreus: the father Agamemnon offers his daughter Iphigenia as a human sacrifice (*Agam.* 224–47) and his wife Clytemnestra retaliates by killing him (*Agam.* 1343); this act then leads the son Orestes to kill his mother (*Cho.* 930). This unraveling of the household is sustained by the prodding of the Furies who insist that blood vengeance must be carried out if a just social order is to be maintained (*Eum.* 255–56, 475–76). After Orestes has killed Clytemnestra, the Furies pursue him. It is the intervention of Apollo and Athena that leads to a new way of settling blood vengeance: a court trial to hear all the circumstances that led to the matricide (*Eum.* 568–806). The acquittal of Orestes is followed by Athena's diplomatic treatment of the Furies to bring their powers of fertility to the service of the polis (*Eum.* 793–869). Although the order of the city needs the more rational form of justice of the court rather than the practice of blood vengeance, it cannot afford to alienate the powers of fertility that are essential for the agricultural enterprise and the maintenance of the city's population.

The sacrifice of Iphigenia highlights the brutality of war and the threat that war poses to civilized life. In the Greek world, human sacrifice is portrayed as an outrageous violent act, whereas animal sacrifice is described in a way that tries to process the guilt of the humans who take the life of the animal. Those engaged in ritual slaughter sought signs that the animal had gone willingly to the altar. The moment of killing the animal was carried out quickly with the women giving a shrill death-cry and the blood being captured and poured out at the altar. The collective witnessing of the act seems to have been designed to alleviate the guilt associated with killing the animal.⁷⁸ Girard argues that the animal substitutes for a human scapegoat who would otherwise be killed in order to release the pent-up aggressions of the members of the community who had been competing fiercely with one another.⁷⁹ In light of the etiology of sacrifice offered in Hesiod's *Theogony* (533–616) in which Prometheus becomes the trickster who is tricked, the practice of sacrifice reminded humans of their place in the cosmic hierarchy: as married agriculturalists who were to give a portion of their produce regularly to the gods. Inherent in the Promethean example is a recognition of the human urge to try to break through the limits imposed by the human condition.

The most serious limit imposed on humans was death. The mourning ritual was designed to give the deceased an honorable burial and to allow the family time to grieve its loss. The dishonorable burial that Clytemnestra gave to Agamemnon stirred up vengeful feelings within Orestes and Electra (*Cho.* 429–44). Without a proper burial, the *psychē* of the deceased could not

⁷⁸ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 56–69, 254–55.

⁷⁹ René Girard, "Generative Scapegoating," 73–105, here 74, 78, 82; Walter Burkert, René Girard, Jonathan Z. Smith, *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (ed. Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

find rest in Hades.⁸⁰ So with Achilles' brutalization of the corpse of Hector (*Il.* 22:394–405), the insult and harm were believed to have an impact on the dead person, for that person could not enter into Hades until his bones were properly interred. Antigone knew well the fate that her brother Polyneices suffered and so held her ground that he receive a proper burial despite Creon's prohibition (*Antig.* 408–40). Creon's son Haemon sided with Antigone (*Antig.* 701–23). Haemon discovered her in her prison-tomb after she had committed suicide. Then he took his own life after unsuccessfully trying to strike down Creon (*Antig.* 1221–43). The troubles that came to Creon and his household were linked in this dramatic production to the influence of Dionysus: the god of both disorder and order who promotes the needs of nature (*physis*) against those of the civilized sphere (*nomos*). In the *Antigone*, the royal household collapses under the pressure of irresolvable contradictions to give way to the social structure of the polis.⁸¹

In the late sixth century B.C.E., the changing social relations within the polis left the individual more conscious of his vulnerability before death than had been the case when his identity was more closely tied to that of a family.⁸² This increasing anxiety before death converged with the teachings of the Eleusinian and Bacchic mysteries about the possibility of meaningful life after death. No longer would one simply go to the gloom of Hades. The possibility of a life of blessedness in the afterlife existed for the initiated; the blessed afterlife would no longer be limited to the select few heroes who were taken away to the Isles of the Blest. The entry into this life of blessedness required that one go through the rites of initiation of the mysteries and know the password (i.e., the *symbolon*) that was to be recited to Persephone upon arrival at the gates of Hades.⁸³ On the gold tablets buried with initiates in the Bacchic mysteries were inscribed the directions (along with other vital information) that the deceased was to follow upon arrival in Hades. If the deceased forgot or was disoriented, it was sufficient to present the gold tablet and allow it to speak on behalf of the deceased. The gold tablets from the late fifth century B.C.E. recovered at Hipponion (southern Italy) make it clear that the initiates were devoted to Dionysus.⁸⁴ This dying and rising god came to be revered as a reliable guide of the

⁸⁰ Jan Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 89–94.

