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# STVDIA ANTIQVA

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A STUDENT JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY  
OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

FALL 2007  
VOLUME 5, NUMBER 2

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY  
PROVO, UTAH

STUDIA ANTIQUA  
A STUDENT JOURNAL FOR THE  
STUDY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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#### EDITOR'S PREFACE

As this issue of *Studia Antiqua* goes to press, a small handful of students are making final preparations for the Students of the Ancient Near East Symposium on Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical Literature, which will take place on Friday, December 7, at 9:00 AM in rooms 3211 and 3223 of the Wilkinson Student Center. Some of the presenters received ORCA grants to fund their research and others funded it on their own, but for each of them the symposium represents a unique and special opportunity to present their research in a professional atmosphere. Dr. Daniel C. Peterson, Dr. Gaye Strathearn, and Dr. Stephen D. Ricks will also be presenting at the conference.

This is the first issue of *Studia Antiqua* published under the auspices of the BYU Religious Studies Center. This has been an invaluable resource. Devan Jensen and Dr. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, with their cadre of editors, have contributed considerably to this issue. Without their expertise this issue would not have been possible. Kent P. Jackson began this semester as our faculty adviser, but his new position as Associate Dean of Religious Education prevented him from dedicating as much time to *Studia Antiqua* as he felt was necessary. As a result, Michael D. Rhodes has accepted the invitation to become our new faculty advisor. We look forward to the dynamic he will bring to our publication. Also new to the ranks is Dave Nielson, who replaces Justin Watkins as president of SANE. Justin is preparing to enter graduate school at the Catholic University, in Washington, D.C. Dave Nielson is a senior in the Ancient Near Eastern Studies major with a Greek/New Testament emphasis. An article of his can be found on page 95 of this issue. Dave also recently submitted a paper to the Society of Biblical Literature's regional meeting and won an award for best undergraduate paper. He and I will both be presenting papers at that meeting in Denver.

Readers may notice that our format has become somewhat malleable of late. We have been experimenting with different formats, but we feel the present issue represents our most productive blend of professionalism and clarity. The new logo on the cover is a stylized depiction of the Students of the Ancient Near East logo. The oil lamp is intended to symbolize one of the many aspirations of the study of the ancient world: illumination of the past. It is our hope that students of the ancient world will view *Studia Antiqua* as an opportunity for growth and maturation within their respective fields of study and as a forum for that illumination. It is with that in mind that we present the fall 2007 issue of *Studia Antiqua*. Enjoy.

Daniel O. McClellan  
Editor in Chief

# ARTICLES



# THE ISRAELITE ORIGINS OF THE MANDAEAN PEOPLE

RICHARD THOMAS

ON the banks of the Euphrates River exists a small community of faithful known as the Mandaeans. In their own language, derived from Aramaic, the word *mandayye*, from which they take their name, means “gnostic.”<sup>1</sup> The religious practices of these people, which dominate most aspects of their lives, are the last remaining traces of ancient gnosticism in the world today.<sup>2</sup> The origin of the Mandaeans is much debated, and it will be the focus of this paper. The Mandaeans claim that their ancestors came from Judea and originally practiced complex baptismal ordinances, the focal point of their religion, on the Jordan River. They claim that soon after the start of the Common Era, they were persecuted by the Jews and left Palestine, in a mass exodus of around 60,000 individuals, to eventually settle on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. There they have stayed, according to their oral tradition and their written record, for nearly two millennia.

They are relatively few in number (commonly estimated to be less than 15,000<sup>3</sup>), and they do not seem to have played a very important role in the shaping of world history. However, understanding the origin of this group can lead to a better understanding of the religious makeup and practices of Judea at the dawn of Christianity. In the course of this paper, I will show that there is evidence which links the origin of Mandaism very closely to Judea and the pre-Christian sectarian, or non-Jewish, sects centered on the Jordan River which preserved the heritage of the preexilic Israelite temple cult. Though I will not be able to conclusively show this to be the case, I believe that the evidence which I will present will show the above stated thesis to be a strong possibility.

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RICHARD THOMAS graduated from BYU in April 2006 with a degree in history. He is studying Greek and Hebrew and is planning to continue biblical studies in graduate school.

1. Kurt Rudolph, *Mandaism* (Lieden: Brill, 1978), 29.

2. Rudolph, *Mandaism*, 1. This is considered a fact among all scholars of Mandaism.

3. Rudolph, *Mandaism*, 1.



In order to accomplish this, first I will cover the Mandaeans in general, discussing aspects of their religion, ordinances, record, and tradition. Then I will show how they are Gnostic in origin. I will examine early Christianity, Judaism, and heterodox sectarian Judaism, pointing out aspects of these religions that have parallels in Mandaeism. I will also identify the Nasarenes, the group from which the Mandaeans most probably originated. In order to show the beliefs of these early Mandaeans, I will examine John the Baptist and his group, which likely are the same group as the Nasarenes. Lastly, I will show how aspects of this group tie back into the pre-exilic Israelite temple cult beliefs, and show the possibility that some of the traditions of preexilic Israel were preserved by the Nasarenes.

### The Mandaeans

I have selected to review aspects of Mandaeism which are important both for understanding the religion and for the framework of this paper. It is important to understand their ritual, beliefs, and relationship to other traditions which originated in Judea in order to understand the origins of Mandaeism. Fundamentally, Mandaeans are Gnostics. They claim to have a secret knowledge which makes it possible for their souls, after death, to return to the “Worlds of Light” from whence they came. Their gnosis is manifest in a complex series of sayings, ordinances, and rituals which are absolutely necessary for salvation. They have multiple books of scripture which gave them protection as “People of the Book” under Arab rule.<sup>4</sup> Primary among these books is the *Ginza*, which includes creation myths, underworld journeys, the story of Noah, words of wisdom from John the Baptist, doctrinal poetry, and Old Testament history with a Mandaean twist. According to Mandaean scholar J. Buckley, “The *Ginza* testifies of a fully developed Mandaean Gnosticism.”<sup>5</sup> Other important works of literature include the *Haran Gawaita*, the *Book of John*, the *Liturgies*, and other works.<sup>6</sup> Though the literature preserves the doctrines, beliefs, practices, and traditions of the Mandaeans, it exists in a very confused state. Consequently, there has traditionally been reluctance among scholars to use this literature as a historical source. Recently, however, scholars have examined the texts not for specific historical facts but for traditions which may be based in history.

As previously stated, the Mandaeans have a highly developed Gnostic belief system marked by a strict concept of dualism between the world of

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4. Sinasi Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life: The Origins and Early History of Mandaeans and Their Relation to the Sabians of the Qur'an and to the Harranians* (England: Oxford University Press, 1994), 70, quoting *Ginza Right*, 15.

5. Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Mandaeans: Ancient Texts and Modern People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

6. Buckley, *The Mandaeans*, 13–15.

light and the world of dark.<sup>7</sup> Their Gnosticism definitely contains eastern influences but is remarkably similar to the Valentinian Gnosticism described by Irenaeus.<sup>8</sup> Their supreme being, the “Great Life,” exists in a “Light World” and is surrounded by numerous light beings which emanate from him in a manner that shows a gradual fall from the Great Life to the earthly world.<sup>9</sup> The world was created by the Demiurge, who is the son of Ruha, the female fallen spirit and adversary of light.<sup>10</sup> Pthil created the human body, but it remained motionless until the preexistent soul of Adam was brought from the Light World by an angelic figure called an *uthra* and inhabited the body, thus creating human life.<sup>11</sup> All of these concepts share remarkable similarities with beliefs held in classical Gnosticism.

In addition to this Gnostic basis, the Mandaeans revere John the Baptist as one of their most important prophets and claim that he was a Mandaean, along with the Old Testament prophets Adam, Abel, Seth, and Enoch. However, they consider Jesus Christ a deceiver. They are decidedly anti-Christian and anti-Jewish, though they conceptualize their origins as stemming from the same tradition as these two religions.<sup>12</sup> They believe in the deliverance of the soul at a cosmological day of judgment. Upon death they believe that the soul ascends to the Light World and to the presence of the “Great Life.” The ordinances, signing names which they receive, as well as the good deeds of the Mandaean, are requisite to get past the watch-houses of the demons as their souls make the journey through the cosmos.<sup>13</sup> This knowledge is provided to Mandaean initiates through a series of ordinances by their established priesthood.

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7. Rudolph, *Mandaicism*, 13.

8. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1, in *The Early Church Fathers* (Weston, NY: Dajul Enterprises, 2000–2001). Irenaeus describes Valentinian Gnosticism as a sect claiming to be Christians which believes in an extremely complex heavenly structure consisting of a great, unknowable god from which many lower gods, or Aeons, emanate from. These aeons exist in a state known as the Pleroma. They believe that the earth and all things in the material universe was created by the Demiurge, the son of the fallen aeon, Sophia (Wisdom). Sophia was restored, and Christ and the Holy Spirit were created to retrieve the fallen. According to Irenaeus, the Gnostics believe “the consummation of all things will take place when all that is spiritual has been formed and perfected by Gnosis (knowledge); and by this they mean spiritual men who have attained to the perfect knowledge of God, and been initiated into these mysteries by Achamoth. And they represent themselves to be these persons” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.6.1). This secret Gnosis is what makes it possible for human beings with corrupted physical bodies to return to the Pleroma.

9. Rudolph, *Mandaicism*, 13.

10. Buckley, *The Mandaean*, 40–48. Though she is often seen as the leader of the forces of darkness, Ruha is not always construed as evil. A very positive side of her exists, which Buckley brings to light. She is compared to the Gnostic Sophia.

11. Rudolph, *Mandaicism*, 14.

12. Rudolph, *Mandaicism*, 14.

13. Rudolph, *Mandaicism*, 10–11.

The most important ordinances are the baptism, or *masbuta*, and the mass of the souls, or *masiqta*.<sup>14</sup> When any ordinance is preformed, both the priest and the initiate are dressed in special white garments similar to those worn by the Levite priests of Judaism.<sup>15</sup> These baptisms takes place every Sunday in “living” (flowing) waters, and are preformed by the priest.<sup>16</sup> The ordinance includes prayers, triple self-immersion, triple immersion by the priest, triple signing of the forehead with water, triple drinking of water, investiture with a myrtle-wreath, blessing by the priest laying his right hand on the head of the initiate, prayers, hymns, and formulas. Then, on the river bank, the second part of the initiation includes anointing of the forehead with sesame oil, a holy meal with pita and water, and a sealing against demons by a recitation of the “sealing prayers” over the head of the initiate. Lastly, a ceremonial handclasp called “giving *kusta*,” or “truth,” is given.<sup>17</sup> The purpose of the baptism is to make contact with the healing powers of the world of light and to purify believers from ritual and moral sins. Without it, there is no hope of ascending to the Great Life.

The mass of the soul prepares the soul for its ascent to the Light World. It also includes triple immersion in the water, anointing, dressing in the sacred white ritual dress, and investing with a myrtle-wreath and a flask of oil. After the death of a Mandaean, ritual eating for the dead takes place, which provides the dead with energy for his or her divine ascent.<sup>18</sup> If the Mandaean dies unclean, a special ceremony called the “bestowal of the garments” can be performed by a living person standing as proxy for the dead person which prepares the soul for ascent.<sup>19</sup> The marriage rite is also very important. It includes the baptism of the bride and groom, a sacred meal, and a ceremony which takes place in a sacred hut which allows the couples’ ancestors to “take part in rites which mean the continuance of their race and to bless the young people.”<sup>20</sup>

### Theories on Origin

The rites and beliefs here described seem to have some parallels in both ancient Mesopotamia as well as in Judea. For this reason, the discovery of the

14. Rudolph, *Mandaeism*, 8.

15. E. S. Drower, *The Mandaean of Iran and Iraq: Their Cults, Customs, Magic Legends, and Folklore*, 2nd ed. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002), 32. These robes consist of a shirt (*ksuya*), a small patch piece stitched to the outer side of the right breast of the shirt (*dasha*), drawers (*sharawala*), and a stole and belt (or girdle). Also, a turban (*burzinqa*) is worn, which wraps around the head three times, with the end hanging over the left shoulder. Priests wear a crown of silk, and a gold ring on the right little finger, and hold a staff.

16. Buckley, *The Mandaean*, 80.

17. Rudolph, *Mandaeism*, 8–10.

18. Rudolph, *Mandaeism*, 10.

19. Rudolph, *Mandaeism*, 11.

20. Rudolph, *Mandaeism*, 12.

Mandaean place of origin is difficult to determine. This is a subject that has traditionally been highly disputed among Mandaean scholars. One school of thought purports that the Mandaeans developed in Mesopotamia on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This school tends to ignore Mandaism's own claims that their ancestors fled from the Jordan River Valley. Edmondo Lupieri, a proponent of this theory claims:

From the point of view of a comparative analysis it means also that Mandaeanism has aligned itself with those religions that allocate a flight to their beginnings, following upon a persecution. In backgrounds linked to Judaism, this flight or original migration is characterized by a flight from Jerusalem before its destruction . . . . The early Christian story of the flight to Pella, the Mormon story of an exodus to America, and the modern Mandaean one of the migration to Mesopotamia are three examples of etiological legends that are useful for our understanding of the historical situation of the religious community of the charismatic head that produced them, but tell us nothing of the actual ancient history to which they refer.<sup>21</sup>

The claim is that there are multiple religions that borrow ideas from Judaism, including Christianity, Mormonism, and Mandaism. Each of these various religions, in the opinion of Lupieri, has fabricated their origin stories as a justification for their ideological parallels with Judaism and their thematic ties to the Hebrew Bible.

Lupieri and those of his persuasion cite as evidence the fact that Mandaism has similarities with Zoroastrianism, Islam, and ancient Babylonian magic. Such similarities include a strict dualism, conceptualization of magic and astrology, ritual meals, meals for the dead, cosmology, and loan words from the languages of Mesopotamia (including more than 80 from Akkadian).<sup>22</sup> The similarities to these Near Eastern religions are far less significant and numerous than similarities with Judean groups. They can be accounted for by the many centuries that the Mandaeans have spent living among the peoples of that region. As with any other religion, having lived as a minority among other dominant religions, it is inevitable that they would have adopted some words, ideas, and practices from them. It would be unreasonable to assume that coexistence with these religions for so many centuries would not result in significant and multiple exchanges and adoptions of ideas. But this assumption says nothing of the origin of the community.

Though this school of thought points out that the Mandaean conceptualization of cosmology, dualism, and astrology is similar to their Persian counterparts, they are not able to show that these similarities strictly point to

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21. Edmondo Lupieri, *The Mandaeans: The Last Gnostics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 160.

22. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 74–82.

a Mesopotamian origin. Similar concepts are to be found in Valentinian Gnosticism and in Jewish mystical circles. The Jewish mystical system of Kabbalah, for example, also claims an ancient Judean origin and is very heavily reliant on astrology and magic.<sup>23</sup> Edwin Yamauchi claims a Babylonian origin for Mandaeans because their ethical approach to sexual relations seems to be quite different from what we know about the Gnostics of the Early Common Era.<sup>24</sup> Though this is true, it is not the case when comparing Mandaean ethics with Jewish, Christian, and Israelite ethical systems.

Another downfall of this explanation on Mandaean origins is their inability to provide a solid explanation for the prominence of Israelite characters, place names, and themes in Mandaean literature and mythology. In his study, Lupieri thoroughly exhausts the Mandaean scriptures, pointing out all the numerous occasions that they refer to Jerusalem, John the Baptist, the Jordan, Mary, and other biblical characters, and explains them away by claiming:

The founders of hostile or enemy religions, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, are turned into demons. Their predecessors, from Adam to Shem in the Old Testament and John and his parents in the New, are transformed into Mandaean figures. In this way Judaism and Christianity can be considered a deviation from a previous Mandaean reality.<sup>25</sup>

A similar phenomenon occurred when the Hellenistic concept of “daimon” was changed dramatically into the Christian “demon” in the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity. True though this may be, it does not answer the question of why the Christian and Jewish founders are demonized instead of Zoroastrian, Persian, and Islamic founders and gods, if the Mandaeans originated in Persia and not Judea. There were an abundance of Jews in Babylon at the time of the supposed development of Mandaeism as a religion. Why, then, were the Babylonian Jews not demonized, instead of their ancestors at Jerusalem? Why is the link made with Israel, if there was not one to begin with? The theory of a Babylonian origin was, at one time, the dominant theory, but it has lost adherents in recent years due the vast amount of evidence for a Judean origin.

The second school of thought more effectually demonstrates that the Mandaeans came originally from Judea and the Jordan basin, as the Mandaeans themselves assert.<sup>26</sup> Many scholars today subscribe to this theory, not only because it is the tradition of the Mandaeans, but because of the vast

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23. For further discussion of Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism, see David A. Cooper, *God is a Verb: Kabbalah and the Practice of Mystical Judaism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997).

24. Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Gnostic Ethics and Mandaean Origins* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2004), 35–42.

25. Lupieri, *The Mandaeans*, 164.

26. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 69–70.

Jewish, Christian, and Gnostic elements which are to be found, to some extent, in Mandaism. Gunduz sums this argument up by observing that,

if we reconstruct the history of migration of the Mandaeans and their settlement in the East, it is quite probable that the Mandaeans migrated under Parthian protection from Palestine to the district of Adiabene which they called . . . the Median Mountains in the first century A.D. Presumably because of the strong Jewish influence at Adiabene they continued their migration until they reached southern Mesopotamia, where they established their community.<sup>27</sup>

This is the point of view of which I am largely in favor and which I wish to support. In order to solidify this point, it is necessary to examine parallels between various Judean sects and Mandaism. This makes a strong case for a Judean origin because the similarities between them are so numerous and so specific.

Strong anti-Jewish feelings among the Mandaeans point to close contact between the two early in the development of the religion. The Mandaeans themselves claim that they were originally the same people as the Jews,<sup>28</sup> but the Jews were corrupt and began to practice evil rituals such as circumcision.<sup>29</sup> Though they lay out many reasons, the overriding reason for the Mandaean hatred for the Jews is a strong tradition that the Jews persecuted their ancestors in Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup> They portrayed Adonai, the Jewish God, as a false god associated with the worship of the sun. But a careful reading of their texts reveals that they once worshipped Adonai along with the Jews. Not until the time of Christ did Adonai lose his place as the Mandaean God.<sup>31</sup>

Though it is diametrically opposed to Judaism, Mandaism shares many traits with it. In addition to revering many biblical figures, including Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Eve, Noah, and Shem, it has traditions regarding Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Satan, Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael. Most of these names appear in the very early Mandaean literature.<sup>32</sup> In addition to these figures, it refers to biblical events, including the crossing of the Red Sea and the Great Flood. Mandaeans also embrace much of the same legal terminology and ethics as their Jewish counterparts.<sup>33</sup> One of the most important similarities between the two is their ritual practices. Parallels exist between the ordination ritual of the Mandaean and the Jewish priests, and in their foot washing, enthronement, laying on of hands, and ritual kissing.<sup>34</sup>

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27. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 124.

28. Buckley, *The Mandaeans*, 49.

29. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 84; see also *Ginza*, 25.

30. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 106.

31. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 94; see also *Haran Gawaita*, 3.

32. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 86–92.

33. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 95–97.

34. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 124.

The similarities with Judaism are alone not enough to explicitly connect Mandaeism with a western origin. Its similarities with Christianity are also striking, however, and lend much to help strengthen this point of view. Much like the Jews, the Mandaeans express a longstanding hatred for Christianity that also seems to stem back to early contact between the two religions. In Mandaean literature, Christ was born a Mandaean but rejected his heritage. He became, instead, a deceiver and a false Messiah who changed the teachings of John and baptism in the Jordan.<sup>35</sup> His followers are seen in the same light as he is. Though they view Christ in this negative light, the Mandaeans do recognize a divine being that came from the Light World to Jerusalem during the reign of Pilate performing miracles and bringing a salvatory knowledge to many. The *Ginza* records:

On the contrary, Enos (Anos)-Uthra comes and proceeds to Jerusalem, clothed as with a garment in water-clouds. . . . He emerges and comes during the years of Pilate, king of the world. Enos-Uthra comes into the world with the powers of the sublime King of Light. He heals the sick and opens (the eyes of) the blind, makes the lepers clean, raises the crippled and the lame so that they can move, he makes the deaf and dumb to speak and gives life to the dead. He gains believers among the Jews and shows them that there is death and life, darkness and light, error and truth. He leads the Jews forth in the name of the sublime King of Light. 360 prophets go forth from the place Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup>

It is possible that this reference to Anos-Uthra is a preservation of an early memory of Jesus before the advent of Christianity.

No matter what the opinion of Christ is among the Mandaeans, his mother is not subject to such criticism. It is obvious from Mandaean references to Mary and Elizabeth that the Mandaeans had knowledge of the relationship between the two women, possibly due to familiarity to the Gospel of Luke which originated in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>37</sup> Along with Christians, the Mandaeans have a rich tradition of the veneration of Mary (Miriai).<sup>38</sup> As previously mentioned, John the Baptist is also revered as the special prophet of Mandaeism. His veneration is so much a part of their religion that one of their key books of scripture is the *Book of John*. When Portuguese missionaries discovered the Mandaeans in the seventeenth century, they incorrectly dubbed them “the Christians of St. John.”<sup>39</sup> Ordinances are similar between the two,

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35. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 104; see also *Ginza*, 51.

36. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 106.

37. Buckley, *The Mandaeans*, 49.

38. Buckley, *The Mandaeans*, 50–56. Miriai is identified as the mother of Jesus the false Messiah, but she has traits of both the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. She is seen as a convert to Mandaeism from Judaism and is even portrayed as a priestess at certain points. Eventually she obtains an archangel-like role as a light being in the world of light.

39. Rudolph, *Mandaeism*, 1.

including the washing of the feet and baptism. Terms associated with baptism are the same, including, *anointing*, *consecrating of water*,<sup>40</sup> *descending*, *triple immersion*, and *unction*.<sup>41</sup> Such connections are not enough to tie Mandaism with the origins of Christianity. However, they do suggest that the two religions may have stemmed from the same tradition.

The baptism of the Mandaeans has other elements which, though not specifically Christian or Jewish, help trace them back to the Near East. In the Mandaean tradition, all baptismal waters are considered “Jordans” (*yardne*), and they are all seen as physical descendants of the Jordan which exists in the Light World.<sup>42</sup> The Jordan tradition appears in the very oldest Mandaean texts. Another site which is referred to by Mandaean text and tradition is Hauran, the land on the eastern side of the River Jordan in Syria. Like the term Jordan, Hauran is referred to in the most ancient Mandaean engravings and refers to a celestial homeland from which the living water flows.<sup>43</sup> The references to Hauran seem to indicate that the early Mandaeans saw Hauran as a homeland, and its name began to be used in referring to their celestial home from which, like Hauran, they were separated. The Mandaean language is based on Aramaic,<sup>44</sup> which was spoken both in Babylon and in the west, but specific terms seem to be derived from the west. Mandaean baptismal terms for immersion, descent, signation, drinking of the water, oil, myrtle wreath, and the laying on of the hand are all of western origin, as are the names of the guardians of baptism, Silmai and Nidbai.<sup>45</sup>

Probably the most important connection to the Judea, however, is the belief system of the Mandaeans. As was earlier stated, the Mandaean belief system is very similar to Valentinian Gnosticism. This Gnosticism appears very early in the history of Christianity and likely developed in Judea as part of early Christianity. Gnosticism, as with Mandaism, is firmly rooted in the west, and the parallels which they share suggest that both originated in the west, possibly from the same tradition. As Valentinian Gnosticism was a branch of Christianity, it is highly likely that they all share a common ancestry from Judea.

One important Judean movement not yet discussed is the baptist sects which existed in Judea from long before the Christian era to two or three centuries after. Together these believers created a baptist movement which was very influential in and around the regions of the Jordan.<sup>46</sup> Though very little

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40. Rudolph, *Mandaism*, 10.

41. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 115–16.

42. Rudolph, *Mandaism*, 8.

43. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 113; see also the *Book of John*, 287.

44. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq*, 14.

45. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 115. Nidbai and Silmai are derived from the Phoenician deities *ndbk* and *slmn*.

46. Charles H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1964), 33.



information has survived about these sects, the small bits that have survived show that they share significant traits with Mandaism which are worth pointing out. In addition, each group shares things in common with other sects, making it impossible, based on the surviving evidence alone, to correctly identify the names and actions of each of these sects. The same group may have been referred to by different names, and each group may have been part of a larger religious whole.

The largest and most encompassing group of baptists, as far as we know, was the Essenes. Josephus described them as another group of Jews along with the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Essenes shared common meals and lived a simple, pious life. He says, "They assemble themselves together . . . into one place; and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water." He also describes the ritual meal of bread and wine that was blessed by their own priests.<sup>47</sup> They were a populous group that increased their number by adopting other men's children.<sup>48</sup> Some practiced marriage and had children as well. They had a belief that the body was corruptible, but the soul was immortal. They rejected the priesthood of the temple as corrupt. The people of Qumran were likely an Essene group which removed itself from Jerusalem into the desert to keep their people away from the corrupt society and priesthood of the Jews. The Essenes parallel the Mandaeans in many ways. Such parallels are persuasive evidence pointing towards a Judean origin for Mandaism.

The early church writer Epiphanius mentions the Masobothians and the Hemerobaptists. Besides the fact that they were part of the baptist movement, very little can be said for sure about them. It is likely, however, that at least the Hemerobaptists were very similar to the group of John the Baptist, as the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* refer to him as "one John, a hemerobaptist who was also . . . the forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>49</sup> This idea shows that the baptist sects were very similar to one another. If they were distinguishable at all, they certainly were not by outsiders.

In light of the tie to Mandaism, the most important of these sects for this study is that of the Nasarenes. Information regarding them was preserved by Epiphanius in his *Panarion*. He takes care to note that the heterodox Jewish group of Nasarenes were different than the Christian group of Nazorenes, whom he also describes.<sup>50</sup> He states that they lived primarily on the east side of the Jordan, that they practiced circumcision, observed the Sabbath and the Jewish feasts, honored the patriarchs, but rejected the law of Moses (the Pentateuch).

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47. Flavius Josephus, *Jewish War*, in *The New Complete Works of Flavius Josephus* (trans. William Whiston; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999) 2.8.5.

48. Josephus, *War* 2.8.5.

49. Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 35.

50. Epiphanius, *The Panarion*, 29.1–9.

They were particularly against the sacrifices and were vegetarians. Also, they had notions of “fate” and “astrology,”<sup>51</sup> on which he does not elaborate. He implies that they were a large group of baptists.<sup>52</sup> Epiphanius wrote more than three centuries after the Nasarenes of the pre-Christian era, thus the actual make up of these Nasarenes at that time is unknown.<sup>53</sup> All that can be said for sure, is that there existed a baptist group centered on the Jordan who rejected the Law of Moses and called themselves Nasarenes.

The existence of the Nasarenes is significant, because the Mandaean version of that term, Nasoraean, is used often in the most ancient Mandaean literature. Gunduz points out that the term Nasoraean appears in two kinds of usage:

Firstly, it is one of the earliest self-designations of the Mandaeans. We generally see this term referring to the Mandaeans in the texts concerning their history, like Haran Gawaita. Secondly the term is used for a certain group of Mandaeans, those who possess secret knowledge and rites. . . . In the texts, not only historical persons such as John the Baptist, but also heavenly beings such as Hibil, Sital and Anos (Enos-Uthra), who symbolize the faith of the Mandaeans are called the Nasoraean.<sup>54</sup>

This term is deeply connected to the Madaean self-recognition but also in their conceptualization of their relationship with the Light World. Thus far in the paper, multiple parallels have been examined, the traditions of the Mandaeans have been explained, loan words and customs have been identified. From all of this evidence, it is logical to infer that a pre-Christian Judean origin of the early Mandaeans is very likely. It seems far too much of a coincidence that both the early Mandaeans (calling themselves Nasoraean), and the Nasarenes, would have existed simultaneously in the Jordan basin, had strong conflicts with the Jewish religion, and, as part of the wider baptist movement, not have been the same group.

This means, then, that the proto-Mandaeans must have at least in part consisted of the Nasarenes of Epiphanius. Mandaean scholars of this century, including Drower, Macuch, Buckley, and Gunduz, have come to this conclusion. Gunduz summarizes Macuch’s German hypothesis that “the movement of separation from official Judaism in the pre-Christian period described by Epiphanius developed in two forms. One group migrated to the

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51. Epiphanius, *The Panarion* 18.1.1–3.

