



Studies in the Bible and Antiquity

Volume 1

Article 7

2009

Full Issue

Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sba>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Scholarship, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious (2009) "Full Issue," *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*. Vol. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sba/vol1/iss1/7>

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE
AND ANTIQUITY

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE AND ANTIQUITY

Published under the Auspices of the
Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts

Director

Kristian Heal

<i>Editor</i>	Brian M. Hauglid
<i>Associate Editor</i>	Carl Griffin
<i>Production Editors</i>	Shirley S. Ricks Alison V. P. Coutts
<i>Cover Design</i>	Jacob D. Rawlins
<i>Layout</i>	Alison V. P. Coutts
<i>Advisory Board</i>	David E. Bokovoy John Gee Frank F. Judd Jr. Jared W. Ludlow Donald W. Parry Dana M. Pike Thomas A. Wayment

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE AND ANTIQUITY

Volume 1 • 2009

NEAL A. MAXWELL INSTITUTE
FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Studies in the Bible and Antiquity is dedicated to promoting a better understanding of the Bible and of religion in the ancient world, bringing the best LDS scholarship and thought to a general Latter-day Saint readership. Questions may be directed to the editors at sba@byu.edu.

© 2009 Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship

Brigham Young University

Provo, UT 84602

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

Phone: (801) 422-9229

Toll Free: (800) 327-6715

FAX: (801) 422-0040

E-mail: sba@byu.edu

Web: <http://mi.byu.edu/publications/studies>

ISSN 2151-7800

CONTENTS

Editors' Introduction.	vii
A Comparison of the Communal Lament Psalms and the Treaty-Covenant Formula. Daniel Belnap	1
From the Hand of Jacob: A Ritual Analysis of Genesis 27. David E. Bokovoy	35
“And the Word Was Made Flesh”: A Latter-day Saint Exegesis of the Blood and Water Imagery in the Gospel of John. Eric D. Huntsman	51
Point Our Souls to Christ: Lessons from Leviticus. Julie M. Smith	67
The Valentinian Bridal Chamber in the <i>Gospel of Philip</i> . Gaye Strathearn	83

Editors' Introduction

We are pleased to present here the first issue of *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*. *Studies* is dedicated to Latter-day Saint research on the Old Testament, New Testament, and other texts or topics that illuminate our understanding of the Bible and religion in antiquity. It is the first LDS periodical devoted exclusively to these subjects and will serve as a companion to the other periodicals of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship dedicated to the study of the scripture and faith of the Restored Gospel.

Studies in the Bible and Antiquity serves the needs of two constituencies. Like its sister publications, *Studies* serves a broad community of general LDS readers who study and teach the Bible and who wish to better understand both the biblical text and its world. Yet *Studies* is also a journal by LDS scholars for LDS scholars, as well as for our academic colleagues who have an interest in LDS approaches to the Bible and religion in antiquity. Therefore, many of the articles published here will be technical in nature. But to serve our general readership, we will work with authors of more technical studies to ensure that even the most specialized articles are as accessible as possible to nonspecialists.

This inaugural issue of *Studies* contains five excellent articles. In "A Comparison of the Communal Lament Psalms and the Treaty-Covenant Formula," Daniel Belnap examines the communal lament psalms within the context of the Hittite covenantal formula. Belnap aptly demonstrates through many examples from the lament psalms that the relationship between Israel and Jehovah fits comfortably within the ancient Hittite treaty-covenant formula, which provides insight into how the Lord taught the Israelites about repentance and forgiveness within the context of their own time. This article has implications for our understanding of LDS covenant making, covenant breaking, and the restoration of covenantal blessings through repentance.

David Bokovoy's article, "From the Hand of Jacob: A Ritual Analysis of Genesis 27," analyzes the element of ritual in Jacob's deception when receiving a blessing from Isaac. Insights gleaned from Hebrew and other ancient practices suggest that hand placement, exchange of clothing, and the seeking of blessing probably relate to rituals associated with the temple. Bokovoy believes that the deception of Jacob may be better understood as a ritual act common to his environment, giving insight into a difficult-to-understand part of the book of Genesis.

In "And the Word Was Made Flesh: An LDS Exegesis of the Blood and Water Imagery in the Gospel of John," Eric D. Huntsman examines a number of Greek words and phrases that illuminate how the Gospel of John presents the symbolic nature of blood and water. It is commonly known that John, more than the other three evangelists, employed symbolism very extensively, and Huntsman has illustrated this fact well with his discussion of blood and water as symbols of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Julie M. Smith's "Pointing Our Souls to Christ: Lessons from Leviticus" examines the Book of Leviticus analogically and shows how the ritual laws of Leviticus pointed the Israelites towards Christ and the atonement. Smith's rereading of Leviticus, informed by contemporary exegetical method, will help readers see Leviticus not as a "dry and irrelevant" legal code, but as a witness to Christ as Savior and Redeemer.

Finally, Gaye Strathearn in "The Valentinian Bridal Chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*" examines whether the "bridal chamber" in the *Gospel of Philip* may be seen as providing evidence of a primitive practice like modern LDS temple marriage. Some LDS scholars have suggested that this is the case. Strathearn carefully describes the issues and provides an accurate and insightful assessment to help readers draw informed conclusions.

We now present this debut issue of *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* with our hope that readers will find in its original and carefully researched articles a greater understanding and appreciation of the Bible and the biblical world.

A COMPARISON OF THE COMMUNAL LAMENT PSALMS AND THE TREATY-COVENANT FORMULA

Daniel Belnap

If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. (Psalm 44:20–21 KJV)

Within the corpus of psalms in the Hebrew Bible can be found a unique grouping known collectively as the communal lament psalms. They are generally characterized by their use of the first common plural pronoun, some type of calamity experienced by the community, and a petition to God asking for deliverance from the calamity. These psalms are also connected to each other through similar metaphors, images, vocabulary, and structure. While the total number of psalms in this category is debatable, a core of seven psalms are universally considered communal laments.¹

Some scholars argue that these laments derive from older, Mesopotamian laments,² yet their poetic and thematic structure more closely resembles a Hittite treaty-covenant formula, which is a literary structure widely attested in the Hebrew Bible.³

1. Psalms 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, and 89. Often Lamentations is included, but this poem exhibits different characteristics than those of the communal laments in the psalter and should therefore be studied separately.

2. Paul W. Ferris Jr., *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); and Walter C. Bouzard Jr., *We Have Heard with Our Ears, O God: Sources of the Communal Laments in the Psalms* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), are the most extensive studies dedicated to this concept.

3. The literature on this pattern as found in the Old Testament is voluminous. Though this article will refer to a number of these sources, two in particular are useful for those interested in studying the pattern. See Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and*

The Hebrew Bible and the Treaty-Covenant Formula

Elias Bickerman in 1951 first noted the similarities between Deuteronomy and the Hittite treaty texts,⁴ but George E. Mendenhall's study, published in 1955, described in much greater detail the similarities in structure between the biblical law texts and the Hittite treaties.⁵ He concluded that elements of the Hittite treaty-covenant formula were also used to describe the covenantal relationship between God and Israel.⁶ In 1964, Klaus Baltzer followed up Mendenhall's seminal work in a study that examined the themes of covenant formula and covenant terminology within the Hebrew corpus.⁷ Dennis McCarthy added to the discussion in 1981 with his comprehensive study of covenant texts in the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern treaty-covenant texts. Since then, others have provided insights primarily concerned with the legal and cultic nature of certain terminology.

Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978); and Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formula: In Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); also Noel Weeks, *Admonition and Curse: The Ancient Near Eastern Treaty/Covenant Form as a Problem in Inter-cultural Relationships* (New York: Clark International, 2004); also Paul Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982). This literary structure can also be found in the Book of Mormon. See Stephen D. Ricks's article "The Treaty/Covenant Pattern in King Benjamin's Address (Mosiah 1–6)," *BYU Studies* 24/2 (1984): 151–62, for the most comprehensive use of the treaty-covenant formula in the Book of Mormon. For a more recent article, see RoseAnn Benson and Stephen D. Ricks, "Treaties and Covenants: Ancient Near Eastern Legal Terminology in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14/1 (2005): 48–61.

4. Elias Bickerman, "Couper une alliance," *Archives d'histoire du droit oriental* 5 (1950–51): 133–56.

5. George E. Mendenhall, "Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East," *Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1955): 26–46, 49–76.

6. McCarthy summarizes Mendenhall's conclusions in *Treaty and Covenant*, 4: "An important element in this discussion is a presentation of the structure of the ancient treaty as revealed in the Hittite texts, and of the evidence for the possibility of Israelite-Hittite contacts. In the light of this structure and these possible contacts, Mendenhall argues to certain conclusions, among others, that the original *form* of the Israelite covenant as made on Sinai was that of the Hittite treaties and that this coincidence is an argument for the substantial historicity of the narrative in Exodus."

7. Klaus Baltzer, *Das Bundesformular* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1964).

McCarthy's formula of the Hittite treaty-covenant exhibits the following structure:

- I. Preamble/introduction
- II. Historical prologue
- III. Stipulations
- IV. Document clause
- V. List of divine witnesses
- VI. Curses and blessing(s)⁸

The preamble, or introduction, identifies both parties and specifically announces the suzerain's power and right to create the treaty-covenant. It establishes a relationship between the two parties. In many of the treaties the introduction comes after a historical narrative, or prologue, that gives the prior relationship—if there had been one between the suzerain and the vassal—in order to establish the new relationship enacted under the treaty.

The stipulations present the obligations of the two parties. While these were primarily obligations the vassal was to keep, some of the treaties contain mutual obligations suggesting that the senior member of the relationship had obligations to the junior, weaker member, particularly to protect and guarantee dynastic continuity.⁹

The fourth element, the document clause, records, preserves, and prescribes the periodic rereading of the treaty. The fifth general element of these treaties lists the deities from the suzerain's and the vassal's culture who invoked the witness and sanction of the treaty. Finally, the last element details the curses and blessing(s) that would fall on the vassal if the stipulations were either not met or broken. Though curses dominate this section, a few of the treaties include a general set of blessings if the treaty is adhered to.

8. John H. Walton summarizes McCarthy's formula and presents it in a more readable form in *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 101–7.

9. For detail on these specific obligations, see McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 42–43, 58.

For the Hebrew Bible, the treaty-covenant formula can be found most prominently in the book of Deuteronomy because of the covenant relationship Israel entered into with God at Sinai. According to McCarthy, the Deuteronomic treaty-covenant formula should be outlined as follows:

- I. Historical prologue (chapters 5–11)
- II. Stipulations (12:1–26:15)
- III. Invocation-adjuration (26:16–19)
- IV. Blessing and curses (28:1–46)¹⁰

Noticeably, certain elements of the Hittite formula are missing in the above outline, but others have been expanded and new elements given precedence.¹¹ Though no explicit explanation is found in the biblical text itself (indeed the author does not explicitly indicate that he uses any template at all),¹² the changes appear to reflect the unique theological nature of the relationship between the Israelites and their God. Unlike the Hittite treaties, which establish a mortal-mortal relationship, the biblical texts describe the establishment of a mortal-divine relationship with God as the suzerain and Israel as the vassal. As opposed to the Hittite treaties, the biblical counterpart stresses the history of the two parties over the titulary, or list of titles establishing the identities of the two parties.¹³ The biblical

10. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 186. Deuteronomy 1–4 generally follows this same pattern but describes the covenantal history of God and the patriarchs.

11. Two characteristics present in the extrabiblical formula are gone in McCarthy's analysis of the biblical form: the document clause and the list of divine witnesses; Although it is interesting that in Deuteronomy 32:1, the heavens and earth are commanded to listen, perhaps acting as legal witnesses to the speech by Yahweh that follows. Psalm 89 describes the sun and moon as witnessing the eternal nature of the Davidic covenant. For a good discussion of this, see G. Ernest Wright, "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter J. Harrelson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), 44–49.

12. In fact, this is one of the primary criticisms of this approach. Still, most biblical scholarship agrees with the general premise.

13. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 169–70: "Now, just how does all this material [Deut 5–11], so largely admonition and exhortation, fit into the covenant pattern? Clearly it serves the same purpose as the historical prologue of the Hittite treaty, that is, it gives

law code that Israel was to keep, according to the covenant, represents the stipulations, while the invocation-adjuration section, like the Hittite documents clause, records Israel's commitment to keep the covenantal obligations, with God's promise of future protection and greatness (through the mediation of Moses).¹⁴

McCarthy does not mention the biblical equivalent of the document clause, but it can be found in Deuteronomy 31:9: "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it to the priests . . . which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord." Moreover, in 31:10–13, Moses declares that the law should be read before Israel every seven years to renew the obligations Israel had made at Sinai. Thus the full biblical formula in Deuteronomy should be as follows:

- I. Historical prologue (chapters 5–11)
- II. Stipulations (12:1–26:15)
- III. Invocation-adjuration (26:16–19)
- IV. Blessing and curses (28:1–46)
- V. Document clause (31:9–13)

This formula in Deuteronomy recounts a covenant-making experience and is also attested in other biblical texts. For example, similar passages using the biblical covenant formula also appear in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. The communal laments may not describe covenant-making events, but they do focus on the covenantal relationship that should exist between God and Israel. As such they provide a unique perspective on the biblical formula. Unlike both Hittite treaty-covenants and the earlier biblical texts found in the Pentateuch, which are both presented from the suzerain's perspective, the communal laments are primarily from the vassal's perspective. Ostensibly the lament psalms operate as covenant-continuing, or

a ground and motive for obedience to the precepts which follow and to which end it is directed."

14. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 184: "The reciprocity of the actions in Dt 26 is not entirely alien to the treaty context. . . . None of this, the statement of covenant-making or mutuality is out of place in the treaty and covenant traditions. However expressed, or even left unexpressed, even in the more subordinating treaties the parties were tied together to mutual advantage. They had mutual obligations."

covenant-reminding, texts.¹⁵ In other words, the communal lament psalms remind Israel of the covenant relationship that should already exist with God.

The covenant reminder in the psalms exhibits an important distinction that affects the presentation of the covenant formula. Like the biblical treaty-covenant formula, one section focuses on the history of the two parties, but unlike the biblical formula, the cursing-and-blessing unit describes the actual curses that have befallen Israel instead of listing potential curses, and then is followed by a refutation of the reasoning behind the curses. In addition, the biblical formula invokes the performance of oaths that should be accepted by both parties, but the laments refer to obligations related to oaths that had already been made. This was then followed by a recommitment to their relationship with God. Finally, the psalms possess the equivalent of a document clause with the inclusion of a section in which the author promises to give praise to God in the future, which also fulfills a prior covenant obligation of Israel. With this in mind, the following represents the communal lament formula as based on the biblical treaty-covenant:

- I. History of relationship
- II. Description of curses
- III. Refutation of curses
- IV. Appeal for deliverance based on
covenantal obligations
- V. Vow of praise
 - a. Declaration of relationship
("You are our King")

15. Though this appears to be unique in the corpus of ancient Near Eastern literature, there may be a similar point of view in the Amarna letters; see Ellen F. Morris, "Bowing and Scraping in the Ancient Near East: An Investigation into Obsequiousness in the Amarna Letters," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 65/3 (2006): 179–85, as well as in the Hittite royal prayers; see Moshe Greenberg, "Hittite Royal Prayers and Biblical Petitionary Psalms," in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung für Walter Beyerlin*, ed. Klaus Seybold and Erich Zenger (Freiberg: Herder, 1995), 15–27; and Ph. H. J. Houwink Ten Cate, "Hittite Royal Prayers," *Numen* 16/1 (1969): 81–98. See also Emanuel Pfoh, "Some Remarks on Patronage in Syria-Palestine during the Later Bronze Age," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52 (2009): 363–81.

History of Relationship

One part of the history section highlights the past relationship between the partners of the covenant, and, in particular, underscores how both parties had met their obligations. The description of God in Deuteronomy 28:7 emphasizes that his role as historical protector of Israel is one of his primary divine obligations. Thus the lament psalms frequently contain the imagery of a divine warrior and describe God as a warrior who fights on behalf of Israel.¹⁶ For example, Psalm 44 begins with a historical reference to God's protective interaction with the Israelites after they enter the land of Canaan:

1. We have heard, O God,
our fathers have told us
the deeds that you did in their days,
in days of old.
2. You, your hand dispossessed the nations
and you planted them [the fathers].
You caused injury to the peoples/nations
and you sent them [the fathers].
3. For not with their sword did they take the earth,
and their arm did not bring deliverance/victory to them,
but your right hand and your arm
and the light of your face,
because you favored them.¹⁷

One can immediately see the warrior terminology and imagery in the above example as well as the representation of God's hand as a warrior and as a planter. The latter image will be discussed in greater depth below. The martial imagery continues in verses 5–7, emphasizing the unity that should exist between Israel and God:

5. With you we will gore our enemies,
in your name we will trample those who rise against us.

16. See Richard J. Clifford, "Psalm 89: A Lament over the Davidic Ruler's Continued Failure," *Harvard Theological Review* 73 1/2 (1980): 35–47.

17. Unless otherwise noted, the translations throughout are by the author.

6. For in my bow I will not trust
and my sword will not deliver me.
7. You give deliverance to us from our enemies
and you thwart our enemies.

Psalms 60 and 83 also use similar martial imagery. Psalm 60:6–8 lists territories adjacent to Jerusalem that the Lord had promised to Israel following his victorious conquest over the enemy:

6. God spoke in his sanctuary:
I will exultingly divide Shechem
and I will measure the valley of Sukkoth.
7. Gilead is for me and Manasseh is for me.
And Ephraim is the place of my strength,
Judah is my scepter.
8. Moab is my washbasin,
against Edom I throw my shoe.
Philistia, I will have victory over you.

Psalm 83 provides a specific history that shows God as a warrior on behalf of Israel:

9. Do to them as Midian,
as against Sisera,
as against Jabin at the stream Kishon.
10. They were destroyed at En-dor,
they were dung in the land.
11. Treat their great men like Oreb and Zeeb,
all their leaders like Zebah and Zalmunna,
12. who said: “Let us take the fields of God.”

Some texts address localized conflicts such as the conflict with Hazor recounted in Judges 4–5 and the repeated aggression from Midian found in Judges 7–8. The former is described in the song of Deborah and employs the imagery of a divine warrior.

However, Psalm 80 does not use martial imagery but displays the imagery of God as a planter in order to recount history:

8. You brought a vine out of Egypt,
you drove out the heathen, then you planted it.
9. You made room for it
and caused that it took deep root
and it filled the land.
10. The hills were shadowed by it
and limbs like healthy cedars.
11. Her branches reached the sea;
her boughs to the river.
- ...
15. the vineyard which your hand planted;
the branch which you made powerful for yourself.

The image of God as planter and as warrior relates to another of his covenantal obligations: to provide a land of inheritance. In the Song of Moses, which follows the Red Sea miracle, Exodus 15:17 promises that the Lord “shal[l] bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance.” Later, following the Sinai covenantal experience, the camp of Israel is compared to an orchard of trees planted by God (Numbers 24:6). Finally, according to 2 Samuel 7:10, God provides the justification for the building of the temple, informing David that “I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them anymore, as beforetime.”

Psalm 74 contains a history unit composed of two sections: a true historical section and a mythical section, but both are woven together to make one complete unit. The historical section begins in verse 2 with the Psalmist commanding Yahweh to

Remember your congregation
which you bought in olden times,

the tribe of your inheritance you redeemed
towards whom you acted as a kinsman.

After the injunction to remember the original covenant-making event,¹⁸ the Psalmist takes the narrative further back in time and describes the creation in martial terms, tying that great event to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and their subsequent travels in the wilderness as shown in verses 12–17:

12. God is king (my king) from olden times,
who works salvation in the midst of the earth.
13. You did divide the sea with your strength,
you shattered the heads of the monsters on the waters.
14. You crushed the heads of Leviathan,
you gave them as food to the people in the desert.
15. You cleaved the spring and the torrent,
you dried up the ever-flowing rivers.
16. The day is yours, also the night;
you established the moon and the sun.
17. You fixed the borders of the earth;
Summer and Autumn, you fashioned them.

Verses 14 and 15 bring together the mythical and historical elements in a chiasmic structure:

- 14 a. You crushed the heads of Leviathan
[a mythical reference to the destruction
of the chaotic sea monster]
- b. You gave them as food to the people in the desert
[a historical reference to God’s interaction with
Israel in the desert]

18. H. Eising, “זָכַר *zākhār*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 4:70: “By calling the people → the עֵדָה *‘ēdhāh*, ‘congregation,’ and → הַנַּחֲלָה *nach^llāh*, ‘heritage,’ of God, Ps. 74:2 alludes clearly enough to the covenant that God is called on to remember.”

- 15 b'. You cleaved the spring and the torrent
 [a historical reference to provision
 of water in the desert for Israel]
- a'. You dried up the ever-flowing rivers
 [a mythical reference to God's control
 over the water]

Verse 14 describes God's victory over the primeval chaos monster that guarantees the survival of Israel in the desert wilderness. Then verse 15 reiterates God's power over the waters, reminding Israel of both his power over the primal sea and his power to miraculously provide water in the wilderness. This chiasmic pattern suggests that the Psalmist wanted the reader or listener to connect the two time periods in order to emphasize God as protector. Moreover, the imagery of providing a meal also suggests a common ritual meal associated with covenant making: the communal meal with the suzerain, God, providing the meal for his vassals. Exodus 24:11 relates such a meal wherein the leaders of the camp share a meal in the presence of Yahweh.¹⁹ A communal meal is also attested in the giving of the manna to the Israelites in the wilderness.²⁰ The mythical provision of the meal reflects the actual, historical events and reiterates the covenantal relationship between Israel and God.

Psalm 89, like Psalm 74, combines the mythical with the historical, thus showing God's sovereignty over the chaotic element. This becomes a foreshadowing event to the rise of the Davidic dynasty:

5. And the heavens recount/praise your wonder, O Yahweh,
 also your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.

19. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 253–56. See also E. W. Nicholson, "The Covenant Ritual in Exodus XXIV," *Vetus Testamentum* 32/1 (1982): 74–86.

20. The presence of the manna may have some covenantal significance. In Exodus 16:32–33, Moses tells Aaron to put an omer of manna in a pot, which will then be put in the ark of the covenant as a reminder for later generations. Its placement in the ark, along with Aaron's rod and the stone tablets, both items associated with the covenant, suggests that the manna too was symbolic of the covenant, perhaps representative of a covenant meal God provided during the entire wilderness period.