⁸¹ Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 233, 256.

⁸² Jan Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London: Routledge, 2002) 25; Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 13.

⁸³ Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (trans. Peter Bing; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 251, 255, 262; Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 138–40.

⁸⁴ Susan Cole, "Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields," 193–217, here 200, 208–9,

deceased into the Netherworld—a location that he periodically visited during the dry portion of the agricultural cycle.

The effort to come to terms with the cosmic forces shaping the environment included observation and manipulation of the elements. The speculations of the Presocratic philosophers aimed to bring a measure of coherence to the conflicts and contradictions that plagued polis life in the sixth to fifth centuries B.C.E. To grant conflict its proper place and to see within it or beneath it a more fundamental unity reveals the sociopolitical impact of speculative thought. The picture or vision of the world provided by a thinker assumes a position of influence in some elite circles in Presocratic Greece that overshadows that of religious ritual. Nevertheless, the action-oriented religious rituals brought a measure of rapprochement with invisible cosmic forces that the speculative thought of the philosophers or the pragmatic procedures of the Hippocratic physicians could not supplant. This religious imagination was constitutive of the world of the tragedians. Their productions played a strategic role in the fifth century B.C.E. in channeling aggressive instincts. This can be seen as analogous to ritual sacrifice in its capacity to promote social equilibrium. The frequent themes of the return of ghosts from the Netherworld in Greek tragedies accords with the anxiety of the fifth century, which struggled with the issue of the finality of death in polis society where the individual felt increasingly vulnerable with the retreat of the family as the dominant social position it held in earlier ages. The rise of the Eleusinian, Orphic, and Bacchic mystery cults offered a ritual means for transcending anxiety over the finality of death.

An Authentic Symbol of the Ruler of the Cosmos: A People or a Statue?

The perception of the underlying, basic reality that endures through change is central to Ezekiel's symbolic thinking. This enduring reality is relational in character and takes the specific form of Yhwh's fidelity to his promise that Israel would be his people. They would symbolize him for better or for worse.

After the Lord reflected with Ezekiel on the causes of the exile (36:16-21), he announced an oracle of salvation (36:22-32) that Ezekiel was to deliver to the house of Israel. This oracle is framed by the inclusion, "not for your sakes am I acting" (vv. 22, 32). Rather the Lord is acting for the sake of his name (v. 22): the linguistic symbol that aims to situate his divine reality within the publicly perceived order of the world. The Israelites were chosen by the Lord when they were in Egypt to be his people (20:5). He has remained faithful to this commitment despite Israel's persistent infidelity. When he punished the Israelites

in *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults* (ed. Michael Cosmopoulos; London: Routledge, 2003); Walter Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004) 86–87.

by exile, this action changed Israel from a positive to a negative symbol of the Lord's power and authority. Nevertheless, Israel continued to be a symbol of its God. This reality would only be relinquished if the Lord totally abandoned Israel. Because of the seriousness of keeping his promise to Israel, the Lord plans (according to Ezek 36:22-23) to intervene to restore the proper perception of his name: i.e., its holiness. This emanation of the Lord's reality will be communicated through the symbol Israel. This manifestation of the Lord's holiness will remove the desecration of his name: i.e., the devolving of his name into the sphere of the common or profane.⁸⁵

The Lord says that the nations will perceive his reality ("the nations will know that I am Yhwh," v. 23) when he manifests his holiness through the Israelites in the sight of the nations (*bēhiqqādēši bākem lē'ênēhem*, "when I manifest my holiness through you in their sight," v. 23). The Lord had made known his reality to Ezekiel in his inaugural vision. This overwhelming sight of a fiery royal figure enthroned above the four living creatures (i.e., cherubim) communicated a sense of a transcendent reality (1:4-28). The symbols of the cherubim, the storm cloud, and the parts of the chariot combine to capture the attention of the viewer and to promote reflection on the ineffable reality revealed. Furthermore, the uniqueness of Ezekiel's vision arises not only from the content of the vision but also from the manner in which it was received. Ezekiel collapsed and was raised up by "wind/spirit" (*ruah*) that had entered into him (2:1). Just as the *ruah* ("wind/spirit") suffused the cherubim and coordinated their movement (1:20-21), so also this *ruah* entered into Ezekiel and began to coordinate his speech and actions (3:24, 27). Through Ezekiel's engagement with the vision, he became part of its symbolic reality, which exemplifies the fact that a symbol does not realize its reality—i.e., it does not express itself—unless it is interpreted.⁸⁶ Just as Ezekiel was incorporated into the vision's symbolic dynamic, so also was Israel destined to be. Israel's status as a symbol of Yhwh had existed since the time Yhwh had entered into covenant with them in Egypt. But the distorted message Israel sent to the nations through its persistent disobedience to the stipulations of the covenant (20:5-32) resulted in the purificatory process of the exile (20:30-38) and the cleansing of Jerusalem by fire (10:2-7; 24:3-14).