52. “I shall next undertake to describe the sect after the Hermerobaptists, called the Nasarenes. They . . . scarcely had any beliefs beyond those of the Jewish sects I have mentioned” (Epiphanius, *The Panarion* 18.1.1.).

53. Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 35. It is obvious from Epiphanius’ scanty coverage of the Nasarenes and the Hermerobaptists that he knows comparatively little about them, and that he is just reflecting what he has heard. Besides identifying their existence, he can hardly be considered a primary source.

54. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 109.

East where they were influenced by Babylonian, Iranian and Syrian Christian traditions. These are the later Mandaeans. The other group stayed in Palestine and later was absorbed into Jewish-Christianity.”<sup>55</sup>

This theory explains the Mandaean reverence of both the Jordan and Hauran, their animosity towards Judaism, their belief that they truly are God’s chosen people, the origins of their baptismal ritual, and possibly their reverence for John the Baptist. It also adds much to understanding why the Mandaeans have for so long been opposed to Christianity.

If the Nasarenes were at all connected with the Jewish-Christian Nazorenes, there would have been animosity toward that group of Christianity, which they would have seen as heretical and apostate, which is manifest today in the Mandaean disdain for Christianity. I concur with Macuch’s conclusion on all but one account. The Nasarenes, rather than being a branch of Judaism, existed alongside it as a separate tradition, preserving remnants of the Israelite temple cult. To solidify this point, it is necessary to understand the role of John the Baptist’s followers. With a clear picture of John and his followers, his ties with Mandaism can clearly be seen.

### John the Baptist

Comparatively little is known about John the Baptist, but his influence was great both on Christians and Mandaeans. According to both traditions, John was born of pure priestly descent; that is, his father, Zecharias, was a temple priest, and his mother, Elizabeth, was a “daughter of Aaron.”<sup>56</sup> A recent theory about John’s connections to the Essenes at Qumran has taken hold, and is convincingly conveyed by Fitzmeyer.<sup>57</sup> The evidence is that John was orphaned at a young age and that he “grew . . . in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.”<sup>58</sup> As previously stated, it was the practice of the Essenes, including those at Qumran, to adopt other men’s children, “while yet pliable and docile . . . and mold them according to their ways.”<sup>59</sup> This is likely the case with John, in that he was orphaned and raised in the wilderness.<sup>60</sup> It would be reasonable to assume that if he was not raised at Qumran, then he was raised by another Essene or baptist group. His ministry shares with the Essenes beliefs about baptism, asceticism, anti-Jewish sentiments, desire for piety and righteous

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55. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, III.

56. Luke 1:14.

57. Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 18–21.

58. Luke 1:80.

59. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.8.2.

60. In the Community Rule, the reason for the Qumran community’s desert existence is outlined. It says, “go into the desert to prepare there the way for HIM, as it is written, ‘Make ready in the desert the way of (Yahweh); make straight in the wilderness a path for our God’”

living, and just acts toward others. Because his ministry was part of the larger baptist movement, he likely at least had contact with, and was influenced to some extent by, Qumran, the Essenes, and the Nasarenes.

John attracted many people to him. The Gospel of Matthew records the tradition, "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan."<sup>61</sup> He taught the necessity of confession<sup>62</sup> and repentance of sin, a baptism by immersion as a physical token of this inner cleansing, prayer, fasting,<sup>63</sup> expectation of a coming messiah who would proceed an eschatological day of judgment,<sup>64</sup> upright living, justness, and piety toward God.<sup>65</sup> All these principles are espoused by Mandaeans, and similar parallels can be found in the temple cult. Among other people, some, if not all, of Christ's twelve Apostles came from the ranks of John's disciples.<sup>66</sup> This may have been seen as a requirement of apostleship to the very earliest Christians.<sup>67</sup> Such an affinity for John's teachings shows a close relationship between the teachings embraced by Jesus and by John, again suggesting the common roots of Christianity and Mandaeism. After Jesus began ministering and baptizing in Jordan following his baptism by John, John and his disciples began preaching and baptizing in Samaria.<sup>68</sup>

After John's death, his group continued to grow. John's followers were widely spread and could be found as far as Alexandria<sup>69</sup> and Ephesus.<sup>70</sup> Many of the group apparently converted to Christianity, but there is evidence to show that the rest began to consider John as the Messiah and greater than Jesus. The *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* and the *Homilies*, thought to

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(1QS 8). This is the same purpose of John's ministry, as recorded in all four gospels. Other passages in the *Rule of the Community* include discussion about the ritual washing of the body as a way to enter the covenant (1QS 5.13–14), as well as looking forward to God's purging the wicked with the spirit of truth (1QS 4.20–21). Also, ancient tradition claims that John's ministry happened along the Jordan at a point that was within walking distance from Qumran.

61. Matt 3:5.

62. Mark 1:5.

63. Luke 5:33.

64. Matt 11:3.

65. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.5.2.

66. Acts 1:21–22. This was a requirement for apostleship in the early Christian church.

67. Acts 1:21–22. The text of Acts states, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." In choosing a new apostle, Luke states that the candidate must have been with the apostles from the Baptism of John.

68. Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 163–64. Scobie shows conclusively that the mysterious "Aenon near Salim" mentioned in John 3:21 is, in fact, located in the region of Samaria. This notion is strengthened by the later association of Simon and Dositheus, both famous Samaritans, with John's sect.

69. Acts 18:24–25. Apollos, a Hellenistic Jew from Alexandria, was baptized by John.

70. Acts 19:3.

have come from Syria in the early third century C.E., record this tradition. In *Recognitions*, it says, “And, behold, one of the disciples of John asserted that John was the Christ, and not Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus Himself declared that John was greater than all men and all prophets. ‘If, then, said he, he be greater than all, he must be held to be greater than Moses, and than Jesus himself. But if he be the greatest of all, then must he be the Christ.’”<sup>71</sup> Though the events of the Pseudo-Clementine literature are considered fictitious by most, it is likely that they preserve concepts that were believed by many early Jewish Christians.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, *Homilies* records that Simon Magus, a Samaritan heretic associated with magic and proto-Gnosticism, was part of, and for a time led, John’s group.<sup>73</sup> This claim is important, because it helps us to conceptualize the some of the beliefs of John’s group which did not find their way into the New Testament. Simon Magus was widely recognized by the early Christians as the father of all heresies. He is also popularly referred to as the first Gnostic.<sup>74</sup> Though this is a speculative claim, Haar makes an in depth study of it and concludes:

There are sufficient grounds to answer a tentative “yes” to him being a pre-Gnostic in the terms of the definition. . . . From the viewpoint of ancient Christian writers there are clear grounds to conclude that Simon was considered a heretic and the author of all heresies. Further, that he practiced ancient magic, was influenced by Greek philosophy, and entertained nascent forms of Gnostic cosmology and anthropology. . . . A self-proclaimed expert on divine things, Simon would not have rejected the notion of being a “Gnostic.”<sup>75</sup>

It is possible that, whether embodied by Simon or symbolized by him, the reference to Simon in the Clementine literature is nothing more than the memory that gnostic concepts, present in both Mandaism and the temple cult, were part of John’s group, as Simon was a symbol of magic practices and proto-gnostic concepts. Messianism was very common in most sects through the region of Judea at that time. Because of the prevalent expectation of a heavenly messianic figure, his followers concluded that John was greater than Christ and a fulfillment of this expectation. This belief is very similar to John’s portrayal in Mandaean literature. They understand John as the leader of the pre-Christian Mandaeans. He believed all the things which the New

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71. *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 1.60 (Weston, NY: Dajul Enterprises, 2000-2001). Part of the reason that they may have seen John as the Messiah is because of the Samaritan belief in Taheb, a Moses-like prophet/messiah figure for whom they awaited. See Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 175.

72. Scobie, *John the Baptist*, 190–92.

73. *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 2.8.

74. Steven Haar, *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 1.

75. Haar, *Simon Magus*, 306–07.

Testament writers recorded of him, as well as espousing the gnostic ideas that Pseudo-Clement ascribes to him.

Among other Gnostic concepts, the Mandaean *Book of John* presents a John who taught about ascent through the realms into the Light World and the presence of the Great One.<sup>76</sup> Also, he taught about a dualism between the King of Light and the “King of Darkness.”<sup>77</sup> He taught that the King of Light had many children, lower deities and light-beings which came (emanated) from him originally.<sup>78</sup> This John was associated with a complex system of rituals, ordinances and knowledge which allowed men, upon their deaths, to ascend through the spheres and return to the King of Light. I have established that John’s group was associated, by the late Christian writers, with Gnosticism and un-orthodox beliefs. The character of John the Baptist in Mandaean literature validates this claim well. They also claim that John the Baptist was a Nasorean, who stayed true to the faith. Thus, according to the Mandaeans, John’s group would also be Nasoreans.

Scholarship recognizes that the beginnings of Mandaeism in Judea and the beginnings of Gnosticism are tied together. Buckley states, “Given Mandaeism’s affinities with other forms of Gnosticism, one might be able to combine research from the earliest data and strata of Mandaeism with those of other Gnostic sources. This would be crucial for the aim of obtaining a clearer historical picture of Gnosticism’s beginnings.”<sup>79</sup> Likewise, Rudolph states, “We may in fact conclude that there is an original connection between an early cultic community of Jewish heretics and Gnosticism.”<sup>80</sup> It is logical from the evidence presented thus far to accept that the early Mandaeans (proto-Gnostics) were to be found primarily in Judea. However, there is not a strong basis in Orthodox Judaism for many of the Gnostic beliefs here discussed which the Mandaeans ascribe to. In fact, many of their beliefs are diametrically opposed to Judaism of the Pre-Christian era. Such beliefs can, however, be found in the pre-exilic Israelite temple cult.

### The Preexilic Israelite Temple Cult

Recent scholarship points to the fact that the Israelite religion which is described in the Old Testament is vastly different than the Israelite religion of history. Margaret Barker presents the argument, and supports it well, that there was an ancient temple cult practiced by the preexilic Israelites, which was suppressed by the reforms of King Josiah and his scribes. The reforms focused

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76. G.R.S. Mead, *The Gnostic Baptizer: Selections from the Mandaean John-Book* (London: John M. Watkins, 1924), 43.

77. Mead, *The Gnostic Baptizer*, 89.

78. Mead, *The Gnostic Baptizer*, 89.

79. Buckley, *The Mandaeans*, 3–4.

80. Rudolph, *Mandaeism*, 16.

the attention of the Israelites on the law rather than on God or the temple. Josiah's reforms were solidified and followed up by Ezra and his scribes after the return of the Jews from Babylon. In making these reforms, they tried to erase all traces of the temple cult among the Israelites. Anything reminiscent of polytheism, multiple heavenly realms, a Wisdom tradition, secret saving knowledge, and a higher priesthood espousing multiple saving ordinances was done away with. Barker studies this cult by examining nonbiblical, nonorthodox records from that era, including the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch*, which was seen as heretical by Jews but embraced by some Christians. She also examines the writings of Philo, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Library, and the Old and New Testaments for still-extant traces of this religion. Though some of the elements were transferred to Orthodox Judaism, most were suppressed and ultimately lost, though their influence can sometimes still be seen.

Barker's main thesis is that remnants of the temple cult survived through the beginning of the Christian era, and served as the basis of Christianity and the backdrop for Christ's ministry. She also asserts that the roots of Gnosticism are to be found in the remnants of the temple cult.<sup>81</sup> Barker makes strong comparisons between the temple cult and Gnosticism in regards to the conceptualization of the Great God, the Great Angel, and fallen angelic deities.<sup>82</sup> She describes what to look for when searching for remnants of the temple cult:

We should expect to find expression of the anger felt by worshippers of Yahweh who had been excluded by the purists of . . . those who were declaring that Yahweh and El were one. We should expect to find hostility to the Jews, since this was the name by which the returned exiles were known. We should expect to find a role for Lady Wisdom . . . We should expect to find a belief in the plural nature of Yahweh. We should expect to find a cult of Angels and heavenly powers with vestiges of the original temple setting. We should expect to find a view of the origin of evil akin to that of the myth of the fallen angels, and we should expect hostility towards the Mosaic Law which characterized the religion of those who both replaced and displaced the ancient cult.<sup>83</sup>

Barker shows that Christian Gnostics fit the picture perfectly. It is apparent that the Mandaeans can be even more closely identified with the temple cult. This comparison may not only show that the earliest Mandaeans preserved remnants of the temple cult, but it also supports the concept that they have the same background as the early Gnostics. Buckley states, "Given Mandaism's affinities with other forms of Gnosticism, one might be able to

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81. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992), 162.

82. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 166.

83. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 166–67.

combine research from the earliest data and strata of Mandaism with those of other Gnostic sources. This would be crucial for the aim of obtaining a clearer historical picture of Gnosticism's beginnings."<sup>84</sup> Likewise, Rudolph says, "We may in fact conclude that there is an original connection between an early cultic community of Jewish heretics and Gnosticism."<sup>85</sup> I will compare specific aspects of Mandaism, and the temple cult to show this connection.

### Mythology and the Heavens

The temple cult looked to a great unknowable father God whom they called El Elyon.<sup>86</sup> El was the high god, and evidences of his existence survive both in the Torah and in prophets, such as Daniel.<sup>87</sup> It seems this high God had both male and female aspects and was the father of the rest of the hosts of heaven. Similarly, the Mandaean supreme being is conceptualized as being "at the summit of the World of Light."<sup>88</sup> This supreme God is referred to as the "Great Life," "Master Mind," and "Melka Ziwa."<sup>89</sup> The Light Worlds surround and emanate from him, much like the heavenly realms were seen as the throne of God.

In the heavens, which surrounded the throne of God, existed the "Sons of God" and a host of other angelic figures. In the temple cult tradition, El Elyon bore many sons, which the Israelites called the Sons of God, or the "Heavenly Hosts." Chief among these subsidiary gods was Yahweh, Israel's patron deity. Often throughout the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and some Dead Sea Scroll texts, Yahweh is referred to as "Yahweh of Hosts,"<sup>90</sup> and there are nearly constant references to "Sons of God."<sup>91</sup> These divine beings, such as Michael,<sup>92</sup> Raphael,<sup>93</sup> and Gabriel,<sup>94</sup> were seen as great angels of the El. Three more, Uriel, Raguel, and Sarakiel, are discussed in detail in Enoch.<sup>95</sup> Yahweh was worshipped as the Son of God and the Holy One of Israel with the

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84. Buckley, *The Mandaean*, 3–4.

85. Rudolph, *Mandaism*, 16.

86. Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1987), 286.

87. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 20.

88. Rudolph, *Mandaism*, 13.

89. E.S. Drower, *The Mandaean of Iran and Iraq* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2002),

251. It is very similar to the Hebrew name Melchizedek, or King of Righteousness.

90. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel*, 162.

91. Barker, *Older Testament*, 104–21.

92. Daniel 10:21.

93. "Tobit," in *The Apocrypha*, trans. Edgar J. Goodspeed (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 113. Raphael is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but is familiar to Israel, as seen here.

94. Daniel 9, 12.

95. *The Book of Enoch the Prophet* (trans. Richard Laurence; San Diego, CA: Wizards Bookshelf, 1995), 26–27.



implicit understanding that there were other holy ones, but they were not to be worshipped by Israel as was Yahweh. Also in the heavenly realms were female angelic deities which acted as consorts to the gods and Sons of God previously mentioned. Of these, we have record of Asherah, Sophia, and the Queen of Heaven.<sup>96</sup> The Queen of Heaven is seen as the consort of “The King,”<sup>97</sup> and Asherah as the consort of Yahweh.<sup>98</sup> Marriage was cast in a positive light among the Israelites partly because the Gods existed in a “marriage-like” state.

As El’s throne was surrounded by cherubim and other angelic figures, the Great Life was surrounded by countless angelic beings known as *uthra*. The *uthra* were created by the Great Life.<sup>99</sup> They too were conceptualized as the children of the high god<sup>100</sup> and were thought to have their own godlike powers. They created the earth under the direction of the Great Life, acted as his messengers, interacted with earth, and preformed saving functions. The Mandaean sacred text *Hauran Gawaita* states that the Mandaeans “loved the lord Adonai” until the appearance of Christ.<sup>101</sup> Adonai, the Hebrew word for lord, is the title of Yahweh. Thus, the Mandaeans originally saw Yahweh as one of the *uthra*, much as did the Israelites. Another important *uthra* to the Mandaeans was Anos. Anos was a messianic *uthra* that came from the Worlds of Light to Jerusalem during the reign of Pilate, performing miracles and bringing a saving knowledge to many. The *Ginza* records:

On the contrary, Enos (Anos)-Uthra comes and proceeds to Jerusalem, clothed as with a garment in water-clouds. . . . He emerges and comes during the years of Pilate, king of the world. Enos-Uthra comes into the world with the powers of the sublime King of Light. He heals the sick and opens (the eyes of) the blind, makes the lepers clean, raises the crippled and the lame so that they can move, he makes the deaf and dumb to speak and gives life to the dead. He gains believers among the Jews and shows them that there is death and life, darkness and light, error and truth. He leads the Jews forth in the name of the sublime King of Light. 360 prophets go forth from the place Jerusalem.<sup>102</sup>

Anos came, much like the Jewish messiah, as a heavenly Messiah to bless and save his people. *Uthra* were paired in marriagelike partnerships. Mandaean tradition claims that the *uthra* created by Milka Ziwa had “female

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96. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 52.

97. This king may have been El Elyon, or it may have been Yahweh. If it was Yahweh, it is possible that these three females were all titles for the same deity. See Barker, *The Great Angel*, 52.

98. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 53.

99. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq*, 251.

100. Buckley, *Mandaeans*, 47. A quote from the *Ginza*, which references a prayer of Ruha’s to the Great Life, asks, “My Father, my Father, Why didst Thou create me?”

101. Rudolph, *Mandaism*, 4.

102. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 106.

compliments.”<sup>103</sup> Female uthra are referred to and revered by name, including Miriai (Mary)<sup>104</sup> and Ruha.<sup>105</sup> Both traditions, then, record a complex heavenly order consisting of a high god and many offspring. These lower deities act as angels, saviors, patron gods, and heavenly priests. They often exist within marriagelike partnership.

According to Mandaicism, everything that has been created on earth has a spiritual counterpart in the Worlds of Life: “Therefore, the early Adam and Adamites (descendants of Adam) are only the images of the heavenly Adam and Adamites. Consequently the salvation of the soul happens only when a soul leaves the earthly world and body and unites with its heavenly partner.”<sup>106</sup> The temple cult also portrayed a spiritual creation which preceded a physical creation. Barker states, “Later traditions knew that an elaborate heavenly world had been created before the material world and this heaven was totally integrated with this earth.”<sup>107</sup>

The Mandaean tradition records that the supreme god, “deputed the governance of the material world which is a world of non-reality, and even its creation, to regents, spirits of power and purity . . . three hundred and sixty in number.”<sup>108</sup> Elsewhere in Mandaean literature, the creation happens as a result of the uthra moving away from the Great Life, and was brought about “by the demiurge Ptahil with the help of the dark powers.”<sup>109</sup> The concept, then, is that the world was created, as well as the body of man, by fallen angels in conjunction with the dark world. Ptahil’s creation of the world, though, was under the direction of his father Hiwil Ziwa, the uthra most closely associated with this world and its inhabitants.<sup>110</sup>

Fallen or evil uthra play a large role in Mandaean mythology. They include Ruha, the Demiurge Pahtil, and, eventually, Adonai, as the fallen god of the Jews.<sup>111</sup> The Mandaean Religion is defined by its strict conceptualization of

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103. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq*, 251.

104. Buckley, *Mandaeans*, 49–56. Miriai is identified as the mother of Jesus, the false Messiah, but she has traits of both the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. She is seen as a convert to Mandaicism from Judaism and is even portrayed as a priestess at certain points. Eventually she is identified as an uthra in the World of Light.

105. Buckley, *Mandaeans*, 43–47. In this passage, Buckley expounds upon Ruha’s role. Often she is seen as the root of evil, the creator of earth, the patron deity of Jerusalem, a child of the Great Life (and thus an Uthra), and even in a semi-messianic light. She is very much like Sophia, but the Mandaean literature does not provide an account of her “fall” as does Gnosticism with Sophia. Instead, it seems she was created by the Great Life in the world of Darkness, and there dwelt, though she was a child of the Great God.

106. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 3.

107. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 7.

108. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq*, 251.

109. Rudolph, *Mandaicism*, 14.

110. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq*, 252.

111. Gunduz, *Knowledge of Life*, 94.

dualism between Light World and the World of Darkness, the King of Light and the King of Darkness.<sup>112</sup> Fallen angels ceased to be followers of the Great Life, and began to follow the King of Darkness. Similarly, a strong undercurrent of dualism is to be found in the temple cult between the Prince of Light, sometimes conceptualized as Michael or Melchizedek, and the Prince of Darkness called Satan. The temple cult also acknowledged fallen angels, including Lucifer. They believed in the concept that sin and evil was introduced into the world by a multitude of fallen angels known as the sons of heaven.<sup>113</sup>

### Ritual, Practices, and Doctrines

The Israelite temple cult was focused in and around the temple of Solomon and its priesthood. At first glance, the rituals of the temple cult do not much seem to resemble the baptismal rituals of the Mandaeans, but a closer examination reveals amazingly similar parallels. Whereas the temple occupied the central place to the temple cult, that role is filled by the *mandi*, or ritual hut, in the Mandaean tradition. In early texts, these *mandi* were called “temples” or “tabernacles.”<sup>114</sup> The design of the hut is similar to that of the Israelite temple, albeit on a smaller scale, with a boundary wall that sets off the sacred space of the temple, a courtyard, through which flows a small man-made inlet from the river in which ordinances are preformed (possibly similar to the brazen sea in the Israelite temple),<sup>115</sup> and the sacred hut at the center. Within the hut complex, they make use of incense alters and offer sacrifices of doves, fowl and sheep. The sacrifices are ritually slain and baked for consumption.<sup>116</sup> They practice these and most other ordinances within their small temple complexes.

Paramount to the Mandaean ritual, and the most important feature of the *mandi* is the flowing water (*yardne*) in which rituals are performed. The purpose of the baptism ritual of the Mandaeans is to, “make contact with the worlds of light and their healing powers.”<sup>117</sup> Lady Drower, the premier Mandaean scholar of this century, claimed that it was, “regarded not only as a symbol of life, but to a certain degree as life itself. . . . Immersion in the water is immersion in a life-fluid, and gives physical well-being, protection against the powers of death, and promise of everlasting life to the soul.”<sup>118</sup> Though the rite of baptism was likely practiced in the temple cult,<sup>119</sup> it cannot yet be proven

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112. Gunduz, *Knowledge of Life*, 2.

113. 1 *Enoch* 6:2.

114. Rudolph, *Mandaeism*, 7–8.

115. Barker, *The Gates of Heaven*, 65.

116. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq*, 135.

117. Rudolph, *Mandaeism*, 10.

118. Drower, *Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq*, 100.

119. This will be a major point of discussion later in the paper, when the followers of John the Baptist are discussed.

to have been a part of the cult. However, Barker shows that water was used as a symbol among the temple cult in much the same way that water is used by the Mandaeans. The conceptualization of water among the temple cult is seen in the Psalms. "And thou make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light."<sup>120</sup> Also, she points out that, along with Isaiah, Joel, and Enoch, Ezekiel prophecies that on the Day of the Lord, water will flow from the door of the temple and towards the sea. It will heal the Dead Sea, making its waters sweet again, and cause life and prosperity.<sup>121</sup> Here, and elsewhere, this water is representative of Yahweh, the Heavenly Messiah who would heal, bring life, and salvation. This "Living Water" role of Yahweh is identical to the role of purifying water in the Mandaean Tradition. The "Living Waters" of baptism are the only way a Mandaean can hope to enter the Worlds of Light, just as Yahweh's messianic role was seen by the temple cult as the only way by which the Israelites enter into the presence of God.

Mandaean priests represent the angelic uthra in their performance of the ordinances,<sup>122</sup> Their ritual dress is very reminiscent of the ritual dress of the temple priests. It consist of a shirt (*ksuya*), a small patch piece stitched to the outer side of the right breast of the shirt (*dasha*), drawers (*sharawala*), and a stole and belt (or girdle). Also, a turban (*burzinqa*) is worn, which wraps around the head three times, with the end hanging over the left shoulder. Priests wear a crown of silk, a gold ring on the right little finger, and hold a staff.<sup>123</sup> The white clothes, the headdress, girdle, robe, crown, and staff used to adorn Mandaean priest are similar to the ephod, robe, brodered coat, mitre, and girdle of the Israelite priests (Exod 28:4). Also similar are the means of ordaining priests between the two. In Mandaean Communities, priests have the same function as kings and are sometimes referred to as kings. In the performance of their ordinances, the priests represent the uthra. The Israelite temple cult included a priesthood of El Elyon, or priesthood of Melchizedek.<sup>124</sup> This priesthood was a higher priesthood than held by the Levites or the sons of Aaron. The holders of this priesthood were the kings of Israel, who were also identified with Melchizedek<sup>125</sup> and represented Yahweh in the ordinances which they performed. Much like the Mandaeans, then, the priests of the temple cult were seen as kings and represented heavenly beings in their priestly roles.

In the *Testament of Levi* (a heterodox Jewish text thought to have come from at least the second century B.C.E.) a vestment ordinance is described which

120. Ps 36:3–9.

121. Barker, *The Gates of Heaven*, 87. She quotes parts of Ezekiel 40–47.

122. Rudolph, *Mandaism*, 6.

123. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iran and Iraq*, 32.

124. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 88–89.

125. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 89.

included anointing with oil, washing the body, a ritual meal of bread and wine, clothing in priestly clothing, and the wearing of a sacred name.<sup>126</sup> The ordination of priests in the Mandaean tradition consists of a very lengthy ritual that includes intricate purification processes, animal sacrifice, baptism, and all the rituals that have been previously described as part of that.<sup>127</sup> Such rituals include all of the aspects of priestly ordination described in the *Testament of Levi*. In both traditions, the ordination to the priesthood is a symbolic ascent experience. It symbolically transforms the priest from being merely a man to becoming a celestial being. The *Secrets of Enoch* records the concept that after Enoch was clothed and washed and anointed by the heavenly beings (i.e., after he became a priest of El) he was “like one of his glorious ones.”<sup>128</sup> Because the rituals of the temple cult are mostly lost, it is beneficial to look at the rituals of Orthodox Judaism which are recorded early in the Bible. Parallels between ordination ritual of the Mandaean and the Jewish priests include foot washing, enthronement, laying on of hands, and ritual kissing.<sup>129</sup>

Melchizedek, as the archetypal high priest of El Elyon, is another interesting parallel between the two traditions. Barker states, “Melchizedek was central to the old royal cult. . . . It is quite clear that this priesthood operated within the mythology of the sons of Elyon, and the triumph of the royal son of God in Jerusalem. We should expect later references to Melchizedek to retain some memory of the cult of Elyon.”<sup>130</sup> His name, translated from Hebrew to mean “King of Righteousness,” is very similar to the Mandaean name for the Great Life, Malka Ziwa. The word *malka* in the Mandaean tradition means “king,”<sup>131</sup> and is cognate with the Hebrew word *melek*. The Mandaean word *ziwa* means radiance;<sup>132</sup> thus Malka Ziwa is the “King of Radiance,” while Melchizedek is the “King of Righteousness.” The similarity is striking, as are the similarities between the name of the Israelite God Yahweh (*yhw*), and the Mandaean *uthra*, Yawer (*ywr*, which means “blindingly bright”). This seems especially remarkable when it is understood that “y” and “r” are interchangeable in the Mandaean script (giving a possible spelling *ywy*).<sup>133</sup>

One of the most important aspects of the temple cult was its conceptualization of knowledge. The cult understood a carefully guarded heavenly

126. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark Ltd., 2003), 128. She quotes a fragmentary version of the Testaments of Levi from the Dead Sea Scrolls, which I was unable to locate.

127. Drower, *The Mandaean of Iran and Iraq*, 146–65.

128. *The Secrets of Enoch* 22:9, in *The Lost Books of the Bible and the Forgotten Books of Eden* (Newfoundland: Alpha House Inc., 1927), 89.