6. For who in the clouds (heaven) is
comparable to Yahweh?
(Who) is like Yahweh among the sons of God (gods?)
7. God (is) awe-inspiring among the council
of the great holy ones
and revered by all surrounding him.
8. Yahweh, God of the hosts,
who, like you, is mighty, O Yah?
And your faithfulness surrounds you.
9. You rule over (in?) the swelling of the sea;
in the surging of the waves you still them.
10. You crushed Rahab like the slain,
with the arm of your strength you
scattered your enemies.
11. To you are the heavens,
also to you is the earth,
the world and everything in it.
You established them.
12. North and South
you organized/created them.
Tabor and Hermon exult in your name.
13. To you is an arm with might;
your hand is strong,
your right hand is lifted up.
14. Righteousness and justice are the base of your throne;
hesed and truth stand before your face.
...
19. Then you spoke in a vision to those of yours
who are practicing *hesed*

and you said, “I set power on a strong one;
I exalted a chosen one from the people.”

20. I found David my servant;
with my holy oil I anointed him.
21. My hand will always be with him,
also my arm will strengthen him.
22. No enemy will go out against him
and no son of injustice will afflict him.
23. I will crush before him his enemies
and those who hate him I will strike down.
24. My faithfulness and *hesed* are with him
and in my name his horn will be exalted.
25. I will place among the sea his hand
and among the rivers his right hand.
26. He will call to me,
“You are my father, My God and
the rock of my deliverance.”
27. I will also appoint him firstborn,
highest of the kings of the earth.
28. For eternity I will maintain my *hesed* to him
and my faithful covenant to him.
29. And I will establish his seed forever
and his throne as the days of heaven.
30. If his sons forsake my law
and do not walk in my judgments;
31. If they breach my statutes
and do not maintain my rules,
32. I will punish with a rod their transgression
and with plagues their sin.

33. But my *hesed* I will not take from him;
I will not deal falsely in my faithfulness.
34. I will not violate my covenant
and the going out of my lips I will not change.
35. Once I have sworn by my holiness
I will not lie to David.
36. His seed will be forever
and his throne, like the sun, before me,
37. Like the moon, set up for eternity
and a witness in the sky, enduring.

As recounted in 2 Samuel 7, the Davidic dynasty was established through a personal covenantal experience that took place between God and David. Yet, as the Psalmist makes clear above, that experience benefited God's righteous, who were promised "a strong one" to act in their interests on God's behalf. Thus the Lord's promises to David concerning dynastic continuity and protection reinforce his earlier promise to protect Israel.²¹

Finally, the covenantal history in Psalm 79 differs from the other communal lament psalms in both size and tenor: "Do not remember the iniquities of the former ones against us!" (v. 8). Unlike the other examples above, this brief line alludes to Israel's sinful past and specifically asks that God not remember that part of its history.²² Yet, the above also seems to stress that the covenantal relationship still exists between the people of Israel and God with their implicit plea that God forgive their sinful state and protect them according to the covenant.

Thus it can be seen that all seven communal laments provide some type of covenantal history. Also, most contain specific imagery

21. Interestingly, many of the characteristics present in the covenant formula are also present within this history, further strengthening the overall covenantal history unit in the psalm.

22. See Isaiah 5:2, 7; Jeremiah 2:21; and Ezekiel 19:10, 13 for negative planting imagery. Interestingly, the historical allusions to God as warrior and God as planter found in these texts include God's explanations as to why he is not going to defend Israel.

that alludes to covenant-making language used in earlier biblical history and that emphasizes the obligations God himself was to keep, specifically to provide a land of promise and to protect them from their adversaries. Even the negative history of Psalm 79 highlights the relationship between God and Israel that existed in years past. Yet these histories contrast with the Psalmist's depiction of his contemporary Israel, which, as we shall see, suffers from some of the covenantal curses established at Sinai.

Description of Curses/Refutation of Curses

Owing to the unique nature that the communal lament psalms share as covenant-reminding texts, as opposed to covenant-establishing texts, the psalms include historical descriptions detailing perceived curses that had fallen on the community in the past. This departs from the list of potential curses provided in the traditional treaty-covenant texts of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.²³ With that in mind, there seems to be a clear relationship between the potential curses described in Deuteronomy (and elsewhere) and the description of events found in the communal lament psalms. For the most part, the curses describe the social disruption and disintegration of Israel that result from foreign invasion. Yet the communal laments also include a refutation of these curses. In other words, these psalms express that the community's curse is not justified, because they have kept their covenantal obligations. These refutations contain a plea for deliverance based on the covenantal obligations both parties had already entered into.

Among the seven communal lament psalms studied here, the primary curse takes place when God abandons Israel on the field of battle and Israel's enemies prevail. Deuteronomy 28:25 refers to this curse as Moses warns Israel about the consequences of covenantal infidelity:

He will cause you to be smitten by your enemies.
In one way you will go out against him

23. For a general discussion concerning the curse unit found in the Hebrew Bible, see Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964).

and in seven ways you will flee before him
and you will be an object of trembling
before all the nations of the earth.

Psalm 44 describes this precise situation in its curse unit (vv. 9–10):

9. Yet you have repudiated us and you have humiliated us.
You do not go out with our armies.
10. You cause us to retreat backwards from our foe;
those who hate us plunder us.

Psalm 60:10 uses similar language in stating: “But you, O God, have rejected us and you do not march among our armies, O God.” In Psalm 80:6, the Psalmist declares: “You set us at strife with our neighbors.” Psalm 89 presents a similar scenario, but adds that God abandons the king, who represents all of Israel:

40. You breached all his defenses,
shattered all his fortresses.
- ...
42. You have raised up the right hand of his adversaries,
you caused all his enemies to rejoice.
43. Also you turned back his sword,
you did not keep him up in battle.

Although the above references suggest that Israel viewed its relationship with God as an antagonistic, adversarial one, other communal laments make explicit that what befalls them, befalls God. In other words, because of the covenantal relationship that exists between the two, action against one should be understood as hostility against the other as well.

Psalm 74:4–8 recounts how the enemy has overtaken the land and in particular defiled the temple, a symbol of Israel’s relationship with God:

4. Your adversaries roar in the midst of the sanctuary,
they set up their banners as standards.

5. One was known who brought up
an axe against the thicket of trees.
6. And now the engraven works, all together,
the axes and hatchets strike them down.
7. They cast fire into your sanctuary.
To the earth they defiled (brought low)
the dwelling place of your name.
8. They said in their hearts,
“We will oppress them together.”
They put to flame every sacred site in the land.

Psalm 79:1–3 relates a similar scenario in which God has again abandoned the community, leaving Israel and the temple to the ravages of the enemy:

1. O God, the nations have entered into your possession,
they polluted the temple of your holiness,
they have put Jerusalem to ruins.
2. They gave the corpses of your servants
as food to the fowl of the air,
the flesh of your covenant keepers to the wild beasts.
3. They poured out their blood like water
around Jerusalem.
There is no burying.

Both examples stress that the enemy who is ravaging Israel is God’s enemy as well. Psalm 74:4 declares that the enemy is “your” enemy, meaning God’s adversary. Similarly Psalm 79 notes that the land is “your possession,” the temple is “your holiness,” and Israel is designated as “your servants” and “your covenant keepers.” This designation is most explicit in Psalm 83 where the author sees no distinction between God and Israel:

2. Your enemies make a tumult,
they that hate you have lifted up the head.

3. Against your people they plot secrets
and consulted against your treasured ones.
4. They have said: “Come, let us cut them off as a nation,
that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.”
5. Unanimous in their counsel,
they are allied against you.

A number of the curses described in the communal lament deal with the effects of military defeat such as being scattered or sold into slavery. Deuteronomy 28:63–64 details these consequences if Israel does not keep the covenantal obligations:

You will be plucked from off the land which you will go to possess. And he will scatter you among all peoples from one end of the earth unto the other end of the earth, and there you will serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known, even of wood and stone.

At least two more communal lament psalms mention this as part of their curse unit—44:11–12:

11. You scatter us among the nations.
12. You sell your people for no price
and you do not set high their price.

and 60:1, where the lament begins:

1. O God, thou hast cast us off,
thou hast scattered us,
thou hast been displeased.

More graphic curses were pronounced when dealing with the lack of a proper burial or disrespect for the dead. The Lord warns in Leviticus 26:22 and Deuteronomy 28:25–26 that if Israel does not adhere to the covenant, he would cause Israel to be smitten before its enemies seven ways and that its “carcass will be food for the fowl of

the air and for the beasts of the earth.”²⁴ This communal lament and curse reflect the imagery of Israel as a beast designated for slaughter, as a wild enemy, as a ferocious beast, and, in the description of the community’s dead, as an actual feast for wild animals. This idea of slaughter first appears in Psalm 44:11, which reads: “You give us out as a sheep carcass.” The Psalmist uses this same imagery later in a poem that describes Israel as “sheep raised for slaughter” (v. 22). Psalm 74:19 describes the enemy as a wild beast: “Don’t give your turtledove²⁵ to the multitude/wild beast!” and implicitly in verses 4 and 23 in their references to the enemy’s roaring.²⁶ Finally, Psalm 79:2 explicitly states a curse that is also found almost word for word in Deuteronomy 28:26:

They gave the corpses of your servants as food to the fowl of the air, the flesh of your covenant keepers to the wild beasts. (Psalm 79:2)

And your carcass shall be meat unto all the fowl of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall chase them away. (Deuteronomy 28:26)²⁷

24. This appears to be a common type of curse found in the Assyrian treaty-covenant texts. See the Aramaic Sefire Inscription I A, lines 30–32 and Inscription II A, 9. Discussed in Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1995), 162–66. See also Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 54–56.

25. The use of the word for turtledove is problematic, though it may have covenantal allusions. See Christopher T. Begg, “The Covenantal Dove in Psalm LXXIV 19–20,” *Vetus Testamentum* 37/1 (1987): 78–80.

26. Though not exactly the same thing, Psalm 44:19 records an interesting curse description: “Thus, you crushed us in the place of the sea monsters and clothed us over with the deepest darkness (shadow of death?).” Though this curse finds no parallel in Deuteronomy, extrabiblical treaties record curses of overwhelming floods, which will cover the treaty breaker. In the Esarhaddon treaty this curse is mentioned twice. The first is in lines 488–89, “May a flood, an irresistible deluge, come up from the earth and devastate you!” The second is line 442, “[May] the gods [. . .] your land with a mighty flood!” For the translation of the Esarhaddon treaty, see D. J. Wiseman, “The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon,” *Iraq* 20 (1958): 1–99, quotations on pp. 66 and 62.

27. This curse also contains imagery and language suggesting lack of a proper burial for the dead. Similar curses are found in the extrabiblical material. Three times in the Esarhaddon treaty (lines 426–27) it is mentioned that the body of the treaty breaker will not receive a burial, instead providing a meal for wild animals, which was discussed earlier. For a discussion of this curse, see Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 68–69. In another text,

The final two references above suggest that the image of a feast, while normally positive, could also connote a curse. Similarly, Psalm 60:3 states that God caused Israel to “drink the wine of astonishment,” and Psalm 80:5 informs us that Israel eats “the bread of tears” and drinks “tears . . . in great measure.” These psalms may reflect the image of feasting as a way to symbolize the establishing of covenantal relationships. As noted above, Exodus 24 shows the feast as a covenant-establishing ritual, and Psalm 74 describes God’s covenantal history. In addition, Deuteronomy 32:13–14 depicts God’s relationship with the people of Israel as one in which he miraculously provided for them food and drink while they were in the wilderness. The feast was meant to be a positive, communal experience, and the use of the imagery of a negative feast in the communal laments suggests that the communal, joyful covenant relationship between God and Israel was broken.

In the final curse Israel is mocked, scorned, and derided.²⁸ Again, Deuteronomy 28:37 anticipates this curse in warning the Israelites that if they do not keep their covenant obligations they “will be an appalling waste, a proverb and an object of taunting among all the nations where God will place you.” In the modern view, this curse may seem the least destructive, but its prominence in the communal laments suggests just the opposite. One scholar suggests that a strong honor/shame continuum governed much of ancient Israel’s cultural and social behavior, which became fundamental in defining its cultural identity.²⁹ The prominence of this curse, as opposed to curses attached to the lack of proper burial or military loss, likely defined the destructive nature of curses since it stripped Israel of its self-identity. This appears to be a good reason for its prominence in the communal lament psalms.³⁰ Psalm 44 illustrates this curse in great detail:

the curse is explicit, “May his corpse drop and have no one to bury it!” L. W. King, *Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1912), 47, iv 19–20.

28. It is also mentioned in 80:6, “You set us at strife with our neighbors / our enemies mock us at will.”

29. See Saul M. Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and Its Environment,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115/2 (1996): 201–18.

30. Lyn M. Bechtel, “The Perception of Shame within the Divine-Human Relationship in Biblical Israel,” in *Uncovering Ancient Stones: Essays in Memory of H. Neil Richardson*,

13. You make us an object of taunting to our neighbors,
mocking and derision to those who surround us.
14. You make us a proverb to the nations,
an object of head-shaking among the peoples.
15. Every day, I am aware of my humiliation,
and I am clothed with the shame of my face,
16. From the sound of the taunter and the blasphemer
before the enemy, the avenging ones.

Psalm 74 contains the curse in verses 22–23:

22. Arise, O God, contend your dispute!
Remember your taunting from the godless all/every day!
23. Do not forget the cry of your adversaries,
the roar of your adversaries ascending continually.

Psalm 79 includes the curse in verse 4:

We have become an object of taunting to our neighbors
an object of derision and mocking to those who surround us.

Psalm 80:6 relates that Israel's enemies "mock" them and 89:41 says that the king, who represented all of Israel, "has become an object of taunting to his neighbors" (v. 39) because God had "made void the covenant" with the Davidic dynasty.

Refutation of Curses

As shown above, the communal laments are associated with the treaty-covenant formula in Deuteronomy. Uniquely, these laments not only include a description of the curses, but they also contain a refutation of the reasoning as to why they would have experienced the curses in the first place. In other words, the laments explain that these

ed. Lewis M. Hopfe (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 84: "YHWH's obligation to protect the people from shaming is never stated directly in any of the covenants but it is assumed, particularly in deuteronomic theology."

curse were unjust since the community had, in fact, been faithful in keeping its covenantal obligations. Only one psalm explicitly states Israel's innocence, but all the laments imply that the community was faithful to its covenants.

Psalm 44:17–18, 20–21 contains the only explicit declaration of Israel's innocence:

17. All this came on us and we did not forget you
and we did not deal falsely with your covenant.
18. Our hearts did not retreat backwards
and our steps did not turn away from your path.
- ...
20. If we forgot the name of our God
and spread our hands to a strange god,³¹
21. Will not God search this?
For he knows the secrets of the heart.

Verse 17 begins with the protestation that Israel did not deal falsely with God's covenant, which sets up the rest of the refutation in the verses that follow. This was a litmus or loyalty test of sorts, in which God is challenged to expose any duplicity or insincerity that may lie behind the community's words. Moreover, the people of Israel demonstrated their fidelity by remaining true to the covenant and remembering their responsibilities, even as "all this came upon us."³²

Like the community of Psalm 44, the community of Psalm 80 also proclaims its innocence by stressing its righteous habits. Verse 4

31. In Jeremiah 19:4–8 it is the worshipping of other gods that is expressed as a breach of the covenant. Interestingly, the consequences are that Israel will be made food for animals and that they will become a "hissing" (שריקה) to the nations.

32. See Gert Kwakkel, "According to My Righteousness": *Upright Behaviour as Grounds for Deliverance in Psalms 7, 17, 18, 26, and 44* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). Also, Adele Berlin's treatment on this theme in Psalm 44, "Psalms and the Literature of Exile: Psalms 137, 44, 69, 78," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller Jr. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 65–84, specifically pages 71–74. See also Mark S. Smith, "Remembering God: Collective Memory in Israelite Religion," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 (2002): 631–51.

expresses the following plea: “How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?” Though not as explicit as in Psalm 44, this passage suggests the community is keeping the covenant and is continuing to seek God through prayer in spite of his anger against them. These concepts are reinforced through imagery found later in Psalm 80, which characterizes Israel as a tree planted by God. According to the text, the tree has grown and flourished, becoming a mighty tree, suggesting that the tree has done exactly what it should be doing, which again leads to the question: “Why hast thou [God] broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?” (Psalm 80:12).

Psalm 74 takes the theme of remembering and forgetting and applies it to God in order to demonstrate the community’s innocence. Verse 2 reminds God that they are his people, his inheritance, and his tribe that he had bought or redeemed in the past.³³ Conversely, 79:8 asks God to forget their past behavior and remember them instead as his “servants” and “saints” (v. 2). This last example demonstrates that one way the communal laments refute the consequences is through emphasizing the community’s relationship to God by designation terminology. Thus, Psalm 79:2 designates Israel as “[God’s] servants” or “[God’s] saints.” Similarly, Psalm 74:19, 21 refers to the community as the “poor” and the “needy,” and 60:5 designates the community as God’s “beloved.” These kinds of designations appear in some treaty-covenant texts that describe the vassal explicitly and in others that refer to those who have rights to the suzerain’s patronage.³⁴ However,

33. Psalm 83:3 also makes explicit that the community is God’s people: “They [the enemies] make shrewd counsel against your people / they take counsel against your treasures.” Psalm 60:3 also uses “your people” to describe the community. Psalm 80:17 describes the community as “the man of your right hand” and “the one you have taken as your own.”

34. For the treaty-covenant usage of the designation “servant,” see Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant*, 92–99, 117–19; for the usage of “poor” and “needy” see Steven J. L. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms* (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 1987), 50: “עניים [poor] thus emerges as a group term for the faithful in Israel, parallel to צדיקים [righteous] and חסיד [faithful]”; see also W. Dennis Tucker Jr., “A Polysemiotic Approach to the Poor in the Psalms,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 31 (2004): 425–39. For the usage of the term *beloved* and associated *love*, see William L. Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): 77–87. For the obligation of the suzerain over lesser

one particular designation is found in some of the communal laments and has particularly strong covenantal connotations.

The Hebrew term for *saints* in 79:2 is *ḥasidim* (pronounced *kha-seedeem*), which is the plural, adjectival form of *ḥesed* (pronounced *khesed*). This term is not found in any other Semitic language but is repeated approximately 250 times in the Hebrew Bible and has been the subject of intense interest because it is used to describe the unique relationship between Israel and God. The term *ḥesed*, and variations of it, is found in three communal laments (44:26; 79:2; 89:2, 3, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49) and is the primary element of refutation in Psalm 89. It can be used outside of covenantal contexts, but when it is used within the framework of a covenant it likely refers to the obligations of the suzerain to the vassal.³⁵ Katherine D. Sakenfeld points out that when God's *ḥesed* is claimed or sought for in the communal laments, it often prefaced or followed up with "a statement indicating that the suppliant's relationship to God is in good repair."³⁶ Thus, the term *ḥasid* refers to one who "practices *ḥesed*" or "one who deserves *ḥesed*," which demonstrates that Israel has not avoided its covenantal obligations.³⁷

members of society, see F. Charles Fensham, "Widow, Orphan, and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 21/2 (1962): 129–39; see also W. Dennis Tucker Jr., "Is Shame a Matter of Patronage in the Communal Laments?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31/4 (2007): 465–80.

35. Katherine D. Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Ḥesed in the Hebrew Bible* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 132: "Within the theological covenant analogy, *ḥesed* provided a concise way of expressing the action of Yahweh as suzerain on behalf of his vassal Israel." In light of this, it is not surprising to find usage of the word in Deuteronomy 7:9: "Know that Yahweh is your God, He is the God, the faithful God who keeps the covenant and the *ḥesed* to those loving him."

36. Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Ḥesed*, 228. She goes on to say, "It may even be suggested that these statements of the 'deserving' behavior of the suppliant form the backdrop for the . . . assurance of deliverance which often conclude[s] the lament form."

37. Nelson Glueck, *Ḥesed in the Bible*, trans. Alfred Gottschalk (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967), 68–69: "The relationship between God and people was one of mutual rights and duties with *ḥesed* as the norm of conduct. It was a covenant alliance based on *ḥesed* and existing because of *ḥesed*. . . . The *Ḥasidim* fulfill their covenantal obligations in that they practice *ḥesed*. . . . They can be, and remain, *Ḥasidim* only as long as they comport themselves according to the sacred covenant concluded at Sinai and as long as they practice *ḥesed*."

Appeal for Deliverance Based on Covenantal Obligations

Refutations are often accompanied by the query of “how long” the calamities are to continue. To some extent, this is a rhetorical question because the refutation itself answers that it should be “no longer.” The questioning plea is usually followed by a series of imperatives and jussives exhorting God to act and defend the community according to his covenant obligations, which were conditioned upon Israel’s covenantal integrity. Of course, Israel, as the junior partner of the covenant, cannot enforce its request upon God, but Israel’s expectation for aid is not in vain, for God has covenanted with Israel.

The first example of this type of appeal is found in Psalm 44:23–24, 26:

23. Rouse yourself! why do you sleep, O Lord?
Rouse yourself! Do not reject (us) forever!

24. Why do you hide your face
and forget our affliction and our oppression?

...

26. Arise! Deliver us and redeem us
for the sake of your *hesed*!

Here the Psalmist clearly states the concern that God may deliberately be unaware of Israel’s predicament, thus necessitating his “waking up” and “remembering” Israel.³⁸ If God remembered Israel it would demonstrate that he had not rejected Israel. Other communal lament pleas reveal similar sentiments. Psalm 74:1 asks the question “Why, O God, have you rejected us forever,” and verse 10 reads:

Until when? How long, O God?
will the enemy taunt,
will the adversary spurn your name forever?

38. Eising, “זָכַר zākhar,” 70: “The fundamental bond of mutual remembrance that unites God and man leads further to the observation that the covenant idea is obviously also important in this context.” See also Dalit Rom-Shiloni, “Psalm 44: The Powers of Protest,” *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 70/4 (2008): 683–98.

The plea above is followed by the injunction to “remember” in the next verse, which is also repeated later in verse 18: “Remember that the enemy has reproached and that the fools have blasphemed your name!” Verse 18 begins a structural sequence for the last five verses with each verse alternating between a positive imperative and a negative exhortation, stressing the desire for remembrance:

19. Do not give your turtledove to the multitude/wild beasts!
Do not forget your poor ever!
20. Look to the covenant! . . .
21. Let not the oppressed return in shame!
Let the poor and needy praise thy name!
22. Arise, O God, plead your cause!
Remember how the fool reproaches you daily!
23. Forget not the voice of your enemies!
The tumult of those that rise up against you grows always.

Psalm 89 also expresses the desire that God “remember” the covenant in two appeals:

46. O Lord, how long?
Will you hide yourself forever?
Will your anger burn like fire?
47. Remember how short my time is;
did you make man in vain?
. . .
49. Lord, where are your acts of *hesed* as of old,
which you swore to your servant David in your truth?
50. Remember, O Lord, the reproach of your servants!
I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people.