Just as the nations regarded the Lord as weak or unfaithful to Israel because of the exile, so they would think highly of him by his returning the exiles to their land (36:23). Because the house of Israel corporately carried about with

⁸⁵ Guiseppe Bettenzoli, *Geist der Heiligkeit: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des QDŠ-Begriffes im Buch Ezechiel* (Quaderni di Semitistica 8; Firenze: Università de Firenze, 1979) 190-94.

⁸⁶ Paul Ricoeur, "Reply to Lewis S. Mudge," 41-45, here 43-44, in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Lewis S. Mudge; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); Rahner, "The Theology of Symbol," 221-52, here 230-31, in *Theological Investigations 4*.

⁸⁶ Cf. Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 146, 169-72.

them the Lord's divine name, the Lord decided to act on account of his name: to remove the misperceptions attached to it because of the punishment of the exile that the Israelites merited for their infidelity (36:18-23). The way in which the nations will come to know the Lord and his holiness seems to be an ordinary perception of facts, just as they would observe other natural and historical phenomena. The nations do not need to undergo a conversion to obtain the new information they gain about the Lord's power and authority.

According to Ezekiel 36:26, 31-32, the exiles' perception of the Lord will go much deeper than that of the nations. This change will not be because of the merit of the exiles but rather because of the Lord's acting to make known the truth about himself (36:22, 32). So the Lord planned to give them a "new heart": the locus controlling the noetic and affective activities of a person. Since their time in Egypt, they had not been able to discern the truth about the Lord's expectation of them. Their capacity of discernment had become so distorted through their worship of idols and their shedding of blood that they were not able to interpret some "not-good" commandments from the Lord and so sacrificed their children to him, which only further defiled them (20:25-31). This undiscerning heart within collective Israel was a "heart of stone" (36:26). It had to be removed and replaced with a "heart of flesh" (*lēb bāšār*, 36:26), which would be more compatible with its flesh (*bāšār*, 36:26).⁸⁷ Just as Ezekiel will speak of the flesh coming back on the dry bones that had reassembled into skeletons (37:8), so also here he reaffirms the fleshly, bodily existence of Israel.

Just as the reconstituted bodies with flesh and skin on the dry bones needed to be animated (37:9-10), so also the heart transplant given to Israel was insufficient to bring it new life (36:26). The Lord then promised the exiles: "I will place a new spirit within you" (*rūah ḥādāšā 'ettēn bēqirbēkem*, 36:26), which he then further specifies as "I will place my Spirit within you" (*w'et rūhī 'ettēn bēqirbēkem*, 36:27). This same identification of the spirit within the reconstituted corpses as the presence of the divine Spirit is stated in Ezekiel 37:14. Then the exiles will be able to obey the Lord's statutes and ordinances. When the Lord's Spirit is present in them, they will be able to symbolize properly the Lord's reality. The public manifestation of the revival and restoration of Israel required the return of Israel to the land. The covenant made with the ancestors promised that the Israelites would live in the land (36:28; cf. 20:5, 11-12, 19-20). Therefore, it was necessary for the exiles to return to the land for the covenant to be credible (cf. Lev 25:2, 18-23).⁸⁸ As important as was the internalization of the covenantal relationship forged through the exilic experience, this covenant relationship needed public, visible form. Because life in the land

⁸⁷ Michael Carasik, *Theologies of the Mind in Biblical Israel* (Studies in Biblical Literature 85; New York: Peter Lang, 2006) 109–10.

⁸⁸ Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 146, 169–72.

under Yhwh's protection was constitutive of the Sinai covenant, Yhwh's demonstration of his fidelity to that covenant (20:33) required the return of the exiles to the land. Because the Israelites' defilements (*tum'otêkem*, 36:29) had resulted in their being vomited out of the land (cf. Lev 18:25, 28), the Lord promised to remove these aspects of their lives that were incompatible with his holiness.⁸⁹ He also promised to make the land fruitful, keeping away from them the reality and reproach of famine (36:29-30).