129. Gunduz, *The Knowledge of Life*, 97–98.

130. Barker, *The Older Testament*, 257.

131. Drower, *The Mandaean of Iran and Iraq*, 78.

132. Drower, *The Mandaean of Iran and Iraq*, 73.

133. Drower, *The Mandaean of Iran and Iraq*, 29.

knowledge that could cause man to become like the gods.<sup>134</sup> This concept is what is illustrated in the account of the Adam and Eve in Genesis, when El said, “Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.”<sup>135</sup> This knowledge is again referred to in the account of the Watchers imparting their heavenly knowledge to mankind, teaching them secrets previously known only to the gods.<sup>136</sup> The cult understood that, “Wisdom, i.e., the Spirit, transformed human beings and made them like God.”<sup>137</sup> Such a concept is also central to Mandaism. They conceptualize that celestial uthras (including the aforementioned Anos-Uthra) teach believers the knowledge necessary to gain salvation.

After the fall of the soul or the “inner Adam” into the body or “trunk” of Adam. . . . Manda dHayye (an uthra whose name means “Knowledge of Life”) came to Adam and taught him the mysteries of the cosmos and the cult-rites. In this way, Adam received “knowledge” (manda) and redemption. “Salvation” or “redemption” (purqana) by means of knowledge and cultic action is brought about in the ascension of the soul (masiqta) to its native realm of light.<sup>138</sup>

It was only through this saving knowledge that the soul was able to travel through the cosmos past the watchtowers and into the Worlds of Light, thus becoming an uthra. Here an angelic figure provides Adam with the knowledge necessary to become a Light World being, or to become like the gods (uthra). It is here apparent just how much the Gnosticism of Mandaism and the protognosticism of the temple cult have in common. Along with this, there a belief among the Mandaeans and the temple cult in a day of judgment.

Among the Mandaeans, a ritual hand clasp finalizes the baptismal ordinance, called the “giving kusta,” or “truth.” Its name implies that this kusta is an essential part of the saving Wisdom. It cannot be said for certain if the temple cult had such a practice or not, though the concept is seen in many other similar religions and organizations throughout western history.<sup>139</sup>

In the temple cult, wisdom was the means whereby wise men were able to ascend through the heavenly realms in a *merkabah* experience and be presented into the presence of El Elyon. This divine ascent experience usually is described in terms of the temple, and is associated with the Holy of Holies and

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134. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel*, 164.

135. Genesis 3:22.

136. 1 *Enoch* 8:1–3.

137. Margaret Barker, *On Earth As it is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 31.

138. Rudolph, *Mandaism*, 14–15.

139. This *kusta* is identical to the first Masonic hand-clasp. It is also reminiscent of the dexiosis seen on Greek and Roman funerary art, the art associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries, and the records preserved regarding the rituals of Mithraism.

the priesthood of El Elyon. Such theophanies are referred to multiple times in the Old Testament, Enoch, and other pseudepigraphical works which preserve traditions of the temple cult. A similar *merkabah* experience is related in the Mandaean *Book of John*, when recounting the vision of Zacharias in regard to the birth of John: “Fire burned in Old Father Zakhria; three heaven-lights appeared. The sun sank and the lights rose. Fire lit up the house of the people, smoke rose over the temple. A quaking quaked in the Throne-chariot (merk-abah, i.e. heaven) so that Earth removed from her seat. A star flew down into Judea, a star flew down into Jerusalem. The sun appeared by night, and the moon rose by day.”<sup>140</sup> Zachariah here has an ascent experience in which he describes bodies of light and a vision foretelling the birth of John. It is very reminiscent of the other mystical wisdom ascent accounts.

In addition to these similarities, it must be remembered that much of the ordinances and practices of the temple cult have not survived intact. Therefore, it is impossible to present a complete picture of the practices and rituals of the cult. It is most probable that there were other ordinances, rituals and beliefs of the temple cult than what have here been covered. Using the information that is available, differences between the two can be seen. These differences do not testify that they are different traditions, but rather that there is a 2,500-year separation between modern Mandaism and the ancient temple cult. In that time, the common tradition has been influenced by Egyptian magic, middle-Platonism, Orthodox Christianity, Hellenistic mystery cults, Babylonian cults, Zoroastrianism, and Islam. With such separation, it is remarkable that so much has stayed the same. In light of all of this evidence, it seems obvious that the origins of Mandaism lie in the temple cult of Israel.

I realize that the conclusions at which I have arrived are not definitive. They cannot be specifically proven because no documents or archeological date exists to do so. However, with the evidence linking Mandaism to the Israelite temple cult which has been presented through this paper, I feel that a fairly accurate portrayal of Mandaism’s progression has been traced.

Despite being diluted for more than two thousand years, the tradition seems clear. The temple cult of Jerusalem, as it appeared in ancient Israel, was nearly destroyed by Josiah’s reforms. However, the tradition survived over the next six hundred years in one form or another and was still being practiced, to some extent, by the Essenes and Nasarenes in Judah just prior to the advent of Christianity. John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were likely either born into or adopted this tradition and used it as the backdrop for their teachings. After John’s death, it would appear that the Nasarenes who revered him as a prophet mingled with some outside influences and began to be persecuted by the Jews

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<sup>140</sup> G. R. S. Mead, *The Gnostic John The Baptizer: Selections from the Mandaean John-Book* (London: John M. Watkins, 1924) 35–36. This is part of an extended excerpt from the Mandaean *Book of John*.

of the age. The followers of Jesus had much the same experience. Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E., the Nasarenes likely chose to leave Judah and Syria in a mass exodus, so as to not be punished by the Romans for the sins of the Jews. Through Syria they traveled to Iraq, where they eventually settled down towards the south east end of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. There they remained for the next nearly two millennia, practicing ordinances and passing on the sacred *mandayye*, which would guarantee them a place in the Light World.





# THE BATTLE OF MARATHON: THE STUNNING VICTORY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE RISE OF ATHENS

DOUG MARSH

ATHENS had never before been faced with so great a threat as the approach of Persian forces to the Greek mainland in 490 B.C.E. Angered by the insolence of Athens and Eretria, which had recently supplied aid to rebelling Ionian cities, the Persian king Darius dispatched his generals Datis and Ataphernes “with the charge to reduce Athens and Eretria to slavery and to bring the slaves back into his presence.” Both Herodotus and Plato saw this dispatch as a mere pretext to accomplish his true aim: to enslave all of Greece and Europe.<sup>1</sup> He moved first against the Eretrians, “reputed to be amongst the noblest and most warlike of the Hellenes of that day (and they were numerous); but he conquered them all in three days.”<sup>2</sup> Having accomplished his objective against Eretria, Darius next turned his gaze to Athens, leaving it and its citizens to decide whether they ought to attempt to resist their seemingly inevitable defeat.<sup>3</sup>

Faced with almost certain ruin, many Athenian generals did not wish to fight, “seeing that they were too few to fight with the army of the Medes.” With the voting generals evenly split between those for and against fighting, the deciding vote was to be cast by Callimachos, the polemarch. Miltiades, one of the ten Athenian strategoi at the time, urged Callimachos to vote to resist the invading Persians:

With thee now it rests, Callimachos, either to bring Athens under slavery, or by making her free to leave behind thee for all the time that men shall live a memorial such as not even Harmodios and Aristogeiton have left. For now the Athenians have come to a danger the greatest to which they have ever come since they were a people; and on the one hand, if they submit to the Medes, it is determined what they shall suffer, being delivered

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1. Plato, *Menexenus*, 239d; Herodotus, *Histories* 6.94

2. Plato, *Menexenus*, 240b.

3. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.101–02.

over to Hippias, while on the other hand, if this city shall gain the victory, it may become the first of the cities of Hellas.<sup>4</sup>

Callimachos was persuaded by this argument and cast his vote in favor of the proposal of Miltiades, and the Athenian and Platean forces engaged the Persians at Marathon. The result of the battle was a victory so stunning and so complete that the Persian army, though they greatly outnumbered their Greek opponents, fled to their ships and returned to Asia. “Than this battle,” eulogized the Roman Nepos, “there has hitherto been none more glorious; for never did so small a band overthrow so numerous a host.”<sup>5</sup> With this spectacular victory, the invasion had been foiled.<sup>6</sup>

As time passed, the predictions made by Miltiades proved to be correct. Once Persia had been effectively repulsed from Greece, not only was Athens left free from foreign tyranny, but it would also soon enter its golden age as the foremost of the Greek poleis. Nevertheless, the Battle of Marathon was not necessarily the definitive moment that it is implied to be by Herodotus’s history. It is important to recognize that the remarkable victory at Marathon was but one episode in a series of events that would affect the future of Greece. Even so, the success achieved on the plains of Marathon was a crucial moment that helped catalyze the Athenian ascent to prominence, not only as a tactically important moment, but as a psychologically critical victory.

For all of its significance, the Battle of Marathon admittedly did little more than delay the encroaching invaders. Persia hardly regarded the humiliating loss at Marathon as a definitive defeat—as the Persian commander Mardonios stated, the net result of the Battle of Marathon was that Persia “fell but little short of coming to Athens itself.”<sup>7</sup> Far from discouraging the great empire from its aims, the defeat only heightened Persian ambition to subjugate the Hellenes to Persian power. When word of the defeat reached King Darius, who was already angered by the assistance Athens had given during the Ionic revolt, he was doubly infuriated, and “then far more than before displayed indignation, and was far more desirous of making a march against Hellas.”<sup>8</sup> Within ten years of their defeat at Marathon, the Persian Empire would return with its army and navy, this time under the command of Darius’s son Xerxes, with increased resolve and determination to subdue Greece. It was the 480 B.C.E. Battle of Salamis and the 479 B.C.E. Battle of Plataea, not the Battle of Marathon, which would ultimately remove the Persian threat from the Greek mainland for good. Clearly, the victory at

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4. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.109.

5. Cornelius Nepos, *Lives of Eminent Commanders*, “Miltiades,” 312.

6. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.116–17.

7. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.9.

8. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.1.

Marathon was not the immediate cause of all the gains that Miltiades had foreseen.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the Battle of Marathon was strategically crucial to Greece's survival. More than simply delaying the inevitable, it gave Athens, and the rest of Greece along with it, ten additional years to prepare for the invading Persians. The time bought by the victory was well spent. Before the second Persian invasion of 480 B.C.E, the oracle at Delphi famously directed that Athens be defended by a "bulwark of wood." As urged by the Athenian archon Themistocles, Athens built its "bulwark," which proved to be the critical factor in victory against the Persians: the Athenian navy.<sup>10</sup> In a stroke of luck, funding for this navy was found in the rich veins of silver that had been newly discovered at nearby Laureion. The Athenians had planned to divide this wealth among its citizens; Themistocles, not trusting other Athenians to appreciate the proximity of the Persian threat, shrewdly—if not deviously—proposed instead "that with the money ships should be built to make war against the Æginetans, who were the most flourishing people in all Greece, and by the number of their ships held the sovereignty of the sea." In so proposing, he "avoiding all mention of danger from Darius or the Persians, who were at a great distance, and their coming very uncertain . . . but by a seasonable employment of the emulation and anger felt by the Athenians against the Æginetans, he induced them to preparation."<sup>11</sup> Through this sleight of hand, Themistocles induced Athens to build up its fleet and make ready (whether its citizens realized it or not) for the coming Persian invasion.

The importance of Athens's navy in the conflict to come is not to be underestimated. In a rare aside, Herodotus offers his opinion that if Athens had not opposed the Persians, and especially with its navy, all of Greece would have fallen under Persian power; even the Spartans, as capable as they were in the arts of war, "would have been isolated and then have performed great deeds and died bravely."<sup>12</sup> Even that most lauded demonstration of Spartan bravery, the battle of Thermopylae, was made possible only by Greek naval superiority at Artemision, where the fleet under the command of Themistocles prevented the Persian navy from sailing around the fortified pass and out-flanking the Spartans.<sup>13</sup> The factor that ultimately forced Xerxes to retreat from his objective was the victory of the Greek navy under Themistocles during the naval battle at Salamis, which shattered the Persian navy. Nor was the victory by sea at Salamis any less remarkable or impressive than the victory by land at Marathon. In fact, Nepos claimed that the battle of Salamis "may be compared

9. Herodotus, *Histories* 8.84–97; 9.25–89.

10. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.140–45.

11. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.140–45.

12. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.139.

13. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.192–95.

with the triumph at Marathon; for the greatest fleet in the memory of man was conquered in like manner at Salamis by a small number of ships.”<sup>14</sup> Without naval support for his infantry, Xerxes’ isolated troops could not long remain in the Hellenic mainland. Herodotus emphasized Athens’s resistance by sea was a determining factor of the war, such that “if a man should say that the Athenians proved to be the saviors of Hellas, he would not fail to hit the truth.”<sup>15</sup> Plutarch, defending Themistocles against any charges of deception, concurred with this opinion:

Whether or not he hereby injured the purity and true balance of government, may be a question for philosophers, but that the deliverance of Greece came at that time from the sea, and that these galleys restored Athens again after it was destroyed, were others wanting, Xerxes himself would be sufficient evidence, who, though his land-forces were still entire, after his defeat at sea, fled away, and thought himself no longer able to encounter the Greeks; and, as it seems to me, left Mardonius behind him, not out of any hopes he could have to bring them into subjection, but to hinder them from pursuing him.<sup>16</sup>

This buildup of naval power that proved the salvation of Greece would not have been possible without the extra time afforded by the victory at Marathon. With the Athenian navy, Greece was able to withstand the Persian assault. Furthermore, after the fight with Persia had ended, Athenian naval superiority resulted in its hegemony of the Delian league, a key component which allowed Athens to enjoy its golden age.

Though its tactical importance was significant, the greatest contribution that the Battle of Marathon made towards to rise of Athens and Greece was not so much strategic as it was psychological. Persia was the largest empire in the world at the time, and according to Plato, the Persian king Darius was the world’s most eminent figure: “None presumed to be his equal; the minds of all men were enthralled by him—so many and mighty and warlike nations had the power of Persia subdued.”<sup>17</sup> Nepos claimed that Persia had brought an army of two hundred thousand men to the field at Marathon.<sup>18</sup> Persia planned to strike quickly before Athens could gather friendly forces, “thinking that in this way [Athens] would be most deserted of allies, if they posed the danger when Greece was still at odds over how to repel the invaders.”<sup>19</sup> A band of nine thousand Athenian men, with the help of no other Greek polis except for a mere thousand men sent from the Plataeans, were forced to oppose Persia

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14. Nepos, “Themistocles,” 318.

15. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.139.

16. Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, “Themistocles,” 6.

17. Plato, *Menexenus*, 240a.

18. Nepos, “Miltiades,” 311.

19. Lysias, *Funeral Oration*, 21.

almost single-handedly.<sup>20</sup> Two thousand Spartans, though willing to render assistance, arrived at the scene too late to do anything but congratulate the Athenians for their victory and return home.<sup>21</sup> No other polis, according to Plato, dared to bring men to the field: “The rest were panic-stricken and kept quiet, too happy in having escaped for a time.”<sup>22</sup> These few forces were all the assistance they had with which they fought the mightiest military power on Earth; a power so terrifying, Herodotus informs his readers, that “up to this time the very name of the Medes was to the Hellenes a terror to hear.”<sup>23</sup> What is more, the Persians outnumbered them nearly twenty to one.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, the odds were against Athens.

In spite of these odds, Athens did have important advantages. One crucial element of Hellenic superiority was the heavy bronze armor of the Greek hoplite. The now-famous “Corinthian” style helmet was forged from a single sheet of bronze, covering “almost the whole head from the collar-bone upwards,” and leaving “only a small, roughly T-shaped aperture for the eyes, nose, and mouth.”<sup>25</sup> This design was so effective that it was used and copied for more than 2,000 years.<sup>26</sup> The shield, or *hoplon*, from which the Greek hoplite derived his name, was a wooden convex disk three feet in diameter, and reinforced with bronze—the rims were always given a bronze facing, and often the entire shield was likewise covered.<sup>27</sup> The left arm was inserted through a bronze strip on the inner side of the shield, and then the left hand grabbed a leather strap on the right edge. This innovative design made the

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20. Nepos, “Miltiades,” 312.

21. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.120.

22. Plato, *Menexenus*, 240c.

23. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.112.

24. This according to the numbers supplied by Nepos. These numbers may immediately appear suspicious, given the tendency of ancient writers to inflate numbers. Nevertheless, Nepos is actually among the most conservative of ancient writers in giving the figure of 200,000 for the number of Persian troops. Herodotus himself does not give a number, but Plutarch and Pausanias both claim there were 300,000 Persian troops, while Plato and Lysias give the number of 500,000 (Plutarch, *Ethics*, 305b; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 4.22.5; Plato, *Menexenus*, 240a; Lysias, *Funeral Oration*, 21.)

25. A. M. Snodgrass, *Arms and Armour of the Greeks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 51. Herodotus makes reference to a Corinthian helmet in 4.180. Historian Tim Everson writes that “since the helmet about to be described appeared first and most frequently on Corinthian vases, most scholars agree that it is one and the same with Herodotus’s Corinthian helmet” (Tim Everson, *Warfare in Ancient Greece: Arms and Armour from the Heroes of Homer to Alexander the Great* [Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004], 80).

26. Snodgrass, *Arms and Armour*, 51.

27. The word *hoplon* more loosely translated means “tools” or “weapons,” of which the shield, also called the *aspis*, was among the most important. That the shield, of all other weapons and armor, should be most commonly linked to this epithet is evidence of its importance and regard by Greek soldiers.

weight of the shield easier to bear and offered greater control and leverage.<sup>28</sup> Bronze plate armor protected the hoplite's chest, belly, thighs, shins, feet, upper arms, and forearms.<sup>29</sup> Greek hoplites were closely packed in a phalanx, wherein each man's shield would partially overlap so that approaching enemies would be faced with a solid wall of bronze.

These armaments offered a particularly significant advantage over Persia, whose troops were much more lightly armored—as Aristagoras, the tyrant of Miletos, said to the Spartan king Cleomenes, “They wear trousers in the field, and cover their heads with turbans. So easy are they to vanquish!”<sup>30</sup> Heavy armor would have been very unusual for an Oriental army of that age, as historian A. M. Snodgrass notes: “The great civilizations of the east . . . apparently never adopted bronze plate-armor. Probably the hot climate is an adequate explanation of this. At all events, the Egyptians, Assyrians, and other Oriental peoples seem to have been content with scale-armor, or simply linen or leather.”<sup>31</sup> The prohibitive cost of bronze armor would also have kept men from the field, thus negating one of Persia's greatest advantages. The net result of such armory was that, man for man, the average Persian warrior was no match for the Greek hoplite.

The second advantage held by Athens was her commander, Miltiades, and the superior tactics he employed. According to Herodotus, the Greek army was deployed in a line “equal in length of front to that of the Medes,” but “drawn up in the middle with a depth of but few ranks, and here their army was weakest, while each wing was strengthened with numbers.”<sup>32</sup> Thus arranged, they ran to meet the Persian army, which was in and of itself a revolutionary tactic, according to Herodotus: “For they were the first of all the Hellenes about whom we know who went to attack the enemy at a run.”<sup>33</sup> Such a show of bravado by a foe so vastly outnumbered was so shocking that the Persians “charged the Athenians with madness which must be fatal, seeing that they were few and yet were pressing forwards at a run.”<sup>34</sup> After lengthy fighting, the center of the Greek line failed, and the Persians ran to the middle in pursuit.

Nevertheless, the two wings of the Greek army held firm and drew together, apparently in the space vacated by the Persian advance, allowing them to attack the Persian army in the exposed flanks and rear. By this maneuver, the Persians were surrounded and began to suffer heavy losses. The defeated Persians were thrown “into such a consternation, that the Persians betook

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28. Snodgrass, *Arms and Armour*, 53; Everson, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, 80.

29. Everson, *Warfare in Ancient Greece*, 87–108.

30. Herodotus, *Histories* 5.49.

31. Snodgrass, *Arms and Armour*, 50.

32. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.III.

33. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.II2.

34. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.II2.

themselves, not to their camp, but to their ships.”<sup>35</sup> The result of their “madness,” which must have seemed little more than a suicidal rush towards a certain doom, was an overwhelming Hellenic victory. Casualties were equally one-sided: Herodotus claims that 6,400 Persians were slain, while only 192 Athenians and 11 Plataeans died.<sup>36</sup> At Marathon, Athens stunned the world by taking on a superior force, thought by some to be invincible, and handing them a sound defeat. As Plato extolled, it was at Marathon that the Hellenes “first taught other men that the power of the Persians was not invincible, but that hosts of men and the multitude of riches alike yield to valor.”<sup>37</sup> For the first time, it seems, the realization dawned that Persia could actually be defeated.

The effect that this defeat had on the image of Persia’s military force can be seen in Xenophon’s *Anabasis*, which describes events that took place less than a century after the battle of Marathon. The Persian Cyrus, in his attempt to overthrow his brother, King Artaxerxes II, procured the aid of 10,000 Greek troops. As Cyrus prepared the Greek troops for the coming battle, he revealed to them that “it is not because I have not barbarians enough that I have brought you hither to fight for me; but because I believe that you are braver and stronger than many barbarians.” Not only did he consider the Greek’s numerical disadvantage to be insignificant, but Cyrus was actually somewhat embarrassed by the incompetence of his own nation’s military strength: “Our enemies have great numbers and they will come on with a great outcry; for the rest, however, if you can hold out against these things, I am ashamed, I assure you, to think what sorry fellows you will find the people of our country to be.”<sup>38</sup> The events that later transpired showed his reticence to be quite justified. During a military review before battle, a spontaneous charge of the Greek hoplites terrified the barbarian troops, causing Cyrus’s guest, the Cilician queen, as well as the people in the market, to flee in terror.<sup>39</sup> When the armies of Cyrus and Artaxerxes finally met at Cunaxa, the Greeks under Cyrus immediately threw the Persian chariots into disarray merely by beating their spears against their shields and frightening their horses. With another spontaneous charge, they then proceeded to scatter the barbarians in front of them before they were even within range of their arrows.<sup>40</sup> Whatever aura of invincibility Persia had attained before its defeat at Marathon had been clearly and completely dispelled—the army whose very name once struck fear into its enemies was now exposed.

The Battle of Marathon showed not only that Persia could be defeated, but how to employ tactics by which one would go about accomplishing the

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35. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.113; Nepos, “Miltiades,” 312.

36. Herodotus, *Histories* 6.117.

37. Plato, *Menexenus*, 240d.

38. Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.7.3.

39. Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.2.18.

40. Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.8.18–19.



feat. The Battle of Marathon is perhaps the first recorded instance in history of the pincer movement or double envelopment, wherein an opponent's flanks are surrounded after he has advanced to the center. The skillful deployment of the Hellenic troops shows that the stunning results of the battle were not accidental: "It is obvious," writes Dr. N. G. L. Hammond, "that the action of the Athenians and the Plataeans on the wings . . . had been preconcerted; for Miltiades, having thinned his center and packed his wings, must have anticipated the actual developments in the fighting and issued orders in advance."<sup>41</sup> From the description of the battle, it can be seen that the victory achieved at Marathon was no mere trick of fate, but a result of careful planning and remarkable foresight by the Greek generals.

The Battle of Marathon is not likely to have been the first time a double envelopment took place, as it is a fairly basic and even universal military tactic—it is apparently described, for example, in Sun Tzu's *Art of War*.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, its occurrence during the Battle of Marathon made it an important lesson for future Greek military leaders and tacticians; the battle was, as Plato wrote, "the action to which the Hellenes looked back when they ventured to fight for their own safety in the battles which ensued: they became disciples of the men of Marathon."<sup>43</sup> Importantly, the Battle of Marathon exposed Persian susceptibility to tactical warfare. In spite of Persia's usually greater numbers, Greek generals thenceforth almost always managed to find and exploit Persian weaknesses through superior strategy, resulting in Persia's expulsion from Greece in 480 B.C.E., the later embarrassment at Cunaxa, and their ultimate defeat at the hands of the tactically superior Alexander the Great. Furthermore, it is evident that tactics similar to the double envelopment used by Miltiades at Marathon were used against other opponents, and not just by the Greeks, but by many of the greatest generals in history. The strategy of Epaminodas at Leuctra, Phillip and Alexander at Chaeronea, Hannibal at Cannae, Scipio Africanus at Ilipa and Zama, and even battles of recent history seem to mimic the Greeks on the Marathon plain. This influence shows the Battle of Marathon to have been an important schoolmaster not only to Greece in its struggle against the barbarians, but to military leaders throughout all time.

The claims made by Miltiades, as reported by Herodotus, were not immediately realized after the Athenian victory at Marathon; it would be

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41. N. G. L. Hammond, "The Campaign and the Battle of Marathon," *Journal of Hellenistic Studies* 88 (1968): 29.

42. "Thus one who is skillful at keeping the enemy on the move maintains deceitful appearances, according to which the enemy will act. He sacrifices something, that the enemy may snatch at it. By holding out baits, he keeps him on the march; then with a body of picked men he lies in wait for him" (Sun Tzu, *Art of War* 5.19–20).

43. Plato, *Menexenus*, 240c.

after a number of years and a series of other critical events that his predictions would come to full fruition. It is nevertheless indisputable that without the victory at Marathon, Athens would have been reduced to servitude, and the rest of Greece along with it. Because of the strategic importance of the victory, which afforded ten more years for the Hellenic poleis to prepare for the Persian invasion, and the psychological victory by which the Hellenic world first understood that Persia could be defeated, the Battle of Marathon made possible both the freedom of the Hellenes and the eminence and Golden Age of Athens.



# “HAVE YE INQUIRED OF THE LORD?” INQUIRY PATTERNS IN THE BIBLE AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

SCOTT PRESTON SUKHAN NIBLEY

THE Hebrew scriptures contain dozens of passages where an inquiry to deity is requested in order to reveal the unknown, or to sanction a proper course of action. Linguistic and narrative similarities in biblical passages involving divine inquiry have been observed by scholars.<sup>1</sup> These divine inquiry incidents are categorized by scholars as a subset of Israelite divination within the larger framework of ancient Near Eastern mantic institutions.<sup>2</sup> Variable narrative elements in these instances include such things as the setting, identity of the requester, identity of the intermediary, reason for the inquiry, and type of oracle employed. Linguistic elements, namely verb choice, correspond to narrative elements in different passages. When these elements are analyzed, prominent patterns of ancient Israelite divine inquiry emerge. The purpose of this paper is to identify dominant patterns of divine inquiry found in the Bible and to show how the Book of Mormon employs the same patterns in varied circumstances, and that these patterns fit all the parameters of typical ancient Israelite consultations of deity. In addition, an understanding of the *prophetic inquiry type* clarifies and contextualizes certain Book of Mormon passages.

## Divination in the Ancient Near East

Methods of divination abounded in the ancient Near East. In order to discern the desires of various deities, seemingly random acts such as the casting of lots (cleromancy), the drawing of pebbles (psephomancy), or the

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1. See generally Christopher T. Begg, “Inquire of God,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:417–18; Begg, “‘Seeking Yahweh’ and the Purpose of Chronicles,” *Louvain Studies* 9 (1982): 128–41; Burke O. Long, “The Effect of Divination upon Israelite Literature,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973): 489–97.

2. Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and Its Near Eastern Environment* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 42.

drawing of arrows (belomancy) were employed by diviners.<sup>3</sup> The results of these random acts were believed to have been affected by a god or gods, and the interpretation of the symbolic instruments provided the consulting party with divine direction regarding a choice or action.

Other types of divination were more fluid and included an open-ended type of oracle, like the necromancy of ancient Egypt, where the consultation of a dead spirit would yield a prophecy of the future or other hidden information.<sup>4</sup> Additional methods of divination found in the ancient Near East include astrology, birth omens, sacrifice omens, dreams or visions, and so forth.<sup>5</sup> These diverse forms indicate a culture where supernatural phenomena are integrated and ritualized into everyday life.

### Divination in Ancient Israel

Divination was prevalent in ancient Israel, and this prevalence is reflected in the Hebrew Bible. For example, the interpretation of dreams is a divinatory power given to Joseph (Gen 41:9–16), and to Daniel (Dan 2:1–3, 16–19). The same Joseph makes mention of using a divinatory vessel of some sort—his silver cup—when he instructs his servant regarding a ruse to keep his brothers in Egypt: of the silver cup, Joseph asks his servant to say, “is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and *whereby indeed he divineth?*” (Gen 44:5, emphasis added). This reference to the divinatory cup is a precedent of sorts to the three divination instruments used by Israelite priests in association with the tabernacle/temple complex: the casting of lots,<sup>6</sup> the Urim and Thummim,<sup>7</sup> and the ephod.<sup>8</sup> Also, as instruments of the Lord themselves, prophets functioned as divinatory mediums that received and delivered the messages of God.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to these examples of Israelite divination, magic was generally condemned under the law of Moses. The main prohibitive passage is Deuteronomy 18:10–12, which suggests the types of magic employed by Israel’s neighbors:

3. Eric D. Huntsman, “Divination, Democracy, and Josephus,” in *Masada and the World of the New Testament*, ed. John F. Hall and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1997), 365–77; See also Hugh W. Nibley, “The Arrow, the Hunter, and the State,” in *The Ancient State*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1991), 1–32.