That the communal lament appeals are concerned with remembrance is not surprising in light of the role it plays in the covenantal texts of the

Pentateuch. Throughout the stipulations recorded in Deuteronomy, Israel is instructed to remember “these things” and obey the law. Deuteronomy 8:1–2 characterizes remembering as a part of the covenantal obligations of Israel:

All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee. (KJV)

Similarly, Deuteronomy 4:23 declares: “Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord, thy God.”

Yet the covenant text in Leviticus 26 also records God’s obligation to remember Israel, particularly after the community has experienced hardship:

Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land; . . . when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God. (Leviticus 26:42, 44–45 KJV)

In light of this passage, the appeals of the communal laments fit within the covenantal context, which means that the Israelites have become worthy of God’s intervening power in two ways: (1) they are innocent of any wrongdoing (demonstrated through their refutation), and (2) they rely on and trust in God’s covenantal integrity to fulfill his obligations. This last point also employs the term *hesed* in its appeals.³⁹ Psalm 44 ends with the request that God deliver the community by

39. Tucker, “Is Shame a Matter of Patronage?” 475: “In the communal laments, especially Psalms 44, 74, and 79, the Psalmists recount the failure of Yahweh as patron to act

virtue of his *hesed*, and in 89:50, one plea queries where God's "*hesed* of old" has gone. In the refutations *hesed* defined Israel's innocence, but here it shows the performance of God's obligations as promised in the covenant.⁴⁰

Other appeals ask God to curse the unnamed adversaries, which is also one of his covenantal obligations. Deuteronomy 30:1–7 contains the Lord's promise that if Israel repents and performs again its covenantal obligations he would "put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee" (v. 7). This promise appears to be at the heart of the appeal in Psalm 79, which begins in verse 5 with the following plea:

5. Until when, O Yahweh?
Will you be angry forever?
Will your jealousy burn like fire?

A series of exhortations that follow include:

6. Pour out your anger on the nations who know not You
and on the nations that do not call on your name!"

...

8. O remember not our former iniquities!
Let thy tender mercies come quickly to us!

9. Help us, O God of our salvation,
for the glory of thy name!
Deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake!

in a manner that reflects the reciprocal nature of the relationship, and further, in a manner that engenders solidarity."

40. See Sung-Hun Lee, "Lament and the Joy of Salvation in the Lament Psalms," in *Book of Psalms*, 224–47, who explores the role of *hesed* in the individual laments and recognizes both that the Psalmist is concerned with an apparent lack of acts of divine *hesed* as well as an assurance that God will perform them in the future: "The petitioner's confidence in God's *hesed* is ultimately based on the unconditional aspect of his *hesed* in the covenant relationship" (p. 246). See also Loren D. Crow, "The Rhetoric of Psalm 44," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 104 (1992): 400. "The supplicant appeals to the actions resulting from God's steadfast love . . . , that is, those things which the Divine does because of the relationship that exists between God and Israel."

10. Why should the heathen say, “Where is their God?”
 let it be known among the nations in our sight,
 the vengeance for your servants’ blood
 that was poured out.
11. Let the moaning of the prisoner come before thee;
 according to your mighty power
 preserve those who are to die.
12. Turn on our neighbors seven times the mocking
 with which they mocked you!

This appeal is interesting because of its reciprocal nature. Verse 6 exhorts God to pour out his anger, suggesting a response in kind to Israel’s blood being poured out like water as described in verse 3. Verse 6 also uses covenantal terminology asking that the Lord punish those who do not “know” him. The term *know*, as used here, has covenantal significance in treaty-covenants.⁴¹ Moreover, the exhortation recorded in verse 12, citing the multiplication of the curse by seven, is found throughout the curse unit in Leviticus 26, which records warnings to the Israelites that God would punish them seven times more if they did not keep their covenant obligations.⁴² In contrast, Deuteronomy 28:7 records God’s promise that if Israel keeps its covenantal obligations, “the Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one

41. Herbert B. Huffmon, “The Treaty Background of Hebrew *YĀDAʿ*,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 181 (February 1966): 31, 33: “The most obvious technical usage of ‘know’ is that with reference to mutual legal recognition on the part of the suzerain and vassal. . . . ‘Know’ is also used as a technical term for recognition of the treaty stipulations as binding.” In Exodus 2:24–25, God is found “remembering the covenant” he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and then “knowing” Israel.

42. “And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins” (Leviticus 26:18 KJV); “And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins” (Leviticus 26:21 KJV); “Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins” (Leviticus 26:24 KJV). One reference in particular, Leviticus 26:28, appears to be reflected in many of the pleas: “Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.” Psalms 74:1; 79:6; 80:4; and 89:46 all are pleas asking how long God will be angry with his people. See also Deuteronomy 29:19–28, where the explanation of God’s wrath is given.

way, and flee before thee seven ways.” Thus, the Psalmist’s request that God smite the enemy seven times includes a reciprocal curse for the community and, at the same time, a reliance on the covenantal promise made by God himself.

Like Psalm 79, the appeal in Psalm 83 provides a series of curses that God can use against his enemy:

1. Keep not your silence, O God!
Hold not your peace and be not still, O God!

...

9. Do unto them as you did to the Midianites
as to Sisera, to Jabin, at the Kidron stream.

...

11. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb
all their princes as Zebah and as Zalmunna.

...

13. O my God, make them as thistledown,
as stubble before the wind.

14. As the fire burns the woods,
as the flame lights the mountains afire,

15. Persecute them with your whirlwind
and terrify them with your storm.

16. Fill their faces with shame . . .

17. Let them be confused and troubled forever
yea, let them be put to shame and die.

The final curse, to shame and to confuse the enemy, is a prominent curse Israel experienced, and therefore it is not surprising that the community, after proclaiming its innocence, requests that the enemy experience the same. Like the other communal laments, those that request the curses rely on the covenantal relationship for their

fulfillment. This demonstrates an inherent trust in one's ability to have a personal relationship with Deity, which is one of the unique features of Israelite theology.

Vow of Praise

A promise or declaration represents the final element of the communal lament psalms. In this sense Israel vows to continue to praise God in the future. This may seem unrelated to the treaty-covenant formula, but it reflects the document clause with its declaration of future praise and serves the same purpose, which is to continue to remember the covenant. Often this declaration includes a proclamation of God's kingship that recognizes him as suzerain and emphasizes both the community's historical acceptance and their current acceptance of the covenantal arrangement.

Sometimes the vow is found near the end of a psalm and at other times it may open a psalm or act as a divider between the various sections of a psalm. For example, Psalm 44:8 contains a promise that the community will "sing praises to God every day and . . . praise your name forever." This vow of praise separates the historical unit from the curse/refutation unit. As such, it functions as a bridge between the two units and also highlights that Israel will continue to recognize the covenant.⁴³ Earlier, the Psalmist declared in verse 4: "You are my king, O God, (thus) command the deliverance of Jacob." As with the vow of praise, this declaration follows a historical section and emphasizes the continuity between the covenantal history and the current, Israelite community. Hence, the covenantal integrity of Israel is acknowledged and confirmed through both the proclamation and the declaration.

Similar to Psalm 44, Psalm 74 possesses both a reference to future praise and a declaration of God's kingship. The kingly declaration

43. Crow, "Rhetoric of Psalm 44," 396: "As the poet reminds God, the community both finds its worth in God and gives God perpetual praise (v. 9). Not only is the community faithful in its trust in God, it also faithfully represents the traditions of its ancestors. . . . In this way the poet artfully alludes to the earlier section in order to fortify the assertion that the present community is behaving faithfully. . . . Furthermore, it argues that, since the present community's action is equivalent to that of the ancestors, God's behavior ought to be (and, so far as we know yet, *is*) like that narrated in vv. 2-4."

in verse 12 says, “God is my king from olden times, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” Unlike some of the lament psalms, this declaration precedes the historical passage, instead of following it. But the purpose is the same as that of Psalm 44 in stressing that the kingship of God has been established “from olden times.” This refutation acts as a warning that Israel will always remember its covenantal relationship with God and that God will always perform acts commensurate with his covenantal obligations. The promise of future praise is implied in verse 21:

Let not the oppressed return in shame!
Let the poor and the needy praise your name!

Here the Psalmist suggests that because of a calamity, Israel cannot perform praise unless God fulfills his obligations. In other words, this verse emphasizes a conditional vow of the Israelites to praise God and to recount their history only after their deliverance from the enemy.⁴⁴

Psalm 79:13 contains an appeal for God to enact curses against the enemy:

Then we—your people and sheep of your pasture—
will give you thanks forever.
For all time we shall tell Your praises.

Like the vow in Psalm 74, this one is conditioned upon the placement of the curses. The *waw* conjunction (ו in the Hebrew) that begins the bicolon connects the imperatives of verses 11 and 12 to the vow, creating an if/then clause: if God responds to the cries of the prisoners avenging them seven times more than the mocking of their enemies, then the covenant people will praise God and recount their history. Psalm 80:18 contains a similar conditional promise:

44. Tony W. Cartledge, “Conditional Vows in the Psalms of Lament: A New Approach to an Old Problem,” in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy*, ed. Kenneth G. Hoglund, Elizabeth F. Huwiler, Jonathan T. Glass, and Roger W. Lee (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 77–94. Though the psalms presented in the paper are not the communal lament psalms of this study, the conclusions are the same.

We will not turn away from You.
 Preserve our life that we may invoke Your name.

Unlike 79, the promise of praise in 89 appears in the first two verses but is performed at the end of the psalm:

1. I will sing of the Lord's *hesed* forever;
 to all generations I will proclaim
 your faithfulness with my mouth.
2. For I declare, "Your *hesed* is confirmed forever;
 there in the heavens You establish Your faithfulness."

...

52. Blessed is the Lord forever, amen and amen.

In both the beginning and the end of this psalm, the vow of praise encompasses its main purpose, which is to show that the covenantal obligations of Israel have been and will be kept, even when God does not seem to meet his obligations. This is reinforced with the declaration of kingship in Psalm 89:18: "For indeed, Yahweh is our shield, the Holy One of Israel is indeed, our king." Like the other declarations of kingship found elsewhere, this declaration also separates historical units. Psalm 89:6–15 describes the mythical imagery of God as the warrior of creation who is praised by the divine assembly and whose kingship over all is made clear. Another section follows and describes the blessed state of those on earth who recognize the "joyful shout," or the outward proclamation of God's sovereign power. This declaration of praise precedes the historical unit that describes the covenant given to David. Here the declaration makes the description of the past community in 89:16–18 apply to contemporary Israel. Thus, just as in the other lament psalms, the vow of praise demonstrates the valid covenantal relationship that should exist in the community.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that elements of Israelite culture, society, and even poetry were affected by outside influences, but it is also true

that the Bible depicts a people who held a unique relationship with their Deity. So while the treaty-covenant formula can be found elsewhere, only in the Bible does it describe the affiliation between a community and the divine. The communal laments represent a unique window into the minds of those who valued their covenant relationship with God as they sought to engage with and comprehend him.⁴⁵ Israel may have experienced tribulation, but the laments portray a community bound to God with a covenant, which ultimately provided security and peace.

For the Latter-day Saint, this unique perspective is actually a familiar one since the ancient Israelite hope that God would keep his word is reflected in the Doctrine and Covenants principle, “There is a law, irrevocably decreed; . . . when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21), and then actually practiced as demonstrated in Doctrine and Covenants 121.⁴⁶ We, like Israel of old, also find security in our covenant relationship with God, finding answers to the trials placed upon us, and therefore find our place in the world. Moreover, thanks to the covenant, we understand that anyone can have the same understanding and the same relationship, a concept not lost on the Psalmist, for in Psalm 83:18 the vow, while similar in form, differs in context: “May they [the enemy] know that your name, Yours alone, is the Yahweh, supreme over all the earth” (v. 19). Thus, the relationship between God and Israel expressed in the communal laments is now understood to be one that all, even the enemy, can experience. In this verse, then, is encapsulated the message and meaning of the covenant, a message that resonates in us today.

Daniel Belnap is an assistant professor in the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University.

45. William M. Soll, “The Israelite Lament: Faith Seeking Understanding,” *Quarterly Review* 8/3 (1988): 79: “The lament is not merely an articulation of unhappiness; it seeks, in the midst of unhappiness, to recover communion with God.”

46. It is interesting to find many, if not all, of the communal lament characteristics in the first six verses of D&C 121, Joseph Smith’s plea to the Lord while in Liberty Jail.

FROM THE HAND OF JACOB: A RITUAL ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 27

David E. Bokovoy

Introduction

The curious account of Isaac's blessing and Jacob's deception featured in the book of Genesis can often raise considerable interest. In sum, the story presented in Genesis 27 contains an etiology explaining the commencement of divine favor granted Jacob's posterity. As a result of his misleading actions, Jacob received his father's pronouncement:

May God give you of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, Abundance of new grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, And nations bow to you; Be master over your brothers, And let your mother's sons bow to you. Cursed be they who curse you, Blessed they who bless you. (Genesis 27:28–29)¹

Though the story of Jacob's blessing and deception has elicited significant scholarly attention, at least one issue pertaining to the narrative has remained unexplored until now.² It is that Genesis 27

1. Unless otherwise noted, biblical translations reflect the Jewish Publication Society translation.

2. See, for example, K. Luke, "Isaac's Blessing: Gen 27," *Scripture* 20 (1968): 33–41; Isaac Mendelsohn, "On the Preferential Status of the Oldest Son," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 156 (1959): 38–40; Ephraim A. Speiser, "I Know Not the Day of My Death," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955): 252–56; Stanley Gevirtz, "Patterns of the Early Poetry of Israel. III: Isaac's Blessing over Jacob," *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization* 32 (1963): 35–47; S. H. Smith, "Heel and Thigh: The Concept of Sexuality in the Jacob-Esau Narratives," *Vetus Testamentum* 40/4 (1990): 464–73; S. Ackerman,

presents a classic illustration of the prominence of ritualization in biblical narrative. David P. Wright has demonstrated the importance of identifying ritual elements in a literary analysis of ancient texts,³ and this study benefits from his reading of the story of Aqhat in interpreting Genesis 27 as a ritual narrative.

With the advancement of ritual studies, defining the actual concept of ritual has, in recent years, proved somewhat problematic.⁴ In her important summary to classify the term *ritual*, Catherine Bell opts for the expression *ritualization* in preference to *ritual*. Bell offers the following useful definition:

Ritualization is a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian, activities. As such, ritualization is a matter of various culturally specific strategies for setting some activities off from others, for creating and privileging a qualitative distinction between the “sacred” and the “profane,” and for ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors.⁵

As an account that features explicit examples of intentional performances with culturally specific strategies designed to set the activities apart from other less sacred occurrences, the tradition of Jacob’s deception in Genesis 27 contains distinct marks of ritualization. The account features a story of a meal offering presented as a ritual performance in order to secure a sacred blessing. As such, Genesis 27 pro-

“The Deception of Isaac, Jacob’s Dream at Bethel, and Incubation on an Animal Skin,” in *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel*, ed. Gary A. Anderson and Saul M. Olyan (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1991): 92–120; Meir Malul, “‘Āqēb ‘Heel’ and ‘āqab ‘To Supplant’ and the Concept of Succession in the Jacob-Esau Narratives,” *Vetus Testamentum* 46/2 (1996): 190–212.

3. David P. Wright, *Ritual in Narrative: The Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001).

4. For a consideration of the challenges in defining ritual, see Jack Goody, “Against Ritual: Loosely Structured Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Topic,” in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), 27; Frits Staal, “The Meaninglessness of Ritual,” *Numen* 26 (1979): 2–22.

5. Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 74.

vides an analogy with ritual offerings in the Hebrew Bible that feature a culturally specific strategy for securing divine favor. In addition to addressing the importance of ritualization in this biblical narrative, the following analysis demonstrates that ritual may assist those of a lesser status to accomplish their objectives that stand in opposition to the desires of the powerful.

Offerings in the Biblical Sphere

A theoretical consideration of biblical offerings as ritual would benefit from a larger comparative study of similar performances in the ancient Near East. In previous studies, scholars have noted a near universal distinction between the general category of *offering* and the more specific category of *sacrifice*.⁶ While the act of sacrifice places emphasis upon the ritual slaying and/or death of the victim, offerings in the general sense focus primarily upon the *presentative* aspect of ritual gift giving. Scholars have long noted that in Mesopotamian rituals, worshippers directed their primary focus toward the food presented to the gods as a meal, rather than the actual rite of slaying. These sacred performances held considerable meaning, for within the cult, Mesopotamian practitioners held the crucial responsibility of feeding their gods.

One of the most significant Mesopotamian illustrations of the ritual care and feeding presented to deities includes a description of the daily sacrifices offered to the gods of the city of Uruk during the Seleucid period.⁷ According to the text, the Mesopotamian deities received four daily services referred to as *naptanu*, the Akkadian word for an ordinary meal.⁸ Caregiving, including meal presentation

6. See, for example, Wilfred G. Lambert, "Donations of Food and Drink to the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jan Quaegebeur (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 191–201; David M. Clemens, "A Study of the Sacrificial Terminology at Ugarit: A Collection and Analysis of the Ugaritic and Akkadian Textual Data" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1999), 1–16.

7. For a translation of the text, see A. Sachs, trans., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 343–45.

8. The Akkadian word *naptanu* appears primarily as a reference for a meal or the time of evening meal; see *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University*

in the form one might offer to a human superior, constituted an important performance in the religious life of ancient Mesopotamia. Conceptually, this Mesopotamian perspective regarding the purpose of offerings provides a helpful backdrop for interpreting one of the roles associated with meal presentations in ancient Israel.

The Hebrew Bible contains evidence that the notion of offering food to deity as a means of securing divine favor operated in ancient Israel. As noted by Gary A. Anderson, “countless texts from every period describe YHWH’s sacrifices as food.”⁹ The resolution to the flood story in J specifically presents Yahweh *smelling* the pleasing odor emitted by the עֹלָה (“burnt offering”), an act that secured deity’s sympathy (see Genesis 8:20–21). A comparable notion appears in 1 Samuel 26:19, where David encourages Saul with the statement “if the Lord has incited you against me, let Him be appeased by an offering” (1 Samuel 26:19). In this passage, the verbal phrase *let him be appeased* is a translation of the *hiphil* third person masculine singular jussive of the root *rwḥ*, meaning “to smell.”¹⁰ Hence, David’s suggestion that YHWH will *appease* his anger via the presentation of a burnt offering (עֹלָה) reflects the biblical connection between the act of smelling food and securing divine favor. This same motif reappears in the Priestly Torah, which defines a large category of offerings as gifts that produce “an odor pleasing to the Lord” (Leviticus 1:9, 13; 2:2, 9; 3:5, 16). Moreover, a variety of passages from both the Priestly Torah and the Holiness School specifically refer to offerings as לֶחֶם (“food”) for the deity (see Leviticus 3:11; 21:6, 17, 21, 22; Numbers 28:2). As a reflection of the food presented to God, items that provided the staples of the human diet—namely, meats, breads (with oil), wine, and even salt—appear as an integral part of altar offerings. In this context, the designation שֻׁלְחָן (“table”) for the open-air altar of Yahweh secures the overall conceptual continuity of the perception of feeding deity as a means of securing divine favor (see Ezekiel 44:16 and Malachi 1:7, 12). This biblical and Near Eastern view concerning the

of Chicago, ed. John A. Brinkman et al. (Chicago: Oriental Institute of Chicago, 1980), 11:319.

9. Gary A. Anderson, “Sacrifices (OT),” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:872.

10. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 3:1196.

presentation of sacred meal offerings clearly reflects the general pattern for gift giving in human relationships.

Anthropologists have demonstrated that theological constructs frequently derive from “anthropo-metaphorical” contexts. In other words, humans naturally define components of the spiritual realm in terms of temporal performances and institutions. By analogy, religious offerings in the ancient Near East appear to reflect the presentation of food gifts given to a human occupying a superior social status. In a similar manner, “a number of features or aspects of the practice of sacrifice and offerings indicate Israel’s understanding of the presentation of sacrifice as a *gift* to the deity.”¹¹ This thematic understanding provides the conceptual background for God’s comments concerning sacrifice in the book of Malachi:

When you present a blind animal for sacrifice—it doesn’t matter! When you present a lame or sick one—it doesn’t matter! Just offer it to your governor: Will he accept you? Will he show you favor? (Malachi 1:8)

Thus, the concept of *offering* or gift giving in biblical Israel reflects the notion that one could actually influence the will of deity in the same way one might obtain the favor of a human superior. Clearly, Israelite traditions such as that preserved in the story of Hannah, where deity grants a petition made in response to a promise of child sacrifice, derive from the same theological perspective witnessed in the so-called motivations for divine assistance witnessed in the psalms of individual lament.¹² Offerings in biblical Israel provided a means for obtaining divine favor in the same way that gifts in the temporal realm secured the approval of social superiors.

11. Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 129, emphasis added.

12. For a survey of this genre, including an analysis of the motivation for divine assistance, see John H. Hayes, “The Songs of Israel,” in *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and M. Patrick Graham (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 153–71.

The Symbolic Value of Hand Placement

Since offerings served as a means for obtaining divine favor, the act of hand placement as a token gesture associated with ritual offerings appears to have provided an important cultic symbol. The Hebrew Bible contains two basic forms of hand placement: (1) two-hand placement that designated the recipient as the focus of the ritual performance, and (2) one-hand placement that identified the gift as an offering *belonging* to the presenter. Wright has shown that examples of the single-hand placement served an attributive function in the Priestly writings. “The attribution is such that no matter who works with the sacrifice, the animal and sacrificial acts performed with it will always be considered as ritually pertaining to the offerer who imposed the hand.”¹³ Evidence for the attributive value of the single-hand placement appears in the Priestly discussion of food offerings: “When any of you presents an offering of cattle to the Lord . . . he shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, that it may be *acceptable in his behalf*, in expiation for him” (Leviticus 1:1, 4). Clearly the phrase וּנְרִצָּה לוֹ (“acceptable for him”) suggests the actual purpose of the ritual as an attributive gesture.

Wright’s interpretation of the attributive function of hand placement provides an explanation for the lack of this gesture with smaller offerings, such as birds and cereal offerings, since the offerer could simply carry these gifts in his hand (cf. Leviticus 1:14–17; 2; 5:7–10, 11–13). “The presentation of the small offerings in the hand of the offerer,” maintains Wright, “is enough to designate the offering as pertaining to that person.”¹⁴ The relative simplicity of determining the beneficiary of these smaller offerings stands in stark contrast to the complexity of presenting larger quadrupeds where several persons may have been required to move an animal through the temple court. Ritual hand placement, therefore, avoided the possibility of “confusion as to who was actually bringing the animal.”¹⁵ Hence references to hand placement in the con-

13. David P. Wright, “The Gesture of Hand Placement in the Hebrew Bible and in Hittite Literature,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106/3 (1986): 439.