According to the salvation oracle of 36:16-38, the reconstituted exiles would be in a position to make a new start. The Lord has acted unilaterally throughout the Book of Ezekiel: first in judgment and then in salvation.⁹⁰ He has worked through Ezekiel as a model of how he plans to work through the reconstituted exilic community. From the perspective of the risk the Lord has taken in binding himself in covenant with Israel, the action of placing his Spirit in the exiles reduces, or perhaps eliminates, the possibility of Israel's disobedience in the future. But from the perspective of what it means to be a symbol of the Lord, the placing of the Lord's Spirit in the Israelites is essential. Without the Lord's presence, they could not be a symbol of the Lord. The radical event of the dying and rising of Israel through the exile and restoration was needed to restore the credibility of Israel as a symbol of the Lord. As a living symbol, the Israelites had to share in the Lord's Spirit if they were to function honestly.⁹¹

Once the Israelites were reconstituted, they, with their new capacity of discernment, would need to come to terms with their past. The Lord says that their memory of their former "evil ways" and "not-good deeds" would lead them to loathe themselves (36:31). This honest awareness of what they were like when they tried to live independent of the Lord would make them aware of their deeply rooted dependence upon the Lord. Their worship of other deities arose from their shortchanging the sovereign power of Yhwh and in their anxiety or impatience in looking to other deities for assistance. The shame they felt over their past deeds would be an important reality check. They would realize the vast gulf that separated them as humans from the transcendent Lord that Ezekiel saw in his inaugural vision. At the same time, they would realize the almost incomprehensible fact of the reality of the Lord's Spirit within them. This magnificent drama is one that Ezekiel relates as objective facts and downplays the affective dimension of the experience.

In Babylon, the cultic statue of Marduk played a central role in the public liturgies of the New Year festival. For example, on the eighth or ninth day of

⁸⁹ Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, 152-54. Kalinda Rose Stevenson (*The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40-48* [SBLDS 154; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996] 19, 37-38) notes that a central concern of Ezekiel 40-48 is to demarcate space so that the sacred and the profane can be kept separate (cf. 42:20).

⁹⁰ Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, 17.

⁹¹ Bettenzoli, *Geist der Heiligkeit*, 144, 48.

Nisannu (March/April), there was a grand procession in which the cult statue of Marduk and the cultic statues of the various gods of the land were paraded from Esagila to the *Akitu* house outside the city.⁹² The ritual was designed to elicit from the populace a recommitment to the royal government and temple establishment for another year. The statue, as the mouth-opening ritual demonstrates, was regarded as imbued with the reality of the deity.⁹³ In other words, the statue itself was treated as though it were alive. The sphere of the holy, populated by anthropomorphic deities, was structured “as though” it were a human society. So the cultic system had its own logic in which it treated the wooden cultic statues as though they were living human beings: feeding, bathing, and clothing them. According to the logic of the profane sphere, a skeptic would regard this system as a hoax. But for the Mesopotamians, a cultic statue was a real symbol of a deity; it did not contain the deity, but it did localize the presence of the deity and constituted a privileged point of access to the deity.⁹⁴ The cultic system made tangible the metaphysical reality of the gods. Its holy objects communicate the metaphysical reality of the gods. The cultic statues both “are” and “are not” the gods; thus, their truth is analogous to that of a metaphor.

Sennacherib’s removal of the statue of Marduk to Assyria symbolized the subservience of the Babylonians to the Assyrians. Scribes within the Assyrian court interpreted the removal of Marduk’s statue to Assyria as an event in which Marduk had been taken into custody.⁹⁵ The view that these scribes formed an anti-Babylonian faction within the Assyrian royal court is contested.⁹⁶ A text known as “The Ordeal of Marduk”—incompletely preserved in two recensions

⁹² J. A. Black, “The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: ‘Taking Bel by the Hand’ and a Cultic Picnic,” *Religion* 11 (1981) 39–59, here 45; Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendar of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993) 440. Stevenson (*The Vision of Transformation*, 53) notes the parallel of Yhwh’s return to his restored temple in Ezekiel 40–48 with Marduk’s return to the *Akitu* house on the tenth day of the New Year festival.

⁹³ Christopher Walker and Michael Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Miš Pi Ritual* (SAA 1; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001) 16–17; Thorkild Jacobsen, “The Graven Image,” 15–32, here 23–28, in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. P. D. Miller Jr., P. D. Hanson, S. D. McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Jacobsen, “The Graven Image,” 15–32, here 22–23, in *Ancient Israelite Religion*.

⁹⁴ Jacobsen, “The Graven Image,” 15–32, here 22–23, in *Ancient Israelite Religion*.

⁹⁵ Steven Holloway, *Aššur Is King! Aššur Is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 147–48.

⁹⁶ Simo Parpola (“Synthesis,” 45–49, in Hayim Tadmor, Benno Landsberger, Simo Parpola, “The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib’s Last Will,” *SAAB* 3 [1989] 3–51) finds evidence for such factions, but Porter (*Images, Power, and Politics*, 132) does not; her view is that various scribes had different strategies for promoting Assyrian self-interest.