4. Robert K. Ritner, “Necromancy in Ancient Egypt,” in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, ed. Leda Circolo and Jonathan Seidel (Boston: Brill Styx, 2002), 89–95.

5. See generally Cryer, *Divination*; JoAnn Scurlock, “Magic (ANE),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 464–68.

6. Lev 16:8; Josh 18:6, 8, 10; 1 Chr 24:31, 25:8, 26:13–14; Neh 10:34; Est 3:7, 9:24; Ps 22:18.

7. Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21; Deut 33:8; 1 Sam 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65.

8. Exod 28: 4, 6, 8, 12, 15; Lev 8:7; 1 Sam 2:18, 28; 22:18; 23:6–9; 2 Sam 6:14; 1 Chr 15:27.

9. For example, see Exod 4:22, 5:1, 8:1; Josh 7:13; Judg 6:8; 2 Sam 7:5; Isa 38:4–5; Jer 2:2.

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD.

Other passages either strictly forbid magic, or present it in a negative light.<sup>10</sup>

Here it is important to note that magic and religion did not have the same structural dichotomy in antiquity that they have had in recent tradition. As Stephen Ricks observes of the Bible, “The major factor dividing acts that might be termed ‘magical’ from those that might be termed ‘religious’ is the perceived power by which the action is performed.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, the biblical sanctions that explicitly prohibit magic, or the passages that present certain acts as pejoratively magic, are not condemning rituals of a supernatural or miraculous nature *per se*, but rather, are delineating between Israelite norms and outside practices.<sup>12</sup> This is wholly contrasting to the more traditional (and less accurate) definition of magic, which “was said to be manipulative and coercive,” and always in opposition to religion, which “was perceived as supplicative.”<sup>13</sup> This definitional distinction is crucial in understanding divination in the ancient Israelite cultus.

Divination itself was not the primary concern of the lawgiver, but rather the accompanying idolatry—the wandering after “strange gods, [and] abominations” (Deut 32:16). It is therefore not surprising to find many instances of divination that are mentioned positively in the Bible.<sup>14</sup> Among these, the requesting of an oracle from God, through a priest or a prophet, is paramount.

### Inquiring of the Lord

Consultation of deity was a part of life in ancient Israel. Ancient Israel’s oracles are ritual indicators of the relationship that the chosen nation had with

10. Lev 19:26; 20:1–6; Exod 22:18; 1 Sam 28; Isa 8:49; 57:3; Ezek 22:28; Mal 3:5.

11. Stephen D. Ricks, “The Magician as Outsider in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament,” in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (New York: Brill, 1995), 143.

12. Ricks, “The Magician as Outsider,” 135–39.

13. Ricks, “The Magician as Outsider,” 134. Ricks argues that this view of magic is a recent invention of the past several centuries that is derived from Protestant reactions to Catholicism, and is far removed from the view of the ancient Israelites, who labeled practices “magical” if they operated outside of the Israelite cultus and were therefore subversive to Israel and Israel’s god.

14. Even aspects of Israel’s legal system seem to derive from a divination context. For example, see Ze’ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT, and Winona Lake, MI: Brigham Young University Press and Eisenbrauns, 2001), 10, where the etymology of the Hebrew *torah* is linked to codified collections of cases decided by the casting of lots (*varah*).

God: that Israel was a suppliant, and that Israel's God would hear and answer requests for revelation. To request an oracle meant to "inquire of the LORD." In the Hebrew Bible, there are several idioms that can be translated into this phrase, and three verbs are commonly used by the biblical authors: *bqš*, *š'l*, and *drš*.<sup>15</sup> These three verbs are roughly synonymous with each other, and generally mean "to seek," "to request," "to ask," or "to search." However, each verb can divulge a separate connotation, which is significant when identifying ritual patterns in a text, as will be shown below.

When an Israelite name for God is used as the object conjoined with one of these verbs, this forms a Hebrew idiom. The name most often used in the Hebrew Bible for deity in this particular idiom is the Tetragrammaton, YHWH,<sup>16</sup> a name which has been held by Jewish tradition to be ineffable, but which is conventionally rendered by scholars in English as *Yahweh*. In the biblical manuscripts this name was given the diacritic vowels of a substitute word, *adonai* (Hebrew for "my lord") that was intended to be pronounced instead of the sacred Tetragrammaton. The translators of the King James Bible followed the Jewish convention and substituted the English word LORD, in capital letters, for the Tetragrammaton. Thus, the idiom is most often translated in the King James Bible as "enquire of the LORD."<sup>17</sup>

This specific phrase reflects a certain unique oracular experience. Although the phrase does not signal a ritualized divine inquiry instance every time it is found in the Bible, the general meaning of "inquiring of the LORD" (that is, to diligently seek after God in righteousness) derived its connotation from the formal divine oracle type.<sup>18</sup> Instances of the formalized oracle associated with the phrase "inquire of the LORD," far outnumber the general, habitual meaning of the phrase.

The least frequently found of the Hebrew verbs associated with a formal query to deity is *bqš*, which is most often translated as "to seek."<sup>19</sup> It is this verb that is used in Exodus 33, where Moses sets up the "Tent of Meeting" in the tabernacle complex which he enters in order to mediate for Israelites, "every

15. Begg, "Inquire of God," 417–18.

16. The Hebrew name for deity *'elohim*, is sometimes used in this expression, but by far the most common name for deity used in the divine inquiry idiom is *yehwah*.

17. Of the difference between *enquire* and *inquire*, *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage* observes that this alternate spelling of the same word is based on regional difference; generally *enquire* is favored in British English, and *inquire* is used in American English. The translators of the King James Bible always used *enquire*, where Joseph Smith always used *inquire*. See Pam Peters, *The Cambridge Guide to English Usage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 282.

18. Begg, "Inquire of God," 417–18. Scriptural examples of this employment of the phrase include Isa 65:1–10; Hos 10:12; Amos 5:4–6; Zeph 1:6; 2:3; 1 Chr 22:19. Begg equates this usage with the NT term *zeteo*, "to seek."

19. Begg, "Inquire of God," 417–18.

one which sought (*mebaqqeš*) the LORD” (Exod 33:7). In this passage, Yahweh appears in the pillar of a cloud and communicates “face to face” with Moses (Exod 33:9–11). This verb is used much less frequently than the other two verbs of the paradigm, and generally behaves like the verb *drš*, which is analyzed below.

The second most common verb used in the inquiry setting is *šʾl*, which is translated as “inquire” (or “enquire” in the KJV).<sup>20</sup> This verb is consistently found in inquiry passages where divination instruments such as the Urim and Thummim are used.<sup>21</sup> When the narrative contexts that employ the verb *šʾl* are compared, they yield a similar pattern. In this pattern the setting is almost exclusively the sacral space of the tabernacle or the temple. The one wishing the oracle approaches the intermediary in the form of a priest. The question is asked and the priest “casts lots,” or manipulates the Urim and Thummim, in order to receive a yes or no answer.<sup>22</sup> The exact process of using the divination instruments is not known, but most passages suggest that a binary response is involved with the devices.<sup>23</sup> Thus, to “inquire of the LORD” (*šaʾal beyehwah*) in this narrative setting is to seek an answer to a simple question through means of priestly divination. Therefore the *šʾl* form of inquiry can be referred to as “priestly inquiry.”

The most frequent verb found for inquiries to God is *drš*.<sup>24</sup> The type of divination represented by this verbal idiom, according to Burke O. Long, is “apparently restricted to prophetism.”<sup>25</sup> Congruent with the prophetic institution, another scholar notably observes that the prophetic oracle “is never explicitly said to occur at a sanctuary.”<sup>26</sup> The person wishing for an oracle in this pattern approaches a prophet, requests an oracle, and receives a divine speech given by the prophet in behalf of God. Those requesting this form of oracle in the Hebrew Bible include Rebekah (Gen 25:22), Moses (Exod 18:15), Ahab and Jehoshaphat (1 Kgs 22:8), the Syrian king Benhadad (2 Kgs 8:8), King Josiah (2 Kgs 22:13), and certain wicked elders (Ezek 14:3; 20:1–3). These

20. Begg, “Inquire of God,” 417–18.

21. Begg, “Inquire of God,” 417–18. The Urim and Thummim are mentioned seven times in the Bible. Of these incidences, the ceremonial scene in Numbers 27 is preeminent. Here, Moses sets Joshua before Eleazar the high priest, and a divine commission is given: “And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask (*šʾl*) for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD” (Num 27:21). This example of the relationship between the priest and the Urim and Thummim perfectly employs the *šʾl* pattern of divine inquiry.

22. Begg, “Inquire of God,” 417–18.

23. For theories on the operation of the Urim and Thummim, see generally Cornelius Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: a Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); Ann Marie Kitz, “The Plural Form of Urim and Thummim,” *JBL* 116 (1997): 401–10.

24. Begg, “Inquire of God,” 417.

25. Long, “The Effect of Divination,” 490.

26. Begg, “Inquire of God,” 417.



inquirers either consulted with the deity themselves (in the case of Rebekah and Moses) or sought the assistance of a prophet. The *drš* form of inquiry can therefore be referred to as “prophetic inquiry.”

As a matter of technical language, prophetic inquiry passages contain certain phrases that indicate different stages of the narrative. If “to inquire of the LORD” (*lidroš et-yehwah*) is a phrase that marks the request for a prophetic oracle, then other phrases mark the delivery of the oracle. As a matter of prophetic speech, the phrase “thus saith the LORD” (*koh ’amar yehwah*) is often used in biblical prophetic inquiry deliveries and “introduces oracular language.”<sup>27</sup> The phrase, “the word of the LORD” (*debar-yehwah*) is also often used, and, as one scholar writes, is “to be interpreted exegetically as [a] technicalit[y] of revelation.”<sup>28</sup> The inclusion of these technical phrases to indicate the delivery of the oracle is often, but not necessarily always, a part of a prophetic inquiry narrative.

A salient example, both of the importance of prophetic divination, and of how the verb *drš* is used idiomatically to mark a scene of divine inquiry through a prophetic intermediary, is found in the account of Saul’s meeting with Samuel. Concerning this meeting the redactor writes, “Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire [*lidroš*] of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer” (1 Sam 9:9). Saul, seeking a message from God, inquires through a prophetic intermediary. Then Samuel, the authorized seer, receives a divine oracle in the form of “the word of God” (1 Sam 9:27) and delivers the message to Saul that he is to be anointed king of Israel (1 Sam 10:1).

The *drš* occurrences are worth special attention for several reasons. First, as this narrative shows, responses to the *drš* queries were far more fluid than the binary methods of instrumental inquiry in the *š’l* setting. It is necessary to note that in the biblical accounts the exact process of oracular delivery from God to prophet is, in every case, ambiguous, as the text seems to take these experiences for granted. The lack of detail about the divine transmissions assumes a degree of familiarity with prophetic divine inquiry. Thus in the Bible, though the process itself is uncertain, it is clear that the idiom “enquire of the LORD,” when the verb *drš* is employed, is frequently used to elicit an open-ended prophetic revelation of the word of God.

A second reason for paying particular attention to this verb form is that reasons for seeking this type of divine revelation seem to involve more dire circumstances than the other two types of inquiry mentioned above. Reasons

27. Donald W. Parry, “‘Thus Saith the Lord’: Prophetic Language in Samuel’s Speech,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1.1 (1992): 181.

28. H.C. Ackerman, “The Principal of Differentiation Between ‘the Word of the Lord’ and ‘the Angel of the Lord,’” *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 37.2 (January 1921): 145.

for using the *drš* inquiry include questions regarding an unusual pregnancy (Gen 25:22), legal disputes (Exod 18:15–16), and illness (1 Kgs 14:5; 2 Kgs 8:7–15). The most notable dire situations that required this type of inquiry are military crises (1 Kgs 22:4–7; 2 Kgs 3:5–11; Jer 21:2; 37:6–8). These, and other similar examples, are all instances when a binary response with a divination instrument is not sufficient, and where the word of the Lord is required.

Finally, as Long points out, “the institution of prophetic inquiry appears to have left substantially more impress on [biblical] literature [than priestly inquiry].”<sup>29</sup> As has been noted, in the *drš* instances are the most frequent in number of the divine inquiry passages in the Hebrew scriptures. They are also mentioned across a wide period of time, spanning several biblical epochs, from the time of the patriarchs right up to the Exile. They are requested by a wide variety of people: women, kings, elders, and commoners. Thus, in frequency, chronology, and individual employment, the *drš* form is the most universal of the divine inquiry passages in the Bible.

### Identifying Divine Inquiry Narratives

A framework for identifying a *drš* instance of divine query in the biblical narrative is suggested by Long to include (1) the setting and preparation for inquiry, (2) a request for an oracle, (3) the delivery of the oracle, and (4) the fulfillment of the oracle.<sup>30</sup> By applying this structure one can determine if narrative elements, what Long calls the “prophetic inquiry schema,” portray a genuine Israelite prophetic inquiry pattern in a given text.

A clear example of this pattern is found in 2 Kings 22. By applying Long’s narrative structure to this chapter, the elements of prophetic inquiry are clear:

#### *1. Setting and Preparation for Inquiry*

Under the reign of King Josiah a certain “book of the law” (generally agreed to be the book of Deuteronomy) is discovered in the temple repository (2 Kgs 22:8). The book is read before the King who is so distraught at the contents that he rends his clothing (2 Kgs 22:11). It is the legal and spiritual ramifications of the law that deeply concern the king who comments, “the wrath of the LORD . . . is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us” (2 Kgs 22:13). There is no recourse but to turn to Yahweh for guidance.

#### *2. Request for an Oracle*

In order to receive guidance in this extraordinary situation the king requests a party led by Hilkiah the high priest, to “Go ye, enquire of the LORD [*dirsu et-yehwah*] for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, con-

29. Long, “The Effect of Divination,” 494.

30. Long, “The Effect of Divination,” 494.

cerning the words of this book that is found. . . . So [they] went unto Huldah the prophetess . . . and they communed with her” (2 Kgs 22:13–14). Here the initial intermediary is a priest, whose role is typically limited to the *šʾl* setting, however the delegation travels to a prophetess who delivers the oracle in the form of a divine speech congruent with the *drš* form.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. *Delivery of the Oracle*

The prophetess delivers the oracle with the preface “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel,” and speaks the judgment in the first person as if in the voice of Yahweh, pronouncing destruction upon Israel for failure to follow the law, and blessings upon Josiah for his humility and penitence (2 Kgs 22:16–20).

### 4. *Fulfillment of the Oracle*

In 2 Kings 24, the words of Hilkiah are fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem and sacks the temple.

By examining this text, several observations arise that help to identify when it is appropriate to consult a prophetic oracle. First, this is a matter of supreme legal and spiritual significance. Ancient Israelite tradition made no distinction regarding standards of religion and law.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising to see the device of divine inquiry belonging to matters of spiritual importance, matters of legal significance, and matters where the two are inseparably intertwined.

A second observation is that there seems to be no precedent that the king could rely on to obtain guidance about this situation. Indeed, it was the law itself, that he found, which caused the unusual circumstance. The codified laws must have assumed the perpetuity of the book of the law. In other words, there is no mention in the law of what to do if you loose the law, through neglect violate many of its provisions, and then find the law again. Legally, this was a situation without precedent.

Lastly, this episode is seen as a matter of divine judgment. The rending of the clothes of the king and the pronouncement that “great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book” (2 Kgs 22:13), signify that displeasing deity is the chief concern, and therefore inquiring of deity is absolutely necessary.

The probing of this occurrence in 2 Kings 22 illustrates an important point about the *drš* prophetic inquiry. In almost every instance, the requesting party is faced with a drastic scenario. None of these requests for God to deliver his word are for mundane matters, and in the case of the military situations (1 Kgs 22:4–7; 2 Kgs 3:5–11; Jer 21:2; 37:6–8), the pregnancy (Gen 25:22), and other circumstances such as the sickness of the king of Syria

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32. Falk, *Hebrew Law*, 4–5.

(Kgs 8:7–15), the matters appear to have been of life or death. Even in the spiritual situations—that is, those matters not immediately relating to physical well being—the stakes are high: there are never requests for a prophetic divine inquiry to resolve minutiae. It is reasonable to assume that a request for deity to intervene with direct prophetic guidance was only solicited in singular circumstances. 2 Kings 22 contains at least three pressing scenarios that in themselves appear to justify prophetic consultation of deity: when spiritual and legal concerns intersect, when facing a matter without precedent, and when in fear of provoking divine judgment. It is in these scenarios that, as a last result, the recourse to divine inquiry is employed. It is also in these scenarios specifically, that the *drš* form of the phrase “inquire of the LORD” is found.

### Ancient Israelite Elements in the Book of Mormon

Many Hebraisms have been identified in the Book of Mormon text.<sup>33</sup> The consistent appearance of these Hebraisms indicates that the Book of Mormon is a translated record. The exact original language (or languages) of the Book of Mormon is not known for certain.<sup>34</sup> However, archaeological discoveries of ancient texts that contain Hebrew transcribed in Egyptian hieratic, or Hebrew written in Egyptian characters, support the claim that the reformed Egyptian of the Book of Mormon was a type of Hebrew written in Egyptian.<sup>35</sup> This claim is reflected in the translated English text itself where instances of Hebrew speech abound. Linguistic analysis of the Hebraic elements in the Book of Mormon allows readers to see significant contextual meanings that are not superficially apparent in the English translation.

33. Studies in this area include Sidney B. Sperry, “Hebrew Idioms in the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era*, October 1954, 703, 728–29; John A. Tvedtnes, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey,” *BYU Studies* 11.1 (1970): 50–60; Tvedtnes, “Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?” in “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, October 1986, 64–66; Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 77–91.

34. In the first chapter of the book, Nephi describes “the language of [his] father,” which he is using to write his record, “which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” (1 Ne 1:2). Near the end of the record Moroni, writing about a thousand years after Nephi, states that the record is written “in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian” (Morm 9:32). Moroni further comments that “if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew . . . and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record” (Moro 9:33). These statements suggest that though the characters on the plates were related to Egyptian, elements of Hebrew had persisted throughout the history of the Nephite people, and that their spoken language consisted of a form of Hebrew.

35. See John A. Tvedtnes and Stephen D. Ricks, “Jewish and Other Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5.2 (1996): 156–63.

Scholars have also found cultural and ritual elements in the Book of Mormon that reflect an ancient Near Eastern, and specifically an ancient Israelite, cultural backdrop. Like the linguistic examinations of Hebraisms, these cultural analyses serve to contextualize the Book of Mormon and show a depth to the text that is not initially apparent. Examples of how this type of analysis have served to elucidate the Book of Mormon, and place the text in an ancient Israelite setting, include studies done about patterns of ancient Israelite warfare, horticulture, festivals, legal codes, and temple typology that are found in the Book of Mormon.<sup>36</sup> These cultural patterns are not necessarily informed by a linguistic analysis of the text, although they may be enhanced by a linguistic approach where there is sufficient evidence of a Hebraism.

Both the linguistic and the cultural approach enhance our appreciation and awareness of the Book of Mormon by providing evidence that the text is actually of ancient Israelite origin, providing a framework that more properly contextualizes the book, and therefore enhances our understanding. The rest of this paper attempts to combine a linguistic and a cultural analysis of ancient Israelite divination found in the Book of Mormon.

### Divine Inquiry in the Book of Mormon

Because the Book of Mormon is written in English, identifying linguistic elements of divine inquiry patterns is more complicated than in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is obviously impossible to study the book's original Hebrew, or Egyptian. However, if potential translated idioms are found within a narrative that contains all the elements of the divine inquiry pattern identified in the Hebrew Bible, an identifiable circumstance of Israelite divine inquiry can be made with comfortable surety. Also, if a narrative in the Book of Mormon matches the structure identified with specific divine inquiry schema in the Bible, either priestly or prophetic, assumptions about verb choices can be made with more latitude.

The Book of Mormon contains the verb *inquire*, or a related form, 31 times in 20 different settings.<sup>37</sup> Of these 31 instances, the verb is employed 13

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36. Among many volumes that examine the cultural setting of the Book of Mormon are Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988); Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988); Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988); John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999); Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch, eds., *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002).

37. 1 Ne 15:3, 8; 1 Ne 16:24; Jacob 2:11; Mosiah 7:2, 11, 13; Mosiah 8:6; Mosiah 26:13, 19; Mosiah 28:6; Alma 12:8; Alma 16:6, 20; Alma 17:22; Alma 18:8; Alma 27:7, 10–11; Alma 40:3, 7, 9; Alma 43:23; Alma 57:17, 28; Hel 9:12–13; 3 Ne 28:37; Ether 1:38; Moro 8:7.

times in completely interpersonal communications, where there is no explicit or implicit mention of deity, such as when King Mosiah grants a group of men to “go up to the land of Lehi-Nephi, to inquire concerning their brethren” (Mosiah 7:2). That leaves 18 times that the verb *inquire* is used with deity as the object of inquiry. Of the separate narratives, where one narrative could use inquire several times in the same passage, 12 deal directly with deity.<sup>38</sup>

In 11 of these settings, the exact phrase, “inquire of the Lord,” or its past tense variant, “inquired of the Lord,” is used. The phrase is used 14 times in the Book of Mormon. Ten of these narratives are candidates for matching the divine inquiry pattern. The other passage does not precisely fit the narrative pattern, but is related to the oracular institution, and will be discussed as well. Each of the ten narratives corresponds precisely to the prophetic form of the inquiry pattern pointed out by Long: they have (1) the setting and preparation for inquiry, (2) a request for an oracle, (3) the delivery of the oracle, and (4) the fulfillment of the oracle (see table 1 for comparisons of Book of Mormon and Biblical prophetic divine inquiry passages).

The ten narratives of Book of Mormon divine inquiry candidates can be categorized into three groups: dire crises of family/tribe/state (1 Ne 16:24; Ether 1:38; Mosiah 28:6), military crises (Alma 16:6, 20; Alma 27:7, 10–11; Alma 43:23), and matters of special ecclesiastical or spiritual importance (Jacob 2:11; Mosiah 26:13; 3 Ne 28:37; Moro 8:7). Each of these instances offers motivations for a prophetic oracle that are comfortably nestled within the framework provided by the biblical *drš* setting. Each would be considered a valid reason for requesting a divine oracle in ancient Israel. Each is a matter of singular circumstance, a matter of life or death, or a matter where only divine interposition can solve a problem.

By applying the framework suggested by Long to these narratives, the accuracy of the Book of Mormon in describing an ancient Israelite divine inquiry scenario is illustrated. As prophetic narrative patterns are identified in the Book of Mormon the contexts of these narratives are enhanced. In addition, Book of Mormon details help to illuminate the prophetic oracle accounts in the Bible.

### Lehi as a Prophetic Inquirer

In the first few passages of the Book of Mormon, Nephi, the chronicler, describes one prophetic experience after another. These experiences begin in 1 Nephi 1, with Lehi, and grow to include Nephi and Lehi together receiving concurrent prophetic manifestations in later chapters. Prominent among Lehi’s prophetic manifestations are visions and dreams, for which he is called

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38. 1 Ne 15:3, 8; 1 Ne 16:24; Jacob 2:11; Mosiah 26:13, 19; Mosiah 28:6; Alma 16:6; Alma 27:7, 10–11; Alma 40:3, 7, 9; Alma 43:23; 3 Ne 28:37; Ether 1:38; Moro 8:7.

“a visionary man” (1 Ne 2:11; 1 Ne 5:2, 4). Lehi’s prophetic calling is fundamental to his authority to lead his family into the wilderness and to the New World. Lehi may have received his prophetic calling relatively late in life when compared with his contemporary Jeremiah, whose prophetic ethos was already established contemporaneously at least in the written record of the brass plates.<sup>39</sup> These prophetic narratives may have been a way of establishing that Nephi and Lehi were prophets in every respect, therefore legitimizing their leadership to their followers and descendants. If this is the case, it would be judicious of Nephi to include as many nuances of prophetic evidence as legitimately possible.

Among the prophetic experiences that Lehi has, one matching the divine inquiry pattern is given. In 1 Nephi 16 the prophetic narrative pattern is clear:

*1. Setting and Preparation for Inquiry*

In the wilderness, Nephi breaks his steel bow, his family suffers and angers at Nephi for want of food (1 Ne 16:18). This scenario is a matter of life and death for the pilgrim family of Lehi, and certainly warrants a request for divine guidance. Nephi prepares himself to receive instruction by making a bow and arrow out of wood, and by arming himself with a sling and stones (1 Ne 16:23).

*2. Request for an Oracle*

In the words of Nephi, “I said unto my father: Whither shall I go to obtain food? And it came to pass that he did *inquire of the Lord*” (1 Ne 16:23–24, emphasis added). This exactly conforms to the prophetic inquiry pattern: Nephi formally requests direction from Lehi, whom the text identifies as a prophet. Lehi immediately seeks the will of God, speaking the divine inquiry idiom.

*3. Delivery of the Oracle*

The oracle, in the form of a divine speech, follows: “And it came to pass that *the voice of the Lord came unto my father*” (1 Ne 16:25, emphasis added). After Lehi is chastened for murmuring, “the voice of the Lord said unto him: Look upon the ball, and behold the things which are written (1 Ne 16:26). On the Liahona, Lehi sees a new writing—the written word of the Lord (1 Ne 16:29). The voice, or word, of the Lord is always the oracle received in the biblical prophetic inquiry narrative, as it is here.

*4. Fulfillment of the Oracle*

Nephi obeys the oracle, and goes up “into the top of the mountain, according to the directions which were given upon the ball,” where, “it came to pass that I did slay wild beasts, insomuch that I did obtain food for our families” (1 Ne 16:30–31). The divine oracle is proven true by the fulfillment of the prophecy, completing the last requirement of the pattern, and finishing the prophetic inquiry narrative.

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39. 1 Ne 5:13. For a comparison of Lehi and Jeremiah, see David Rolph and Jo Ann H. Seely, “Lehi & Jeremiah: Prophets, Priests, & Patriarchs,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 357–80.

Interestingly, this narrative combines elements from the *drš* and the *šʾl* patterns of the Bible. The question posed to the prophet is not as open ended as typical prophetic inquiries found in the Bible; it is one that is answered with both the word of the Lord and a manifestation from an oracular instrument, the Liahona.<sup>40</sup> It would be interesting to know what the original verb was that was inscribed on the golden plates and translated as “inquire” by Joseph Smith in this passage.

The delivery and fulfillment of this oracle, both through a divine instrument, and through the word of the Lord, was evidence to Lehi’s family that he was indeed, “a visionary man.” Furthermore, the inclusion of this example of prophetic behavior in Nephi’s founding narrative serves to legitimize the authority of the founding patriarch, especially his authority to leave Jerusalem and begin a new nation.

The ancient Nephite audience would have been familiar with oracular inquiry from the brass plates; many of the biblical prophetic inquiry narratives come from the Book of Jeremiah, of whom we are expressly told that his prophecies were written in the brass plates. Additionally, Lehi’s family was possibly familiar with prophetic inquiry from personal observation in Jerusalem; the prophetic inquiry sequence in 2 Kings 22, and several others instances would have happened right around the time of Lehi.

Of the biblical record, Long observes that, “with the exile, this form of prophetic inquiry disappeared.”<sup>41</sup> Of the prophetic divination, he states:

It has become clear that divinatory practices in ancient Israel, particularly in their early prophetic modes, had a striking influence upon Israelite literature. . . . Prophetic divination produced . . . a narrative “inquiry schema,” which structured whole reports, and decisively shaped larger narratives, as well as . . . shorter anecdotes.<sup>42</sup>

It is readily apparent in the case of the Book of Mormon, that, beginning with Lehi, not only did the institution of prophetic inquiry survive among this group of Israelites, but the narrative pattern associated with this type of oracle survived in their literature as well.