14. Wright, “Gesture of Hand Placement,” 439.

15. Wright, “Gesture of Hand Placement,” 439.

text of ritual offerings appear to have served an attributive function, identifying the presenter as the would-be recipient of divine favor.

Presentation in Genesis 27

Having observed the purpose of offerings and hand placement in the context of divine blessings, the reader can now witness the ritual use of these motifs in the Isaac and Jacob narrative contained in Genesis 27. The story of Isaac's blessing and Jacob's deceit contains ritualization in narrative that parallels the scheme of offerings in the cultic sphere. Genesis 27 begins with a statement spoken by Isaac to his son Esau, linking gift giving with blessing: "Hunt me some game then prepare a dish for me such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my innermost blessing before I die" (vv. 3–4). From a Near Eastern perspective, this link between feast and blessing witnessed in Isaac's instructions to Esau immediately places the event in the context of sacred meal imagery.¹⁶ In light of the cultic understanding that offerings influenced divine favor, Isaac's instructions to *first* provide a gift of food prior to the blessing illustrates the account's reliance upon the themes connected with biblical accounts of ritualization.

In a similar statement, the Deuteronomist instructed Israel to "eat your fill and then bless Yahweh your God for the good land that he has given you" (Deuteronomy 8:10).¹⁷ The importance of the ritual sequence of offering and blessing in Genesis 27 appears through the literary force of repetition:¹⁸

Bring me some game and prepare a dish for me to eat, *so that*
I may bless you, before the Lord, before I die. (v. 7)

I have done as you told me. Pray sit up and eat of my game, *so that*
that you may give me your innermost blessing. (v. 19)

16. For a recent study of this theme, see Daniel Belnap, *Fillets of Fatling and Goblets of Gold: The Use of Meal Events in the Ritual Imagery in the Ugaritic Mythological and Epic Texts* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2008).

17. As translated by the author; for a discussion and bibliography of early Jewish texts concerning the practice of following a meal with a recitation of blessings, see Abraham Chill, *The Mitzvot: The Commandments and Their Rationale* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 385–87.

18. As translated by the author.

Serve me and let me eat of my son's game *so that* I may give you my innermost blessing. (v. 25)

Understanding the function of the *waw* in these passages as a conjunctive-sequential marker allows for the two independent clauses to function in terms of volitional statements: "eat in order that the blessing may occur."¹⁹

In the context of the account's ritualization, Rebekah's rehearsal of Isaac's speech presented in verse 7 includes a significant addition: "Bring me some game and prepare a dish for me to eat, so that I may bless you, *before the Lord*, before I die."²⁰ By placing the blessing and meal offering into a setting that occurs before deity, Rebekah's statement provides an important clue of an intentional effort to invoke a cultic theme directly into the narrative.²¹

Throughout the Hebrew Bible the most frequent attestation of the prepositional phrase יהוה לפני ("before the Lord") appears in cultic/temple contexts.²² Indeed, technically, the prepositional phrase denotes the spatial locale where "the majority of cultic acts take place."²³ As Menahem Haran has observed,

19. See the discussion provided by Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O'Connor in *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 650.

20. As translated by the author. In a compelling statement, Robert Alter explains the distinction between Isaac's original speech and Rebekah's rehearsal of the address as an act "heightening the sense of the sacred and irrevocable character of the blessing she wants Jacob to steal." *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton, 1996), 138.

21. See Hermann Gunkel, for example, who suggests that the phrase *before the Lord* signifies that "a sacrificial meal seems originally to have been involved here at which the deity is cited," in Mark E. Biddle, trans., *Genesis* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 302. In contrast see Westermann, who suggests that the phrase יהוה לפני is a later addition intended as a balance between the narrative and the pronouncements. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 438.

22. For an analysis of the term יהוה לפני, see Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 26; M. D. Fowler, "The Meaning of *lipne* YHWH in the OT," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 99 (1987): 384–90.

23. Heinz-Josef Simian-Yofre, "פניו," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 11:609.

Any cultic activity to which the biblical text applies the formula “before the Lord” can be considered an indication of the existence of a temple at the site, since this expression stems from the basic conception of the temple as a divine dwelling-place and actually belongs to the temple’s technical terminology.²⁴

Though the account does not specify that the blessing ritual took place at a literal temple, the attestation of the phrase *before the Lord* suggests that the act of hunting and meal presentation draws upon temple ideology associated with sacrificial meals. This connection between sacred ritual and the act of hunting reflects the biblical description of Nimrod as a mighty hunter “before the Lord” (Genesis 10:9). Combining the two stories in Genesis strengthens the theme of cultic ritualization underlying Rebekah’s statement.

In a recent analysis of the Nimrod tradition, Yigal Levin has illustrated that the geographic context for Genesis 10:8–12 derives from Mesopotamia.²⁵ Levin argues that the biblical Nimrod appears modeled after combined traditions concerning Sargon of Akkad and his grandson, Naram-Sin.²⁶ If correct, Levin’s theory would provide an intriguing Mesopotamian connection between Esau and Nimrod, the mighty hunters “before the Lord.” The biblical identification of Nimrod as a mighty hunter who performed his slayings with deity’s approval parallels the Mesopotamian view concerning kings as hunters performing a sacral act. “The gods Ninurta and Nergal, who love my priesthood,” proclaimed the Neo-Assyrian king Shalmaneser III, “gave to me the wild beasts and commanded me to hunt.”²⁷ Hence, the ritualization in Genesis 27, which presents Isaac as the one who commands Esau to hunt and then provide him with a feast prior to receiving a blessing,

24. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel*, 26.

25. Yigal Levin, “Nimrod the Mighty, King of Kish, King of Sumer and Akkad,” *Vetus Testamentum* 52 (2002): 350–66.

26. In contrast to this suggestion, see Ignazio M. Ceccherelli, “Nimrod, primo re ‘universale’ della storia,” *Bibbia e Oriente* 36 (1994): 25–39. Ceccherelli argues that Nimrod’s connection with hunting may reflect a remembrance of the role of primitive rulers, as well as a fear of powerful kings destroying their enemies.

27. Annals: Aššur Clay Tablets (2.113B: iv 40–44), as translated by K. Lawson Jr. in William W. Hallo, *The Context of Scripture: Volume 2 Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 265.

may reflect not only the general Near Eastern perspective concerning meal offerings, but at a basic, historical level, the Mesopotamian view of the hunting kings performing sacral acts commissioned by the gods.

In addition to the actual meal imagery in Genesis 27, the story of Jacob's blessing presents supplementary allusions to elements associated with a ritual offering presented to deity. In the blessing account, the author states that Isaac "smelled [Jacob's] clothes and he blessed him, saying, 'Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of the fields that the Lord has blessed'" (v. 27). Though the reference to the pleasing smell emitted by the clothes worn by Jacob carries a very practical purpose in terms of the account, the language in verse 27 provides an additional link with sacrificial imagery. The text employs the use of the cognate accusative whereby the third person masculine singular *hiphil* verb and the direct object share the same trilateral root, *rwḥ*; hence, וירח את-ריח ("he smelled the smell").

In the Bible, the closest grammatical parallel to this phrase appears in Genesis 8:21, which describes the pleasing smell of the sacrificial meal presented by Noah to God, an act which like the *smelling* in Genesis 27 precedes the bestowal of a blessing: וירח יהוה את-ריח ("The Lord smelled the smell").²⁸ The direct relationship between food and blessing in Genesis 27 parallels the Jacob and Esau episode featured in Genesis 25. As a sign of the coherent juxtaposition of these two narratives, the term בכרה ("rights of the firstborn") in Genesis 25 appears as an anagram of ברכה meaning "blessing" in Genesis 27.²⁹ When Esau in chapter 25 requested food from his younger sibling, Jacob responded, "first sell me your birthright" (בכרה; v. 31). The account concludes by stating that "Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; he ate and drank, and he rose and went away. Thus did Esau spurn the birthright" (בכרה; v. 34). Like Genesis 27, the story portrayed in Genesis 25 presents a lucid example of an individual feeding a human superior in an effort to acquire a sacred

28. See also Leviticus 26:31 KJV: "And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and *I will not smell the savour* of your sweet odours," emphasis added.

29. For a discussion of בכרה as an anagram, see Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1994), 178.

gift. Therefore, the common denominator in both episodes presenting Jacob as the usurper of favor is the presentation of food.

The Ritual Exchange of Clothing

Prior to the blessing, the narrative presents an example of a physical gesture that held considerable meaning in biblical accounts featuring ritualization: “Then Rebekah took the best garments of her elder son Esau, which were in her house, and put them on her younger son Jacob” (Genesis 27:15).³⁰ This statement presupposes that dressing for the occasion was “appropriate to the act of blessing and expected by the father, and is an important attestation that specifically defined events in the life of the family [were] festal celebrations.”³¹ Though the term כִּימָר (“garment”) in verse 15 typically refers to general clothing, the word can appear as a designation for sacred attire used specifically in the context of temple-related performances (see, for example, Exodus 28:2).³²

In the story of Jacob’s blessing, clothing seems to serve a symbolic purpose. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, an individual’s persona often appears as an extension of his clothing.³³ Thus Jacob’s act of assuming Esau’s position by wearing his raiment is not unlike the episode recorded in 1 Samuel 18 where David assumes the persona of the political heir through a similar ritual exchange:

Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. (1 Samuel 18:3–4)³⁴

Since the narrative commences with a statement about Isaac’s blindness, Jacob’s act of vesting himself in Esau’s apparel seems to have served a purely ritual function (Genesis 27:1). This act stands in stark contrast with Jacob’s subsequent performance of donning

30. As translated by the author.

31. Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 439.

32. See Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1:108.

33. Important examples include, but are not limited to, Genesis 3:21; Exodus 28; and Ezekiel 16:8.

34. As translated by the author.

animal skin, a gesture that served an obvious practical function in verse 23, wherein the author notes, “[Isaac] did not recognize [Jacob] because his hands were hairy like those of his brother.” The symbolic use of clothing in Genesis 27 corresponds with the observation that ritual is largely, if not exclusively, concerned with actions performed by and upon the body.³⁵

The Blessing Ritual

The formal blessing ritual begins in verse 24 with identification of the supplicant. Isaac begins the process with the question “Are you really my son Esau?” to which Jacob responds, “I am.” Question-and-answer successions frequently appear in ritual settings. For example, in the obvious cultic *Sitz im Leben* preserved in Psalm 24, the inquiry is made, “who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place,” to which an unnamed speaker responds, “He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not taken a false oath by My life or sworn *deceitfully* [למרמה] he shall carry away a *blessing* [ברכה] from the Lord” (Psalm 24:3–5).³⁶ However, in direct contrast to this question-and-answer session presented in the biblical psalm, the ritual action taken by Jacob presents an alternative possibility: “[Isaac] said ‘Your brother came *deceitfully* [במרמה] and he took your blessing [ברכתך] away’” (Genesis 27:35).³⁷ Hence, the account illustrates that ritual, even when performed במרמה (“in deceit”), carries efficacy, or the ability to secure a ברכה (“blessing”).

Following the initial act of identifying the supplicant, the ritual continues in Genesis 27 with the presentation of food: “[Isaac] said, ‘Serve me and let me eat of my son’s game that I may give you my innermost blessing.’ So he served him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank” (v. 25). The meal is then followed by an act of physical contact between the participants (vv. 26–27a). The kiss, which serves in this context as a gesture of approach, constitutes a preliminary per-

35. See Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 31.

36. For an analysis of the cultic background generally associated with this psalm, see Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 310–16.

37. As translated by the author.

formance prior to the actual blessing presented in verses 28–29. At the commencement of Isaac’s blessing, the author introduces the ritual performance with a repetition of the statement first expressed in verse 23, וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ (“he blessed him”).

This literary example of *inclusio* provides a resumption that effectively frames the account’s preparatory rituals prior to the actual blessing. As Claus Westermann notes, “Whereas the וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ at the end of verse 23 introduces the blessing ritual as a whole, [in verse 27] it introduces the blessing pronouncement, hence וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר [he blessed him then he said].”³⁸ As illustrated through this reading, ritualization provides the literary means whereby Jacob could assume the rights and privileges associated with the important issue of birthright in the biblical traditions.

Hand Placement in Genesis 27

In view of the underlying ritualization featured so prominently throughout Genesis 27, the issue of hand placement witnessed in the Jacob narratives provides an additional attestation of the ritual performances associated with the cultic sphere. Though Jacob’s mother, Rebekah, actually prepared the offering for her husband, she insured that the benefits of presentation would be given solely to Jacob through an attributive gesture with clear ritual undertones: “She placed the dish and the bread that she had prepared *in the hand* [בִּיד] of Jacob her son” (v. 17). By presenting the offering *in his hand*, Jacob performed an act similar to gestures specifically attested in the biblical cult: “When any of you presents an offering . . . he shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, that it may be acceptable *in his behalf*” (Leviticus 1:1, 4). Evidence that the author of Genesis 27 recognized the cultic undertones of this gesture appears later in the Jacob cycle through the description of the Patriarch’s attempt to placate Esau through a bestowal of a *minḥāh* “gift/offering”:

Now I pray you: if you would do this favor, accept *my gift*
[מִנְחָתִי] *from my hand* [בְּיָדִי] for to see your face is like seeing

38. Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 440.

the face of God, and you have received me favorably. Please accept my present, which has been brought to you, for God has favored me and I have plenty. (Genesis 33:10–11)

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the technical term מִנְחָה (*minḥāh*) carries both the connotation of tribute and religious offering.³⁹ In ritual contexts, *minḥāh* frequently appears as a technical designation for a food offering. Heinz-Josef Fabry states that “the *minḥā* constitutes the high point of the sacrificial ritual, since it insures that God is able to smell the pleasing fragrance of the offering.”⁴⁰ As a theological concept, the expression seems to derive from an anthropometaphorical context. Baruch Levine suggests:

Like many names given to sacrifices, the term *minḥāh* was appropriated by Priestly writers from the administrative vocabulary because it effectively expressed the subservient relationship of the worshiper toward God. At the same time, it conveyed the duty of the worshiper to present gifts to God, often in the form of sacrifices.⁴¹

In the same way that Israelites in the cultic sphere could appease deity through the act of gift giving *from their hands*, Jacob first obtained Isaac’s blessing and then Esau’s forgiveness via a similar act.

Recognizing the ritualization of hand placement in Genesis 27 increases the narrative drama in verse 22 when Isaac with some degree of apparent recognition declares: “The voice is Jacob’s but the *hands* are the *hands* of Esau.” Significantly, the author returns to the attributive value of hand placement at the conclusion of the episode: “But [Isaac] did not recognize [Jacob], for his *hands* were hairy like the *hands* of Esau his brother, so he blessed him” (v. 23). This passage provides strong textual evidence for the ritual link between the attributive value of hand placement and the bestowal of blessing, a suggestion that is not unlike that expressed by M. Malul in his legalistic analy-

39. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:601–2.

40. Heinz-Josef Fabry, “מִנְחָה,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 8:417.

41. Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 9.

sis of עֶקֶב (“heel”) throughout the Jacob story. Through comparative analysis with Mesopotamian rituals, Malul has suggested that in the Jacob narratives עֶקֶב (“heel”) as both a noun and a verb “echoes the known picturesque idiom or legal symbolic act of planting one’s foot as a symbol of assuming a certain status and thereby acquiring a piece of property.”⁴² In a comparable way, hand placement held ritual overtones in the story of Jacob’s succession. By ritually presenting an offering *from his hand*, Jacob received the patriarchal blessing.

Theoretical Consideration of Ritual

As noted in the commencement of this study, ritual may assist those of a lesser status to accomplish their objectives that appear in opposition to the desires of the powerful. The story of Jacob’s deception in Genesis 27 presents an elaborate variant of the biblical birthright tradition.⁴³ Jacob himself appears later in Genesis using descriptive terminology that emphasizes the special status of the firstborn: “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the first fruit of my vigor, exceeding in rank and exceeding in honor” (Genesis 49:3). The later Deuteronomic legal material provides evidence that at some point in Israelite society, firstborn males received a double share of inheritance:

If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him sons, but the first-born is the son of the unloved one when he will his property to his sons, he may not treat as first-born the son of the loved one in disregard of the son of the unloved one who is older. Instead, he must accept the first-born, the son of the unloved one, and allot to him a double portion of all he possesses; since he is the first fruit of his vigor, the birthright is his due. (Deuteronomy 21:15–17)

42. Malul, “‘Āqēb ‘Heel’ and ‘āqab ‘To Supplant,’” 203.

43. For a recent analysis of this theme in the Hebrew Bible, see Gary N. Knoppers, “The Preferential Status of the Eldest Son Revoked?” in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible, Essays in Honour of John Van Seters*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie, Thomas Römer, and Hans H. Schmid (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 115–26.

In Genesis 27, Jacob's deceptive statement "I am . . . your firstborn" clearly underscores the issue of inheritance that provides the narrative framework for the account (v. 19). As such, Jacob's narrative "stands out as clearly different from those in the Abraham cycle: the tension is not the result of a natural phenomenon (like famine or a wife's barrenness) but of the action of a person who intervenes in an established course of events."⁴⁴ With its reference to the presentation of food and hand placement, the story of Jacob's blessing demonstrates one of the basic motifs attested in accounts featuring ritualization. Ritual often provides a means whereby an individual of an inferior status may accomplish his objectives that are incongruent with the desires of more influential individuals.

Conclusion

Ritualization in narrative provides an important tool for the interpreter of ancient texts. As a method for identifying culturally specific actions that conveyed important meaning, the study of ritual in the Hebrew Bible demonstrates that traditions such as Jacob's blessing often contain significant ritual gestures. Through an analogy with their own cultic experience, an ancient Israelite audience would have presumably recognized, even if only at a subconscious level, the value of Jacob's performances as an effort to accomplish his own agenda by presenting a gift from his hand to a socially superior individual. This reading of the text is possible through an awareness of ritual values in the narrative and cultic traditions of biblical Israel.

David E. Bokovoy is a doctoral candidate in Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East at Brandeis University.

44. Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 434–35.

“AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH”: A LATTER-DAY SAINT EXEGESIS OF THE BLOOD AND WATER IMAGERY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Eric D. Huntsman

Both blood and water provide powerful images in the first half of the Gospel of John. Although instances of blood and water in John can be taken separately, a comprehensive, exegetical approach¹ to the gospel suggests a consistent, overarching imagery with water turning to wine—symbolic perhaps of blood—at Cana in John 2:1–11; water and spirit being the source of the new birth in 3:1–21; water “springing up to everlasting life” in 4:4–42; Jesus’s blood as a source of life in the Bread of Life discourse of 6:26–59; and rivers of living water flowing from those who believe in Jesus in 7:37–39. Critical to understanding this symbolism is the sign of blood and water streaming from Jesus’s side as he hangs from the cross in John 19:34–45, where it becomes apparent that the sign represents symbols of Jesus’s dual nature: his ability *as a mortal* to lay down his life as an offering for sin, but his continuing *divine* ability to work “the infinite and eternal atonement” and become the source of eternal life for those who accept him. This symbolism resonates with Latter-day Saint understanding of the nature and role of Jesus Christ.

1. Exegesis consists of a close reading of a scriptural text that seeks to “lead out” its original meaning by understanding its historical, literary, and theological context. For a basic review of the exegetical method and how Latter-day Saints may consider using it, see Eric D. Huntsman, “Teaching through Exegesis: Helping Students Ask Questions of the Text,” *Religious Educator* 6/1 (2005): 107–26.

Asking Questions of the Text

In biblical studies, the examination of the person and work of Jesus is known as Christology, and scholarship of the New Testament Gospels often puts the four surviving texts on a continuum, with Mark representing a simpler, even “low,” Christology on one end of the spectrum and with John representing the most developed, divine portrayal of Jesus on the other. The high Christology of John has particular resonance for Latter-day Saints, where the *Logos* hymn of John 1:1–18 accords with LDS teachings on premortality, particularly with the premortal identity and role of Jesus before the incarnation. In addition, several passages of restoration scripture and LDS teaching shape the hermeneutic that Latter-day Saints can bring to bear on the exegesis of the Gospel. Of particular note are 1 Nephi 11:12–33 on the condescension of God, and Doctrine and Covenants 93:2–10 on the premortal state and mortal incarnation of Jesus Christ. For Latter-day Saints, the resurrection is understood as the rising of a tangible, corporeal body of flesh and bones that is “spiritual” in that it is animated and quickened by spirit (see 1 Corinthians 15:42–44; Alma 11:45) rather than sustained and nourished by blood as are mortal, earthly bodies (see Genesis 9:4, where blood is described as being the life of flesh). These perspectives allow an interpretation of the blood and water imagery that makes these elements symbolic of mortality on the one hand and eternal life on the other, making them truly *sēmeia*, or signs that witness who Jesus was and what he did for mankind.

While Latter-day Saints, together with many conservative schools of biblical interpretation, might not accept all the assumptions of conventional studies of New Testament Christology—particularly an evolving model moving from resurrection, adoption, and conception Christology to preexistent Christology²—most would agree that John’s explication of Jesus’s nature and role is unique among the New Testament Gospel records. Nowhere is this more evident than in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1–18). Important for LDS

2. For example, Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist, 1994), 103–41.

exegesis of the *Logos* hymn are echoes found in a revelation received by Joseph Smith on 6 May 1833, now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 93. In Latter-day Saint scripture this revelation provides Jesus Christ’s own commentary on important Johannine themes, including the unity of the Father and the Son (D&C 93:3–5; John 10:30), the premortal existence and role of the Word (D&C 93:8–10; John 1:1–3), and being begotten or becoming the sons of God (D&C 93:20–22; John 1:12–13).

With the powerful statement “and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” John 1:14 lays out the incarnational theology of his Gospel. Jesus was not just a man but the divine *logos* who was veiled in flesh during the time that he lived (*eskēnōsen*, literally “pitched his tent”) among men, recalling how Jehovah lived among Israel in the wilderness tabernacle (which throughout the Septuagint and the book of Hebrews was a *skēnē* or “tent”).³ This verse, echoed in Doctrine and Covenants 93:11, receives further explication in restoration scripture, including 1 Nephi 11:12–33, that portrays the concept of the condescension in Christological categories within the context of a visionary experience. In 1 Nephi 11:12–20, the *person* of Jesus is described in incarnational terms—namely, the premortal Jesus Christ, conventionally identified in LDS theology as the divine Jehovah who took upon himself a mortal body of flesh and blood (John 11:20–25; cf. Mosiah 15:1–4), whereby he became both the mortal son of Mary and the divine Son of God, the Eternal Father. Then, in 1 Nephi 11:26–33, the *work* of Jesus is portrayed through his ministry among the children of men and ultimately in his death on the cross for the sins of the world.⁴

3. Walter Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “skēnos” and “skēnoō,” 929. See also Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 29–35; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 37–42; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 82–93; Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 133.