(Ashur and Nineveh)—seems to depict Marduk as being on trial before Aššur.⁹⁷ The crime (*biššu*) alleged against Marduk supplied a rationale for the abduction of a deity who had been honored in Assyrian cultic practice since the fourteenth century B.C.E.⁹⁸ The traditional explanation for the departure of Marduk's statue from Babylon was the anger of Marduk toward the Babylonians; it had been used by Nebuchadnezzar I (1126–1105) to explain why Marduk's statue had been taken to Elam in the thirteenth century B.C.E.⁹⁹ Most of the Assyrians, despite the presence of considerably anti-Babylonian sentiment, would have revered Marduk and would have tried to derive benefits from his presence in their land.¹⁰⁰ If the cult statue ceases to function symbolically and becomes an end in itself, then the cultic system has covered over and, practically speaking, has usurped the divine realm. Given the vast number of deities and temple establishments, such control by any single Mesopotamian temple system could only have been partial. Also diverse viewpoints on the will of the gods would have come to expression from the various diviners, prophets, exorcists, and sages. Likewise, magicians, under the patronage of Ea and Marduk, would have provided remedies that purported to tap into a primordial material realm, one to which even the gods had to be attentive.¹⁰¹

Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, the author of *Ludlul-bêl-nêmeqi*, claimed that he was puzzled about the gods. Bottéro points to this attitude of the sages as evidence that the Mesopotamians regarded the gods as transcendent.¹⁰² They were not simply lords of the temple manors in the various cities such that heaven and earth were two spheres within the same single level of reality. To know the ways of the gods required an ongoing search.

Gilgamesh journeyed to Utnapishtim in an effort to find the secret for transcending death. He failed to gain the means for transcending death, but he did learn from Šiduri, Urshanabi, and Utnapishtim about the limits of what humans can achieve. He urged Urshanabi to return to Uruk to view the wall

⁹⁷ Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (SAA 3; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989) 82–91.

⁹⁸ Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics*, 137–38.

⁹⁹ Grant Frame, *Rulers of Babylonia: From the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination (1157–612 BC)* (RIMA 2; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) B.6.31.15, ll. 16–25 on p. 183; Holloway, *Aššur Is King!*, 368–70; W. G. Lambert, “The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion,” 3–13, in *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of T. J. Meek* (ed. William S. McCullough; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1964). The idea of a tutelary deity of a city or region inviting an outside conqueror is attested in the *Code of Hammurapi* where Hammurapi claims that Dagan summoned him to take over the settlements along the Euphrates (IV:24–28).

¹⁰⁰ Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics*, 137–45.

¹⁰¹ Van Binsbergen and Wiggermann, “Magic in History,” 3–34, here 16, 21, in *Mesopotamian Magic*.

¹⁰² Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, 263–67.

that he had constructed. Foster argues that Gilgamesh had reached the point of seeing that his accomplishments alone would outlive him. The knowledge that Gilgamesh gained from his journey would live on after him if he found an adequate way to communicate it.¹⁰³

The anthropogony related in the *Atrahasis* poem depicts the human as created from clay and the blood of a slain god (I, iv.206–17, 223–26).¹⁰⁴ The *etemmu* from the god's flesh resided in the human and gave the human vitality. If the blood can be regarded as a sign of the planning capacity (*tēmu*), then humans are able to observe their environment, reflect on their experience, and make plans on the basis of the *etemmu* passed on in their family through the blood. So the blood of the family symbolizes its personal deity: its intelligent life-force that is passed on from generation to generation.¹⁰⁵ This divinely endowed reflective capacity would have distinguished humans from other animals. Enkidu, through sexual relations with Šamḫat, was introduced into human civilization from the sphere of the animals. But, as Foster notes, sexual knowledge is the lowest level of human knowledge. Enkidu and Gilgamesh ascended to higher forms of knowledge about personal relationships and about the human condition.¹⁰⁶

In the Mesopotamian inscriptions, the people of the city see their collective identity symbolized by the cult statue of the city god.¹⁰⁷ Processions with the cult statue were particularly effective ways to galvanize the collective feelings of the populace. This symbol of the deity would have triggered a sense that the common bonds of the people were founded in a larger divine reality that was solicitous for their well-being. The troubles that afflicted the Babylonians at the time of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon were reflected in the misfortunes that beset the statue of Marduk.

Greek cities of the seventh century began to invest in the cultic statues and temples of the deities that represented them: e.g., Athena in Athens, Artemis in Ephesus, Hera in Samos.¹⁰⁸ Heraclitus deposited his book in the Artemision in

¹⁰³ Benjamin Foster, "Gilgamesh: Sex, Love and the Ascent of Knowledge," 21–42, here 22, in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East* (ed. John H. Marks and Robert M. Good; Guilford, Conn.: Four Quarters Publishing, 1987).