### Nephi as a Prophetic Inquirer

With a better understanding of the precise phrase that is used to formally query deity, and its implications, another occurrence in Nephi’s narrative may

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40. The Urim and Thummim are not mentioned by name in the Book of Mormon, and only the Liahona, in this passage, fills the requirements of an instrument of divination used in an inquiry setting. The interpreters were used to translate, but are never mentioned in a divining context similar to the Urim and Thummim of the Bible.

41. Long, “The Effect of Divination,” 491.

42. Long, “The Effect of Divination,” 497.



take on enhanced meaning. Nephi's brethren are consulting with each other outside the tent of their father about certain ambiguous aspects of Lehi's revelations. Nephi, who, significantly, has just returned from a profound prophetic experience of his own, returns their query to him concerning the matters with the rejoinder, "Have ye *inquired of the Lord?*" (1 Ne 15:8, emphasis added).

The didactic purpose of this phrase as a general admonishment to be righteous and prayerful is somewhat reinforced by Nephi's own commentary in a previous verse regarding the words of Lehi, that they "were hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord," and that his brothers could not understand them, "they being hard in their hearts, therefore they did not look unto the Lord as they ought" (1 Ne 15:3). But given the special prophetic connotation that the phrase "inquire of the Lord" evokes in most biblical passages, and given the incredible prophetic experience Nephi had immediately preceding his question, Nephi's remark could be interpreted as another implied question to his brothers: "Are *you* prophets?" This would explain the brothers' response as, not a remark of apathy, but of factual comparison: "We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us" (1 Ne 15:9, emphasis added). Or in other words, "We are not prophets, as you and Father appear to be." If this is the case, it would fit properly within the narrative role 1 Nephi fills in establishing the prophetic mantles of Nephi and Lehi, and Nephi's question cannot be easily discounted as merely a didactic rejoinder.

### **Divine Inquiry in Family, Tribal, or State Crises**

The 1 Nephi 16 passage is one of three in the Book of Mormon where an appeal to deity through a prophetic medium is used to solve a crisis that affects the perpetuation of a family, tribe, or state. The other two passages are Ether 1, and Mosiah 28.

In Ether 1, Jared, in the confusion following the destruction of the tower of Babel, asks his brother to "inquire of the Lord whether he will drive us out of the land . . . and cry unto him whither we shall go" (Ether 1:38). The brother of Jared does so, and receives the word of the Lord, instructing him to prepare his tribe to journey to the new world.

This prophetic inquiry in this passage has several interesting features. First, it predates Israel. In this way it functions like the Rebekah passage in Genesis 25. It is evidence that Jesus Christ, as Yahweh, functioned by name, and in power, as God to peoples predating Israel. This is a powerful theme in the book of Ether, most poignantly presented with the appearance of the premortal Christ to the brother of Jared. The prophetic inquiry narrative enhances this theme.

As a second point, it is possible that this narrative pattern could also have purposely been used by the editor Moroni. He might have couched this

prophetic experience in a narrative structure he was familiar with from the brass plates. If this true it would be an example, as Long observes above, where the prophetic divination in the Bible (or in this case, the brass plates, and other Nephite records) “decisively shaped larger narratives, as well as . . . shorter anecdotes.”<sup>43</sup>

Finally, like the 1 Nephi 16 account, this record of prophetic divination functions in a founding narrative account that serves to legitimize the leader of a new colony, destined for the promised land, as a prophet. The security of the family, and therefore the destiny of a future people in the new world, is in jeopardy, a dire situation where divine inquiry is justified.

The Mosiah 28 scenario, like the 1 Nephi 16, and the Ether 1 passages, is a matter of family security. The recently converted sons of King Mosiah all wish to go on an unprecedented and dangerous mission to the Lamanites. This constitutes not only a local family crisis, as the sons wish to place themselves in the way of evident peril, but a crisis of state as well, because the sons are all potential heirs to the Nephite throne, occupied by their aging father. It is unsurprising that Mosiah, as a prophet-king, would turn to the Lord for a direct answer. The record states:

And king Mosiah went and *inquired of the Lord* if he should let his sons go up among the Lamanites to preach the word. And the Lord said unto Mosiah: Let them go up, for many shall believe on their words, and they shall have eternal life; and I will deliver thy sons out of the hands of the Lamanites. (Mosiah 28:6–7, emphasis added)

This oracle was fulfilled exactly as the Lord promised.

### Divine Inquiry in Warfare

Like the Israelites in the Bible, the Israelites in the Book of Mormon used prophetic oracles in military crises. Several biblical passages are devoted to this tradition.<sup>44</sup> In the Book of Mormon, the same narrative structure is followed. When Zoram, chief captain of the Nephite armies (Alma 16:6), and later Moroni, who holds the same office (Alma 43:23), approach the prophet Alma for direction concerning military strategy, they are following in the venerable Israelite tradition of consulting a prophetic oracle in a matter of war. The prophet Alma, upon receiving revelation from the Lord, notifies each captain concerning the position and intention of the opposing Lamanite armies. In both cases, military victories are achieved by following the counsel of the oracle.

An additional passage in Alma involves prophetic divination in a military crisis. The matter of the safety of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies in Alma 27 is grouped

43. Long, “The Effect of Divination,” 497.

44. 1 Kgs 22:5–15; 2 Kgs 3:11–13; Jer 21:2; 37:7.

within this category because it is in the context of war. The Amalekites incite the Lamanites to slaughter the defenseless Ammonites, and the safety of an entire group depends on the inquiry to the Lord made by the prophet Ammon (Alma 27:2–7). The word of the Lord is delivered and the Ammonites move to Jereshon (Alma 27:11–14, 26). The people of Ammon are saved, and are kept from breaking their covenant to never again bear arms.

### Divine Inquiry in Ecclesiastical Matters

There are four times in the Book of Mormon where prophetic inquiry is used to clarify doctrinal matters, or matters of ecclesiastical importance: Jacob 2:11, Mosiah 26:13, 3 Nephi 28:37, and Moroni 8:7. The use of the prophetic inquiry narrative in these chapters reinforces the prophetic role of each of the participants and illustrates the important role divine inquiry had in dealing with unusual or unprecedented issues in the Nephite church.

In Jacob 2, the prophet Jacob issues a sweeping call to repentance to the Nephite people recently arrived in the new world. He begins his sermon with the statement: “I must tell you the truth according to the plainness of the word of God. For behold, as *I inquired of the Lord*, thus came the word unto me, saying: Jacob, get thou up into the temple on the morrow, and declare the word which I shall give thee unto this people” (Jacob 2:11, emphasis added). It is significant that the sermon from which this statement of divine inquiry is taken is preceded by the preface that Jacob spoke “unto the people of Nephi, after the death of Nephi.” Perhaps, this divine inquiry narrative served to legitimize the prophetic role of Jacob after the death of his brother, the prophet-king Nephi.

As in the beginning, so at the end of the Book of Mormon, divine inquiry is still in practice. The prophet Mormon figures in prophetic inquiry narratives in two situations. The first is his request for clarification on a doctrinal matter relating to the three Nephites disciples selected by the Savior “who were caught up into the heavens, that I knew not whether they were cleansed from mortality to immortality” (3 Ne 28:36). Mormon states, “I have *inquired of the Lord*, and he hath made it manifest unto me that there must needs be a change wrought upon their bodies” (3 Ne 28:37, emphasis added). He then explicates the doctrine regarding translated beings that he received from the Lord.

A second issue that Mormon appeals to divine inquiry for is found in Moroni 8. In this chapter Moroni includes an epistle written by his father concerning the matter of pedobaptism that has crept up among a local congregation. The narrative setting certainly warrants an appeal for divine guidance, and Mormon’s quick reaction is indicative of the seriousness of this doctrinal and ecclesiastical matter: “For immediately after I had learned these things of you *I inquired of the Lord* concerning the matter” (Moro 8:7, emphasis added).

The record of the delivery of this oracle adds a dimension toward understanding the process of prophetic divination that is not explicit in any other divine inquiry narrative: “and the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moro 8:7, emphasis added). The precise revelatory language of “the word of the Lord” (*debar-yehwah*) is indicative of an oracle and is used elsewhere in the Bible and the Book of Mormon in prophetic inquiry narratives.<sup>45</sup> However, here, when Moroni couples the technical phrase with the descriptive “by the power of the Holy Ghost,” the nature of the prophetic oracle is distilled into concrete Christian terms.

To summarize, this passage is significant because it indicates that the Israelite prophetic institution of divine inquiry was perpetuated throughout Nephite history, that the narrative pattern for this oracle remained intact as well, and that the process of receiving prophetic oracles is fundamentally through the Holy Ghost.

### Alma as a Prophetic Inquirer

One more matter in the Book of Mormon merits prophetic inquiry, and is deserving of especial treatment. Alma’s role as a prophetic inquirer has already been treated in the military crises. The other instance of Alma’s use of the prophetic oracle is found in Mosiah 26. The entire chapter conforms to the prophetic inquiry narrative and deserves a more thorough examination.

#### 1. *Setting and Preparation for Inquiry* (1–6)

Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that . . . did not believe the tradition of their fathers. . . . And they would not be baptized; neither would they join the church. And they were a separate people as to their faith . . . [and] they did deceive many with their flattering words, who were in the church, and did cause them to commit many sins; therefore it became expedient that those who committed sin, that were in the church, should be admonished by the church.

#### 2. *Request for an Oracle* (7–13)

And it came to pass that they were brought before the priests . . . [who] brought them before Alma, who was the high priest. . . . Now there had not any such thing happened before in the church; therefore Alma was troubled in his spirit . . . and he went and *inquired of the Lord* what he should do concerning this matter, for he feared that he should do wrong in the sight of God.

#### 3. *Delivery of the Oracle* (14–32)

And it came to pass that after he had poured out his whole soul to God, *the voice of the Lord came to him*, saying: Blessed art thou, Alma. . . . And because thou hast inquired of me concerning the transgressor, thou

45. For biblical examples, see 1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Kgs 3:12; 2 Chr 18:18; Ezek 20:45. For Book of Mormon instances, see Jacob 2:4, 27; Mosiah 26:34; Alma 43:24; Ether 1:33; Moro 8:7.

art blessed. . . . I say unto you, Go; and whosoever transgresseth against me, him shall ye judge according to the sins which he has committed; and if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also. . . . Now I say unto you, Go; and whosoever will not repent of his sins the same shall not be numbered among my people; and this shall be observed from this time forward.

4. *Fulfillment of the Oracle* (33–37)

And it came to pass when Alma had heard these words he wrote them down that he might have them, and that he might judge the people of that church according to the commandments of God. And it came to pass that Alma went and judged those that had been taken in iniquity, according to the word of the Lord. And whosoever repented of their sins and did confess them, them he did number among the people of the church; And those that would not confess their sins and repent of their iniquity, the same were not numbered among the people of the church, and their names were blotted out.

Given the length of this passage, and that the entire chapter conforms to the prophetic inquiry pattern, it may be that this is the most detailed account of Israelite divine inquiry that is available. A few points should be made.

First, the entire procedure is a display of vast jurisdictional movement. The accused are discovered apparently *in flagrante delicto* by many witnesses (Mosiah 26:9), and taken before the local congregation of teachers, who deliver them to a higher congregation of priests, who submit the case to Alma, the prophet-high priest (Mosiah 26:7). This is in accordance with Israelite tradition, where, according to Ze'ev Falk, “the Hebrew clergy exercised various judicial functions,” and “formed special tribunals in the sanctuary.”<sup>46</sup> All of this is done under the direction of King Mosiah, who is consulted so that he might “judge them according to their crimes” (Mosiah 26:11). Mosiah defers the case back to Alma, issuing a special tribunal, as is the prerogative of the king.<sup>47</sup>

Second, apparently there was no provision in the written law for the type of crime, or crimes, committed by this group of church members. The text does not reveal the nature of the crimes committed. If the matter was a regular crime of sexual transgression, apostasy, or idolatry, it would most likely be a matter of relative ease to determine punishment. This is a matter with no precedent (Mosiah 26:10), and perhaps an extremely difficult, or impossible case to apply the written law to. Whatever the nature of the transgression, it encompasses civil and ecclesiastical realms, and is singular enough to require divine guidance.

Finally, Alma's chief fear seems to be the divine displeasure caused by this singular circumstance. After weighing the matter in his mind, considering all the facts, and consulting King Mosiah, the record states that “the spirit of

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46. Falk, *Hebrew Law*, 47.

47. Falk, *Hebrew Law*, 40–49.

Alma was again troubled; and he went and *inquired of the Lord* what he should do concerning this matter, for *he feared that he should do wrong in the sight of God*” (Mosiah 26:13, emphasis added).

In comparison with the biblical justifications for consulting a prophetic oracle, Mosiah 26 is a classic case. It is a matter of both spiritual and legal significance, it is a situation without precedent, and it is a matter whose outcome carries a heavy sense of divine judgment.

The resolution to this problem comes, after a prophetic inquiry is requested, in the form of a divine speech from the Lord. However, the word of the Lord to Alma is far grander in detail than any other biblical or Book of Mormon divine inquiry response. It contains individual communiqué as well as general laws and statutes. It contains the doctrinal requirements for salvation, including faith in Christ and reception of necessary ordinances. It contains an intimate depiction of the mercy of the Great Jehovah, for “as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me” (Mosiah 26:30). The case in Mosiah 26 conforms precisely to all parameters of the divine inquiry pattern, and deserves to be considered not only as the *locus classicus* of divine inquiry schema in the Book of Mormon, but of all Israelite literature.

### Conclusion

The Book of Mormon text claims to be the record of ancient Israelites. Therefore evidence of Israelite authenticity—linguistic, cultural, or otherwise—that is found in the text (especially of things not known during the time of Joseph Smith), reinforces the claim that Joseph translated the Book of Mormon, and that it is indeed a record of an ancient Israelite people. This study examines the prophetic divination of ancient Israel—the institution itself, the narrative pattern that this institution left in the biblical text, and the discovery of this narrative pattern in the Book of Mormon. The ancient Israelite practice of formal, ritualized consultation of deity is signified in the Bible by the English phrase “inquire of the LORD.” This phrase has two notable Hebrew counterparts that each belong to a narrative pattern of divine inquiry. The most frequently occurring pattern utilizes a prophetic intermediary with the oracle coming in the form of a divine speech as the word of the Lord. Questions posed to this oracle were almost always as recourse to singularly unique circumstances, where no other means of solving the problem were available.

The Book of Mormon contains ten examples of divine inquiry that contain the phrase “inquire of the Lord,” or a variant. Each of these fulfills the requirements of Israelite prophetic inquiry. Each contains a proper motivation for consulting deity: matters of warfare, family/tribe/state crises, and of unusual ecclesiastical matters. Each contains idiomatic language unique to the prophetic oracle type. Each conforms precisely to the narrative pattern of prophetic inquiry discovered in the Bible.

These narratives exist over a wide chronological range, from the beginning of the book to the end. Their existence sheds considerable light on the Book of Mormon. They highlight the vital role of prophets. In some cases they show evidence of serving the unique purpose of establishing the legitimacy of certain prophets. Additionally, the Book of Mormon examples of prophetic inquiry contain insights unseen in their biblical counterparts. The Moroni 8 account shows the process of receiving revelation; that the word of the Lord comes to prophets through the power of the Holy Ghost. The Mosiah 26 account shows the nature of Israel's God; that his motivation for delivering oracles is his personal care and concern for the children of men and for his church. Finally, the inclusion of the prophetic inquiry narrative is one piece of evidence to suggest that the Book of Mormon has an ancient Israelite origin.

Table 1: Divine inquiry pattern in the Hebrew Bible and in the Book of Mormon

Elements	Setting and preparation	Request for Oracle	Delivery of Oracle	Fulfillment of Oracle
Gen 25:	4-10	11-13	14-19	20-27
1 Kgs 22:	1-4	5-6a, 7-9, 15a	6b, 10-14, 15b, 17, 28	30-38
2 Kgs 3:	4-10	11-13	14-19	20-27
2 Kgs 8:	7	8-9	10-13	14-15
2 Kgs 22:	8-11, 13b	12-13a, 14	15-20	11-14
Jer 21:	1	2	3-14	39: 1-7; 52:4-11
Jer 37:	1-2, 4-5	7	6-10	52:12-15; Lam 4:17
Ezek 14:	1	3b	2-3a, 4-11	implied
1 Ne 16:	18-23a	23b-24	25-30	31-32
Jacob 2:	2-10	11a	11b, 23-33	implied
Mosiah 26:	1-12	13	14-32	33-39
Mosiah 28:	1-5	6	7-8	Alma 17:35; Alma 19:22-23
Alma 16:	1-4	5-6a	6b	7-8
Alma 27:	1-6	7-11a	11b-13	14-15, 21-30
Alma 43:	17-22	23	24	25-42
3 Ne 28:	4-32, 36	37a	37b-40	4 Ne 1:14; Mormon 8:10-11
Ether 1:	33-37	38-39	40-43	5:2-12
Moro 8:	2-6	7a	7b-8	9-21

# CLEMENT OF ROME AS SEEN THROUGH AN APOSTOLIC PARADIGM

DAVE NIELSEN

OVER the last one hundred years, the nature of the callings, duties, and influence of the apostles in early Christianity has been one of the most perplexing issues facing New Testament scholarship. The last century has seen a number of works about the office of the apostle in the early church.<sup>1</sup> For years the consensus among scholars was that the office of the apostle as instituted by Christ was not important in and of itself. Proponents of this view see the office and the men who hold it as useful only for the purpose of bringing converts to Christ, after which a rebirth in the Spirit was the only thing needed for them to stay in the fold of the good shepherd. Recently, however, other arguments have surfaced that debate the point. Bovon and Bockmuehl, in particular, have been very outspoken and have persuasively written on the way they think the apostleship should be interpreted in ecclesiastical history. Bovon's major thesis is that the early Christians preserved the memory of the apostles for certain reasons.<sup>2</sup> Those men who were with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry

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1. See, among others, Francois Bovon, *Studies in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003); Hans Dieter Betz, "Apostle," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:309–11; Walter Schmitals, *The Office of the Apostle in the Early Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969); R. Schnackenburg, *Apostles Before and During Paul's time*, in W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 287–303; F. Agnew, *On the Origin of the Term Apostolos*, CBQ 38:59–53; "The Origin of the NT Apostle-Concept: A Review of Research," *JBL* 105.1 (1986): 75–96; A. Ehrhart, *The Apostolic Succession in the First Two Centuries of the Church* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953); E. J. Goodspeed, *The Twelve: The Story of Christ's Apostles* (Philadelphia: J. C. Winston Co., 1957); E. Molland, "Le développement de l'idée de succession apostolique," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 34 (1954): 1–29.

2. Bovon, *Studies*, 1–2. The four reasons he gives are (1) the memory serves as an ethical model for the Church; (2) commands love, and love equals a deepening, developing Christian notion of Communion; (3) preserves doctrine; and (4) provides authority, especially in relation to apostolic origins of episcopal seats.



were the links to the citizens struggling with alienation and sporadic persecutions to the source of their new faith. After they had passed, Bovon argues, it was the memory, almost to the point of veneration, that was a source not only of strength to the early Christians but also a source of identity. No doubt the memory of these courageous men was important. However, I propose to take this one step further. The saints in the first generations not only preserved the memory of the founders because it helped preserve their distinct identity but because the office which they held was vital to the church's foundation and organization. From the New Testament we learn that as long as the apostles were in touch with and correcting the branches in the different cities, they were being instructed in the word as the Lord would want them to be.

One of the earliest leaders to emerge after, or, depending on the dating of some New Testament writings, during the time of the traditional twelve was a man we know from tradition as Clement of Rome. In sum we have two epistles attributed to this author, the second generally regarded as spurious and unrelated to the first.<sup>3</sup> Early Christians, it can be argued, did see Clement in an apostolic light and looked to him as an apostle in the sense that they understood from his forebears. This view arises from the fact that early Christians used his first epistle to the Corinthians for centuries. He wrote in the same style and on the same topics, and when seen in the milieu of the late first century, those who used the book had no reason to doubt its authority or see it as anything less than what they had received from the traditional apostles.<sup>4</sup>

The respected English scholar J. B. Lightfoot notes that 1 Clement was held in very high regard by later Christian writers and quoted frequently, including by Clement of Alexandria, who considered it scripture.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the German patristic historian Adolf von Harnack wrote his magnum opus on 1 Clement "since there is no other document which is able to rival it in respect to historical significance."<sup>6</sup> Why did the Corinthians and those who read the letter afterwards respect it to the degree that they did? The purpose of this paper is to examine why those in this early period of the church did so, and attempt, as best we can, to see Clement as they would have.

The paradigm that we will use is a traditional one, articulated by Lee McDonald in his *Formation of the Biblical Canon*,<sup>7</sup> consisting of five main

3. Donald Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 2.

4. These arguments are central to the paper and will be further elucidated below.

5. Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers in English* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 39.

6. W.C. van Unnik, "Studies on the So-Called First Epistle of Clement: The Literary Genre" in *Encounters with Hellenism: Studies on the First Letter of Clement*, ed. Chillers Breytenbach and Laurence L. Welborn (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 117.

7. Lee M. McDonald, *Formation of the Biblical Canon*, (rev. ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 229.

areas: apostolicity, orthodoxy, antiquity, inspiration, and church use. Because we are dealing with an apostolic paradigm, I will first examine the nature of the apostleship in the New Testament and then see how Clement relates. Each of the other five categories will be treated to conclude that, based on the ways the “canonical” writings were judged, the early Christians were not doing anything different by using Clement as a book of holy writ.

### The Apostleship in the New Testament

The use of the word *apostolos* in Koine Greek is unique. Throughout classical literature, the word is always used in relation to a messenger tied to the sea, be it commercial shipping or a military expedition. The word is not at all common outside of the New Testament (and Josephus). It is used a total of 79 times therein, four-fifths of that coming from the pens of either Paul or Luke.<sup>8</sup> This is fitting because of their particular contributions to our knowledge of how the gospel originally went forth. Luke’s main purpose is to show that the admonition of Christ was to go preach to all nations, indeed to “Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Luke also mentions for the first time the life of the most well-known missionary that is later developed in his own writings. Paul, who calls himself the apostle of the Gentiles (Rom 11:13), spent the bulk of his time preaching to those not of the house of Israel after his call from Christ (Acts 9, et al.).<sup>9</sup> These simple facts teach us very much about the apostleship. These were men who did not fear a thing, who went and wore out their lives, even unto death, in preaching the kingdom to all people, regardless of station, status, or creed. This founding principle would prove to be very influential for those who came after them to fill their shoes.

The calling of the *apostoloi*, both original and subsequent, shows the main qualifications that were required of the apostles. We read in the Gospels that the men who would later become the twelve were no different than others who followed Christ. Gospel authors use the term *mathetai* to describe all the disciples early on.<sup>10</sup> A major transformation is seen in the first mission to which Christ called the twelve.<sup>11</sup> Kittel points out that the synoptists give no reason for this initial endeavor, other than the initiative of Jesus.<sup>12</sup> In

8. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols (trans. G.W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–76), 1:402.

9. Bible Dictionary, LDS 1979 edition of the KJV, 680. BD says that, “it was primarily through his ministry that the gospel was established among those of gentile lineage throughout Europe and Asia Minor, although the way was opened by Peter’s baptism of Cornelius.”

10. Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:424.

11. See Matt 10; Mark 3; Luke 6.

12. Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:425.

chapter 10 Matthew states that Christ called twelve disciples (*mathetas*) to him and gave them power (*exousia*) to act in his name. In the very next verse they are called the twelve apostles (*apostloi*), and Matthew proceeds to give a list of their names.

Here we see the word *apostolos* being used in the traditional and canonical sense. These men were sent out to perform a specific duty on behalf of another and were given power (*exousia*) to act in his stead. After further instructions by Christ of what he expects of them, they proceed to have a wonderful mission, and after their return (which Matthew does not describe), the term *apostolos* is no longer used in connection with them for the rest of the gospel account.<sup>13</sup>

Luke supplies the rest of the information about the calling of apostles in the New Testament. After the passion, resurrection, and forty-day ministry of Christ, we read that the small group of believers gathers to call another apostle to fill the void left by the betrayer Judas. Acting as leader, Peter calls for one among the 120, one who had been with them since the baptism of John and had been a witness of the resurrection, to complete the select group.<sup>14</sup> After they cast lots, Matthias was chosen to join the others and was then counted among them “of this ministry and apostleship” (Acts 1:25).

However, this time the group was to remain. They were called in the same manner, but now the events that immediately followed solidified their place in the church. Acts 1:3–4 tells us that Christ was with them 40 days after he appeared triumphant from the garden tomb. The exact details of what was taught elude us, but this much we do know. He spoke of things “pertaining to the kingdom of God” which they knew they would go preach to all nations. But, he tells them in v. 4 to not go until they receive “the promise of the Father,” which v. 5 qualifies as a coming endowment of the Holy Ghost. On their first mission they had been briefly given this endowment; now they would be given what they needed to act in the office of teaching and leadership that Christ held when he was on the earth. The very next chapter in Acts

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13. Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:427. Matthew does not mention their return, but Mark does. After this he too refers to those sent on this mission as *mathetai*, and withholds the title of apostle. Kittel later notes that this is because the reference is not due to the character that the office bestowed on the men, but an endowment, an actual change of their role in the community of disciples because of the calling extended them from Christ. Some have suggested in recent scholarship that this portion of Matthew 10 is a later apologetic addition for the purpose of tracing a later fabricated office to the time of Christ. The fact that all synoptic Gospels agree on this topic shows that it is very likely that the office and its nature, as we have been discussing, is of earliest origin and not a later interpolation.

14. The significance of the number twelve is quite interesting in relation to the apostleship. We know from biblical usage elsewhere that the number twelve symbolizes priesthood and perfection therein. So whatever Christ had done among them or ordained them unto post-resurrection, the twelve were to represent the fullness of his law, organization, and priesthood as a unified body.

details the events of the Pentecost, the wondrous power that was promised them in Acts 1:8. All that Christ had promised them was being fulfilled. This time, though, they would not return to their master in the flesh to give an accounting of their mission. They would now go forth and teach with a permanent endowment of the same *exousia* they had held before, only to give an account to their master when they had finished the course given them and passed from this mortal existence.

Luke, after the initial spread of the gospel to Judea and Samaria, introduces the reader to the one who would take it the rest of the way. Paul, the great persecutor, was “in the briefest of moments . . . transformed”<sup>15</sup> while on the road to Damascus and was changed into the Lord’s greatest instrument of conversion for the nations of the Gentiles. A study of Paul’s life and teachings, though edifying, is not within the parameters of this study. His ordination or acceptance to the apostleship is, however, for Luke is very selective in his use of the title *apostolos*.<sup>16</sup>

We read that after his conversion and healing by Ananias in Syrian Antioch, Paul spent time in Arabia, most likely preaching, and then elsewhere in the holy land among the church. He informs us that at the time of the Jerusalem council, Peter, James, and John “perceived that grace was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship” (Gal 2:9). Hall is very instructive on what this passage means. The Greek word used for fellowship, he notes, is *koinonia*, which “has the meaning of being a fellow participant in an association; a partner, comrade, or companion; one belonging to a select group.”<sup>17</sup> To summarize, Hall points out that after a decade of working for the Savior, they would not simply say welcome to the Church, but to the office that they held: that of apostleship. It is in this sense that Luke refers to Paul and Barnabas as *apostoloi* in Acts 14:14.<sup>18</sup>

### Apostolicity

The period directly following the immediate first generation of the followers of Christ was the most important formative stage for the church. Even though the extent of it is unknown, we know that the apostleship had grown beyond the original core<sup>19</sup> to adapt to changes that arose in the early church. The deaths of their leaders would have been a tough blow to take. It is human nature to look for a leader, one that exhibits right principles and

15. John Hall, *New Testament Witnesses of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 229.

16. Kittel, *TDNT*, 1:428.

17. Hall, *Witnesses*, 237.

18. Hall, *Witnesses*, 237–38. That they presumably filled vacancies in the group of special witnesses is not sure and cannot be proven definitively.