4. Latter-day Saint commentators frequently identify this division as representing the condescension of God the Father (John 11:12–20) on the one hand and the condescension of God the Son (11:26–33) on the other; see, for example, Joseph Fielding McConkie

Between these two pericopes lies the interpretive centerpiece of the vision of the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi (1 Nephi 11:21–25). This centerpiece describes Christ as the love of God, the tree of life, and as the fountain of living waters, the latter being particularly important for interpreting the imagery of blood and water in the Gospel of John (11:21–25).

While the prologue of John does not explicitly connect the incarnate Word with blood, John 1:13 does contrast those who are born of God with those who are born only of blood and the will of the flesh, suggesting that the first birth for all, including Christ, is one of flesh and blood. Later in the Fourth Gospel the second birth is described in terms of water and spirit (e.g., John 3:3–5). Thus the prologue’s emphasis on the Word becoming flesh implicitly connects the incarnation with blood. In LDS exegesis flesh and blood together consistently refer to living, albeit mortal, bodies (Ether 3:8–9; see Leviticus 17:11–14; Ecclesiastes 14:19; 1 Corinthians 15:50), as contrasted with “flesh and bone” that can refer to immortal, resurrected bodies (D&C 129:1–2; 130:22).⁵ Accordingly, the image of blood is associated with life but specifically with the life of flesh and hence with mortality, whereas water, also a source of life, is frequently associated with spirit, as in John 7:39, where streams of living water are explicitly identified as his spirit.⁶ The correlation of blood with mortality on the one hand and

and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 77–85; Monte Nyman, *I, Nephi, Wrote This Record* (Orem, UT: Granite, 2003), 140–49. This division sees the act of God’s becoming the father of Jesus Christ as an act of condescension on his part. Jesus’s dwelling on earth, associating with the poor and afflicted, being rejected and judged, and ultimately submitting to death is his own condescension. Given the high Christology of John, Mosiah 15, and Doctrine and Covenants 93, referring to the incarnation portrayed in 1 Nephi 12–20 as the condescension of the Father *and* the Son is probably appropriate, given that the divine Word condescended to become the man Jesus.

5. “After the resurrection from the dead our bodies will be spiritual bodies, but they will be bodies that are tangible, bodies that have been purified, but they will nevertheless be bodies of flesh and bones, but they will not be blood bodies, they will no longer be quickened by blood but quickened by the spirit which is eternal and they shall become immortal and shall never die.” Joseph Fielding Smith, *Conference Report*, April 1917, 63.

6. See John 7:39 where streams of living water are explicitly identified as his spirit. See also Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 324 n. 39; and Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel*

water with spiritual—even divine or eternal—life on the other can be consistently applied throughout John, and this has important implications for these symbols as they appear in some of the most important discourses of the Johannine Jesus.

Water to Wine (John 2:1–11)

Wine as a symbol for blood provides an additional level of interpretation for the first *sēmeion*, or “sign,” in the Gospel of John: the miracle at the wedding at Cana. “Signs” or “miraculous signs” are, in fact, better translations for the Greek term *sēmeia* than “miracles.” Rather than downplaying the reality and power of Jesus’s miracles, this translation emphasizes what the *sēmeia* symbolize or teach about Jesus or what he can do rather than focusing on the acts themselves.⁷ Looking past the historical details of the actual wedding feast itself, the symbolism of this miracle’s context suggests a connection with the relationship of Jesus, the bridegroom, and the church, the bride. This idea is present in John 3:29 and Revelation 21:1–9 and is also echoed in D&C 65:3 and 133:10.⁸ Scholarly exegesis has proposed a number of interpretations for the transmutation of water into fine wine. These

of John (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 253 and 257 n. 39, both of which cite Jewish precedents for the association of water and spirit.

7. For the symbolism, see Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 103–11; Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 163–64.

8. Much has been written concerning the possible identity of the bridegroom at the wedding of Cana itself. An early third-century Latin preface to John identifies John the son of Zebedee as the groom, which may explain the role of Mary if John’s mother Salome was her sister; see Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 97. In harmony with his preference for anonymity, John would not have been expected to name himself (indeed, he never even mentions the name of Jesus’s mother). Although rarely suggested, Nathaniel, as a native of Cana (John 21:2), could have been the bridegroom, since his recent call (John 1:45–54), which immediately precedes the Cana pericope, might have occasioned the invitation of his new master and friends (although this does not explain the prominence of Mary in the account, unless here, too, there was some familial relationship). Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 1:448–49, suggested that “some member of the Holy Family,” presumably another son of Mary, was being married. See also James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 144; and McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 1:135–36. Earlier, nineteenth-century LDS proposals often focused on defining the role of Jesus at the wedding, although this does not fit as well

include the replacement of Jewish purification rituals by the blood of Christ, the theme of abundance (because the six ceremonial water pots would have yielded up to 120 gallons of high quality wine), and other sacramental imagery.⁹ On the other hand, most LDS discussions of this miracle have tended to focus on the fact that Jesus, as Creator, had power over the elements.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the role of Mary in this pericope suggests the possibility of another layer of interpretation that is particularly significant if the wine here represents blood and hence mortality. In John's Gospel the mother of Jesus appears only here and at the foot of the cross in John 19, and in both instances she is unnamed. While efforts have been made to explain Jesus's reference to her as "woman" as a sign of respect or deference, there is little precedent for this in either Greek or the presumed original Aramaic words of Jesus.¹¹ Given John's avoidance of Mary's name, his use of the Greek vocative *gynai* may well have a generalizing effect, connecting Mary with Eve in Genesis 3:15 and the eschatological woman of Revelation 12.¹² Nevertheless, her being called "the mother of Jesus" four times in John 2:1–12 suggests that the actual relationship of Mary and Jesus is what is important in this passage.

Greek physiology posited that an embryo was formed of the father's seed and the mother's blood, an idea also found in Wisdom of Solomon 7:1–2: "In the womb of a mother was I molded *into flesh*, within the period of ten months, compacted *with blood*, from the seed of a man" (emphasis added).¹³ Given that the children of God in John 1:12–13 are not born by blood or the flesh, Mary's role in the conception of Jesus was specifically to bring him into a mortal or

the circumstances described in the text; see, for example, Orson Hyde, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:82 (6 October 1854).

9. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 112–18.

10. E.g., Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 146–49; McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:453–54; Fred E. Woods, "The Water Imagery in John's Gospel: Power, Purification, and Pedagogy," in *The Lord of the Gospels*, ed. Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 192.

11. Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 158–59.

12. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 12; Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 89.

13. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 99; Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 158.

earthly state. As Eve was the agent whereby mankind was brought into mortality, Mary was the means by which the premortal, spiritual, and divine Word became the earthly Jesus. As a result, the miracle of turning water into wine may actually be a symbol of the Incarnation.¹⁴ This explains Mary’s presence at the wedding, which is parallel to the appearance of the beautiful and fair virgin of 1 Nephi 11:13–20 (also unnamed) who is “the mother of the Son of God, *after the manner of the flesh.*” If the miracle at Cana typifies the nativity for the Fourth Gospel, this “beginning of miracles” at one level actually points to the first miracle of Jesus’s earthly ministry, his conception, revealing who he was and explaining how this sign “manifested his glory” to his disciples and led them to believe in him (John 2:11).

Water and Spirit (John 3:1–36)

Jesus’s discourse with Nicodemus on the new birth (John 3:1–36) further develops the dichotomy between flesh—and implicitly blood—on the one hand, and water and spirit on the other. While John 3:5 is used as a proof text by Latter-day Saints to support the ritual necessity of water baptism and the subsequent receiving of the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Greek text of this verse makes an important, close connection between water and spirit: in the phrase *ex hydatos kai pneumatos*, the nouns for water and spirit are anarthrous (that is, appearing without definite articles) and are governed by a single preposition.¹⁵ All men, having been born of flesh and blood, must now be born again, this time of water and spirit, for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Significant for Johannine Christology is the fact that the earthly birth of Jesus, as the Only Begotten, was of both flesh and blood and water and spirit, the Word being clothed in flesh through the Incarnation.

14. Eric D. Huntsman, “The Lamb of God: Unique Aspects of the Passion Narrative in John,” in *Behold the Lamb of God: The Fourth Annual BYU Religious Education Easter Conference*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Frank F. Judd Jr., and Thomas A. Wayment (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2008), 51–52.

15. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 131, who also points out the close parallel here with Matthew 1:20, “what is begotten in her [Mary] is of the Holy Spirit.”

“Water Springing Up into Everlasting Life” (John 4:1–42)

In the discourse with the Samaritan woman at the well about the Water of Life (John 4:1–42), the presence of a woman (*gynē*) and the symbolism of drawing water connect this pericope with the miracle at Cana. There Jesus had instructed the Samaritan woman to “draw out” water from the pots, using a word (*antlēate*) commonly employed for drawing water from wells.¹⁶ Here, after Jesus told her that he could give her “living water” (John 4:10), she noted that the well was deep and that he had nothing with which to draw its water (*antlēma*). Jesus’s famous response then connected both water and himself with a different quality of life than that sustained by earthly water: “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

The expression for living water in Classical and New Testament Greek, *hydōr zōn*, can refer to flowing water fit to drink, which later, rabbinic teaching remembered as being considered pure for ritual purposes (Mishnah *Mikwa’ot* 1:1–8).¹⁷ Compared to the water of cisterns or even wells, the Samaritan woman certainly found this type of water preferable, but the participle *zōn* can also refer to that which is life-producing or offers life.¹⁸ Likewise, while the woman at first concentrated on the fact that because the water was “springing” or “bubbling up,” she would not need to expend the effort to draw it as she did for the water at the well, the participle used here (*hallomenou*) has deeper connotations. In fact, *hallomai* is used only here to refer to the action of water; elsewhere it refers to leaping or jumping by human

16. Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “antlēō”; Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 100.

17. See Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 230. While the ritual uses of water were overwhelmingly concerned with purification, see the interesting case of the “bitter” waters of Numbers 5:11–31.

18. Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “zaō,” note in definition 4a that the participle is used figuratively with the water of a spring in contrast with stagnant water, which is *hydōr nekron*. Definition 5, however, associates it with things and persons that communicate divine life.

beings. Nevertheless, in the Septuagint it is used in connection with the spirit of God falling upon Samson and Saul (Judges 14:6, 19; 15:4; 1 Samuel 10:10).¹⁹ Interpretations of the living water that Christ gives include Jesus’s revelation and teaching on the one hand or the Spirit as imparted by Jesus on the other; this latter idea is explicit in John 7:38–39.²⁰ Nevertheless, the complete phrase “well of water, springing up into everlasting life” may refer to Jesus himself as the source of both spirit and life. In this regard, Old Testament references to Yahweh as the “fountain of life” (Psalm 36:9) and “the spring of living water” (Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13)²¹ find support in LDS scripture in 1 Nephi 11:25: “And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.” In the vision of Nephi, Jesus is the paramount example of the love of God—which, of course, finds a parallel in John 3:16–17—and the fruit of the tree, which is defined as the “greatest of all the gifts” in 1 Nephi 15:36. This seems to refer to the gift of eternal life itself (D&C 14:7). Likewise, Jesus, the fountain of living waters, gives those who come to him life—not just the kind of mortal life that physical water sustains but rather spiritual, eternal life.

Flesh and Blood (John 6:25–59)

Nowhere, perhaps, is the image of blood in John more powerfully used as a symbol than in Jesus’s Discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6:26–59. In the second part of this discourse, Jesus moved from the earlier image of “bread come down from heaven” to the more jarring image of flesh and blood, concentrating on the central *act* of Jesus’s work: his salvific death, and how believers appropriate it (6:51–59).²²

19. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 178–80.

20. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 178–80.

21. Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 231.

22. Eric D. Huntsman, “The Bread of Life Sermon,” in *From the Transfiguration to the Triumphal Entry*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 269–317.

Here Jesus solemnly declared, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (6:53–54). Modern, particularly Christian, readers—accustomed to the sacramental imagery of partaking of bread and either wine or water that represents the body and blood of Christ—may not always appreciate the impact of this imagery on its original audience given biblical injunctions against consuming blood.²³

A sacramental interpretation of this section of the discourse may be appropriate, particularly since in the Gospel of John, no mention is made of the institution of the ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper. Nevertheless, comparisons between the sacrament of the Lord’s supper and the flesh and blood section of the Bread of Life Discourse must be qualified because all sacramental references in the New Testament are to the body (*sōma*: Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24, 27, 29) of Jesus rather than specifically to the flesh (*sarx/sarka*: John 6:51, 53–55).²⁴ Although this distinction between body (*sōma*) and flesh (*sarx*) should not be pressed too far,²⁵ the combination of flesh *and* blood emphasizes that Jesus was speaking of his mortal body, because *flesh and blood* consistently refers to living, albeit mortal, bodies (Ether 3:8–9; see Leviticus 17:11–14; Ecclesiastes 14:19; 1 Corinthians 15:50), as contrasted with “flesh and bone,” which can refer to immortal, resurrected bodies (D&C 129:1–2; 130:22). Thus John’s use of the terms *flesh and blood* in the final section of the Bread of Life Discourse stresses the incarna-

23. Note that the Old Testament injunctions against drinking blood (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 19:26) were reaffirmed in the New Testament (Acts 15:30; 21:25).

24. See Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 331–32, especially n. 125, and Huntsman, “Bread of Life,” 279–80. For the semantic ranges of the respective nouns, see Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “sarx” and “sōma.”

25. 3 Nephi 18:28–29, for instance, speaks of partaking of the sacrament improperly as “partaking of *my* flesh and blood unworthily,” although this may have particular reference to improperly trying to lay hold of the fruits of the atonement, being somewhat analogous to “crucifying the Lord afresh” (Hebrews 6:6) and even “assenting unto his death” (D&C 132:27). On the other hand, see also D&C 20:40, which refers to “administering the bread and wine—the emblems of the flesh and blood.”

tion of the divine Word “in the flesh.” Accordingly, “eating his flesh and drinking his blood” suggests that believers in Jesus must accept and internalize the fact that Jesus has really come in the flesh and that he, the Lamb of God, would sacrifice that mortal life for his people.²⁶

Rivers of Living Water (John 7:37–39)

In the Second Temple period, Sukkot, or the Festival of Tabernacles, had taken on a number of ritual additions, including the drawing of water from the Gihon spring to be poured on the altar as part of the autumnal prayers for rain and the lighting of great lamps in the temple courtyards. Both of these practices gave occasions for symbolic statements by Jesus—namely, that he was the source of living waters, the life-giving spirit in John 7:37b–39, and the light of the world in John 8:12.²⁷ In the first of these, Jesus echoed his earlier words to the Samaritan woman at the well, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37b–38).

This passage has notable difficulties, the first of which involves the punctuation and affects the antecedent of the genitive of possession in “out of his belly (*koilia*),” which some translations render as “heart.” What is uncertain here is whether the Greek means, “Let anyone who believes in me come and drink! As scripture says, ‘From *his* heart shall flow streams of living water’” (NJB); or “and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of *the believer’s* heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (NRSV).²⁸

The second problem arises from the scripture ostensibly cited, for which there is no obvious candidate in either the Masoretic Text or the Septuagint. However, if it is taken not as a direct citation but rather as a broad reference to the Mosaic story of water flowing from the rock (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:11; Deuteronomy 8:15; Psalm 105:41), which rock was a type of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4), then the source

26. Huntsman, “Bread of Life,” 282–85.

27. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 326–29.

28. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 320–21; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 256; Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 374–78 (emphases added).

of the living waters would be Jesus, and this passage would be parallel to the earlier pericope of the woman at the well.²⁹

John 7:39, however, connects living water closely with the spirit: “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given* because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”³⁰ The meaning of this verse has caused considerable discussion, both within and outside of LDS circles, although in this instance the KJV rendering, “for the Holy Ghost was not yet given,” may have complicated the question further. The Greek text *oupō gar ēn pneuma*, literally rendered, simply states, “there was not yet spirit,” without specifying that it was the Holy Ghost that was absent or that it was somehow not yet “given.”

As noted above, in LDS theology, resurrected, glorified beings are not only tangible bodies of flesh and bone, they are also in a sense “spiritual” bodies because they are animated, sustained, and quickened by spirit rather than blood, the symbol of mortality. According to LDS Church president Joseph Fielding Smith, “After the resurrection from the dead our bodies will be spiritual bodies, but they will be bodies that are tangible, bodies that have been purified, but they will nevertheless be bodies of flesh and bones . . . they will not be blood bodies, they will no longer be quickened by blood but quickened by the spirit which is eternal and they shall become immortal and shall never die.”³¹ In this sense, prior to the death of Jesus’s mortal body and his subsequent resurrection, there was not yet any animating, life-giving, or even resurrecting spirit for those to whom he would give eternal life. A final, possible aspect of Jesus’s role in “giving life” might be discerned in the image of living water flowing *ek tēs koilias*, or “from his belly.” While *koilia* generally refers to organs of nourishment, particularly the stomach, commentators have usually taken it in its metaphorical sense as the seat of emotions, feelings, and desires, which anciently were placed in the viscera or bowels but for

29. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 321–23.

30. Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 201.

31. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Conference Report*, April 1917, 63.

which modern English generally prefers “heart.”³² Nevertheless, there is another possibility, since *koilia* can refer to the womb or uterus,³³ as is the case in Luke 1:41, 44; 2:21; 11:27; 23:29; and especially in John 3:4. In these instances, of course, it is applied to a woman, but there may be some sense that as a woman gives birth to a child, so Jesus gives new birth to the believer.³⁴ Indeed, the sense that not only Jesus can pass on this eternal life but so can those who receive it in its fullness from him, which is suggested by the alternate punctuation and reading of John 7:38, is supported by restoration scripture, particularly D&C 132:19 and 24, which speak of “a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” and “eternal lives” (plural) in those who become candidates for exaltation.

Blood and Water (John 19:34–35)

The symbolism of blood and water comes to fruition at the end of the crucifixion scene: “But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and *forthwith came there out blood and water*. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe” (John 19:34–35). The importance of this symbol is patent, as seen by John’s eagerness to bear witness of it and stress that he is sharing this sign so that the reader might believe.³⁵ While scholarly exegesis has at times associated the water and blood here with “the water of baptism” (John 3:5) and “the blood of the Eucharist” (John 6:53, 54, 55–56),³⁶ there has been a recognition that the symbols are best viewed in accordance with John’s use of the terms elsewhere, notably in the believer “not being born of blood” (John 1:13); to those who are born “of water and the spirit” (John 3:5); to “living water” as the gift of Christ (John 4:10–14); and to living waters as the spirit flowing from believers (or from Christ; John 7:38–39).³⁷ If blood indeed

32. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 323; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 257.

33. Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “koilia.”

34. See Matthew G. Ancell, “Blood and Water: Unity in the Gospel of John” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1998), 20.

35. Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 505.

36. Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 506.

37. Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 724–25.

does represent the source of mortal life (see again Genesis 9:4), and if water symbolizes the life-giving spirit that is the source of eternal life,³⁸ then this sign in fact reflects the dual nature of the Incarnate Word as both the mortal son of Mary (blood) and the Divine Son of God (water). However, the blood and water may have represented not just *who* Jesus was but *what* he did: as the sacrificial Lamb of God, his atoning blood flowed on the wood of the cross to save his people even as the blood of the paschal lambs stained the wooden door frames of the Israelites to deliver them from death on the first Passover. Nevertheless the water from Jesus's side suggests that the cross, a dead tree and symbol of cursing, also became a type of the tree of life and a source of blessings.³⁹ Thus, just as Old Testament visions featured rivers of healing, life-imbibing water issuing from millennial Jerusalem and its temple, which was the place of sacrifice (Ezekiel 47:1–12 and Zechariah 14:8), so now living waters flow from Jesus on the cross.

The flowing of water, and blood, from Jesus's "side" (*pleura*) here, however, may have further significance that parallels the rivers of water flowing from the *koilia* in John 7:38. Originally *pleura*, usually in the plural, referred to "ribs,"⁴⁰ and John here may be recalling the singular use of *pleura* in Genesis 2:22 LXX, where it referred to God forming Eve out of one of Adam's ribs, the idea being that somehow woman was born from man.⁴¹ The fact that the atoning death of Jesus somehow "gave birth" to the eternal life of those who believe in him is supported by the presence of blood and water, which are elements that accompany the physical birth of a child.⁴² These, together with spirit,

38. To be sure, ancient physiology posited that in addition to blood, the body contained other important fluids or "humors," including a clear liquid called *ichōr*. A divine form of this fluid, however, was also believed to be the special substance of the gods that flowed in their veins *instead* of blood; see Homer, *Iliad* 5.340; Plutarch, *Moralia* 180E, 341B; and the brief discussion of Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 203. Given that resurrected bodies are bodies of flesh and bone and not flesh *and* blood, if symbolically water = spirit, the flowing water could, in fact, represent the quickening spirit that animates immortal beings.

39. Huntsman, "Lamb of God," 63–64.

40. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), s.v. "pleura."

41. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 935.

42. Ancell, "Blood and Water," 17.

are mentioned together in restoration scripture in Moses 6:59–60, where they are the means by which believers “are sanctified from sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory.” Thus, Jesus’s unique status as the Divine Word made Flesh enabled him to “give birth” to his own flesh, providing them life both on earth and in the next. The idea of the fatherhood of Christ is particularly supported by another passage of LDS scripture, Mosiah 5:7: “Ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, *this day he hath spiritually begotten you*; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, *ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters*” (emphasis added).

This understanding gives Jesus’s promise in John 14:18 new meaning: “I will not leave you comfortless [*orphanous*, literally “orphans”]: I will come to you,” suggesting that he will come to be a father to us. According to LDS theology, God is the spiritual father of all men and women, just as our earthly parents gave us biological life. Through his infinite and eternal atonement, Jesus becomes yet another father for his saints, giving them eternal life. The image of water—or spiritual, eternal life—streaming from his belly or pouring from his side graphically illustrates this point with symbolism that is consistent with the use of blood and water throughout the Gospel of John.

Eric Huntsman is an associate professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University where he is also affiliated faculty with Classics and Ancient Near Eastern Studies.

POINT OUR SOULS TO CHRIST: LESSONS FROM LEVITICUS

Julie M. Smith

The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob wrote, “We keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to [Christ]” (Jacob 4:5), and Nephi taught that the end for which the law was given was to “look forward . . . unto Christ” (2 Nephi 25:24). Similarly, Abinadi said that the law of Moses was “a shadow of those things which are to come” (Mosiah 16:14), and Amulek preached about the “whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice, . . . the Son of God” (Alma 34:14). Central to the law of Moses were the temple ordinances, purity laws, and the calendar, all of which are explained in detail in Leviticus. It should be possible, then, to read Leviticus in a way that points the reader’s soul toward Christ, yet most readers find Leviticus dry and irrelevant. Is there a way to find Christ in Leviticus?