¹⁰⁴ W. G. Lambert, A. R. Millard, *Atra-ḫasis: the Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999) 58–59.

¹⁰⁵ Tzvi Abusch, "Sacrifice in Mesopotamia," 39–48, here 45, in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience* (ed. Albert I. Baumgarten; Studies in the History of Religions 97; Leiden: Brill, 2002).

¹⁰⁶ Foster, "Gilgamesh: Sex, Love and the Ascent of Knowledge," 22.

¹⁰⁷ Porter, *Images, Power, and Politics*, 146; cf. Riecke Borger, *Inschriften Asarhaddons* (AfO Beiheft 9; Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1956) 12–13, §11, ll. 18b–37; Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire*, 73; Grayson, "Assyria: Sennacherib and Esarhaddon (704–669 B.C.)," 103–41, here 132–34, in *CAH*, vol. 3, part 2.

¹⁰⁸ R. A. Tomlinson, *Greek Sanctuaries* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1976) 29; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Early Sanctuaries, the Eighth Century and Ritual Space:

Ephesus, yet he criticized popular piety that encouraged people to pray to statues (*DK* 22B5).¹⁰⁹ He taught that the *logos* of the *psychē* and the *logos* of the laws of a city should be obeyed insofar as they partook of the cosmic *logos* (*DK* 22B114). This cosmic *logos*, which he identified with cosmic fire, coursed through all people and things (*DK* 22B90). While this cosmic *logos* fosters awareness of the unity of all things in the midst of conflict, it does not adequately value the embodied individual human. The talionic justice of Anaximander's world, in which everything emerges from the cosmic process but then must repay it (*DK* 12B1), fits in with this view in which the cosmic harmony is more important than the fate of the individual.

Solon, faced with the increasing gap between rich and poor in Athens, tried to foster an awareness of the danger that greed posed to the existence of the polis (fr. 4.5–8, 17–25). The exploitation of one citizen by another could not go on without effect. Over time, the polis itself would have to pay collectively for these excesses by individuals. Thus Solon intervened to free citizens weighed down by debt slavery (fr. 36.18–22). This *seisachtheia* (“a shaking off of burdens”) aimed to promote *eunomia*, “harmony,” in which the civic order was in accord with *Dikē*, the primordial order of the polis (fr. 4.30–39). Even though Solon saw the gods as watching over the political order, he urged the citizens to take greater responsibility for the civic order and not to blame all their troubles on the gods (fr. 4.1–4). Such a view would have been in accord with the Ionian rationalism of Homer's *Odyssey* that chastised humans for not taking responsibility for their own troubles but rather blaming them on the gods (*Od.* 1.32–34).

By the end of the sixth century, with the growing influence of the polis and the decline in the influence of the family, the individual citizen began to feel more exposed.¹¹⁰ So the appeal of mystery cults that guaranteed the individual safe passage into Hades and into happier regions in the afterlife gained adherents. In the Bacchic version of these mysteries, the dying and rising god of viticulture, Dionysus, became an important figure who accompanied the deceased into the afterlife.¹¹¹ This god, who was seen as the principle of disorder and order in the polis, was associated with the dying and rising components of social change and adaptation; thus, he became an important figure in dealing with the

Fragments of a Discourse,” 1–17, here 10, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*; Helmut Kyrieleis, “The Heraion at Samos,” 125–53, here 126, 150, in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches*.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 6–9.

¹¹⁰ Susan Cole, “Landscapes of Dionysos and Elysian Fields,” 193–217, here 196, in *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults* (ed. Michael Cosmopoulos; London: Routledge, 2003).

¹¹¹ Fritz Graf, “Dionysian and Orphic Eschatology: New Texts and Old Questions,” 239–58, here 242, in *Masks of Dionysus* (ed. Thomas Carpenter and Christopher Faraone; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

terror of death. In the life of the polis, Dionysus was the god who would take possession of people in the forms of drunkenness, frenzy, and madness. Such divine indwelling or *enthousiasmos* was regarded as a source of savage energies that in the best poleis would be allowed to express themselves in ways that eventually contributed to the vitality and balance of the life of the citizens.¹¹²

Among the Presocratics, the notion of *pneuma*, “spirit,” is almost entirely absent. Empedocles regards the blood as the source of all sensation and thought (*DK* 31B105). Many of the Presocratics regarded nature as divine and that humans were suffused with this divine reality. Thus, in their view the divine was immanent and would not have borne the sense of transcendence essential to Ezekiel’s view of Yhwh or of that found in Babylonian wisdom compositions such as *Ludlul-bēl-nēmeqi*. The notion of *psychē* as a life-force belonging to the divine realm was taught in Orphic, Bacchic, and Pythagorean circles; in their view the purpose of human life was to undergo purification so as to return to the divine homeland. The notion of *pneuma*, alluded to by Xenophanes (*DK* 21 A1.27–28), was later developed by the Hippocratic writers and the Stoics who saw the *pneuma* as a material substance that vivified and integrated the corporeal reality of humans.¹¹³ However, among the Presocratics the notion of *pneuma* received no attention as a divine integrating force that would transform humans as it did in Ezekiel 36:26–27. Most of the Presocratic thinkers emphasized the development of the noetic capacities of humans as the way to live in harmony with the cosmos.