19. By this I mean the group after Judas that included Matthias.

right authority. G. W. H. Lampe's work on the early church argues that they did not have the ability to judge the corpus of texts as a whole as canonical or not, and took decided the matter on a case by case basis. Any book's "intrinsic apostolic authority" was judged by the degree to which Christ spoke through it to them, and how closely that work mirrored the teachings of the apostles, as they interpreted them.<sup>20</sup> Others, like Tertullian, judged the authority of a work based on the connection it had with the apostles themselves, the reasoning being that since the apostles were close to Jesus historically, any close to them would have a much better grasp on things. Thus Tertullian placed Mark and Luke under the primacy of Matthew and John.<sup>21</sup> Historically we see some looking to Rome; the supremacy of its See was accepted early on by the Christians because the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul are said to have taken place there. The leader of the church there would thus have been seen as a natural successor.<sup>22</sup> The epistle of Clement to the Corinthians can certainly be said to speak the words of Christ on account of the scripture and divine precedence it relies on. Also, as will be further explored below, 1 Clement definitely belongs to the generation that immediately followed the apostles. This and the following categories show how he was seen as fulfilling the role that the original twelve and their immediate successors would have.

### Orthodoxy

The occasional nature of the writings of the New Testament becomes apparent to any who closely read the texts. Because the term orthodox is anachronistic in relation to the time the New Testament texts were being composed, there is no one group of teachings that permeates all 27 books.<sup>23</sup> Because 1 Clement is written to the Corinthians, we will briefly examine the structure of the letters in the Pauline corpus and see how the text of Clement relates.

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20. G. W. H. Lampe, *The Early Church* (London: SCM, 1956), 91.

21. McDonald, *Formation*, 232.

22. Developments in later centuries show that the leaders of the big four cities of the empire and of the church, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, had more ecclesiastical say and power with what was going on. I am trying to say here that it is possible that this movement began during the time of Clement, who would have inherited this elevated position in the eyes of those he wrote to.

23. Students of the New Testament will immediately remember that in the speeches of Peter and Paul in Acts (but also abundantly found elsewhere) is found a unifying theme: the *kerygma*. This is a five-point presentation that pervades these speeches, namely that (1) Jesus is the Son of God; (2) he suffered and died; (3) he was resurrected and ascended to heaven; (4) he will come again in glory; (5) we need to act on this knowledge (morally).

Reading 1 Clement feels very much like reading a Pauline epistle.<sup>24</sup> The first thing that strikes a reader is the opening formula he uses.<sup>25</sup> 1 Clement 1:1 reads: “The Church of God that temporarily resides in Rome, to the Church of God that temporarily resides in Corinth, to those who have been called and made holy by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be increased among you, from the all-powerful God, through Jesus Christ.” Any number of Paul’s letters could be used to demonstrate a parallel. Ephesians 1:1–3 reads:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

As Nibley rightly points out, the only thing missing is Clement’s claim to authority.<sup>26</sup> A possible explanation is that Paul was writing during missionary travels and was never really able to call one place a home or base. If it was understood or at least known among the Corinthians what was happening in Rome, Clement would not need to state his authority.

The overall structure and intent of the works of both authors are similar. Quasten divides the text into four sections, just as a Pauline letter, containing an introduction (Chapters 1–3), two main parts (Chapters 4–36 and 37–61), and a closing benediction (Chapters 62–65). The first main part is generally about the problems in Corinth, those of discord and envy, and tells them how to overcome those pitfalls. The second main section, the Quasten notes, is more specific to the situation in Corinth. To teach them discipline, Clement discusses the rigorous training of the Roman army and their obedience, as well as a call to remember the patriarchal hierarchy of God’s people in the Old Testament.<sup>27</sup> Just as Christ had set up the organization of his people, so have the apostles chosen righteous men to lead in their stead, and it is not meet for

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24. Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 12, 63.

25. Similar passages are found in the closing formulas that are important to our discussion but are not included above so as to avoid redundancy. 1 Clem. 65:1 asks for them to send news back by his envoys, and v. 2 closes with “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and with all those everywhere who are called by God through Him. Through whom be to Him all glory, honor, power, greatness, and the eternal throne, forever and ever. Amen.” Eph 6:21 says that someone would be by to check on them, then 23–24 reads, “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ with sincerity. Amen.”

26. Hugh Nibley, *Apostles and Bishops in Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 24–25.

27. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 2005), 1:44.

the church members to take it upon themselves to choose another. The overarching theme in the epistle is love, a love for fellow members, their leaders, and ultimately of Christ that leads to proper behavior and respect of his church. Obviously, the purpose of both is to correct a wayward group of saints. And, the way they do this is by a two-part structure that is very Pauline, that of the indicative/imperative method. Within the main body of the text there are numerous periscopes that illustrate this. Chapters 14–18 are indicative sections wherein Clement is referring to Old Testament parallels of obedience and submission to the Lord’s will, including (among others) the stories of David, Elijah, and Job. Then in chapter 19, Clement applies it to his audience, admonishing them to “gaze intently on the Father and Creator of the entire world and cling to his magnificent and superior gifts of peace and acts of kindness. . . . We should realize how he feels no anger towards his entire creation.”<sup>28</sup> Clement goes on to exhort them for the next ten chapters until he begins another teaching section.

Paul uses this style in most of his letters in the New Testament so that he can address the occasion that caused him to write to them by teaching correct principles, then admonishing them to do what is right in his ethical section. Let us look at 2 Thessalonians for an example. The people in that Grecian town were having difficulties understanding the parousia (a widespread problem in the early church), and Paul writes to instruct them more fully. After an opening and thanksgiving section comprising chapter 1, he teaches them about the signs of the coming (2 Thess 2:1–3:16), then teaches by means of paranesis and exhortation that they need to actively work towards the time of the second coming, and prepare themselves for the arrival of their Lord, not just wait for it. He then closes with a blessing and greeting (3:16–18).

Other rhetorical styles illustrate the stylistic connection between Paul and Clement. Though a known and well-used device, the diatribe is characteristic of Paul in the corpus of the New Testament. Rom 3:3–4 reads: “For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” 1 Clem. 33:1 is very similar: “What then shall we do, brothers? Shall we grow idle and not do what is good? Shall we abandon our acts of love? May the master never let this happen to us!”

Both use the illusion of the church being the body of Christ.<sup>29</sup> Both 1 Cor 12:12–27 and 1 Clem. 37:5 talk about the relationship between body parts and how that relates to the church. Another similarity between the fathers has to do with charity. 1 Clem. 49 and 1 Cor 13 almost parallel each other in their

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28. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths we Never Knew* (New York: Oxford, 2003), 71.

29. 1 Cor 12:12–27: “And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”

discussions on charity, especially the verses from 1 Cor 13:4–7 that focus on the unifying characteristic of love. Another very clear parallel has to do with the importance of the office and role of bishop. 1 Clem. 44:1–4 reads:

So too our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that strife would arise over the office of bishop. For this reason, since they understood perfectly well in advance what would happen, they appointed those we have already mentioned . . . to the effect that if these should die, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. Thus we do not think it right to remove from the ministry those who were appointed by them or, afterwards, by other reputable men, with the entire church giving its approval. For they have ministered over the flock of Christ blamelessly and with humility, gently and unselfishly, receiving a good witness by all, many times over.

The famous corresponding passage in Ephesians 4:11–14 states:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

More may be gleaned from examining the texts. It is safe to say that Clement's role, whether given to him by the hand of Peter or not, would seem quite authoritative as it was being read by the people in Corinth.

### Inspiration

Clement claims inspiration in the same breath wherein he says that Paul wrote under the influence of the Holy Spirit (1 Clem. 63.2). However, because of the sheer volume of quotes taken from the Old and New Testaments, some have claimed that Clement is no more than an editor using an ancient form of “cut and paste.”<sup>30</sup> The bulk of the quotations and allusions come from the Hebrew Bible, while the New Testament is used less frequently and never reproduced verbatim.<sup>31</sup> The question of exactly what Clement used is difficult to answer because he alludes to so many scriptures without actually citing them. It is confirmed that at the very least he knew and quoted the synoptic Gospels, Hebrews, much of the Pauline corpus, Acts, Peter, and James.<sup>32</sup>

30. Jefford, *Guide*, 68; Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to Early Christian Writings* (New York: Oxford, 2004), 455.

31. Hagner, *Testaments*, 135.

32. Hagner, *Testaments*, 135.



Because an in-depth study of each is worthy of a book, and because many as of late have questioned his use of Hebrews in particular,<sup>33</sup> it is there we will focus on this section.

The closeness of the two in the relevant sections was noticed early and led many, including Eusebius, to wonder whether or not Clement was the author (or translator) of Hebrews.<sup>34</sup> His dependence on the text, though again not verbatim, is confirmed by the fact that he follows the text of Hebrews where a LXX passage is used more closely than the LXX vorlage (1 Clem. 36:3–4; Heb 1:3–4; Ps 103:4–5).<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the best example, though there are many, of textual dependence (based on topical order and Greek grammar) is Heb 11 compared to 1 Clem. 9–12. That he used Hebrews is not the thesis under consideration, but more why he did so. Goodspeed has suggested that Heb 5:12 was the impetus for the epistle in the first place. It states, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat.” His reasoning is that, if the epistle to the Hebrews had just been received in Rome, the “frequent reflection of its language and method is only natural.”<sup>36</sup> It is clear that Clement knew well and was taught by Hebrews, and because of this familiarity, he was able to relate the material to the situation with Corinth he was dealing with at the time, finding a mine of information and terminology “perfectly adaptable to . . . his own purposes.”<sup>37</sup>

It is well known that Hebrews itself relies heavily on the Hebrew Bible, as do other New Testament books, albeit not to the same degree as 1 Clement. We must remember that much of the New Testament is written in a way to show God working through history (Heilsgeschichte) for the salvation of Israel. As Hebrews quotes the Hebrew Bible to inspire faith and give examples through familiar material, so does Clement the same with the Corinthian church. Both Ellingsworth and Mees agree that Clement’s thought is independent at crucial points from that of Hebrews, as well as the fact that Clement is indebted to the same tradition of scriptural exegesis and exposition as the author of Hebrews.<sup>38</sup> When it is remembered that Clement is writing to

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33. Hagner, *Testaments*, 179–95.

34. Hagner, *Testaments*, 179. See also David W. Bercot, ed., *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 169.

35. Hagner, *Testaments*, 179–95.

36. Hagner, *Testaments*, 195, and note 2.

37. Hagner, *Testaments*, 195.

38. Edgar J. Goodspeed, “First Clement Called Forth by Hebrews,” *JBL* 30.2 (1911), 157–60. There is also one more element that may tie the two together, that they both rely on a common liturgical tradition. For more on this, see Fullenbach’s summary of scholarship in *Ecclesiastical Office and the Primacy of Rome* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1980), 17, as well as note 184.

a wayward congregation that has thrown out its leaders after a dispute over authority, it makes perfect sense that he would structure his themes and arguments as other books of scripture did, and rely upon the authority of the scriptures that were known by all.

### Antiquity

It is generally accepted that the letter to the Corinthians was written in 95 or 96 C.E. The *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem* fluctuate from between 70 and 140 C.E., respectively.<sup>39</sup> The consensus agrees with the 95/96 C.E. dating, based on the following evidence presented in the text.

The prologue (1 Clem. 1:1) states:

By reason of the sudden and repeated calamities and reverses which are befalling us, brethren, we consider that we have been somewhat tardy in giving heed to the matters of dispute that have arisen among you, dearly beloved, and to the detestable and unholy sedition, so alien and strange to the elect of God, which a few headstrong and self-willed persons have kindled to such a pitch of madness that your name, once revered and renowned and lovely in the sight of all men, hath been greatly reviled.

It is generally assumed that the “sudden and repeated calamities . . . befalling us” refer to the persecutions of the emperor Domitian near the end of his reign, circa 95 or 96 C.E. 1 Clem. 44:2 says that the presbyters installed by the hands of the apostles have died, as well as alluding to the passing of their successors (44:3). The church in Corinth is called ancient (47:6), and elsewhere we learn that elders from Rome have lived from boyhood to old-age since the time of the apostles (63:3). Thus we may assume, based on the traditional dating of Peter and Paul’s deaths to the Neronian persecution of 64 C.E., that it is most likely that Clement indeed belongs to the generation he refers to in 5:1, but must be in the twilight of his life. Though there is some disagreement, traditional Catholic sources place Clement third in line from Peter, which would perfectly place him at the end of the first century.<sup>40</sup> When we consider the dates that scholars attribute to some New Testament books, the dating of 1 Clement is seen with the proper significance. McDonald, summarizing other

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39. A full discussion of the dating arguments is not within the scope of this paper. For more information one should consult Andrew Gregory, “1 Clement: An Introduction,” *The Expository Times* 117.6 (2006), 223–30; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1:23–25; L. L. Welborn, “The Preface to 1 Clement: The Rhetorical Situation and The Traditional Date,” in *Encounters with Hellenism: Studies on the First Letter of Clement*, ed. Chillers Breytenbach and Laurence L. Welborn (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 197–216.

40. Charles A. Columbe, *A History of the Popes: Vicars of Christ* (New York: MJF, 2003), 21–24.

scholarship, states that “today’s more developed critical tools of investigation have enabled biblical scholars to show fairly convincingly that some of the literature of the New Testament—especially 2 Peter, probably the pastorals, and possible other literature as well—was written later than other non-canonical Christian books, later than the Didache, 1 Clement, Hermas, [and others].”<sup>41</sup> Thus both New Testament and apocryphal scholars place Clement well within the paradigm of canonicity.

### Church Use

Ehrman writes that “1 Clement was known and appreciated in parts of the Christian church for several centuries,” and that, according to Dionysius of Corinth, it was read side by side with Paul’s letter to them, cited by many church fathers, and that “it was eventually included among the books of the New Testament in several of our surviving manuscripts.”<sup>42</sup> We know that it was translated at an early date into Syriac, Coptic, and Latin—languages that would have covered most of the world missionaries were able to reach for the first few centuries of the church.<sup>43</sup> The same author also states that the text was broken up into pericopae so as to be read in liturgy of the worship service and had been (by 170 C.E.) an ancient custom.<sup>44</sup> Again Ehrman has written that around the same time (ca. late fourth century) in Alexandria, Didymus the Blind listed it as part of his canon.<sup>45</sup> The best preserved copy of the text is contained in the Codex Alexandrinus, which places it just after the apocalypse of John, again attesting to what Christians of the day thought of it. Another twelfth century Syrian manuscript places the two letters attributed to Clement immediately after the Catholic Epistles and before the Pauline.<sup>46</sup> Metzger has found that a fourth-century work from Syria called the *Apostolic Canons* lists both 1 and 2 Clement as part of the New Testament.<sup>47</sup>

It may come as a surprise to learn that, in fact, the name of the author does not appear anywhere in the text itself. The earliest reference is made by

41. McDonald, *Formation*, 237.

42. Holmes, *Fathers*, 28.

43. Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 409.

44. Unnik, *Studies*, 118, note 13.

45. Bart D. Ehrman, “The New Testament Canon of Didymus the Blind,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983): 1–21. For a complete and exhaustive list of who quotes 1 Clement and where, see J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers: Part 1, Clement of Rome* (Macmillan: London, 1890), 1:149–200. The references range from Barnabas and Ignatius, very early in the second century, all the way to the autographs of writers through the tenth century, and include such influential men as Polycarp, Hermas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Ambrose, and Augustine.

46. Holmes, *Fathers*, 39.

47. Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 313.

Dionysius of Corinth (ca. 170 C.E.) via Eusebius, who spoke of “the letter that was formerly sent to us through Clement.”<sup>48</sup> There is no way of confirming the truth or untruth of his statement. Since he is from the same town to which the letter was originally sent, in nearly the same generation, and since there is no objection against this, we follow suit.<sup>49</sup> Given the antiquity and the clues from the generation that followed the epistle, possible connections with the apostles themselves are intriguing. Philippians 4:3 refers to one Clement, whom Paul calls his fellow laborer and says his name is written in the book of life. The belief that both Peter and Paul both died in Rome after spending time there is almost universally accepted by scholars. Clement also alludes to being in contact with these great men themselves. 1 Clem. 5:1 reads, “But, to pass from the examples of ancient days, let us come to those champions who lived nearest to our time. Let us set before us the noble examples which belong to our generation,” afterward giving examples of the faithfulness of Peter and Paul in the face of persecution. The possibility of a close association with Paul and other leading authorities (most notably Peter in Rome), not only as an acquaintance but as a fellow missionary makes the appearance of a bestowal of authority very attractive. Even though Paul has a precedent for making his former companions into apostle material,<sup>50</sup> such a possibility remains just that and cannot be proven either way.

### Conclusion: The Emergence of Rome in the Affairs of the Corinthian Church

In his discussion on the bishopric of Rome, Nibley correctly points out that the See of Rome gained prominence simply because of its being in the most powerful city in the empire.<sup>51</sup> Quoting Norman Baynes, he also writes, “[the religion spread] from the provincial capital to the country side so that the provincial capital came to be regarded as the mother church,”<sup>52</sup> an idea later canonized after Nicaea that officially gave supremacy and power to the bishops of the large cities (especially the “big 4” of Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria). These notions were no doubt already in motion during the life of Clement, whose image of authority to others was increased because of the city in which he lived.

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48. Unnik, *Studies*, 119, especially note 16.

49. Unnik, *Studies*, 119.

50. In Acts 14:4, 14, Paul’s companion is called an apostle in the same breath as Paul. Although the bible dictionary says that Barnabas is not an apostle, but only mentioned as one, I affirm that he was indeed by this time inducted into the ranks and we simply do not have a record of it.

51. Nibley, *Apostles*, 75.

52. Nibley, *Apostles*, 83.

Many other scholars agree with the notion that the respect which the letter from Rome demands is particularly because of its birthplace. Cauwelaert speaks for most: “l’intimité de leurs relations ordinaires qui a en quelque sorte forcé les sentiments de solidarité chrétienne de l’Église de Rome à s’expliquer, dès lors que le bien de l’Église de Corinthe se trouvait en cause.”<sup>53</sup>

Still there are others who want to say that the letter is not a normal *correctio fraterna* but was written because of a latent sense of apostolicity.<sup>54</sup> The letter never specifically asserts its ecclesiastical authority, but there is never a denial of it either. Based on linguistic evidence and the occasion of the letter, we conclude with Unnik that Clement is sent as a symbol and marks the beginning of a natural and deliberate attempt of the church at Rome to take the place that Jerusalem and Antioch did before as the center of operations for the church.<sup>55</sup> This is especially poignant when we remember that the very reason the letter was written was to reprove a church who had deposed its leaders and to teach them that “a congregation is bound to act at all times within the lawful order commanded by God.”<sup>56</sup> Beyond the natural lessons contained in the scriptures that he quotes, Clement is not trying to teach anything new or revolutionary—he is simply trying to defend the system set in place by the apostles as they did in their official correspondences. In his championing the system of elders we see him taking the place of a leader watching over the church. This is significant in that the same system is now a binding aspect of apostolic tradition, and, as von Campenhausen notes, “It may be said that here for the first time the structures of canon law are included in the category of doctrines and dogma, and given the same sacral and immutable character.”<sup>57</sup>

Thus we have seen that the first epistle of Clement truly deserves its place of primacy in the study of the early Church. Clement indeed acted in an apostolic way, not only in the style in which he taught but also in the way he looked after the church. Because of this the earliest Christians recognized its inherent worth for themselves and for the Church, and accordingly used it since its inception in the first century C.E. until the fourth and fifth centuries, and after in the liturgies and sermons of the congregations throughout the empire.

Too often we, after mastering the scholarship and history of the past two millennia, judge too quickly about complex issues that have nothing to do with studying texts, but everything to do with a desire to do one’s best in following the Savior. I have attempted to show that, through internal textual and

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53. R. van Cauwelaert, “L’intervention de l’Église de Rome à Corinthe vers l’an 96,” *Revue d’histoire Ecclésiastique* 31 (1935): 305.

54. Unnik, *Studies*, 125.

55. For the entire exhaustive argument see Unnik, *Studies*, 124–80.

56. Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 87.

57. Von Campenhausen, *Authority*, 92.

external historical evidences, that it is possible to see the life and ministry of Clement of Rome through an apostolic paradigm. This standard was given them from the practices and traditions of the early church who knew the importance of the apostles who taught them. These bodies of believers received not only additional instruction but an identity that distinguished them from other religious movements, including other tangents of the emerging Christian faith. Their teachings were fundamental for the community, its worship and also its social life.<sup>58</sup> Through this study we are thus better able to see not only the institutions and structures of the early Christian movement, but also the perspective of those who lived in them and what they believed and considered to be important.

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58. Wolfgang A. Bienert, "The Picture of the Apostle in Early Christian Tradition," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1991), 2:26.



# BRIEF NOTES





# THE ACHAEMENID KINGS AND THE WORSHIP OF AHURA MAZDA: PROTO-ZOROASTRIANISM IN THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

AVRAM R. SHANNON

IN the two centuries prior to the Common Era, before Alexander the Great came on the world stage and left his indelible mark of Hellenism, the Near East was ruled by Indo-Aryans out of Persia, or modern-day Iran. These rulers, called the Achaemenids (from their family name), were different than any of the previous rulers over the Near East. For one thing, they were Indo-Europeans and spoke an Indo-European language, while the previous rulers had been Semites like the Assyrians or the Neo-Babylonians. These Achaemenid kings conquered the great cities of the Near East, such as Babylon, but did not assimilate in the same ways that previous conquerors had. They ruled their new empire not from the traditional sites along the Euphrates but from their ancient palaces on the Iranian plateau, from Susa, Ecbatana, and Persepolis.<sup>1</sup>

Another way they differed was in their religion. The Indo-Aryans east of the Zagros mountain always differed somewhat in their worship from the Semites of Mesopotamia and the Levant. Their gods were similar to those found in the Vedic scriptures of India. However, around this time, the Persian rulers began to worship in a new manner. They began to follow the teachings of Zarathustra, the prophet who founded Zoroastrianism, the religion named after him. While the first major king of the Achaemenids, Cyrus the Great, does not seem to be too devoted to what would be termed Zoroastrianism, one of his successors, Darius I, certainly was. It is possible to map a development of royal treatment of Zoroastrian worship by the Achaemenid kings, from Cyrus to Xerxes, through the use of the sources available to us, and to view the effect that this had on the development of the religion.

The prophet Zarathustra is a somewhat difficult figure to pin down in history, since there are many theories on when he actually lived. The standard

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1. W. J. Vogelsang, "The Rise and Organisation of the Achaemenid Empire: The Eastern Iranian Evidence," in *Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 3, ed. M. H. E. Weippert (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

theory is that he lived, taught, and wrote his hymns (which are the basic scripture of the Zoroastrian religious practice) in about the sixth century B.C.E. The primary reason for this is that it is in this period that the name of Ahura Mazda, the god of Zarathustra's Hymns, begins to show up in the inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings. Another theory, put forth by Mary Boyce, is that he lived around the 12th century B.C.E. The *Gathas* (the name for the hymns in Avestite, the language in which they are written) are therefore written down later, and represent a later version of his original teachings. There is much discussion on the matter, and the arguments made by the various sides are largely inconclusive. This paper, however, supposes a later Zarathustra rather than an earlier one, as the evidence in question seems, in this case, to point in that direction.<sup>2</sup>

There are a number of divine beings worshiped in Zoroastrianism, both anciently and modernly. Chief of these is Ahura Mazda, the ruler god. His name means "wise lord," and according to Herodotus he was worshiped as the wide sky above the earth.<sup>3</sup> His symbol appears to have been a winged disk, similar to that found in Egyptian usage, but uniquely Persian. Ahura Mazda is the primary god mentioned in the *Gathas*, and seems to have been the god that Zarathustra himself worshipped. He is the only god mentioned by name in any inscription belonging to Darius I, and he is presented by Darius as being the divine source behind the power of the king, which is very much in line with standard Near Eastern kingship ideology.<sup>4</sup>

Another important god is Mithra, who was associated in later Persian works with the sun. This same god is mentioned in the Vedic literature as Mitra, and then later worshiped by the Romans in his own mystery cult under the name of Mithras. Mithra is not mentioned in the *Gathas*, nor is he mentioned in any of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions before the reign of Artaxerxes II in 404–359 B.C.E.,<sup>5</sup> some eighty or so years after Darius I and his proposed establishment of Zoroastrianism as the state religion in the Persian Empire. Even Mary Boyce, who believes that the Achaemenid kings were Zoroastrian from the beginning and that Zarathustra's great religious innovation happened very early in Iranian history, recognizes that there is no

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2. The interested reader however is directed to the various discussions in Jarl Charpentier, "The Date of Zoroaster," *Bulletin of Oriental Studies* 3.4 (1925): 747–55; Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1982); and William Malandra, *An Introduction to Iranian Religion: Readings from the Avesta and Achaemenid Inscriptions* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

3. Herodotus, *Histories* 1.131.

4. G. W. Ahlstrom, "Solomon, The Chosen One," *History of Religions* 8.2 (November 1968): 94.

5. Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 251.

mention of the god Mithra in the hymns written by Zarathustra.<sup>6</sup> M. J. Edwards, discussing a difficult passage in Herodotus, argues that the early Persians associated Mithra with the morning star (i.e., the planet Venus), although not with the Greek goddess or her various Near Eastern counterparts.<sup>7</sup> He is later identified with the sun, and it is by this association that he is best known in the later Roman mystery cult that bears his name.

Fire plays an important role in the Zoroastrian religion, as it did in the old Iranian religion before it, and many of the depictions of the Achaemenid kings show them worshipping before an altar of fire. This seems to be more than merely a holocaust altar for the sacrificing of burnt offerings but a central part of the Zoroastrianism religion. Although a little out of the period under discussion, during the reign of Darius III (335–331 B.C.E.), in the waning days of the Persian Empire, according to the history of Quintus Curtius, Darius inspires his troops by “the Sun and Mithras, and the sacred and eternal fire.”<sup>8</sup> This passage illustrates both the centrality of fire in the religious views of the last of the Achaemenid kings, as well showing the close association between the sun and Mithra during his reign, almost to the point of equation.

Cyrus the Great does not make mention of Ahura Mazda in any of his inscriptions. In fact many of his inscriptions betray a sense of plurality that is not found in the texts of later kings of the Achaemenid dynasty. A very famous inscription of his illustrates this. This is the Cyrus Cylinder, found in Babylon, which contains a decree justifying his rule in the city of Babylon. In it he relates how Marduk, the local god of Babylon and chief god of Babylonia, appointed him to be king over Babylon. Later in the text he commands that temples be rebuilt and the various local cults be started up again. He then asks that these gods bless him. This text has a parallel in Ezra 1:1–4 in the Hebrew Bible. The portion of the text reads: “May all the gods whom I settled in their sacred centers ask daily of Bel that my days may be long, and may they intercede for my welfare. May they say to Marduk, my lord, ‘As for Cyrus, the king who reveres you, . . .’”<sup>9</sup>

This inscription betrays in Cyrus a plurality which the later Achaemenid kings rejected. In this inscription he invokes Marduk and Bel, a title for Marduk, to bless him, and mentions a number of other gods. Mary Boyce, once again trying to fit this text into her interpretation of the Achaemenid king's religion has observed, “Doctrinally, it is impossible to reconcile his

6. Mary Boyce, “On Mithra's Part in Zoroastrianism,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 32.1 (1968): 14, note 27.

7. M. J. Edwards, “Herodotus and Mithras: *Histories* 1.131,” *The American Journal of Philology* 111.1 (1990): 4.

8. Quintus Curtius, 4.13.12, in Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 106.

9. *Cyrus Cylinder* (COS 2.124, 314–16), trans. Mordechai Cogan.

acknowledgment of alien great gods with his own acceptance of Ahura Mazda as the one true God.”<sup>10</sup> Impossible, indeed. This is actually part of the reason for supposing for a later Zarathustra, because there is no textual evidence for his existence or his religion until after the reign of Cyrus the Great, in the mid sixth century B.C.E. Cyrus does not seem to be a worshipper of Ahura Mazda, at least not exclusively, nor does he seem to be an adherent of the teachings of Zarathustra.