In recent years, the study of Leviticus has been galvanized by the late Mary Douglas, an anthropologist. Douglas’s central insight was that Leviticus relies on analogical thinking, which means that each part of the law cannot be understood on its own but only by comparing it with other parts of the law of Moses. She notes that in Leviticus, there are usually no explanations given for why something is done; rather, the explanation is to be found in comparing one part of the text with another part of the text. As Douglas explains, “If one asks, Why

this rule? the answer is that it conforms to that other rule. If, Why both those rules? the answer is a larger category of rules in which they are embedded. . . . Instead of argument there is analogy.”¹ Analogical reading helps us make sense of a document that, relative to the rest of the Old Testament, has very few imperatives or commandments. Herein I will employ an analogical reading of Leviticus to demonstrate what the Book of Mormon prophets already knew: that the law of Moses, even in its details, points our souls to Christ.

While Douglas’s methodology will be used, the bulk of examples in this paper are my own; I take her methodology in an overtly Christian direction, in a way that Douglas did not. This study will analogically analyze several passages in Leviticus to show its focus on Christ.

The first three chapters of Leviticus explain the procedures for making offerings. There are three types described: burnt offerings (Leviticus 1), meat offerings (Leviticus 2; I will refer to these as “cereal offerings” since they are all grain), and peace offerings (Leviticus 3). Each of these has three subcategories (burnt offering: herd animals, flock animals, and fowls; cereal offering: flour, baked grain, and first-fruits; peace offering: herd animals, lambs, and goats). Interestingly, only the central subcategory of the central offering—namely, the baked grain cereal offering—has three subcategories of its own: offerings baked in an oven (Leviticus 2:4), baked in a pan (Leviticus 2:5–6), and cooked in a frying pan (Leviticus 2:7). If we consider this text analogically, we see that this structure of embedded triplets encourages a focus on the center item in each section. But why should our attention be drawn to cereal offerings baked in a pan? Because that offering is made—and only made—when the high priest is anointed to his office (see Leviticus 6:21). So this structure guides the reader to see the anointing of the high priest as, literally, central. A perceptive reader realizes that the role of the high priest—which is, fundamentally, to make atonement—is central to worship in ancient Israel. Hence, atonement made by one having authority is the focal point of the rituals. This reading is one way we can use an analogical approach to find Christ in Leviticus.

1. Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18.

Some rituals involved placing the hand of the worshipper upon the animal before it was sacrificed (see, for example, Leviticus 1:4; 3:2; 4:4; 8:14). Leviticus 1:4 explains why: “It shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” Because placing a hand was always performed by the person who made the offering (whether priest or laity), it suggests that the person established a connection between himself and the animal. That connection was made clearest in the ritual performed on the Day of Atonement, when “Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away” (Leviticus 16:21). This encourages the reader to see the other instances of placing a hand upon an offering as an effort to release one’s sins onto the animal, which is then sacrificed. The participant in the ritual—and the reader of the laws—is then primed for the idea that an innocent party can take on the sins of another and be sacrificed for them, so long as the worshipper initiates the connection. This would, of course, reach its fruition in the atonement of Christ.

All offerings in Leviticus 1 were burnt on the altar; Douglas points out that *burnt* might be translated as “turns all the offering into smoke.” She notes that “the formula repeated eleven times warns that this is no casual remark. . . . In Hebrew the verb ‘to turn into smoke’ is not the same as the verb ‘to burn’, used for non-sacrificial incineration: it means turning something into something else, smoke.”² This is important because the most prominent reference to smoke up to this point in Israel’s history is when the Lord met Moses on Mount Sinai. It is described thus: “And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke [or covered in smoke], because the Lord descended upon it in fire” (Exodus 19:18). Note that Mount Sinai was surrounded by smoke because the Lord was descending; the idea that smoke accompanied the Lord’s presence became a common feature in the biblical canon (see Psalm 144:5; Isaiah 4:5; 6:4; and Revelation 15:8). So for the rituals in Leviticus to be based on the idea of turning sacrificial animals into smoke is to imply that an atoning sacrifice creates the

2. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 68–69.

conditions under which the Lord can visit the covenant people. Once again, the importance of atonement is emphasized.

As the animal and grain offerings are described in Leviticus, a refrain emerges: they must be “without blemish” (see Leviticus 1:3; this phrase might also be translated as “flawless”). This suggests that only the very best should be offered to the Lord and that only something perfect can be sacrificed. Yet at the same time, the option for a poor worshipper to bring a less expensive offering (see, e.g., Leviticus 5:7) means that the Lord’s mercy is accessible to every person. In fact, even those completely impoverished could still offer a sacrifice, since they could glean the fields (see Leviticus 5:11 and 19:9–10). Thus, the Lord requires a standard of perfection and, at the same time, accommodates individual imperfections. Later in Leviticus, the Israelites were commanded that Aaron’s sons must be without blemish in order to serve as priests (see Leviticus 21:17), which implies an association between the priest and the sacrificial animal and suggests that there was a sacrificial nature to the work of the priest and thus prepared the audience for the sacrifice of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Leviticus 1–3 describes sacrificial rituals that required the participation of the priests, and yet this section begins: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering . . .” (Leviticus 1:2). Note that these chapters are addressed to the laity—not the priests. Only in later chapters (7 and following) will the text address the priests and will the offerings be described from their point of view. While this is perhaps surprising in a text that some readers think of as a priesthood handbook, it is significant that the role of the laity was emphasized; ordinances may be performed *by* the priests, but they are performed *for* the laity.

The statement “And the Lord spake unto Moses” (Leviticus 4:1) or a similar variant begins virtually every new section of laws in the book. It is an easy phrase to overlook, but its inclusion and repetition emphasize that these laws originated with the Lord. Leviticus 4 explains the rituals that accompany the sin offering and underscores that sin defiles the tabernacle. The defilement denotes that the Lord cannot—literally or figuratively—dwell in the tabernacle. Hence, sin

makes it impossible to enjoy the presence of the Lord. But Levitical ritual also teaches that the blood of a perfect sacrifice can cleanse the tabernacle so that the Lord can once again dwell therein. In addition, the fire used to burn the offerings must not go out (see Leviticus 6:9, 12, 13), which implies that the people always had access to the atoning power. To a Christian, the symbolism here should be apparent.

As mentioned, Leviticus 4 explains the ordinances associated with sin offerings. But the order in which the material is presented is also quite instructive. The ritual was performed on occasions when a sin was committed by a priest (Leviticus 4:3), the whole congregation (Leviticus 4:13), a ruler (Leviticus 4:22), and a common person (Leviticus 4:27). If this order is hierarchical, it implies that the whole congregation was of higher status than the ruler. Additionally, in each ritual, the guilty party placed hands on the animal before it was sacrificed, except in the case of the whole congregation, where the “elders of the congregation” (Leviticus 4:15) did so, implying that, in this case, the elders represent the people.

Leviticus 8 describes rituals that accompany the ordination of priests. Normally when a cereal offering was made, a small portion of it was turned into smoke and the rest was given to the priests as food. But when this ritual was performed as part of the ordination of a priest, the entire portion was burned (see Leviticus 8:26–28). Similarly, the majority of the wave offering was normally given to the priests (see Leviticus 7:34), but when done as part of the consecration of the priest, it was given to Moses (see Leviticus 8:29). These small changes serve to emphasize that the priesthood cannot be (literally) self-serving. It also suggests that there was a chain of priesthood authority stretching from the high priest, through Moses, to the Lord.

After the priest had been clothed in sacred vestments and the sacrifice performed, the text notes that Moses took the blood of the sacrifice “and put it upon the tip of Aaron’s right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot” (Leviticus 8:23). A similar ritual occurred in only one other place in Leviticus: in the ritual to cleanse a leper, the blood from the offering was applied to the leper by the priest, who “put it upon the tip of the right ear of

him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot” (Leviticus 14:14). The blood of the sacrifice was capable of changing the worshipper’s position both from outcast to laity and from laity to priest. Note also that these rituals were the only ones in Leviticus where blood was placed on a person; normally, the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled somewhere in the tabernacle. This suggests that when the leper was cleansed and the priest was consecrated, their bodies were parallel to the altar, which is to say that their bodies symbolically became the location of sacrifice, worship, and transformation.

There is one other noteworthy application of sacrificial blood: in Leviticus 14:6 and 51, a living bird was dipped into the blood of a sacrificed bird and then allowed to fly away in a ritual used for the cleansing of both lepers and houses. It is tempting to understand this freed bird as a symbol for the freedom of one covered in atoning blood, but analogical reading of another part of Leviticus suggests otherwise. There is a third ritual in Leviticus with interesting parallels to the two-bird ritual: on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16:7), two goats were presented and one was sacrificed for a sin offering. As for the other, “Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away . . . into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:21–22). This informs our understanding of the two-bird ritual: the freed animal was not so much set at liberty as meant to carry away sins or impurity. Applying this understanding to the two-bird ritual, we see that both birds—both the one killed and the one freed—played an important role in the cleansing of the leper or leprous home. The fleeing bird or goat suggests that sin did not cease to exist through the ritual of atonement but rather that it was carried by someone else. Comparing these three rituals also makes clear that the ritual of the Day of Atonement was primarily concerned with cleansing.

The idea of blood as a cleanser is a counterintuitive notion developed throughout Leviticus. A few examples of this have already been discussed; one other is worth noting. Leviticus 4 describes the procedures to be followed when various groups of people (from the common person to the high priest) sin, and all of them involve sprinkling the blood of the slain animal in the tabernacle, which cleansed it from the sins of those who have polluted it. The paradoxical idea of blood as a ritual cleanser prepared the covenant people to understand the role of Jesus Christ's blood.

There is one use of blood that does not appear in Leviticus: one of the strongest prohibitions in the entire text is against consuming blood. Why might this be? Since blood assumed the symbolic role of a cleanser (of the altar and of people), to consume blood would be an attempt to cleanse oneself. (This may also explain why emissions of human blood render the person unclean.) In Leviticus, cleansing comes when the priest sacrificed an animal, suggesting that atonement was not something one did for oneself but rather that it required an intermediary with special status (since both the priest and the animal needed to be pure). It may be that the symbolic consumption of Jesus's blood as part of the last supper and the sacrament is related to this principle. Additionally, blood is never turned into smoke on the altar, which suggests a link between the altar and the body that we will explore more fully below. An analogical reading encourages us to see the strong prohibition against blood consumption as a reminder that atonement is not something that one can do for oneself and that it also prepares the careful reader to understand that Jesus's blood is unique and therefore can be symbolically consumed to the benefit of the worshipper.

Other dietary laws are found in Leviticus 11 and have long been a puzzle to readers, but an analogical reading suggests reasons behind the restrictions. All "beasts" except for cattle, sheep, and goats were forbidden (see Leviticus 11:1–8); note that these were the only three animals that were used for sacrifices. Inasmuch as the sacrificial animals were considered the "food" of the Lord, the implication is that the covenant people were to eat what the Lord

“ate,” or to model themselves on the Lord and to act as the Lord did. This association between how the Lord is and how the people should be is furthered by a clever pun in this chapter; as Douglas explains, the same word is used at the end of the chapter to describe the Lord’s action in bringing the people out of Egypt (see Leviticus 11:45) as is used in the beginning of the chapter to describe the bringing up of cud (what the KJV calls “chewing the cud” in Leviticus 11:3) of those animals that the covenant people were permitted to eat.³ Because these verbal echoes bracket the entire body of dietary laws, they underscore the point that even in something as mundane as their food choices, the people had an opportunity to emulate the Lord. And since the restrictions on what could be placed on the altar paralleled the restrictions on what could be placed in the body, the text suggests that the body and the altar are analogous. The altar was the focal point for worship, but so was the body. The altar was the location of sacrifice and holiness; the body should have been the same. Note also that the animals mentioned in Leviticus 11 are divided according to the pattern of Genesis 1, where animals were created in three groups according to their habitat (water, air, and land). Since the dietary laws mimic the created order, this reinforces the concept that these laws reflected God’s will for creation and that adherence to the dietary laws implied that humans were making the same kinds of distinctions that God made. Also note that just as people were divided into three categories in Leviticus—priests, laity, and unclean—foods were similarly divided into sacrificial, edible, and unclean. The paralleling of people and foods implied gradations of holiness in both groups, suggesting that holiness was not a binary division but rather a way of viewing human progression toward holiness. This theme reached its fruition in Peter’s dream that all foods were clean, which was understood by him to mean that all people were clean (see Acts 10:10–28). This multivalent linkage between food and people primes the careful reader to better understand the role of the sacrament in Jesus’s ministry.

3. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 49.

Leviticus 12–15 concerns impurity. In chapter 12, we find the procedures for restoring to purity women who have given birth. Interestingly, the birth of a girl resulted in an unclean time of two weeks, while for a boy the time was one week. On the eighth day, the boy was circumcised. This suggests that ordinances such as circumcision have the power to abrogate impurity. One might speculate that other reasons account for the differences in time before purity is restored, but an analogical reading encourages us to look at differences between similar texts in order to explain them. When we do that here, we find that the only difference mentioned in the text is the practice of circumcision and therefore conclude that it is circumcision that leads to purity.

Leviticus 14 contains procedures for restoring purity to leprous people, clothing, and houses. Note that the procedure for cleansing a leprous house is very similar to that for a leprous person, implying a parallel between human bodies and houses. That, in turn, suggests that the household—with all of its inhabitants—is a discrete entity in the same way that one person is: the house is like a skin for the family. This hints at a theology of families that stresses their interdependence but also their susceptibility to impurity. Note that if the person's skin is *entirely* leprous, they were considered clean (Leviticus 13:13). This implies that the issue of cleanness is not one of conforming to modern medical notions but rather deals with wholeness. People entirely covered with leprosy were clean because their skin was consistent, but partial leprosy was unclean because it was mixed (compare the regulations on mixing wool and linen in Leviticus 19:19). It suggests a rubric through which we might understand virtually all the regulations in Leviticus—the law prohibited mixing items that should be distinct: clean and unclean people, animals, skin, textiles, seeds in a field, and so on. It points to a larger moral lesson regarding the separation between the clean and the unclean, the righteous and the wicked, and prepares the careful reader for Jesus's teachings about the end times (see, e.g., Mark 13).

Douglas's reading of Leviticus 12–15 notes that atonement was necessary when a “covering” was breached;⁴ those coverings included the house covering the clothing, the clothing covering the skin, and the skin covering the body. In each case, if the covering was spoiled, sacrifice was necessary. Douglas links this theme to the story of the fall, at which time Adam and Eve realized the necessity for a covering after they had transgressed. They attempted to cover themselves, but that was inadequate: the covering must come from the Lord, and when it did, it was—as Leviticus encourages us to see it—a symbol for atonement. The importance attached to “coverings” may extend to the sacrificial offerings, where one of the parts of the animal to be burnt was described as the fat “that covereth the inwards” (Leviticus 4:8). This covering, which was ritually pure (since the animal must be unblemished), was sacrificed in order to restore ritual purity to the offerer, whose own “covering” had in some way become blemished. This concept ties in nicely to the idea of an atonement; in fact, in Hebrew the words for “covering” and “atonement” are very similar.⁵ Thus the idea of substitutionary sacrifice was taught.

Analogical reading finds significance even in the arrangement of the material; note that chapter 11 (the dietary laws) and chapters 12–15 (concerning impurity) literally led up to the Day of Atonement (chapter 16). This most sacred of days required that the worshippers be pure from the inside out; hence they had to be in obedience to both dietary laws and impurity laws. In this case, the very structure of the text leads us to center our attention on the Day of Atonement and the need for atonement; it implies that the worshipper must have been personally prepared to worthily participate in that day's events. The fact that a human, like the tabernacle, could be unclean implies that, like the tabernacle, a human could also enjoy the presence of the Lord, but only when certain criteria were met. While modern readers commonly see the purity regulations as part of a law understood in opposition to the Spirit, the presence of these regulations taught the ancient Israelites that their own bodies could be the dwelling place of

4. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 244–45.

5. Credit for this observation belongs to Kevin Barney.

the Spirit of the Lord just as the tabernacle could be, if only they chose to become clean and pure.

Chapter 18 consists of prohibitions against a variety of sexual relationships. In the middle of that list, however, is this statement: “And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech” (Leviticus 18:21). Why would a prohibition against sacrificing a child to a false god show up in the middle of a list consisting of condemnations of sexual relationships? Analogical thinking provides an answer, especially when we note that the child was called “thy seed” in the prohibition. This implies that, for all of the prohibitions in this chapter, there is an emphasis on the effect that the forbidden sexual relationship would have on the next generation: just as one’s seed should not be given to Molech, it cannot be given to a forbidden relationship. The implication is that a prime reason for sexual morality was the effect that illicit relationships would have on future generations and the self-centeredness of sexual immorality. Further, just as giving one’s seed to Molech implied a spiritual relationship with Molech, participating in any of the forbidden sexual relationships would do the same. Note that, unlike most of the regulations in Leviticus, reasons for the prohibitions were given for most of the relationships in this chapter; the relationship was prohibited because the person involved was a close relative (see, e.g., Leviticus 18:8) or because the act itself was an “abomination” (Leviticus 18:22). Interestingly, the explanatory clause for a child sacrificed to Molech reads “neither shalt thou [or so that thou shalt not] profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord” (Leviticus 18:21), implying that just as a man could not marry his father’s sister because “she is thy father’s near kinswoman” (Leviticus 18:12), a child could not be sacrificed because she or he was the “near kin” of the Lord. The relationship between the child and the Lord was emphasized through its comparison with a relationship that is too close to permit marriage.

Chapters 23–25 of Leviticus contain the laws concerning special times and holy days. A prominent feature of these holy days was the prohibition of work, which is mentioned for the Sabbath, Passover, Festival of Weeks, the Day of Horn Blasts, the Day of Atonement, and

the Festival of Booths. The prohibition against work given for the Day of Atonement is notable for its severity (see Leviticus 23:28–29); it served to underscore the importance of this day, even relative to other holy days. It also shifts the focus to the kind of work that *was* done: the sacrifices that focused on atonement and redemption. For the Christian, it points to the singularity of Christ’s atoning work and its complete separation from human work. The only annual holiday that did not prohibit work is Firstfruits, a day also unique in that it is the only one not tied to a specific day on the calendar but rather to the day when the Israelites “reap the harvest” (Leviticus 23:10). It makes sense that a day commemorating the harvest would not prohibit work; this in turn serves to emphasize the holiness of honest labor. It is thus an important counterpoint to the holidays that prohibit work since it makes clear that there was nothing inherently unclean or impure about work.

A second prominent feature of the holy days is that all of those tied to the calendar involved the number seven in some way (i.e., the Sabbath was the seventh day, Passover was at the end of two seven-day cycles, the Day of Atonement was in the seventh month). While number symbolism is foreign to modern Western cultures, it was common in the Bible, where the number seven was a symbol for completeness or perfection. All holy days share this characteristic in some way. In other words, they all belong to the Lord, the source of perfection.

One oddity in this section is that, in the midst of chapters concerning events that occurred at a specific and for a limited period, we find requirements for the continual fire in the tabernacle (see Leviticus 24:1–9). This placement serves to underscore the perpetual nature of the fire and the idea that being in the tabernacle (or, later, in the temple) is always a special time. The clever placement of these regulations served to emphasize to Israel the importance of the tabernacle/temple—it was a special place in the same way in which holy days were special times. It also serves as a commentary on the discussion of work (and its prohibition) above: “Every sabbath [Aaron] shall set [the loaves] in order before the Lord continually” (Leviticus 24:8). We find clear approval for Aaron’s Sabbath work and the suggestion that

work that was sacrificial or worshipful was, in fact, most appropriate for the Sabbath. In other words, the Sabbath was not about refraining from work per se but about refraining from what we might call non-worshipful work. The perpetual fire implied that certain work is acceptable—even necessary—on the Sabbath.

The section on perpetual fire is located between regulations concerning holy days that occur once every calendar year and those that only happened in certain years. The two events that are not annual—the Sabbath year (which was every seventh year; see Leviticus 25:1–7) and the Jubilee Year (which was every fiftieth year; see Leviticus 25:8–55)—are described as holy times for the *land*, not for the *people* (see Leviticus 25:2). The Sabbath year was, obviously, analogous to the Sabbath day, since both occur during every seventh time period, but it is also analogous by placement in the text. Perhaps less obvious is that the Jubilee Year was analogous to the Festival of Weeks (see Leviticus 23:15–22), a parallel suggested by their placement in the text as the second event mentioned in their respective sections but also by the fact that they occur after the forty-ninth day/year has elapsed. Thinking analogically encourages us to compare the Jubilee Year and the Festival of Weeks. The Jubilee Year involved returning land and people to their original ownership and the Festival of Weeks involved making sacrificial offerings, so paralleling these two suggests that one aspect of the sacrificial offering system was to return animals and grains to their original owner, the Lord. Similarly, the release of land and people in the Year of Jubilee implies that the sacrificial acts of worship symbolically represented liberty and freedom. Both holy periods also involved concern for the poor: the Festival of Weeks included a prohibition against harvesting the corners of the fields and gathering the gleanings (Leviticus 23:22), while the Jubilee Year involved ending all contracts of debt and servitude. Thus they emphasized the Lord’s care for the impoverished. The parallel also suggests that the land operated on a longer time scale than humans since its holy time was measured in years instead of weeks. Given the number of promises made to ancient Israel that involved the land, this would have been an important lesson for them to internalize.

We can arrange the holy days in the following chiasmic structure:

- A Sabbath Day (23:3)
- B Passover (23:5–8)
- C Firstfruits (23:10–14)
- D Festival of Weeks (23:15–22)
- E Horn Blasts (23:24–25)
- E' Day of Atonement (23:27–32)
- D' Festival of Tabernacles (23:34–43)
- C' Perpetual Fire/Bread (24:2–9)
- B' Sabbath Year (25:2–7)
- A' Jubilee Year (25:8–55)

We have already considered some of the similarities between Firstfruits and the perpetual fire, as these are the only times in the calendar that permit work. These two events are also the only ones not tied to the calendar, since the perpetual fire is continual and Firstfruits was based on the harvest.

In this structure we find the Sabbath day paralleled to the Jubilee Year, with the Sabbath day's general prohibition on work mirrored in the Jubilee Year: "proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. . . . Ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed" (Leviticus 25:10–11). This suggests that the Sabbath day should have been a time of liberty, a time when all people "returned" to their place of origin and abandoned other pursuits, and also that a proper observance of the Sabbath required preparation (since sowing and reaping—even of after growth—are not permitted in the Jubilee Year).