In Ezekiel’s view, the primary way to understand the character of sovereign power in the cosmos was to observe living symbols of the personal reality that ruled the cosmos. Ezekiel proclaimed that Yhwh would make the Israelites into authentic symbols of him by placing his Spirit in them. This participation in Yhwh’s reality would enable them in their bodily existence to proclaim Yhwh’s sovereign power. Israel’s exile would be replaced by a return to a land that would enjoy abundant fertility. But most of all, the presence of Yhwh’s Spirit in the Israelites would enable them to be obedient and thus to send a true picture of what Yhwh is like through their collective existence. By contrast, the Mesopotamian statues of wood and stone, even if they were conceived to be alive according to a sacramental model, could not match the living reality of flesh and blood Israelites who would make known Yhwh’s presence. Among most of the Presocratics, the search for the ruling force of the cosmos emphasized the noetic apprehension of this ruling principle rather than trying to integrate the noetic and affective ways of apprehending this ultimate reality as in Ezekiel. But thinkers such as Xenophanes claimed that this ruling principle was a cosmic god

¹¹² Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual*, 298. Albert Henrichs, “‘He Has a God in Him’: Human and Divine in the Modern Perception of Dionysus,” 13–43, here 29–31, in *Masks of Dionysus*.

¹¹³ Kleinknecht, “*pneuma, pneumatikos*,” 332–59, here 354, in *TDNT* 6.

with whom humans could not communicate. However, the Pythagoreans and Empedocles promoted a view of humans as beings whose true identity was of divine origin and thus were struggling to purify their embodied existence so that this divine element might be freed. Also in the religious culture of Presocratic times, the god Dionysus was revered as one who became manifest in humans in fits of enthusiasm and madness in order to restore equilibrium between the demands of nature and convention in polis society. However, Ezekiel is unique in his view of the Israelites as living symbols of Yhwh for he proclaimed that their embodied existence would shine brightly before the nations when Yhwh was present with them. They would be the means by which Yhwh would manifest his holiness to the nations (Ezek 36:23).

The Return to Yhwh's Holy Mountain

Ezekiel proclaims that those exiles who choose to return to the Lord (20:39) will serve him on his holy mountain.¹¹⁴ They will no longer be enamored of their own beauty (16:15; 28:17) but will be ready to acknowledge the reality of Yhwh as symbolized by his name (20:39, 44). The gifts and the idols that they had previously used in their service of Yhwh and the gods of their own making will have been purged from their midst. The restored exiles will take their stand on the holy mountain, like the cherub prior to his transgressions in Ezekiel 28:12-15. In this Edenic setting on the height of Israel, the whole house of Israel will serve Yhwh through their tribute and offerings of first fruits (20:40). Yhwh will accept these offerings, which do not include the offering of the firstborn by which Israel defiled itself (20:26). The offering that is central to this restored condition is the Israelites themselves: Yhwh will receive them as a “sweet-smelling offering” when he gathers the Israelites that have been scattered among the nations (20:41). This regathering is a symbolic action through which Yhwh sanctifies himself in the eyes of the nations (20:41).¹¹⁵ In 20:40, Yhwh emphasizes that he will receive Israel as an offering “there” (*šām*, three times), which makes clear that the symbolic message that Israel is once more his people must be externalized through Israel's actual presence in the land. This new standing place in the land will lead the Israelites to reflect upon their past. Their memory of their past transgressions will cause them to loathe themselves and so bring them to a deeper awareness of how their essential reality is bound together with

¹¹⁴ Jon Levenson, (*Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48* [HSM 10; Missoula, Mt.: Scholars, 1976] 17, 33, 67) argues that this mountain is Zion and that this final vision with its Edenlike conditions keeps alive the promises extended to David within an eschatological context in which the earthly monarchy has been depoliticized.

¹¹⁵ Bettenzoli (*Geist der Heiligkeit*, 202) claims that the second half of Ezekiel 20 deals with the cultic stream of tradition—in contrast to the religious-legal sphere—where Yhwh intervenes first in judgment and then in acceptance of Israel as an offering.