Egypt is an interesting case for the discussion of the religion of the Achaemenid kings, as both Cambyses and Darius were installed as Pharaoh with, at least initially, all the related religious associations. Cambyses, the Persian king between Cyrus and Darius, only ruled for seven years, and appears to have been very involved in the Egyptian religion. Pierre Briant observes that Cambyses had a particularly strong sense of devotion towards Neith, an Egyptian goddess, including making donations to build her a temple.<sup>11</sup> Darius I, interestingly enough, also seems to have had some connection to the Egyptian religion, in that his cartouche has been found in Egyptian temples.<sup>12</sup> However, in general, the rule of Persians was not positive for the Egyptian gods and the priesthoods that maintained their cults. Quite the contrary, in fact. Lisbeth Fried has argued that all foreign religions and religious observances were tools of the Persian state, observing that “Persian rule had a strongly negative impact on the growth, development and autonomy of Egyptian temples.”<sup>13</sup>

However, this discussion gets more complicated with Darius I, one of the most powerful kings of his line, and a strong devotee of Ahura Mazda. The first mention of Ahura Mazda in a royal inscription dates to the reign of Darius I, and the primary god he mentions is Ahura Mazda.<sup>14</sup> Other gods are mentioned, but only in secondary usage. That Darius viewed Ahura Mazda as the premiere and the greatest god is clear from his inscriptions. One of the most famous of these is the Behistun Inscription, in which he describes the strength of his empire and of his reign. There is throughout his inscriptions a great ideological element including his divine kingship and “insisting especially on the privileged protection of Ahura Mazda.”<sup>15</sup> For example he claims that “By the grace of Ahuramazda<sup>16</sup> I am king; Ahuramazda brought the

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10. Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 65.

11. Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 473.

12. Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relationships in the Persian Empire in Biblical and Judaic Studies*, vol. 10 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 106.

13. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King*, 106.

14. Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, 2.103.

15. Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 211.

16. In Old Persian the divine name of Ahura Mazda is written as a single word, as here.

kingdom to me.”<sup>17</sup> Here we can clearly see that Darius I portrays his kingship as a divine gift from the god Ahura Mazda.

There are evidences from classical sources for Darius’s adherence to a religious system similar to Zoroastrianism, if not necessarily Zoroastrianism itself. One of these includes a recognition of ritual purity, and the impurity found from dead bodies. Herodotus records a story, and although he gives his standard anti-Persian spin on it, it is easy to see contained within it the idea of ritual purity. A certain Babylonian queen insisted, upon her death, on being entombed over a gate into the city of Babylon. It is recorded that Darius I was squeamish about passing under the gate for reasons not given by Herodotus.<sup>18</sup> We can assume that it was part of his religious devotions that made him squeamish, as it is unlikely a warrior king was overly upset over the mere presence of a corpse.

For Darius I, Ahura Mazda was the supreme god, the highest and holiest of beings, a god worshiped in his inscriptions with a singular fervor, similar to that found by the Hebrew prophets in the Hebrew Bible. He praises Ahura Mazda saying, “A great god is Ahuramazda who created this earth, who created yonder heaven, who created man, who created peace for man, who made Darius king.”<sup>19</sup> There seems to be a logical progression from one thought to the next. Thus first, Ahura Mazda creates heaven and earth, then he creates man, and then he creates peace for man. How is it that he creates peace for man? He makes Darius I king. Here we have both a compelling piece of propaganda as well as an interesting statement of Darius’s fervent belief in his appointment by Ahura Mazda and his willingness to serve him.

It has been argued that one of the purposes of the Achaemenid kings in the spreading of their Persian Empire was to establish Zoroastrianism as the state religion and to spread it abroad throughout the Near East.<sup>20</sup> Even with the strength of Darius’s conviction in Ahura Mazda as discussed above, this seems to be unlikely, especially since the kings subsequent to Cyrus followed his policy of official religious tolerance, as observed in the above discussion of the Cyrus Cylinder. According to the book of Ezra, in the Hebrew Bible, Darius I renewed Cyrus’s proclamation and continued his policy toward the Jews living in the Persian province of Yehud (Ezra 6:1–12). Once again quoting Boyce, “it is impossible to reconcile his acknowledgment of alien great gods with his own acceptance of Ahura Mazda as the one true God.”<sup>21</sup>

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17. Darius I, DfB 1.11–12, as quoted in A.V. Williams Jackson and Louis H. Gray, “The Religion of the Achaemenid Kings. First Series. The Religion According to the Inscriptions,” *Journal of the Oriental Society*, vol. 2, *Index to the Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vols. 1–20 (1900): 162.

18. Herodotus, *Histories* 1.187.

19. Darius I DNa, in Jackson, “Religion of Achaemenid Kings,” 162.

20. Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, 2.49.

21. Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, 2.65.

We should not try to reconcile these things. While it becomes obvious from the reading of the inscriptions that all the kings subsequent to Darius I worshipped Ahura Mazda, and many of the later elements of Zoroastrian religion, it is by no means as evident that the religion they practiced was Zoroastrianism as it is currently understood, and indeed, it would be unfair of us to do so. There does, however, seem to be a general movement toward this later stage, especially in the introduction of other deities into the pantheon, such as Mithra and Ahura Mazda's *spensa*, or angelic beings who attend to him and serve him in various spheres. Indeed, there is a general movement away from the tolerance found in the early kings, either in Cyrus's and Cambyses's seeming syncretism, as well as in Darius's following of the previous policies of the empire, and perhaps a recognition of the polytheistic roots of his new religion.

Xerxes, the son of Darius I, while following his father's faith in Ahura Mazda as the great god, did not do likewise with the tolerant policy put forth by Cyrus the Great. His policy seems to have been one of putting in place the worship of Ahura Mazda, where previously other gods had been worshipped, referred to as *daevas*, the word in the Avesta for false god. He talks about how Ahura Mazda created the earth and created peace, in a passage that parallels his father's nicely, but then goes on to report, "By the favor of Ahura Mazda I smote that land and put it into its place . . . within these lands where formerly the *daevas* were worshipped. Afterward, by the favor of Ahura Mazda, I destroyed the community of the *daevas* and proclaimed: The *daevas* you shall not worship. Where formerly the *daevas* were worshipped, there I worshipped Ahura Mazda and the holy Arta."<sup>22</sup>

There are a number of very important facts to be learned from this inscription. First, it clearly illustrates the less tolerant attitude of Xerxes, as compared to his forebears. Second, it shows how the religion of the Achaemenid kings was moving progressively toward something closer to modern Zoroastrian religious dogma, with the inclusion of a mention of the worship of Arta (a name that can be roughly translated as "righteousness"), who is one of the angelic demigods associated with Ahura Mazda. As previously mentioned, the only god named by Darius I in any of his inscriptions is Ahura Mazda, his premiere and primary god.

Another example of the evolving nature of the belief of the Achaemenid kings, and their relationship to the cult that they had adopted comes from later in the previously quoted inscription, where Xerxes says, "The man who has respect for that law which Ahuramazda has established, and worships Ahuramazda and Arta reverently, he becomes both happy while living, and becomes blessed when dead."<sup>23</sup> This is again very different from the

22. Xerxes XPh, quoted in Robert J. Littman, "The Religious Policy of Xerxes and the 'Book of Esther,'" *Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 65.3 (January 1975): 153.

23. Xerxes XPh, quoted in Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 550.

inscriptions of his father, which, while singularly devoted to Ahura Mazda and ascribing to him creation and the right of divine kingship, which he gave to his supporter Darius, are free from anything as theological as we have here. This is more than just the standard Near Eastern statement of “I am king because my god is best.” This is a real positive statement of a religious doctrine in an official royal inscription. By now, Zoroastrianism, in whatever form, was definitely the state religion.

Where previously in the Near East gods were held to be more powerful than others, never before was a god put forward as the sole true god, with everyone submitting to the worship of the “true god” in the true manner. Previously “god” had been used to justify conquest only in the sense of “My god is more powerful than your god.” Here we have, “My god will be your god too, whether you like or not.” This is the kind of ideology that would be used again and again during the Middle Ages, by both Christians and Muslims, and it finds its strongest historical antecedent here in the Persian Empire. It has often been argued that Zoroastrianism had a great influence on Judaism and subsequently Christianity, usually in a positive sense.<sup>24</sup> Here, however, we have illustrated something a little less positive, the tendency towards religious bigotry so often found in state religions.

Thus we can see in the process of moving from the standard Near Eastern treatment of religion in the reigns of Cyrus the Great and Cambyses to Xerxes’s enforcement of the worship of Ahura Mazda and the proto-Zoroastrianism that went with it a movement toward increasing dogmatism and standardization of the religion. Darius’s conversion to the worship of Ahura Mazda was to have interesting affects on the Persian Empire. As discussed above, it led to some religious intolerance. It also led to the formalization of one of history’s most interesting religions, a religion that continues on to this very day. The effect of the Persian prophet Zarathustra on Darius I and then again on Darius’s son had a far reaching influence that has lasted long after the empire that Cyrus created had fallen. Something very important happened sometime between the reigns of Cambyses and Xerxes, something into which the royal inscriptions give us much insight.

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24. For an overview of the various arguments see James Barr’s excellent article, “The Question of Religious Influence: The Case of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53.2 (June 1985), 201–35.





# MAGIC, BIBLICAL LAW, AND THE ISRAELITE URIM AND THUMMIM

TREVAN G. HATCH

WE know from seven passages in the Hebrew Bible that the Israelites used an object in the temple referred to as the Urim and Thummim.<sup>1</sup> This paper will discuss issues pertaining to this object in connection with magical practices and biblical law. It will not discuss the intricate details of its function or appearance, but rather its function and use in direct association with biblical law. First, I will establish a foundation by briefly discussing separation of church and state laws in ancient Israel. Second, I will discuss the influence of the Lord on the use and function of the Urim and Thummim. Finally, I will discuss legal matters pertaining to the high priest's use of the Urim and Thummim.

## Church and State Laws in Ancient Israel

It seems that in recent past we have witnessed, at least in the United States of America, an increase in outspoken opinion toward the separation of church and state. Among other things, prayer has been removed from public schools, the Bible has been removed from courtrooms, and most recently, there has been a surge to remove "God" from the Pledge of Allegiance.<sup>2</sup> In ancient Israel, however, the separation of church and state laws was almost nonexistent. The Western religious ideology of the 21st century C.E. would have been considered blasphemy in ancient Israel.

Textual and even archaeological evidence of the ancient world shows that the people of every civilization were motivated in everyday living by their god or gods. Evidence also shows, at least in ancient Israel, that the god, or gods,

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1. Passages that only mention the Urim are Num 27:21; 1 Sam 28:6. Passages that mention both the Urim and Thummim are Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65.

2. See "Under God' Should Be Removed from the Pledge of Allegiance," in *Religion in America*, ed. Mary E. Williams (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2006), 119–23.

of a particular civilization were involved in all aspects of living. YHWH, the God of the Israelites, instructed the prophets and kings in matters concerning law, punishments, architecture, and even war. In the ancient Near East, when a nation attacked and conquered another nation, the victors would burn and destroy the holy sanctuary and subsequently build their holy structure over the remains. This was meant as a statement to the effect of “our god is more powerful than your god.” The ideas, beliefs, and customs of the Israelites required the stamp of God’s approval in all things.

In Exodus 24:12 we read, “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction’” (NIV). Concerning this law, biblical law scholar Ze’ev W. Falk wrote, “Hebrew tradition did not distinguish between norms of religion, morality, and law.”<sup>3</sup> He also wrote, “Justice [was] administered in the name of God and quite often the court or official body convene[d] in the sanctuary or on the occasion of a religious ceremony.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Magic and the Urim and Thummim**

Was the Urim and Thummim used in connection with God’s law, or was it used by magicians? In answering this question, let us first differentiate between magic and religion, or magic and miracle. Dr. John Welch, a biblical scholar who specializes in ancient law, wrote:

Religion and magic are often distinguished by the ways they interact with the divine. For example, religion represents the practice of a certain ethnic or political group and is institutionalized. Its priests are publicly legitimized and recognized, and they receive authority from a sanctioned organization, which is generally dedicated to a specific deity. Magic, on the other hand, is outside of strict sociopolitical boundaries. Teachers of magic have to be sought out in secret, and their authority lies in their ability or knowledge. . . . Religion tends to ask, appeal to, and maybe coerce the divine; sacrifices, obligations, prayers, and worship all contribute to the practitioner’s appeal for a deity’s actions; religion makes petitions to God. Magic typically tries to command, control, or manipulate the supernatural by esoteric knowledge, imprecations, or special communication with deity.<sup>5</sup>

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3. Ze’ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press and Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 4.

4. Falk, *Hebrew Law*, 5.

5. John W. Welch, “Miracles, Maleficium, and Maistas,” in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 359.

Arthur E. Waite, in quoting the *Zohar*,<sup>6</sup> stated that faith was “being [in] friendship with God, whereas magic is friendship with the demon.” It is clear, at least from a biblical perspective, that Satan, who is the “demon,” often attempts to imitate the workings and miracles of God. An example of this is found in Exodus 7. In this chapter Moses cast signs and plagues in the name of YHWH upon the Egyptians, but Pharaoh’s magicians and sorcerers performed the same wonders with their “enchantments” as did Moses (Exod 7:11, 22; see also Exod 8:7, 18). A similar incident occurred when Moses, as well as the magicians of Pharaoh, turned their staffs into serpents (see Exod 7:12). Notice that it was Moses’s serpent that devoured the magician’s serpents in Pharaoh’s court. “This is a perfect example,” stated Peter Schafer, “of ‘your magic is my miracle’: what the Egyptian magicians do is . . . nothing but magic, and what Moses and Aaron do is miracle; and . . . miracle is superior to magic: miracle is performed with the aid of God, magic is performed with spell.”<sup>8</sup> Or one could say, with the “aid of the ‘demon.’”

We find passages in the Bible stating that the Lord strictly prohibited the working of magic.<sup>9</sup> God told the Israelites,

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God. The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so. (Deut 18:9–14, NIV)

Speaking of magic and divination in biblical times, the great Rabbi Maimonides of the middle ages stated, “I know that nearly all men [were] led greatly astray in matters of this kind and think there is some reality in them; but it is not so. There [were] even good and pious men of . . . faith who think there is reality in these practices, but they are only forbidden by the Torah.”<sup>10</sup>

6. The *Zohar* is a Jewish Kabbalistic work containing rabbinical commentary on the Pentateuch. The text was probably compiled around the 13th century C.E.

7. Arthur Edward Waite, *The Secret Doctrine in Israel: A Study of the Zohar and Its Connections* (London: William Rider & Son, 1913), 274.

8. Peter Schafer, “Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism,” in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. Peter Schafer and Hans G. Kippenberg (New York: Brill, 1997), 29.

9. See Isa 44:25; Lev 19:31; 20:27; Num 19:14.

10. Rev. A. Cohen, *The Teachings of Maimonides* (New York: KTAV Publishing, 1968), 123.

It is clear that the Lord did not approve of any man performing magic, for magic was the “abomination” of other “nations” (Deut 18:9). A way of proving whether a particular individual had performed a miracle or magic was by showing under what authority he acted. If an individual produced great miracles using another name beside the name of the God of Israel, he was considered a magician and would therefore be sentenced to death.<sup>11</sup> One must act under proper authority when performing miracles. We see an example of this in the Gospel of Mark. After Jesus had performed healings and miracles he was anxiously asked, “By what authority do you do these things?” (Mark 11:28). His critics wanted to be sure that works of evil and magic were not being performed in their land, especially near the temple.

Now that we have differentiated between magic and miracle, the question remains, was the Urim and Thummim used in connection with God or magic? The Urim and Thummim was kept in the possession of the high priest. It was used for the general purpose of understanding the will of God and for foreseeing the future. Textual evidence shows that not only did the Lord approve of the Urim and Thummim but he also commanded the high priest concerning how to use it (see Exod 28, Num 27:21).<sup>12</sup> When the Lord condemned divination, he was referring to the practice of divining in a name of a god other than his own. It was the “foreign” work of magic that the Lord did not approve of.<sup>13</sup>

### The Urim and Thummim and God’s law

*Laws regarding the Urim and Thummim and sacred vestments of the high priest.* The high priest was instructed to wear, as sacred holy vestments, “a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle” (Exod 28:4, KJV). The ephod, which was made of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet material, was an article of clothing made to drape over the shoulders with the sides joined together. The ephod contained two shoulder pieces by which two stones were attached to each side. The breastplate containing twelve pouches, each holding a precious stone bearing a name of a tribe, was placed over the ephod. The Lord instructed the high priest to fasten the Urim and Thummim to the breastplate and construct a pouch in which the Urim and Thummim could be placed. The Urim and Thummim pouch was most likely located behind the twelve stones in the middle of the breastplate. We assume

11. See Welch, “Miracles,” 350, 361–62. The Mishnah states that a magician should be put to death by stoning. See *San* 7:4, 11, as cited in Schafer, “Magic and Religion,” 34.

12. See Cornelius Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 231.

13. David N. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:469.

this was the case due to the Lord's instruction to have the Urim and Thummim placed over the "heart" of the high priest (see Exod 28).<sup>14</sup>

*Receiving revelation and instruction from the Urim and Thummim.* The only people permitted to use the Urim and Thummim in ancient Israel were the high priest and the prophets.<sup>15</sup> If a man desired to receive instruction from the Lord, it was required that he approach the high priest and request that he inquire of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim. The inquirer was also required to be spiritually clean. If the high priest inquired for any individual who was unclean in spirit, the Urim and Thummim would remain dark and no answer would be provided (see Num 27:21; 1 Sam 28:6). If the entire nation of Israel were collectively seeking guidance from the Urim and Thummim, they must all be clean. The Jerusalem Talmud<sup>16</sup> states:

They are called Urim, derived from or, "light," because they light the way for Israel, showing them what course to follow; Tumim, cognate to tanim, "whole," because they make the way "whole" before them. For when the children of Israel were "whole," that is, righteous, the Urim and Tumim would direct them along the proper path.<sup>17</sup>

Not only must the individual, or individuals, approaching the high priest be clean, but the high priest himself must also be clean and possess the Holy Spirit when inquiring of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim. The Babylonian Talmud states, "No priest was inquired of who does not speak by means of the Holy Spirit and upon whom the Divine Presence does not rest."<sup>18</sup> Louis Ginzberg, a noted Jewish scholar, stated, "Only the high priest who was permeated with the Holy Spirit . . . might obtain an answer. . . . If the high priest was worthy, he received an answer to every inquiry, for on these stones

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14. For a more detailed analysis of the clothing worn by the high priest see Van Dam, *Urim*, 141–63.

15. After the death of the prophets and the destruction of the first temple in the sixth century B.C.E., the Urim and Thummim ceased working (see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946], 6:69).

16. The Talmud is an ancient record which contain rabbinic discussions and writings regarding Jewish custom, law, and history. The Talmud is made up of two components. One component is called the Mishnah which contains the oral law, the other is referred to as the Gemara which contains discussions mainly pertaining to the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible). There are two sets of Tamlud which exist today: The Babylonian Talmud produced in Babylon (ca. 500 C.E.), and the Palestinian Tamlud, also known as the Jerusalem Talmud, produced in Jerusalem (ca. 200–400 C.E.). Today the Babylonian Talmud is recognized as the primary source of authority and rabbinic discussion. These texts are still widely used, especially among Jewish scholars.

17. Yoma 7:3, as cited in Avraham Yaakov Finkel, *The Torah Revealed: Talmudic Masters Unveil the Secrets of the Bible* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 134.

18. Yoma 73b, as cited in Van Dam, *Urim*, 32.

were engraved all the letters of the alphabet, so that all conceivable words could be constructed from them.<sup>19</sup>

After a request to inquire of the Lord, the high priest would then withdraw into the tabernacle to communicate with the Lord.<sup>20</sup> After the high priest inquired through the Urim and Thummim, the answer would appear in the twelve stones located in the breastplate. Each stone contained the engraved name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Several letters would become illuminated, thus creating a word.<sup>21</sup> An example of this would be Zebulon, Naphtali, Levi, which would render, *betel*. (There are no vowels in Hebrew and therefore, when the consonants became illumined, the high priest would have to render the meaning.)

*The Urim and Thummim was used in connection with war. We find, in Jewish tradition, instances where the high priest would not withdraw into the tabernacle to receive an answer from the Lord but would stand before a congregation, most likely in or near the temple courtyard. A perfect example of this would be prior to the Israelites going into war. The high priest, clad in the sacred vestments, would stand before the army and inquire of the Lord regarding war strategies and even inquire as to whether they would be victorious in battle.*<sup>22</sup>

One tradition states that the answer would come to the army by the “flashing of the two engraved stones on the shoulder piece of the ephod.”<sup>23</sup> Josephus Flavius, a Jewish historian (ca. 38–100 C.E.), stated that when the high priest participated in priestly ceremonies or spoke of the revelations given by YHWH to the people, the stone on the shoulder piece began to shine. He also said, “By means of the twelve stones [and Urim and Thummim], which the high-priest wore upon his breast . . . God foreshadowed victory to those on the eve of battle. For so brilliant a light flashed out from them.”<sup>24</sup> The *Zohar*, of the 13th century C.E., a mystical work of the Middle Ages, quoting Rabbi Hiyya, stated that not only did the stones flash brightly, but the face of the high priest shone bright as well.<sup>25</sup> All of Israel could see divine light emanating from the breastplate worn by the high priest, which showed them that they were protected by God. The troops would understand the message by the manner in which the stones flashed their light.

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19. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:172–73.

20. See I. L. Cohen, *Urim and Thummim: The Secret of God* (Greenvale, NY: New Research Publications, 1977), 29.

21. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:172.

22. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3:377–78.

23. Van Dam, *Urim*, 17.

24. Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 3.163, 166, 185; as cited in Van Dam, *Urim*, 19–20.

25. Van Dam, *Urim*, 25.

Another tradition states that the answer would come audibly. The Urim and Thummim would act as a device to project sound, probably similar to our modern-day microphone or speaker. This would make it possible for all the troops of Israel to hear the instruction from the Lord, and therefore every person would know exactly what the battle plans entailed, otherwise confusion may have crept in.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps this is the reason Israel was so successful in defeating their enemies, at least during the days of the tabernacle and the First Temple Period.

We find in the law strict orders from the Lord against the wearing of the priestly vestments outside the tabernacle or the courtyard of the temple (see Lev 16:23). There is however, at least one possible exception. The high priest was commanded to wear his priestly vestments with the Urim and Thummim while accompanying his army into battle. Not only did the high priest bring along the Urim and Thummim and his priestly robes onto the battlefield, but he also brought the ark (see Josh 6). A passage in Exodus tells us that the high priest must have the Urim and Thummim with him when approaching the Lord (see Exod 28:30). When approaching the Lord, the high priest was required to go into the Holy of Holies, the place in which the ark was kept. It seems fitting that the high priest would wear his priestly robes as well as the Urim and Thummim when going into war, knowing that the Ark of the Covenant would be carried by his side.<sup>27</sup>

### The Urim and Thummim and the Holy of Holies

As mentioned, the high priest must have the Urim and Thummim with him while entering into the Holy of Holies. The precious stones located on the breastplate contained the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. One tradition states that while the precious stones contained the names of tribes, the Urim and Thummim contained the holy name. In the Targum of Exodus 28:30, *Pseudo-Jonathan*,<sup>28</sup> we find an interesting translation which discusses the power of this holy name when uttered:

And you shall put into the breastplate the Urim, which illuminate their words and make manifest the hidden things of the House of Israel, and the Thummim which perfect their deeds, for the high priest who seeks instruction from the Lord through them. Because in them is engraved and exposed the great and holy Name by which the three hundred and ten

26. Cohen, *Secret of God*, 30, 34–35.

27. Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.46, as cited in Cohen, *Secret of God*, 54–55.

28. Targumim are Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible which were used for several hundred years by Jewish scholars, Rabbis and others. The Targumim were compiled in Babylon or Israel during the Second Temple Period (537–520 B.C.E.).



worlds were created. . . . And whoever pronounces this holy Name in the hour of distress, shall be saved.<sup>29</sup>

If the translation carries the tradition accurately, we may assume that the reason why the Urim and Thummim was taken into battle by the high priest was to save Israel in time of distress. Whenever the Israelite army encountered defeat and great distress, the holy name which appeared in the Urim and Thummim would have been pronounced, and thus the Israelites would have been saved.

The holy name which brings about the creation of “three hundred and ten worlds,” and by which this world was created, was considered by Rashi (1040–1105 C.E.)<sup>30</sup> to be YHWH, the sacred name of God, which, even to this day, is rarely uttered aloud by Jews. The well-known Rabbi Ramban (1194–1270 C.E.) suggests that there were several names of God displayed in the Urim and Thummim with which the high priest must be familiar. These names would also have been pronounced by the high priest before being permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, or the presence of God. The *Zohar*, quoting Rabbi Judah, stated that the name by which the worlds were created is 42 letters in length.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps this may have also been the name by which the high priest recited before proceeding through the veil and entering into the presence of God.

It appears, by the statements of the previous rabbis, that the holy name of YHWH may have been accompanied by another, much longer phrase comprising of 42 consonants. Another possibility is that the high priest pronounced all the names of God, which totaled 42 consonants in length, before entering the Holy of Holies.

## Conclusion

The Urim and Thummim was an object given to the Israelites by God to be used by the high priest for revelatory purposes as well as protection. It was not used in connection with magic and divination but was used by the high priest and the prophets on God’s terms. Certain laws were strictly obeyed in approaching God, both in the procedure of inquiring through the Urim and Thummim and in the entering of the high priest into the Holy of Holies.

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29. Translation given by McNamara and Maher in *Diez Macho*, Neophyti 1, 3.465–66; as cited in Van Dam, *Urim*, 23, emphasis added.

30. Rashi was a well-revered Jewish rabbi thought to have been given a divine gift from God to provide commentary on the Bible as well as the *Bab*, 24, 25.

31. Van Dam, *Urim*, 24, 25.

# THE ESSENCE OF FAITH: AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF HEBREWS II:1–3

JUSTIN SODERQUIST

Ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐπιζομένων ὑπόστασις πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων. ἐν ταύτῃ γὰρ ἐμαρτυρήθησαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι. πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι. (Hebrews II:1–3, NA<sup>27</sup>)

QUESTIONS revolving around the definition of faith are likely to be wrestled with in any and every Bible-believing congregation. Questions include the following: Where does faith originate? What is its object? How is it obtained? What is its purpose? What are the fruits in store for those who are found possessing it in the last day? Answers to these questions are not easily understood. One must look at the scriptural definitions and examples of those who lived faithful lives in order to obtain a knowledge of what faith meant to God's ancient people. This paper will do just that.

## Contextual Analysis

*Historical Context.* The historical context of the book of Hebrews is murky at best. The audience of the book is presumably a group of Jewish Christians, hence the title of the work, but it could also be written to non-Jewish Christians attracted to or influenced by Jewish temple worship. There is no internal evidence which helps identify an author, and the Greek of the book of Hebrews far surpasses the rest of the Pauline corpus, but these facts do not entirely deny Pauline authorship. It is clearly possible for a person to write differently when doing so in a new context or occasion. The problem, however, is that we have no reason to assume that this was the case for Paul. This does not exclude the possibility that the work could have been written by someone else's hand while maintaining Pauline thought and instruction. The ancient idea of authorship portrays this notion far better than today's society—it is a

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matter of intermediate versus ultimate agency. In the end, Origen's view on the Paulinity of Hebrews must prevail: "Who wrote the epistle is known to God alone."<sup>1</sup>

The place from which the letter was written is also a matter of debate. One of the only clues we have from the text itself is in the last chapter of the book where the author extends greetings from "those of Italy" (13:24). It is unknown whether this is a reference to Christians living in Rome at the time or if it was from Christians who originally came from Rome but had moved elsewhere. Acts 2:10 seems to suggest the latter.

The date awarded to Hebrews depends entirely upon its authorship. If it is truly Pauline, it was most likely written around 65–68 C.E. during Paul's imprisonment. Other clues about the date stem from the subject matter itself. Hebrews is rich in description of temple ritual (or tabernacle, as the case may be). This point could either imply that it was written before or after the destruction of the Jewish temple, depending on one's take. There is no mention of the Jewish temple in the work. This could be an indication that it was written before the destruction—the lack of reference to the temple manifesting disdain for its apostate state. Conversely, it could have been written after the destruction, making reference instead to the heavenly temple (or tabernacle) which replaced the old Mosaic system. Notwithstanding these uncertainties, the message of the book stands as a strong witness of the divinity of Christ as the great High Priest.

### Literary Context

The Epistle to the Hebrews is not very representative of how an ancient epistle was structured. The letter starts off as a treatise (1:1–3), then continues into the body of the letter as a homily, or rather a sermon often-homiletic (1:4–12:29), and then concludes as an epistle proper (13:1–19). In the body of the letter, the author explains the superiority of Jesus in three different aspects: First, the superiority of Jesus as God's son (1:4–4:13), second, the superiority of Jesus' priesthood (4:14–7:28), and third the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice and ministry (8:1–10:18). In the following section (vv. 10:19–12:29), he explains how we should conduct ourselves in order to become a participant in the blessings made available in and through Christ's superiority. To accomplish this we must live a life of faith and endurance. It is here that the pericope under discussion is found. It consists of a strong doctrinal definition of faith which serves as a foundation for the verses that follow which exemplify the principles taught using various scriptural accounts of the "elders" who lived the faithful life.