The chiasmus encourages us to parallel the Passover with the Sabbath year. Part of the Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the next day: "seven days ye must eat unleavened bread" (Leviticus 23:6), implying a relationship between the Sabbath year and consuming only unleavened bread. Because unleavened bread was required for the offerings, a time when the Israelites consumed only unleavened

bread suggests a time when they were more closely conforming their behavior to the Lord's behavior (inasmuch as the sacrifices were his "food") and more closely paralleling their bodies to the altar (which also cannot "consume" leavened bread). So the implication is that the Sabbath year was a time when their behavior and bodies more closely comport with the Lord and the altar. And what about the Sabbath year suggests that that was in fact happening? Most likely it is this admonition to observe the Sabbath year: "the land [shall] keep a sabbath unto the Lord" (Leviticus 25:2). In other words, allowing the land to rest was to act as the Lord does, which draws attention to the fact that the prohibition on Sabbath work has its root in the Lord's actions.

The chiasmus pairs the Festival of Weeks with the Festival of Tabernacles. Both were tied to the harvest (Weeks: "when ye reap the harvest of your land" [Leviticus 23:22]; Tabernacles: "when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land" [Leviticus 23:39]). And while the Festival of Weeks, with its prohibition on gleaning (Leviticus 23:22), suggested a concern for the poor, the purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles was so that all generations "may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 23:43). The juxtaposition of concern for the poor with remembering Israel's history implies a link between the two, and this link calls attention to the poverty of Israel's past and the fact that those who are currently poor should be considered no less worthy than Israel's ancestors. As much as living in booths (or temporary shelters) encouraged the Israelites to see themselves in the place of their ancestors who were liberated from Egypt, not gleaning the fields encouraged the covenant people to see themselves in the place of the poor. This association is furthered by the fact that the same word used for the "corners" of the field that were not to be gleaned in Leviticus 23:22 (פִּיּוֹת) is used in Leviticus 19:27 and 21:5 in the prohibition on cutting the "corners" of their beards. In their very bodies, they were to be as the land.

The central material of the chiasmus is the blowing of trumpets and the Day of Atonement. The link between the two might not be obvious, given that the trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of

Tabernacles all occurred during the seventh month of the year. The horn blasts—which occurred nine days before the Day of Atonement—suggest a time of preparation before the Day of Atonement and thus emphasized the importance of the latter and the concept of atonement in general.

Amid this material is a brief law code from which we get the familiar “eye for [an] eye” (Leviticus 24:20) concept and other laws that speak of a one-to-one correspondence between an action and its consequence, such as “he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 24:17). In this section is also this law: “he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 24:16). This placement suggests that parity existed between blasphemy and loss of life. It implies that reverencing the name of deity was somehow on par with the preservation of human life and therefore points to the role of God as creator.

We have seen several examples in which the law of Moses, as taught in Leviticus, has the capacity to point souls to Christ by analogically teaching doctrines that underpin notions of atonement theology. Key ideas such as substitutionary sacrifice, the central role of the high priest, and the role of sacred time and space are elucidated. When Jesus visited the Nephites in the New World, he taught them that the law of Moses “truly testified of [him]” (3 Nephi 15:10). The book of Leviticus is an important part of that testimony.

Julie Smith earned a graduate degree in Biblical Studies from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. She teaches institute classes and homeschools her children.

THE VALENTINIAN BRIDAL CHAMBER IN THE *GOSPEL OF PHILIP*

Gaye Strathearn

While a graduate student I took several classes in Gnosticism and Thomas Christianity. One topic that came up regularly in both classes was the Valentinian bridal chamber. As a Latter-day Saint, I was intrigued with the subject and so wrote a paper about it for a New Testament seminar. In attendance at that seminar was James M. Robinson, one of the foremost scholars in Gnosticism, who was the moving force behind the translation and publication of the Nag Hammadi library into English. At the end of the seminar, he made a comment that has had a great impact on the last ten years of my life. He said that whenever he gave lectures on the *Gospel of Philip*, one of the texts of the Nag Hammadi library, Latter-day Saints in his audience often came up and asked him how the *Gospel of Philip* compared with the Mormon practice of temple marriage. His answer was always to the effect that he didn't know because he didn't know anything about Mormon temple marriage. Robinson's comment reinforced the notion that the *Gospel of Philip* is of tremendous interest to many Latter-day Saints, especially in its numerous references to the bridal chamber. Some LDS scholars have drawn our attention to some similarities between the concept of marriage in LDS theology and in

the *Gospel of Philip*,¹ but no one has given a detailed discussion of the bridal chamber within its Valentinian context. It seems to me, however, that such a discussion is critical before we can truly evaluate the significance of this text for LDS beliefs about marriage and the temple.

For centuries our major text for a description of the Valentinian bridal chamber was a five-volume heresiology entitled *Against Heresies*.² Irenaeus, an influential early church father, wrote this text toward the end of the second century AD. Clearly Irenaeus had an agenda that was unfavorable toward the Valentinians, the major target of his treatise. It was not until 1945 that scholars had access to texts written by Valentinians that provided an insider account of the bridal chamber. These texts were discovered by Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Sammān, a local field hand, at the base of a cliff in the Nag Hammadi region of Upper Egypt.³ In a jar he found twelve complete papyrus codices, with an additional eight pages from a thirteenth codex that were stuffed inside the cover of the sixth codex. Although until recently it has perhaps not received the same amount of public press, this discovery is as important to the study of Christian origins as the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was to the study of Second Temple Judaism. In the library eight texts mention the

1. For example, see S. Kent Brown and C. Wilfred Griggs, “The 40-Day Ministry,” *Ensign*, August 1975, 6–11; Stephen E. Robinson, “Background for the Testaments,” *Ensign*, December 1982, 30; Hugh W. Nibley, “Return to the Temple,” in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 54; S. Kent Brown, “The Nag Hammadi Library: A Mormon Perspective,” in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1986), 261–62; William J. Hamblin, “Aspects of an Early Christian Initiation Ritual,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:212; Richard O. Cowan, “Sacred Temples Ancient and Modern,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 108.

2. Other early texts that mention the bridal chamber are Clement of Alexandria’s *Excerpts from Theodotus* and the *Acts of Thomas*. The scope of this paper does not allow me to examine these texts in detail. For a detailed examination of their portrayal of the bridal chamber, see my dissertation, “The Valentinian Bridal Chamber” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2004), 86–116.

3. James M. Robinson, introduction to *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), 22–26.

bridal chamber.⁴ Five of these texts are not Valentinian, showing that the bridal chamber concept was not unique to the Valentinians, but as a number of scholars have noted, it was the Valentinians who “made the most of marriage as a ‘mystery.’”⁵ Three Valentinian texts in the library refer to the bridal chamber, but the most detailed, and therefore the most important for our discussion, is the *Gospel of Philip*.⁶

As I examine the *Gospel of Philip* here, I recognize that a number of passages about the bridal chamber are of particular interest to Latter-day Saints. There are many intriguing points of contact with LDS belief about the temple and marriage. However, there are also significant points of divergence. To understand both positions, it is important to read the *Gospel of Philip*'s references to the bridal chamber within their Valentinian context. Therefore, although I will include quotations from Latter-day Saints at the beginning of each section, the discussion of the relevant passages will focus on their Valentinian context.

4. Non-Valentinian texts include *Gospel of Thomas* 75, 104; *Dialogue of the Savior* 138.48–50; *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* 57.10–18; 62.6–10; 65.35–66.8; 67.5–11; *Authoritative Teaching* 22.23–34; *Teachings of Silvanus* 94.19–29. Valentinian texts include *Exegesis of the Soul* 132.2–133.10; *Tripartite Tractate* 93.1; 122.15–16, 21; 128.33; 138.11; reconstructed in 135.31; *Gospel of Philip* 65.1–26; 67.2–27; 69.1–70.4; 70.9–71.15; 72.17–23; 74.12–24; 76.1–5; 81.34–82.26; 84.14–86.18; reconstructed in 75.29.

5. Robert McL. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip: Translated from the Coptic Text, with an Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 20; see Robert M. Grant, “The Mystery of Marriage in the Gospel of Philip,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 15 (1961): 131.

6. Early scholars routinely identified the text as Valentinian. See Hans-Martin Schenke, “Das Evangelium nach Philippus: Ein Evangelium der Valentinianer aus dem Funde von Nag-Hamadi,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 84/1 (1959): 1–26; Elaine Pagels, “The ‘Mystery of Marriage’ in the *Gospel of Philip* Revisited,” in *The Future of Early Christianity*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 442–54. Recently, however, this identification has come into question. Martha Lee Turner argues in her preface that the text is “a collection of disparate materials,” although she does acknowledge that it contains some “‘primitive’ Valentinian material,” in *The Gospel according to Philip: The Sources and Coherence of an Early Christian Collection* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 235. I am of the opinion that the bridal chamber was introduced by the Thomas Christians and appropriated and developed by the Valentinians; see Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures: A New Translation with Annotations and Introduction* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 220, 359–60; see also Riley’s comment that the bridal chamber is “a typical Thomas tradition [cf. *Gospel of Thomas* 75] inherited by Valentinus and found in a number of later texts.” Gregory J. Riley, “Second Treatise of the Great Seth,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 168–69 n. 57.17.

The Teacher Valentinus

Before focusing on the *Gospel of Philip*, it will be helpful to give a brief overview of Valentinus and his school. One modern scholar describes Valentinus as “the greatest Gnostic of all times.”⁷ Our knowledge of his life is, at best, fragmentary and must be gleaned from a number of different ancient sources. According to Epiphanius, a fifth-century heresiologist, Valentinus was born on the coast of Egypt, perhaps somewhere near Carthage, around AD 100. At some point he moved to Alexandria, where he received a Greek education (Epiphanius, *Refutation of All Heresies* 32.2.3). Plato’s teachings became very influential in the development of Valentinus’s cosmology and view of salvation.⁸ Clement of Alexandria says that the Valentinians taught that their founder was also a student of Theudas, who was a pupil of Paul (*Miscellanies* 7). According to Irenaeus, Valentinus “came to Rome in the time of Hyginus [Bishop of Rome ca. 136–40], flourished under Pius [ca. 140–57], and remained until Anicetus [ca. 157–68]” (*Against Heresies* 3.4.3). When he left Rome he apparently went to Cyprus and continued teaching there (Epiphanius, *Refutation of All Heresies* 31). Tertullian tells us that he was a man of genius and eloquence (*Against the Valentinians* 4) who was originally a believer “in the doctrine of the Catholic Church in Rome” (*Prescription against Heretics* 30). There is, however, no indication that Valentinus ever sought to establish a separate church.⁹ In fact, he seems to have worked within the

7. Gilles Quispel, “Gnosticism: Gnosticism from Its Origins to the Middle Ages,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 5:571.

8. Tertullian, *The Flesh of Christ* 20; Tertullian, *Prescription against Heretics* 30. See also G. C. Stead, “In Search of Valentinus,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference at Yale, March 1978*, ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 75–102; and Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, trans. Michael Steinhauser, ed. Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 294–96.

9. Lampe has noted, “Valentinus was never excommunicated by the Roman Christians.” *From Paul to Valentinus*, 294 n. 8. This position is contrary to Tertullian’s statement that he was (*Prescription against Heretics* 30). However, Lampe argues that it was a tradition about Marcion, which was only later applied to Valentinus. *From Paul to Valentinus*, 391 n. 17. Lampe makes a good argument that there was no unified Christian congregation in Rome during the first two centuries. Rather, there were many house churches that varied according to leadership, ethnicity, social status, and even theology.

established system. Irenaeus says that the Valentinians “imitat[e] our phraseology” and that they “hold doctrines similar to ours” (*Against Heresies* 3.15.2), and Tertullian says that Valentinus expected to become a bishop (*Against the Valentinians* 4). Instead of establishing a separate church, the Valentinians seem to have functioned as a school within the Christian church. Before individuals could join the Valentinian school, according to Tertullian, they were required to go through a five-year novitiate and only then were they taught “the mysteries,” which they were forbidden to speak of with outsiders (*Against the Valentinians* 1).

One of the mysteries that the Valentinians taught was the bridal chamber (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.6.4; 1.21.3; *Gospel of Philip* 63.31–65.1; 67.27–30; 71.3–15; 85.22–86.19). Even with the long novitiate, the Valentinian school flourished. Remarkable are the number of famous pupils whose reputations have survived from antiquity, such as Markus, Ptolemy, Heracleon, and Theodotus, just to name a few. Hippolytus also tells us that there was an eastern and a western branch of this school that differed theologically over the nature of Christ (*Refutation of All Heresies* 6.30). Although we don’t have any specific numbers for Valentinus’s followers, there must have been many because Tertullian tells us that they constituted “a very large body” (*Against the Valentinians* 1). According to Peter Lampe, it wasn’t until the time of Irenaeus (ca. 180) that the Valentinians were marginalized from the rest of the Christian community.¹⁰

The Valentinian Bridal Chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*

It is those passages among the Nag Hammadi codices which deal with mysteries and initiations that have generated the most interest among Latter-day Saints. For example, the gospel of Philip describes an initiation in three stages, corresponding to the three chambers of the Jerusalem Temple (69:14ff). In

This situation allowed the Valentinians to maintain a loose relationship with other Christians while maintaining their own unique interpretation. *From Paul to Valentinus*, 359–96.

10. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 385–91.

the last stage, which was called the Bridal Chamber, a sacred marriage was performed which was believed to be eternally binding (70:19ff) and which had to be performed in mortality (86:1ff).¹¹

Although a number of texts from Nag Hammadi mention the bridal chamber, it is the *Gospel of Philip* that refers to it most often. The importance of the bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip* is highlighted by Elaine Pagels: “Interpreting the bridal imagery that dominates [the *Gospel of Philip*] . . . seems to offer an essential key not only for understanding the *Gospel of Philip* but also for reconstructing, so far as our fragmentary sources allow, the Valentinian movement in the history of second-century Christianity.”¹²

The text itself contains twenty-six references to the bridal chamber, and Hans-Martin Schenke has suggested another inclusion in his restoration in 75.29.¹³ Three Greek loan words—*νημφῶν* (*numphōn*), *παστός* (*pastos*), and *κοιτών* (*koitōn*)—are translated as “bridal chamber,” but the Coptic word *μανωελεετ* (*mansheleet*) is not found. Each of these references is scattered throughout the latter half of the text, and although they are found in clusters, *νημφῶν* is the most common term used (see chart 1).

Any study of the bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip* is challenged by the nature of the text. It does not exhibit the same flow and linear development of thought found in the canonical gospels. Perhaps the most famous description of its composition was that given by Robert M. Grant in his 1959 Society of Biblical Literature presidential address, where he described it as “chaotic arrangement!”¹⁴ The text’s “chaotic arrangement” does not result in an explicit description of the bridal chamber. Rather we find a loose collection of isolated thoughts

11. Robinson, “Background for the Testaments,” 30.

12. Pagels, “Mystery of Marriage,” 442. See also Jean-Marie Sevrin, “Les noces spirituelles dans l’Évangile selon Philippe,” *Muséon: Revue d’études orientales* 77 (1974): 143.

13. Hans-Martin Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium: (Nag Hammadi Codex II,3)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 461.

14. Robert M. Grant, “The Two Gnostic Gospels,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960): 2.

CHART 1

Distribution of “Bridal Chamber” References
in the *Gospel of Philip*

Codex Page Numbers*	ΠΥΜΦΩΝ	ΠΑΣΤΟΣ	ΚΟΙΤΩΝ
65	*		
66			
67	* * *		
68			
69	* * *	* *	
70		* * * *	
71		* *	
72	* *		
73			
74	*		
75	?†		
76	*		
77			
78			
79			
80			
81			
82	* *		*
83			
84			*
85			* *
86	*		

* According to Bentley Layton’s transcription in “Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1:142–215.

† There is a lacuna in 75.29. Although Layton left the lacuna blank (*Nag Hammadi*, 194), Schenke restored it as follows: $\chi\upsilon\lambda\omega\pi\epsilon\ \epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda\ \epsilon\bar{\mu}\ \pi\alpha\pi\tau\upsilon\mu\phi\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \mu\bar{\eta}\bar{\nu}\ [\Gamma\upsilon\mu\phi\eta]$ (*Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 461). The context and size of the lacuna lead me to agree with Schenke’s restoration.

from which we have to try to re-create what the bridal chamber meant to the Valentinians.

To further complicate the matter, the *Gospel of Philip* describes marriage and the bridal chamber four times as a “mystery” (64.31–65.1; 67.27–30; 71.3–15; 85.22–86.19).¹⁵ These statements seem to be a reflection on Ephesians 5:31–32: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery.” But the statements also reflect the marriage language that was associated with the Dionysiac, Eleusinian, Isiac, and Mithraic mysteries.¹⁶ This all suggests that only those who were initiated into the mysteries could fully understand references to marriage and the bridal chamber.

A Bridal Chamber Ritual?

Scholars have argued over whether the bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip* refers to a specific ritual. Early scholars certainly understood it to be one, but more recent studies have questioned that position.¹⁷ Without doubt, bridal imagery was a pervasive metaphor in the ancient world.¹⁸ In Jewish and Christian texts in particular it is frequently used to describe salvation. I would argue, however, that

15. These statements support Irenaeus’s claim that the Marcosians considered the bridal chamber to be a mystery (*Against Heresies* 1.6.4).

16. For a discussion, see Strathearn, “Valentinian Bridal Chamber,” 222–28.

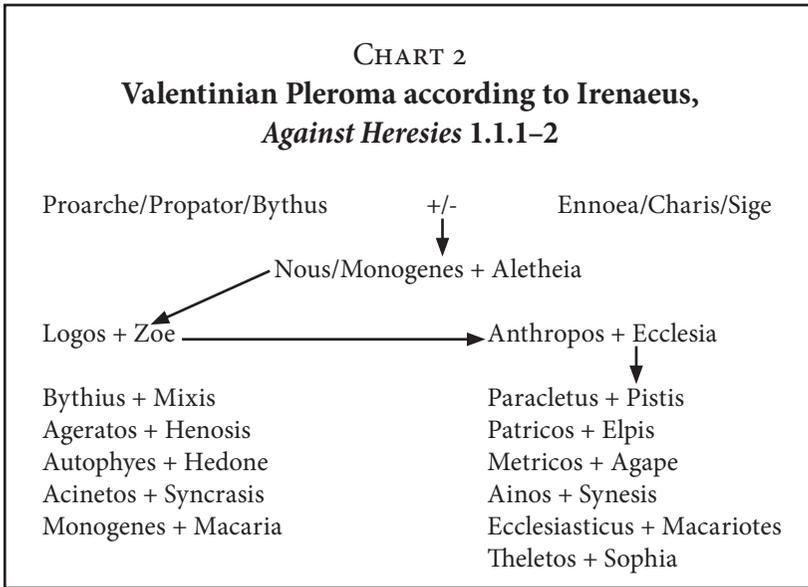
17. Some examples of those who understood the bridal chamber to be a ritual are John D. Turner, “Ritual in Gnosticism,” in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1994* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1994), 136–81; Risto Uro, “The Bridal Chamber and Other Mysteries: Ritual System and Ritual Transmission in the Valentinian Movement,” in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, ed. Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 457–86. In contrast, Pagels argues that ritual is a blanket term for the initiation consisting of baptism, chrism, and the eucharist. “Ritual in the *Gospel of Philip*,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 281. Einar Thomassen argues, “The fact that the notion of the bridal chamber may be associated with baptism and anointing as well as with the eucharist suggests that it does not represent a separate ritual event, but that it is rather an implied aspect in the process of initiation.” *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians”* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 100.

18. See generally Nissinen and Uro, *Sacred Marriages*.

the Valentinians did practice a bridal chamber ritual, although it still remains difficult to determine the exact nature of that ritual.

Irenaeus, an influential Christian writer in the second century who wrote about the Valentinians (and other “heretics”), recorded, “For some of them prepare a [bridal chamber, *νυμφῶνα*] and perform a sort of mystic rite (pronouncing certain expressions) with those who are being initiated, and affirm that it is a spiritual marriage [*πνευματικὸν γάμον φάσκουσιν εἶναι*] which is celebrated by them, after the likeness of the conjunctions above” (*Against Heresies* 1.21.3).¹⁹ The “conjunctions above” refers to Valentinian cosmology, in which heaven, or the Pleroma, is in a state of balance because it consists of a number of paired, male-female divine beings that emanated from the high God (see chart 2). The Valentinian bridal chamber ritual is,

19. With the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945, some scholars have increasingly criticized Irenaeus’s work by arguing that his polemical writings have skewed Valentinian teachings. For example, see Elaine H. Pagels, “Conflicting Versions of Valentinian Eschatology: Irenaeus’ Treatise vs. the Excerpts from Theodotus,” *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974): 35–53; Morton Smith, “The History of the Term *Gnostikos*,” in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the Conference at Yale, March 1978*, ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 2:796–807; Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Church: Combined Edition of The Fathers of the Greek Church and the Fathers of the Latin Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 20. While Irenaeus’s polemical bent is not in question, that does not mean he does not include accurate information. His account of the cosmogonic myth has much in common with the account in the *Apocryphon of John*, discovered in the Nag Hammadi library. In addition, Irenaeus insists that he gave accurate information about his opponents. He got his information about them from personal contact with Valentinians and through study of their writings (*Against Heresies* 1.preface.2). He also declares that a person who is going to “undertake their conversion, must possess an accurate knowledge of their systems or schemes of doctrine. . . . This was the reason that my predecessors . . . were unable . . . to refute the Valentinians satisfactorily, because they were ignorant of these men’s system; which I with all care delivered to thee in the first book” (*Against Heresies* 4.preface.2). For Irenaeus, unlike many of his successors, the Valentinians “were not historical artifacts but living and dangerous realities”; see Terrance Tiessen, “Gnosticism as Heresy: The Response to Irenaeus,” in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Wendy E. Helleman (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 339. Any gross misrepresentations would surely have evoked strenuous denials from his opponents that would have, in turn, undermined Irenaeus’s credibility; Tiessen, “Gnosticism as Heresy,” 340; Alastair H. B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1.



therefore, a way to re-create that balance and to prepare individuals to return to the Pleroma and become a part of that state.