Yhwh's holy name through the covenant (20:43-44). In their returned condition, the exiles will perceive their deeply rooted dependence on Yhwh and be filled with feelings of revulsion at their idolatrous actions which have betrayed that essential bond.

The mountain to which the exiles will return is never explicitly named Jerusalem or Zion. The mountain is holy and so resembles the visionary Edenic garden that lay behind the king of Tyre (28:13-14). Just as this mythological or spiritualized mountain is not divorced from the physical reality of the kingdom of Tyre, so also the visionary holy mountain to which the Israelite exiles will return is not cut off from the physical reality of the land of Israel. The Eden-like mountain described at length in Ezekiel 40-48 is a utopian reality in which political and economic realities have been addressed so that attention can be directed on an ongoing basis to the maintenance of the temple cult (43:10-46:24).¹¹⁶ The offerings conducted there are components of the more fundamental, all-encompassing offering of the Israelites themselves to Yhwh. It is in this sweet-smelling offering that Israel symbolizes Yhwh, for the Israelites freely give back their life to Yhwh to manifest the reality of Yhwh before the nations. Even though Yhwh insists that he will be king over Israel (20:33) and brings severe consequences on Israel for rejecting his rule over them (11:21; 18:30), their choice to be Yhwh's people is emphasized by Ezekiel (3:17-21; 18:30-31; 33:1-20).

Israel's decision to serve Yhwh alone is demanded by Yhwh as a faithful covenant partner. The decision to serve Yhwh is seen to issue from the heart from which locus, reason, emotion, and voluntary actions arise (Ezek 18:31). Even though the will is not labeled as a distinct human capacity, the function of making a decision is repeatedly noted of individuals in the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., Exod 20:2-17; Josh 24:14-24; 1 Kgs 18:21). Ezekiel's attention to the choice of an individual to obey Yhwh, where individual rather than collective responsibility is highlighted (18:1-29), shows that Ezekiel was clearly aware of what later Greek thinkers would demarcate as the human faculty of the will. When this decision is made to serve Yhwh (20:35, 39), then the Israelites will be standing in a new place from which their noetic and affective capacities will be positioned to function more holistically. Yet for Ezekiel, as we have seen, this integration of the noetic and the affective depends upon the infusion of Yhwh's Spirit that renovates the perceptual apparatus of the person (36:26-27). With the presence of Yhwh's Spirit in an individual, the animal, human, and divine dimensions of human existence are brought into a working harmony.

¹¹⁶ Corrine Patton ("Priest, Prophet, and Exile: Ezekiel as a Literary Construct," 73-89, here 78, in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World* [SBLSS 31; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004]) notes that "the final vision is to be 'taught' like priestly torah (43:11-12 and 44:5)."

The infusion of the Spirit takes place within space and time. Its manifestation is not simply internal and invisible but rather has a public aspect (36:23-24, 27-28). The Israelites' return to God's mountain shows how the physical and metaphysical, the external and internal aspects of their relationship with Yhwh are essential to the relationship (20:40-41; 36:9-12). Israel's call to be an authentic symbol of Yhwh shows that for Ezekiel the manifestation of the holy occurs preeminently through human beings (20:14; 36:23). When this symbolizing relation is compromised, it spawns a crisis that reaches into the most sacred areas of communal life. The temple destroyed in 586 is replaced in the book of Ezekiel with a visionary temple that is remembered and sustained by a community infused with the Spirit of Yhwh. To be on God's holy mountain is to participate in both earthly and heavenly reality. For Ezekiel, it is this larger visionary context spanning heaven and earth, communicated through the Spirit, that makes possible the constructive uses of the noetic faculty.

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SPIRIT & REASON

By comparing and contrasting the pictures gained from Greek and Mesopotamian cities with Ezekiel's Jerusalem, Launderville masterfully shows how Ezekiel fosters a type of symbolic thinking focused on making the Israelites into living symbols of God. The Spirit is the reality that connects humans with the cosmic order and enables the workings of the human heart—the place within which reason functions, according to ancient Israelite anthropology. Ezekiel's symbolic thinking is an integrative rationality in which the reason is regarded as operating within the heart through the empowerment and guidance of the Spirit.

In this ambitious project, Launderville draws out a wealth of fascinating information about the Mesopotamian and pre-Socratic Greek traditions, and puts them into conversation with Ezekiel. His cross-cultural approach to Ezekiel's use of symbolic language to make meaning is a most welcome addition to the scholarship on this prophetic book.

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Launderville has examined a remarkable selection of Ancient Near Eastern and Greek literature and addressed issues that lie outside typical monographs devoted to that prophet. I know no other scholar who has the capacity to work with this scope.

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