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1. Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, ed. Andrew Louth, trans. G. A. Williamson (London: Penguin Books, 1989), 202 (§6.25).

### Formal Analysis

As mentioned, this pericope is situated in the latter part of the letter's body—the sermon often-homiletic. The first verse in this passage is the bedrock for the following two. It declares (in part, at least) what faith is. The next verse shows the purpose of and need for faith and prefaces the rest of the chapter which is filled with examples of these “elders” (πρεσβύτεροι) who were approved by God and received his testimony. Finally, the third verse emphasizes the importance of faith in the eternal scheme of the plan of salvation and ushers in this list by telling of the creation—the first in a powerful series of case studies.

### Detailed Analysis

Hebrews 11:1 is the most direct and straightforward definition of faith in the New Testament. Paul Ellingworth notes that ἔστιν δέ, the first two words of the verse, “is followed by an anarthrous noun in definitions,” which is certainly the case here.<sup>2</sup> However, this verse should not be understood to be a complete, all-encompassing definition per se, but rather a partial one—an explication of certain aspects of faith only. This is because there is no mention of the faith's object in the verse, also because it lacks any reference to who possesses the faith.

This discussion presupposes that faith is the subject of the verse as opposed to the predicate nominative. Several scholars have created rubrics for the purpose of making this distinction. Daniel B. Wallace mentions two as most noteworthy: Goetchius in his book *The Language of the New Testament*, and McGaughey in his *Descriptive Analysis of Ἔστιν*. According to Goetchius's standards, one of the principle factors used to distinguish the two is to determine whether or not one or the other “is mentioned in immediately preceding context.”<sup>3</sup> Faith is mentioned in the last verse of chapter 10, making it an obvious candidate for the subject by his rubric.

Another exegetically significant grammatical note to consider is whether the subject-predicate nominative pair is a subset or a convertible proposition.<sup>4</sup>

2. Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 564.

3. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 42.

4. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 40–45. According to Wallace, the subject and the predicate nominative are not always interchangeable. When this is the case, the predicate nominative often represents a larger class or state to which the subject belongs. “In linguistic terms, the narrower category (subject) is the hyponym and the broader category (predicate nom.) is the superordinate.” This is called a subset proposition. A convertible proposition is where the subject and the predicate nominative are interchangeable: A=B, for example, is the same as B=A.

It would seem that a case could be made for either possibility in this passage. Thus, secure exegesis of it is not entirely possible. Perhaps this accounts for the continual discussion of the meaning of faith—an area where there seems to be rampant and progressive disaccord among Christians.

Although the relationship between the subject and the predicate nominative is indeterminate, there is much to be gained by exploring the nuances of each term. Craig R. Koester asserts that “faith encompasses both trust in God and faithfulness to God.”<sup>5</sup> Taking faith as the subject, the assumed predicate nominative is ὑπόστασις. There are five occurrences of this word in the New Testament (2 Cor 9:4; 11:17; Heb 1:3; 3:14; and 11:1).<sup>6</sup> Meanings derived from the different contexts of the word can be separated into two general senses: the objective sense of “guarantee” or the subjective sense of “being sure.”<sup>7</sup> The New Revised Standard Version translates the word as “assurance,” which seems to do a fine job of capturing both of the senses just mentioned.<sup>8</sup> The ὑπόστασις is both the conviction a person has in unseen rewards which are “hoped for” as well as the guarantee, deed, or entitlement given us by God who is, himself, the guarantor. As Ellingworth phrases it, “Faith guarantees what believers hope for.”<sup>9</sup>

The “things unseen” (πραγμάτων . . . οὐ βλεπομένων) mentioned in this verse are the same as those “hoped for” mentioned earlier. John Barton and John Muddiman note that “those invisible things are both the objects of future hope and the transcendent realities, God and his exalted Son, that guarantee hope.”<sup>10</sup> Contrary to their rendering, however, οὐ βλεπομένων is probably better translated as “unseen” rather than “invisible,” as the latter connotes the inability of the things hoped for to be seen, which would defy the whole point and purpose of one’s hope, assuming literality of the passage.

Understanding the second verse requires an awareness of the pericope’s larger context—specifically of vv. 4–40. The elders (πρεσβύτεροι) mentioned here are most likely the men mentioned in those following verses. The key term to aid in the understanding of this verse is the word ἐμαρτυρήθησαν.

5. Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 472.

6. The fact that the only other occurrences of this word outside of Hebrews come from the secure Pauline is evidence of Pauline authorship—be it intermediate or ultimate.

7. Renderings of this word in some of the major modern translations include “confidence, substance, assurance, reality, conviction, undertaking, matter, and state.” Frederick W. Danker ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1041 (hereafter BDAG), favors the rendering “realization.”

8. Joseph Smith, in his new translation of the Bible, also favors “assurance” (JST Heb 11:1).

9. Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 564.

10. John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1251.

According to J. Beutler, the verb in the passive sense means “witnessed” or “testified,”<sup>11</sup> although other renderings include “gained approval” (NASB), “received approval” (NRSV), “were commended” (NIV), “were attested” (NAB), “obtained good report” (KJV), and “obtained a testimony” (Rheims). The sense that should be understood here is that the elders accomplished by faith whatever it was that they were commanded to do by God and thus were received into his favor and grace. This “approval” could, perhaps, be the “assurance of things hoped for” mentioned in the previous verse.

The third verse of the pericope is by far the most challenging grammatically—perhaps theologically as well. The dative of means is employed both in the case of *πίστει* and of *ῥήματι*. In the case of *πίστει*, the text does not directly specify who it was that employed the faith—men or God. Indirectly, however, it seems to be tied to the verb *νοούμεν*, connoting that the faith is of men (possessive), yet in God. The dative *ῥήματι* together with the passive infinitive portrays the means by which the action of the verb is accomplished. Although the text suggests that the means of accomplishment was the immaterial “word” spoken by God, it is tempting to cross-textually equate *ῥήματι* here with the Johannine *λόγος*—who, like the “word,” is also God’s, thus turning the dative of means into one of agency. However, assuming Pauline authorship (be it either intermediate or ultimate), it is almost impossible to reconcile this rendering with the remainder of the Pauline corpus. Also, given the rarity of the dative of agency in the New Testament, interpreting *ῥήματι* thus might be taking a little too much liberty.

Stemming from *ῥήματι* comes the seemingly difficult phrase, *εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγόνεσθαι*. The key to understanding this phrase lies in the nuance of the phrase *εἰς τὸ*. The construction of *εἰς τὸ* plus an infinitive denotes either purpose or result.<sup>12</sup> In this case, result seems to make the most sense as it describes how “what is seen” (*τὸ βλεπόμενον*) came to be in its present state—finished or completed. It appears that the *γεγόνεσθαι* at the end of the verse parallels the *κατηρτίσθαι* at the beginning. Following this mode of reasoning, *τὸ βλεπόμενον* would parallel *τοὺς αἰῶνας* and *μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων* would do the same with *ῥήματι*—the *ἐκ* functioning in the same capacity as the dative of means (*ῥήματι*).<sup>13</sup> Viewing the verse as a parallelism helps clarify what the author meant with his somewhat awkward use of terminology.

11. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 2.390.

12. See F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 207 (§402.2); see also Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 591–93.

13. See BDAG, 296–97 (3d–g). On the comparison of the singular with the plural, see Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 270 (§1003).

### Synthesis

Hebrews 11:1–3 is short yet profound. It begins with a bold, doctrinally significant partial definition of faith, which is then followed by a small verse declaring for us its purpose: to receive a testimony or witness from God of the unseen things that are “hoped for” in the first verse. Faith becomes an assurance (ὑπόστασις) of these objects of our hope—both a firm belief and a guarantee from God of their ultimate realization. Finally, the third verse draws the audience’s attention to the over-arching importance of faith. This is done by taking them back to the beginning, creation, wherein the ages were prepared by God’s word. This verse ushers in an account of several of the scriptural “elders” who, through their faith, received from God a witness of their approval and an assurance (both objectively and subjectively) of the realization of things “hoped for.”

### Reflection

The definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1–3 is powerful, yet incomplete. Taken in the context of the examples of faithful elders, deeper meaning becomes manifest. Faith is not something that can be explained or understood with mere words. Instead, one truly learns faith in the living practice of it. Perhaps this is why the author of Hebrews included the list of faithful individuals with his definition in v. 1—perhaps these examples are meant to be an integral part of the definition, the embodiment of the principle.

Additional and somewhat similar definitions of faith are found in the Book of Mormon. The first is in Alma 32:21: “And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.” Another is in Ether 12:6: “And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.” In the first example, Alma is giving a discourse that invites people to live the gospel faithfully, whether or not they are allowed inside the synagogues. They are encouraged to experiment with the word (definitely sharing Johannine Christology) and live it. Only in and through this experiment on the word can they gain knowledge. They must live faith to know it.

In the second example, Moroni very distinctly captures the nuance of the Hebrews passage with its accompanying examples. One must prove that he will live the principles during the trial of his faith. Then and only then will the witness come which, in turn, begets an even greater faith in that individual.

# AN EXEGETICAL LOOK AT GENESIS 39: POTIPHAR'S WIFE AND JOSEPH

JOSEPH PETRAMALO

## Genesis 39<sup>1</sup>: Potiphar's Wife and Joseph

(1) When Joseph was taken down to Egypt, a certain Egyptian, Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh and his chief steward, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. (2) The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he stayed in the house of his Egyptian master. (3) And when his master saw that the LORD was with him that the LORD lent success to everything he undertook, (4) he took a liking to Joseph. He made him his personal attendant and put him in charge of his household, placing in his hands all that he owned. (5) And from the time that the Egyptian put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed his house for Joseph's sake, so that the blessing of the LORD was upon everything that he owned, in the house and outside. (6) He left all that he had in Joseph's hands and, with him there, he paid attention to nothing save the food that he ate. Now Joseph was well built and handsome. (7) After a time, his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, "Lie with me." (8) But he refused. He said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master gives no thought to anything in this house, and all that he owns he has placed in my hands. (9) He wields no more authority in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except yourself, since you are his wife. How then could I do this most wicked thing, and sin before God?" (10) And much as she coaxed Joseph day after day, he did not yield to her request to lie beside her, to be with her. (11) One such day, he came into the house to do his work. None of the household being there inside, (12) she caught hold of him by his coat and said, "Lie with me!" But he left his coat in her hand and got away and fled outside. (13) When she saw that he had left his coat in her hand and

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1. The translation used is W. Gunther Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary Jewish Publication Society* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981).



had fled outside, (14) she called out to her servants and said to them, "Look, he had to bring us a Hebrew to mock us! This one came to lie with me; but I screamed loud. (15) And when he heard me screaming at the top of my voice, he left his coat with me and got away and fled outside." (16) She kept his coat beside her, until his master came home. (17) Then she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew slave whom you brought into our house came to me to mock me; (18) but when I screamed at the top of my voice, he left his coat with me and fled outside." (19) When his master heard the story that his wife told him, namely, "Thus and so your slave did to me," he was furious. (20) So Joseph's master had him put in prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. But even while he was there in prison, (21) the LORD was with Joseph: He extended kindness to him and disposed the chief jailer favorably toward him. (22) The chief jailer put in Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in that prison, and he was the one to carry out everything that was done there. (23) The chief jailer did not supervise anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him, and whatever he did the LORD made successful.

### Historical Background

The historical setting for this chapter in Genesis has been a difficult one for scholars to pinpoint. In actuality, it has not been done. We know from the text that it is during the time when Israel is still a nomadic tribe. It falls a few centuries after Abraham has come out of Mesopotamia that Jacob, Joseph's father, is a nomad living with his family in tents. Because of the reference to the herding of the animals in chapter 37, it is obvious that Jacob and his sons were nomadic pastoralists. This shows a very early period for the dating of this story. The source that can offer the most information is Egypt.

Many scholars have found evidence from the text supporting the theory that Joseph's time in Egypt must have come during the Hyksos period. This is the theory which is best supported and most widely accepted. The first clue we find is the use of horses. Traditionally it was assumed that horses were not used in Egypt until the coming of the Hyksos. Thus, it can be presumed that Joseph enters Egypt during the Hyksos dynasty. However, recent textual and archaeological data suggests that in fact horses existed in Egypt much earlier. A horse skeleton has been found at Gaza dating to around 2500 B.C.E. Another historical clue is that during Joseph's stay in Egypt the pharaoh was living in the Delta Valley. During the Hyksos dynasty, the capital was at Avaris, which was in the northeast corner of the Delta. The third factor that points to this time period is the comment in Exodus 1:8 that the pharaoh "knew not Joseph." This seems odd, considering the fact that Joseph would have been known throughout Egypt because of his later position of authority. It can be assumed that when the Hyksos dynasty was overthrown a native

Egyptian came to rule again. Because of the hate and animosity towards this dynasty, the Egyptians attempted to erase the Hyksos period from their historical records. This would have also been one of the most likely times for Joseph (a foreigner) to have risen to power.

There are also many arguments against this dating. Each of these arguments has been questioned and there is evidence that stands against them, but it seems likely that the Hyksos period was the backdrop for the story of Joseph in Egypt. I will use this as the historical context for my discussion on this chapter. This would put our chapter around 2000–1800 B.C.E.

### Literary Context

This is an important chapter for the political and theological developments that take place. It is in Egypt that Israel becomes a powerful nation. When they arrive, they are a small nomadic people. But when they leave, they are a great nation. It is during this time that God renews his covenants with his people and sends Moses to deliver them. The next few chapters following 39 show this development. We find an interesting situation in the literary construction of these later chapters of Genesis.

It seems that chapter 39 begins where chapter 37 left off. Thus, chapter 38 is an interpolation into the text, probably made by some redactor. However, upon closer inspection, it seems that there is a direct correlation between chapters 38 and 39 in regards to the topic of sexuality. In chapter 38 we find the story of Judah and Tamar. Here Judah sins by committing fornication with her. He gives in to his physical desires and in so doing loses his birthright. In contrast, Joseph is strong by resisting the advances of Potiphar's wife. He states that to lie with her would be "a sin against God" (Gen 39:9). This was the major theme of Genesis 39, according to the patristic commentaries. I will look at this idea further when discussing the theological ramifications of these verses. It seems clear that the placement of these two chapters shows a definite relationship.

But we also find another literary grouping. Genesis 39–41 seems to be a literary unit of its own. Here we find the story of Joseph in Egypt and his rise to power. There is no mention of his family or Canaan in any of the verses within this pericope. We see that one of the other themes is prospering in the empire. He prospers as chief in Potiphar's house, with his dreams in prison, and also with pharaoh. The text implies that because Joseph relies on the Lord in each circumstance, he is successful and the Lord blesses him in each situation. Thus, it is difficult to pinpoint this story within one literary unit. It seems to be part of three separate ones. Possibly the redactor meant it to be this way. Because of its placement, I would argue that it is crucial to its current location within the text. It was put there for a specific reading. The placement within this section gives the contrast between Judah and Joseph,

but in the following chapters, it also shows how Joseph was the one to become great and make Israel great as well.

This passage seems to be fairly comprehensive. It does not contain much historically besides giving us the name Potiphar. However, this name has never been attested historically thus it is useless for historical data. We are never given the name of the pharaoh during Joseph's rise to power. Because of this we must go deeper into the text to find other clues for the historicity of the chapter. I have done a brief job above, but a thorough analysis would require a much larger investigation than is possible here. While the historical data is lacking here and requires more guess work than anything, the theological data is excellent. Because of the layout of the chapters, the emphasis can be seen in the placement of the specific chapters.

Another important part of this text is its authorship. This chapter has been attributed to the J source by scholarship. Our best clue for this is the appearance of Yahweh in vv. 2, 3, 5, 21, and 23. While it is arguable that it was possibly the E source, most would attribute the majority of the chapter to J. We do find a couple of very interesting points that should be considered because of the differences between the J and E reading. In v. 4, the text says that "he served him," in reference to Joseph becoming Potiphar's servant. This appears as a variant of E, but in J, his position is much higher. He is a *mer-per* (superintendent of the house). Thus, there is a stronger emphasis on Joseph's success in the J account. If we are to assume that Genesis, as well as the other four books of the Pentateuch, was written by Moses, then we would apply the authorship to him. However, if we apply the Documentary Hypothesis, then we would place the source with J.

### Form

There is not much to look at regarding form in this chapter. However, there are a few small things that I would like to note before moving on to the structure of chapter 39. This specific chapter falls within a narrative account. It is simply a story being told by the author/redactor. The specific category is more difficult to place. It most certainly is a popular history narrative. It sets up a history which would later be important to the Israelites and their origins. We have a number of other historical narratives, similar to this one, in chapter 39. Most of these can be found in the book of Genesis. It also falls under the special narrative grouping of a *waw*-consecutive tense. This is one of two popular narrative tenses that are used in the Hebrew narrative accounts.

It is interesting to note, however, that the success of Joseph is always attributed to the Lord. This is present in parallel formulae. It is mentioned twice in the beginning of the chapter and twice at the end. Both times it is used to make the point to the reader that the Lord is with Joseph and he will prosper, even if he is struggling at the moment. It is used to explain everything

in this chapter. This is often one of the most important aspects of Israelite narrative accounts. The Lord promises Israel that if they keep their covenants with him, he will protect them. The parallel emphasizes the importance of this concept in this story of Genesis 39.

### Structure

I will first give a brief outline of the major sections here in the chapter, and then go into more detail with each. I do this to show the narrative structure upon which this chapter was built. The first part of the chapter begins with Joseph going down to Egypt. This comprises the first two verses. The second part is the status of Joseph after he arrives at Potiphar's house, where he quickly advances in rank and experiences much success. This continues from v. 2 until 6. The third part is the temptation of Joseph by Potiphar's wife. This makes up the majority of the chapter from v. 6 until 18. The main focus of the chapter is to show how Joseph overcame the temptation with which he was faced. The fourth part shows the consequences of his refusal.

In v. 1 we are told that he is taken down to Egypt. There he is purchased as a slave by Potiphar. It is interesting that Potiphar is referenced as an Egyptian three different times. It would seem that this is important due to the repetition found in so few verses. This could be one clue that would lend support to the Hyksos theory.<sup>2</sup> The status of Potiphar and the fact that he was a native Egyptian seems to be the purpose of this repetition. His name gives more support to his native status.<sup>3</sup>

The second theme begins in v. 2 where it says, "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he stayed in the house of his Egyptian master." Joseph is not subjected to outside slave labor like most would have been. Because of his skills he is kept inside as a household servant. Because of his continued success in the proceeding few verses, he is given greater responsibility. Eventually he is given authority over everything except the food which Potiphar eats. Here is another interesting narrative intrusion. Why would Potiphar pay so much attention to the food he ate? The text is very specific about this point. Some interpreters have questioned whether or not everything was so prosperous under Joseph that he had nothing else to do but sit around and eat. While this may be a subtle compliment about Joseph's success, it probably has reference to the Egyptian restrictions on food. They would not allow a foreigner to prepare the food. Thus, Joseph was master over all that

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2. However, John Skinner, in his Genesis commentary, argues that this is not sufficient evidence to lend support to this theory (*Genesis ICC* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930], 457). Thus, it is possible but not particularly arguable on this premise.

3. Skinner, *Genesis*, 457. He explains the Egyptian name as *Pedephre*: "He Whom the Sun-God Gives."

Potiphar had both in the house and out, except for the preparation of food. At this point in the narrative, given his status, Joseph has risen as high as he can.

The third, and most prominent, theme is the temptation of Joseph by Potiphar's wife. Here we have Joseph approached by his master's wife. We are never given her name in this context. However, later tradition names her Zuleika.<sup>4</sup> We find a number of interesting points here. The first is Joseph's response to her advances. He claims theological reasons for refusing her. In so doing he uses the name Elohim. This is different from his previous references to "Yahweh." He uses the term because she is not a Hebrew. Joseph simply refers to God and not the more personal Yahweh. Another reading of this might be because of the later rabbinic reading. They argue that Elohim is used to reference the just characteristics of God, and Yahweh as the merciful ones. Joseph is possibly referencing the just characteristic because of the crime it would be against God. Another interesting point comes in the next verse. This is the focal point in the theological theme of Judah verses Joseph. In the Judah and Tamar story, Judah sleeps with Tamar and, in so doing, commits evil. In contrast, Potiphar's wife "coaxed Joseph day after day, yet he did not yield to her request to lie beside her" (Gen 39:10). Judah sees Tamar and lies with her, yet Joseph cannot be coaxed to sin even when she does so day after day. Thus, Judah forfeits his birthright by sinning, and Joseph receives it through his faithfulness and steadfastness, even in the presence of temptation.

The last of the themes is found in vv. 20–23. This is the fall of Joseph back to his former status of slave, but now he is in prison. This prison was probably for political prisoners. We do not have many accounts of prisoners or prisons from the Egyptian material. The only occurrences we have of the usage of the word *sohar* (prison) are found here in Genesis. Because of the lack of other occurrences it makes for an unusual word. It is not clear why this is. One reason for the lack of jails is because most often the accused would be executed. This was the precedent throughout the ancient Near East, and thus there was little need for prisons. However, because of the others confined with Joseph (the cupbearer and baker), it would seem that this is a royal prison. Many scholars have puzzled over why Joseph was put here by Potiphar. Usually the slave would have been immediately executed. This leaves the question, was Potiphar questioning the guilt of Joseph? But the counterargument is that Potiphar was exceedingly angry with him. Scholars are unsure why Joseph was sentenced there. But perhaps it was according to the will of God.

One of the most interesting literary structures in this chapter is the *inclusio*. This encompasses the whole chapter and, in fact, may be a smaller unit to a much larger one. The beginning of the *inclusio* is Joseph's arrival

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4. W. Gunther Plaut, ed., *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1962), 257.

in Egypt as a slave and his being sold to the highest bidder. He is at one of the lowest points to which a human could descend in the ancient world. He goes on to rise to power and influence in Potiphar's house and is made master over all that Potiphar has. However, after his temptation he is reduced again to his former status. Thus, we have an *inclusio* beginning in v. 1 and ending in v. 22. This is probably part of a much larger literary *inclusio* unit because of the repeat experience in prison and again with Pharaoh.

### Grammatical Data

This portion is relatively unimportant for this chapter and pericope. There are a couple of minor variant readings, but nothing of significance. The ones that do appear are variants such as "his house" instead of "the house." Because of the lack of variants, I will not spend time explaining the relatively few and minor ones that do exist. Instead I will continue with lexical information on certain words. There are a few that need explaining because of ambiguity or their importance on the text.

*Chief steward.* Potiphar is described as being the chief steward for Pharaoh. This meant he was in charge of the prison. This might explain why he had Joseph placed there instead of having him executed.

*Courtier.* The Hebrew word *saris* means "eunuch." This has caused debate among scholars. Often it has been associated with responsibility over harems. Thus, it has been assumed that Potiphar was chief over Pharaoh's harem. However, this seems unlikely. Scholars now debate the issue. On the other hand, this could be important in the story of Joseph's temptation. Because of the lack of sexual fulfillment from her husband due to his position, Potiphar's wife may have been turning to Joseph for that fulfillment.

*Coax.* This is an interesting word in this context. It means "to influence or gently urge by caressing or flattering."<sup>5</sup> Because of Joseph's initial refusal, Potiphar's wife attempts to go about it by gentle persuasion over an extended period of time.

The dating of this text is difficult because we only have it in the full text. We are able to accurately date the Leningrad Codex and the Masoretic Text, but this does not help with the specific dating of this passage. Because there are few clues (such as poetry, etc.), one must date the narrative according to the book of Genesis, or the source that wrote it. J is believed to have been written around 950 B.C.E. It is one of the earliest sources. Thus, the account would have been recorded fairly early, much earlier than those who believe it to have been written subsequent to the exile.

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5. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2004), 237.

### **Biblical Context**

I have attempted to look individually at the unique sections of this chapter to provide a better understanding of the message of this pericope. As a result of a closer reading of this passage, two main themes are evident. The first is manifest by the location of the chapter. It is put right after the story of Judah and Tamar and is explicit in the contrasting ideas of the two chapters. Chapter 39 is emphasizing the righteousness of Joseph and legitimizing the reason for him receiving the birthright later. The next main emphasis of the chapter is the parallel formulae found at the beginning and the end. This stresses the importance that the Lord is with Joseph and that Joseph is being watched over and protected by the divine. Another literary aspect that stresses this is the *inclusio*. Both literary units provide a structure that is unmistakable for the reader to understand the important message being shared. The importance of this chapter can be seen by the way others used this in scripture.

We find other references throughout scripture that talk about and discuss Joseph. Most often it is in regard to genealogy. The genealogy gives reference to the sons of Joseph to state the lines which they come through. But it is used in other ways as well. Often it is given to show the mercy of the Lord in preserving Joseph and making him successful, which is the subject and purpose of the story. It can be found within the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Luke references it in Acts 7:9, 13–14, 18. The tone is somewhat condemning of the Patriarchs and the way they dealt with God's favored one. Also in Joshua 17, we have reference to it when the land of promise is being divided among the children of Israel. In 1 Chronicles 5:12, we have the explanation of why Reuben forfeited the birthright and why it eventually was given to Joseph.

### **Theology**

As stated above, this passage has large theological importance. Much of the theological message has already been covered above. This message in chapter 39 applies to the Mosaic covenant. The most prominent theme here is Joseph's temptation. The need for personal moral cleanliness was of utmost importance. Not only is he able to resist the initial approach and offer by Potiphar's wife but also the constant coaxing. This later one is the more difficult, because he must never let his guard down. But Joseph is rewarded for his goodness, and because of Joseph's righteousness he is eventually given the birthright by his father Jacob. The protection that the Lord provides Joseph with while he is in Egypt is obvious. Most often, people who committed the sin of which they were accused would have been executed rather than imprisoned. Also, Joseph rises to prominence and power until he becomes second in command over all of Egypt.

This protection and prosperity is a result of the covenant made by his father with God. He was a recipient of those direct blessings.

It is also difficult to miss the typology of Joseph as a foreshadowing of Christ. The Hebrew scriptures do this with many of the major prophets. We have examples with Isaiah, Elijah, and others. Here Joseph is taken down to Egypt in exile and as an outcast. Christ was taken down to Egypt as well because of the persecution under Herod the Great. Joseph was betrayed by those closest to him, as was Christ, both by the Jews as a whole, as well as one of his closest friends. While Joseph's rise to power was physical, it was due to his righteousness and by following the commandments. Christ rose in spiritual power through his perfect obedience. There are also many other theological aspects of this passage. Many of the Early Christian Fathers read this passage very allegorically. They felt the theological power of the passage was not in the physical temptations and triumphs but in the spiritual ones.

Often in scripture the purpose of the story is both figurative as well as literal. Sometimes it is difficult to know which one should be applied. But quite often, it should be both. But regardless of the reading, it would provide a strong theological passage that would be supported later by interpretations. This is a very important text and would be considered valuable by those later interpreters and readers.

### Secondary Literature

The literature on Genesis 39 is somewhat staggering in proportion. So much has been written on the topic of Joseph's temptation, and his experience in general. This is because of the many different interpretations and commentaries, depending on the religious views and backgrounds of the individual author.

However, as I have reviewed much of this, I have noticed that they could be categorized in two different groups. While there are many differences within the groups, the standard within each is relatively the same. The two categories would consist of the literal interpreters and the figurative ones. While the first of the two categories is the more populated one, there are others that tend toward a more figurative reading. Much of the controversy focuses on the temptation of Joseph. While I agree with some of what the scholars have written, other parts I do not. Skinner's commentary is very good. He leans toward a more literal reading but makes some figurative points as well. The other part of his work was beneficial is the footnotes. Another helpful commentator is Dr. Gary Rendsburg, who is considered one of the leading authorities on the book of Genesis. While most of his scholarship tends to be more conservative, he does a good job of acknowledging views outside his own.

Another interesting point that most of the scholars touched on were the similarities found between the Joseph story and the Egyptian parallel of the



“Tale of Two Brothers.” They see many strong correlations between these two stories, and there are even scholars that argue that the later Joseph story was built around this earlier Egyptian mythological tale. While I disagree with this view, many of the correlations are very interesting. While much can be learned by a close reading of the Bible, we need to be careful that we do not apply our own readings onto the text simply because that is what we want it to say.