In the *Gospel of Philip* it is clear that not everyone participated in the bridal chamber, but rather that it was reserved for a select few. “A bridal chamber is not for the animals, nor is it for the slaves, nor for defiled women; but it is for free men and virgins” (69.1–4). There are also a number of passages, many of particular interest to Latter-day Saints, which strengthen the idea that the bridal chamber was a ritual. The first reads, “The Lord [performed] everything in a mystery, a baptism and a chrism and a eucharist and a redemption and a bridal chamber” (67.27–30). Henry Green describes this passage as “the most remarkable list of rituals” of Valentinian Gnosticism.²⁰ Bentley Layton also uses this passage to argue that the Valentinians “accepted the usual sacraments of the second-century church.”²¹ Nevertheless, while Layton’s assertion may be true for the rituals of baptism, chrism, and the eucharist, it is much more difficult to make a case for “redemption” and the bridal

20. Henry A. Green, “Ritual in Valentinian Gnosticism: A Sociological Interpretation,” *Journal of Religious History* 12 (1982): 120.

21. Layton, *Gnostic Scriptures*, 270.

chamber as separate rituals.²² Perhaps it is this fact more than any other that has led more recent scholarship to attempt to refute the idea that the Valentinians practiced redemption and the bridal chamber as separate salvific rituals.

The question of a bridal chamber ritual in the *Gospel of Philip*, however, is complicated by the nature of the text. Pagels has rightly noted that “the author of Philip is obviously no Hippolytus; instead of detailed description of ritual acts he interprets them impressionistically.”²³ In coming to this conclusion she is influenced by Michael Williams’s argument that the *Gospel of Philip* “employs sacramental imagery with a great deal of freedom, as though . . . viewing the initiation process as a continuous whole, rather than insisting upon analytically isolating the precise contribution of each sacrament.”²⁴ Certainly the *Gospel of Philip* suggests a close relationship between the rituals because they are often portrayed as overlapping in scope. Thus we find individual sacraments associated with others: baptism and chrism (57.22–28); baptism, redemption, and the bridal chamber (69.14–70.4); chrism,

22. We know very little about this “redemption.” Irenaeus says that the Marcosians practiced a rite of redemption. Although he does not seem to know precisely what it is, he gives two examples. He first describes it as a higher form of baptism: whereas water baptism is *psychikon* and limited to the “the remission of sins,” he describes redemption as *pneumatikē* (*Against Heresies* 1.21.1). He also describes redemption as the means of bypassing the cosmic judge. Redemption renders an individual “incapable of being seized or seen by the principalities and powers” and thus “their inner man may ascend on high in an invisible manner, as if their body were left among created things in this world, while their soul is sent forward to the Demiurge” (*Against Heresies* 1.21.5). In this instance he seems to be referring to the Homeric helmet of Pluto. In the *Tripartite Tractate* redemption seems to be associated with the putting on of a garment: “for those who will put it on and those who have received redemption wear it” (128.22–24). In the *Gospel of Philip*, we learn only that “redemption is ‘the holy of the holy’” in the temple and that it “takes place in the bridal chamber” (69.23–27). Wesley W. Isenberg, “The Gospel of Philip (II,3),” in *Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 180–81.

23. Pagels, “Ritual in the *Gospel of Philip*,” 281.

24. Michael A. Williams, “Realized Eschatology in the Gospel of Philip,” *Restoration Quarterly* 14 (1971): 13. Turner suggests that baptism, chrism, and eucharist were “included in the same initiation ceremony” but suggests that “the redemption and bridal chamber constituted a sort of second baptism . . . and were capable of repetition.” “Ritual in Gnosticism,” 150.

baptism, and the bridal chamber (74.12–24); baptism, eucharist, and chrism (74.25–75.2); and eucharist and baptism (75.14–24; 77.2–15).

In recognizing the connection between the sacraments and the fluid boundaries of these rites in the *Gospel of Philip*, we must not, however, ignore the fact that all five are mentioned individually in 67.27–30. This passage suggests to me that each ritual must have provided a unique dimension to the overall initiatory process. In addition, as we shall see in our second passage, all parts of the initiatory experience do not appear to be of equal importance. Rather, the bridal chamber is described as being superior to both baptism and redemption (69.14–29).²⁵ It does not seem coincidental that the bridal chamber is the last in the list of five. This strengthens Schenke's initial assessment that "of the Valentinian sacraments, which are spoken in the Gospel of Philip, it is the mystery of the bridal chamber that is most highly valued."²⁶

A second passage that suggests to me that the bridal chamber was a specific ritual is the description of the Jerusalem temple in 69.14–70.4. Of this passage Schenke notes, "That the saying of the Gospel of Philip comes to speak here of the Jerusalem temple is so surprising that one has good reason to see it as a milestone."²⁷

There were three shrines of sacrifice in Jerusalem. The one opens to the west. It is called "the holy." Another opens to the south. It is called "the holy of the holy." The third, which opens to the east, it is called "the holy of holies," the place where the high priest enters alone. Baptism is the house which is holy. Redemption is the holy of the holy. The holy of the holies is the bridal chamber. (69.14–70.4)

The emphasis here on only the three sacraments of baptism, redemption, and the bridal chamber indicates that this pericope probably originated from a different source than the earlier reference to five sacraments.

25. Although the text is riddled with lacunae, the overall sense of the passage suggests that it is superior to baptism and redemption.

26. Schenke, "Das Evangelium nach Philippus," 5.

27. Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 403.

The text continues: “Baptism leads to resurrection and redemption. For redemption (takes place) in the bridal chamber” (69.25–26). The three shrines of the temple mentioned in this passage are consistent with the tripartite architectural structures found in many Near Eastern temples, including the Jerusalem temple. According to John Lundquist, this architectural phenomenon symbolized the idea of “a successive ascension toward heaven.”²⁸ Thus Schenke translates line 25 as “baptism *leads to* resurrection and redemption.”²⁹ Baptism, therefore, is not equivalent to the bridal chamber, but leads or ascends to it.

The fact that the bridal chamber is the holy of holies suggests that it represents the place where God dwells. George MacRae recognized this when he wrote the following:

The allegory seems to identify these [shrines] with three different sacraments in the sacramental system of the Valentinian Gnostics. But I think it is more than that. It is more than that because it builds on the concept that one moves toward the divine presence as one moves successively through the outer courts of the temple toward the inner Holy of Holies, to which only the priest had access. Consequently the order in which the courts are identified with the sacraments becomes very important. The initiatory rite of baptism is the outermost one. The rite of redemption, whatever that may have consisted of, is the second one. And it is the bridal chamber, the rite of which was the supreme rite for the Valentinian Gnostic, which is the approach into the presence of God himself.³⁰

28. John M. Lundquist, “What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology,” in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, ed. H. B. Huffmon, F. A. Spina, and A. R. W. Green (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 211.

29. Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 49. Others have translated ΟΥΤΙΓΧΑ ΜΜΑΧΥ as “includes”; see Isenberg, “Gospel of Philip (II,3),” 151.

30. George MacRae, “The Temple as a House of Revelation in the Nag Hammadi Texts,” in *Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1984), 184–85. For a discussion of the three rituals in relation to the ritual practice in the Israelite temple, see April D. De Conick, “Entering God’s Presence: Sacramentalism in the Gospel of Philip,” in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1998, part 1* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 489–523.

Thus we can understand this passage in the *Gospel of Philip* to refer to a cultic journey that begins with baptism but which finds its culmination in the bridal chamber, or the holy of holies in the temple. This again suggests that *baptism* and the *bridal chamber* are related, but not equivalent, terms.

The rest of this passage in *Philip* is heavily damaged, so it is difficult to make much sense of what is going on. But it does make mention of the veil of the temple being torn from top to bottom. The veil here has reference to the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies. It represented a barrier that separated humans from the presence of God. It is also understood in the *Gospel of Philip* that under the Mosaic law only the high priest could enter the holy of holies. The fact that our text describes the veil as being completely torn indicates that this barrier had been removed. For Valentinians, the primary situation that kept them from returning to the presence of God was their ignorance of “who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, whither we hasten, and from what we are redeemed, what birth is and what rebirth.”³¹ Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that the temple veil here represented ignorance. The fact that it was completely torn indicates that they had received knowledge that enabled them to break through the barrier of ignorance and thus enter the bridal chamber, or the presence of God.

A third indication that the bridal chamber was a ritual is a number of passages that mention sons or children of the bridal chamber (ΠΩΗΡΕ ΜΠΟΥΜΦΩΝ). The *Gospel of Philip* teaches that children of the bridal chamber are designated as the “free” (72.20–23) and that they are the “true race” (76.3–5). There appears to be a process of transformation that brings them to this state. They were not originally children of the bridal chamber but came into being “from water and fire and light” (67.3–5) since, as Ristro Uro argues, “this expression is clearly an epithet for those who have passed through an initiation of some kind.”³² He links this phrase to a second-century inscription found on the Via Latina that also mentions brothers of the bridal

31. See Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpts from Theodotus* 78.2, in Robert P. Casey, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria* (London: Christophers, 1934), 89.

32. Uro, “Bridal Chamber and Other Mysteries,” 475.

chamber in connection with ritual baths.³³ In addition, the *Gospel of Philip* also reinforces the transformative nature of the bridal chamber by teaching, “If anyone becomes a child of the bridal chamber, he/she will receive light” (86.4–5). This light must be received here in mortality and is necessary to prevent the sons of the bridal chamber being detained or tormented in their journey back to the Pleroma (86.6–14). It appears that this state is achieved over a period of time because we learn that the children of the bridal chamber are permitted to enter the bridal chamber every day (82.15–17).

So, although the *Gospel of Philip* contains no extensive discussion of a bridal chamber, it has significant pointers to strongly suggest a bridal chamber ritual associated with the holy of holies in the temple and that it was the means whereby a person was transformed and received the light needed to enter the eternal realm. All of these concepts are intriguing for Latter-day Saints as they consider the doctrine of temple marriage. As we try to determine the nature of the ritual, however, we will see that there are also some very significant differences.

The Kiss

The *hieros gamos* [i.e., the sacred marriage] is represented by a holy kiss.³⁴

When Schenke first published the *Gospel of Philip* and noted the prominence of the bridal chamber, he concluded that the kiss was *the* bridal chamber ritual. He based his conclusion on another passage that might be of interest to Latter-day Saints. “For it is by a kiss that the perfect conceive and give birth. On account of this we also kiss one another. We receive the conception from the grace that is in one another” (59.2–6).

The conception that takes place through the kiss must refer to a spiritual rather than physical birth.³⁵ Hans-Georg Gaffron links the

33. Uro, “Bridal Chamber and Other Mysteries,” 475; Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 298–99.

34. Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2005), 526.

35. It is possible that outsiders who came across a saying like this may have taken it out of context and assumed a sexual act. Perhaps this may have been the case with Irenaeus, although it is also possible that there were abuses of the spiritual ideal. We

kiss with a later discussion in the *Gospel of Philip* of the relationship between Jesus and his companion (κοινωνος) Mary Magdalene (63.30–64.9),³⁶ a point sensationalized in one of Dan Brown's novels.³⁷ Although there are a number of lacunae at the end of page 63, it seems clear the disciples are put out because they think Jesus loves Mary more than them because he "kiss[ed] (ακιμαζε) her [often] on her [. . .]" Layton has supplied ηελεε in the lacuna to indicate that the kiss was not a single event, but was repeated often.³⁸ Gaffron argues that their relationship is strengthened by the fact that immediately after the discussion of the kiss in 59.2–6 comes a discussion of Mary Magdalene, who is described as the lord's κοινωνος.³⁹ While it would certainly be helpful to have such a connection between the two passages, there is in my mind a significant problem with such an assumption. In 59.3 the word *kiss* is a correct translation of the Coptic word η. In line 63.36, however, the Coptic word for *kiss* is a translation of the Greek word ἀσπάζομαι. While it is possible to translate this word as *kiss*, it refers more specifically to a greeting or embrace.⁴⁰ Thus C. J. de Catanzaro reads 63.26 as "[he] greeted her."⁴¹ Further, Wesley Isenberg notes, "although *kiss* may be correct, the Coptic construction found here is not normally used in this sense."⁴² Therefore, to be truer to the Greek sense, it seems best to me not to link these two passages.⁴³

What does the kiss represent? It seems clear that the author of this passage understood the kiss to be different from Paul's holy

know of cases where misunderstandings took place as non-Christians heard the language of the Christian sacrament; see Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9.6.

36. Hans-Georg Gaffron, "Studien zum koptischen Philippusevangelium unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Sakramente" (Inaug.-diss., Rheinische-Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, Bonn, 1969), 214.

37. Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 245–46.

38. Layton, transcription of "Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip," 1:168.

39. Gaffron, "Studien zum koptischen Philippusevangelium," 212.

40. Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 245–46.

41. C. J. de Catanzaro, "The Gospel According to Philip," *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (1962): 47.

42. Isenberg, "Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip," 1:169 n. 63:36, emphasis in original.

43. So also Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 265.

kiss (φίλημα ἁγιον) in the New Testament.⁴⁴ According to William Klassen, Paul's kisses were "a public declaration of the affirmation of faith: 'In Christ there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free' (Galatians 3:28)."⁴⁵ But in our passage, the kiss represents the means of conceiving and giving birth. The passage is embedded in a discussion on the contrast between the children of the heavenly man and the earthly man, Adam. On the one hand, the children of Adam are many and will die. On the other, the children of the perfect man (i.e., Christ; 55.11–12) do not die "but are always begotten" (58.17–22). The kiss is related to the nourishment of the word that also comes from the mouth (58.30–59.2).⁴⁶ In this way the kiss symbolizes the transference of the life-breath from one to the other—hence the notion that the kiss leads to birth.⁴⁷

There are some difficulties linking the kiss of our passage with the bridal chamber. First, the connection is never made explicit in the *Gospel of Philip*. In fact, the bridal chamber is not introduced until much later in the text. If, however, we could link the "children of the perfect man" with the "children of the bridal chamber," then we could

44. This point is contra Grant, who says that the kiss in the *Gospel of Philip* "was taken over from the Church. We first encounter it in the Pauline epistles and in 1 Peter. None of the apostolic fathers mentions it, but this silence is accidental, for it reappears in Justin's first apology and flourishes thereafter." "Mystery of Marriage," 139.

45. William Klassen, "Kiss (NT)," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:92.

46. Compare similar teachings in the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Truth*. "Jesus said, 'Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me; I myself shall become that person, and the hidden things will be revealed to that one'" (*Gospel of Thomas* 108). "Truth appeared; all its emanations knew it. They greeted the Father in truth with a perfect power that joins them with the Father. For, as for everyone who loves the truth—because the truth is the mouth of the Father; his tongue is the Holy Spirit, . . . since this is the manifestation of the Father and his revelation to his aeons" (*Gospel of Truth* 26.28–27.7), in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 44.

47. See Genesis 2:7; cf. Elisha's restoration of the young child to life when "he put his mouth upon his mouth" (2 Kings 4:34). See also the *Odes of Solomon* 28.7–8, "And immortal life embraced me, and kissed me. And from that (life) is the Spirit which is within me. And it cannot die because it is life"; see *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:760. Many have noted the parallels between the kiss in the *Gospel of Philip* and the Mandaean and Manichean literature; see Jacques É. Ménard, *L'Évangile selon Philippe* (Montreal: Université de Montréal, 1964), 149, and Gaffron, "Studien zum koptischen Philippusevangelium," 216–17.

link the kiss with the bridal chamber, but the disparate nature of the *Gospel of Philip* text makes this connection difficult. Second, there is no other Valentinian text that relates a kiss with the bridal chamber, and although a kiss is often a part of modern wedding ceremonies, it is almost nonexistent in depictions of ancient weddings.⁴⁸ One exception is the apocryphal work *Joseph and Aseneth*. Although not a Valentinian text, it does bring together themes that are important in the *Gospel of Philip*: spiritual awakening, initiation, and marriage. Most significantly, *Joseph and Aseneth* specifically mentions the kiss in a ritual context of Aseneth's transformation and conversion, and the story culminates with a kiss as part of a marriage ceremony.⁴⁹

The "Mirrored Bridal Chamber"

Some writings mention a secret and sacred ordinance of the "mirrored bridal chamber" associated with "the Holy of Holies."⁵⁰

According to the *Gospel of Philip*, the separation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden resulted in two adverse consequences, both of which are rectified in the bridal chamber. The first consequence is paralleled in the Bible: it brought death into the world. "When Eve was still in Adam death did not exist. When she was separated from him death came into being" (68.22–26). Likewise, "If the woman had not separated from the man, she should not die with the man. His separation became the beginning of death" (70.9–12; cf. Genesis 3:19). If, however, "he enters again and attains his former self, death will be no more" (68.25–26). This reunification takes place in the bridal cham-

48. In her extensive discussion of marriage in the rituals of Greek religion, Aphroditia Avagianou makes no mention of a kiss in any of the rituals. *Sacred Marriage in the Rituals of Greek Religion* (New York: Lang, 1991). Nor does Michael L. Satlow in his discussion of ancient Jewish wedding rituals. He does, however, admit that, because of the paucity of material from the Second Temple period, his discussion concentrates on rabbinic sources. *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), xxii–xxiii.

49. See my discussion in Strathearn, "Valentinian Bridal Chamber," 212–15.

50. Donald Q. Cannon, Larry E. Dahl, and John W. Welch, "The Restoration of Major Doctrines through Joseph Smith: Priesthood, the Word of God, and the Temple," *Ensign*, February 1989, 12–13.

ber. “Therefore Christ came that he might correct again the separation that happened from the beginning [i.e., the division of Adam and Eve] and unite the two, and give life to those who died in the separation and unite them. But the woman is always united with her husband in the bridal chamber. Indeed those who are united in the bridal chamber will no longer be divided. Thus Eve separated from Adam because she was not united with him in the bridal chamber” (70.13–22).

The second adverse consequence of Adam and Eve’s separation was that it made their descendants vulnerable to the attacks of evil spirits. This scenario is based on the Valentinian belief that the Pleroma is balanced by the series of divinely paired male/female emanations mentioned above. Before Adam and Eve were separated, they represented the male/female emanations of the Pleroma, but when they separated, not only was death introduced but the separated beings became exposed. “The forms of evil spirit include male ones and female ones. The males are they that unite with the souls which inhabit a female form but the females are they which are mingled with those in a male form. . . . When the wanton women see a male sitting alone, they leap down on him and play with him and defile him. So also the lecherous men, when they see a beautiful woman sitting alone, they persuade her and compel her, wishing to defile her” (65.1–7, 12–19).⁵¹

The only way to counteract these attacks, according to the *Gospel of Philip*, is to “receive a male power and a female” (ⲫⲓ ⲛⲟⲩϥⲒⲐⲐⲛ ⲛⲉⲣⲟⲩⲩⲧ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲟⲩϥⲒⲓⲙⲉ).⁵² This power is described as “the bridegroom and the bride” (65.9–11). Williams argues that this power comes from an “actual social joining of man and woman” and understands that joining to be a “spiritual marriage.”⁵³ Yet in coming to this conclusion, he follows Isenberg’s translation that an individual must receive “a male power or a female power.”⁵⁴ The Coptic, however, reads ⲙⲛ (“and”) instead of Ⲏ (“or”).

51. For narrative accounts of humans being attacked by malignant spirits, see *Acts of Thomas* 42–43; 62–64.

52. Isenberg translates this phrase as “receive a male power or a female power” (“Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip,” 1:171).

53. Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 149.

54. Isenberg, “Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip,” 1:171.

Therefore I have chosen to translate the phrase as “receive a male power and a female.” Jean-Marie Sevrin is probably correct to interpret the power as coming from the combined androgynous power of a male *and* a female.⁵⁵ This reading not only makes better sense of the Coptic, it also fits better with the idea that the malevolent spirits have power because of the separation of male and female. It seems reasonable to assert that the power to overcome the separation would be a unified power.

The *Gospel of Philip* teaches that this unifying power is received in the *eikonikos* (εἰκονικός) bridal chamber (65.12). Isenberg translates this phrase as the “mirrored bridal chamber.”⁵⁶ I am persuaded here, however, that we should not imagine a bridal chamber with mirrors on opposite walls. Rather, as Williams has argued, it would be better translated as duplicate bridal chamber, which should be understood as a representative of a divine reality.⁵⁷ Williams’s interpretation is based on the frequent belief in antiquity that in many respects earth is merely a copy or image of divine reality. Plato taught that the earth must be “a copy of something” (*Timaeus* 28–29). One text from the Nag Hammadi library describes the creation of this world as being “after the pattern of the realms above, for by starting from the invisible world the visible world was invented” (*Hypostasis of the Archons* 87.8–11). In the Bible, we learn in a number of places that the tabernacle or the temple is a copy, usually of the heavenly temple (Exodus 25:9, 40; Hebrews 8:1–5; 9:23).

The power received in the *eikonikos* bridal chamber in our passage is described as a play on words, “if the image (εἰκων) and the angel are united with one another, neither can any [evil spirit] venture to go in to the man or the woman” (65.24–26).⁵⁸ Here the image refers to the mortal as an image of a divine double, sometimes described as an angel. Just as Adam and Eve were separated in the Garden of Eden,

55. Sevrin, “Les noces spirituelles,” 154 n. 36; see also de Catanzaro, “The Gospel According to Philip,” 48–49.

56. Isenberg, “Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip,” 1:171.

57. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism,”* 149, 295 n. 28.

58. Cf. *Gospel of Philip* 58.11–14 where images (εἰκων) are united (εὐνοῦν) with angels by those “who have joined (εὐνοῦν) the perfect light with the holy spirit.” See also *Gospel of Philip* 72.14 where *eikonikos* is used again and also *Apocryphon of John* 14.13–15.13.

Valentinians believed that when they came to earth they were also separated from their divine reality and thus became images. Irenaeus taught that when Valentinians “at last achieve perfection, [they] shall be given as brides to the angels of the Savior” (*Against Heresies* 1.7.5). Rather than being a marriage where a man and a woman are united, the Valentinian bridal chamber was a place where individuals were united with their divine self, their angel.

Conclusion

The Valentinian bridal chamber shares a number of interesting parallels with Latter-day Saint teachings about eternal marriage. The bridal chamber seems to be the culminating ritual in a series of rituals required for individuals to return to the Pleroma. This ritual, which re-creates the balance and harmony of the Pleroma, must be performed on earth. It is associated with the holy of holies in the temple, and it may or may not have been associated with a sacred kiss. But if we are to maintain a historical perspective of the Valentinian bridal chamber, these interesting parallels must also be understood in conjunction with the dissimilarities. Although certain passages in the *Gospel of Philip* use the language of a man and a woman being united in the bridal chamber, they must be understood in the context of the Valentinian theology of angels and images. The reunification that takes place in the bridal chamber is not the union of a husband and wife as we understand it, but the union of an individual with his or her angel, or divine alter ego. In addition, the so-called “mirrored bridal chamber” was not understood by the Valentinians to be a room with mirrors on either side to represent eternity. Rather it represented a re-creation of the heavenly bridal chamber, just as the ancient temples were understood to be a re-creation of the heavenly temple.

Gaye Strathearn is an assistant professor in the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University.

