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Maleness, Memory, and the Matter of Dream Divination in the Hebrew Bible

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In this essay, I should like to bring together four topics that I contend are reciprocally illuminating for the study of dreams and dream divination in ancient Israel. The first is a relationship between gendered constructions of Israelite diviners and beliefs concerning fertility and the stigma of pollution. The second is an association of dreams with male virility. The third topic is a perceived connection between memory and masculinity. The fourth is the role of the heart as an organ for recording dreams. As I shall argue, the four topics are mutually defined by conceptions of maleness, which, in turn, inform our understanding of the Israelite dream experience, its import, and narratives concerning dreams. In particular, they combine to explain why only men dream and interpret dreams in the Hebrew Bible, unlike elsewhere in the ancient Near East, and how the heart and the phallus became competing loci for inscribing covenantal memory. I shall use the terms prophet, diviner, and mantic interchangeably.¹

¹ In agreement with a number of scholars, e.g., Martti Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources*, SAA 7 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project; Helsinki University Press, 1980); Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, with contributions by C. L. Seow and Robert K. Ritner, WAW 12 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Thomas W. Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Jean-Michel de Tarragon, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Canaan and Ancient Israel," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York: Scribner, 1985), 3:2070–81.

I begin with the relationship between gendered constructions of Israelite diviners and beliefs concerning fertility and the stigma of pollution. Scholars long have examined the Hebrew Bible's mantics and their social, historical, and literary contexts, but it is only in recent years that they have turned their attention to the role that conceptions of gender play in defining these contexts.² For example, Esther Hamori has shown that biblical portraits of female diviners often place them in non-normative roles in family structures and follow a "widespread association between childless women and access to divine knowledge."³ This coincides with a pattern that one finds in ancient, medieval, and modern societies of female diviners as virgins, celibate, or postmenopausal. Her biblical examples of female diviners not said to have children include Miriam,⁴ Deborah,⁵ Huldah, Noadiah, and the wise women of Tekoa and Abel.⁶ Inversely, Israelite writers typically portray male prophets in narratives as married or as otherwise part of normative family structures. Her analyses, and those of other scholars,⁷ have shown that the Israelite understanding of both male and female prophets was informed largely by constructions of maleness that circumscribed prophetic

² See especially the essays collected in Deborah W. Rooke, ed., *Embroidered Garments: Priests and Gender in Biblical Israel*, HBM 25 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009); Deborah W. Rooke, ed., *A Question of Sex? Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, HBM 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007); Ovidiu Creangă, ed., *Men and Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, BMW 33 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010); Jonathan Stökl and Corinne L. Carvalho, eds., *Prophets Male and Female: Gender and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Ancient Near East*, AIL 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013).

³ Esther J. Hamori, "The Prophet and the Necromancer: Women's Divination for Kings," *JBL* 132 (2013): 829 n. 9. See also Esther J. Hamori, "Childless Female Diviners in the Bible and Beyond," in *Prophets Male and Female: Gender and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jonathan Stökl and Corinne L. Carvalho, AIL 15 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 169–91.

⁴ Josephus (*Ant.* 3.54) gives Hur as the name of Miriam's husband, but the Targum to 1 Chron 2:19, 4:4, and Exod. Rab. 48:3 say Hur is Miriam's son and that Miriam (also known as Ephrath) was Caleb's wife. No tradition concerning a husband for Miriam appears in the Bible.

⁵ Deborah is the wife of Lappidoth (Judg 4:4), but she is not said to have children.

⁶ I would add here also Samson's mother (Judg 13:2–3). We are told that she was barren when Yahweh's angel contacted her and promised her that she would have a child. The one exception to the pattern is an anonymous woman in Isa 8:3 who bears a child who serves as a portent. As Hamori observes, the account contains no prophecy, song, or speech.

⁷ See, e.g., the contributions found in Stökl and Carvalho, *Prophets Male and Female*.

performance, agency, behavior, status, and identity. As Jonathan Stökl and Corinne Corvalho have put it: “Masculinity was an essential element in understanding the gender dynamics of the prophetic phenomena.”⁸

While I take their observations to be axiomatic, I find it equally informative to look at these dynamics in association with beliefs concerning fertility and pollution. In his study of disability, Saul Olyan discusses fertility and the stigma of pollution in a way that bears directly upon our understanding of Israelite diviners. His summation is worth citing in full.

Inclusion of the menstruant and the parturient among the Hebrew Bible’s disabled persons also introduces a gender dimension to our discussion for a whole class of women—those of child-bearing age—are stigmatized and periodically marginalized as a result of their construction as severe polluters. Even when such women are not menstruating or giving birth, their potential to pollute and the consequent need to restrict their contact with others at regular intervals is presumably never forgotten, and so their stigmatization as potential polluters is ongoing, even if their marginalization is not. One might even argue that immature girls and postmenopausal women share this stigmatization, given that they will become/once were women of childbearing age. In contrast, males are not subject to such stigmatization as regular, severe polluters. Sexually mature males may pollute through emissions of semen, but such emissions result only in minor impurity, defiling the male, his partner, and anything the semen touches for 1 day (Lev 15:16–18); in addition, emissions of semen are potentially subject to voluntary control, in contrast to menstruation.⁹

Building on Olyan’s observation of the androcentric conceptions of fertility and pollution, we may bring into focus the equally androcentric conceptions of Israelite diviners. Like women generally, female diviners carried the stigma of those who will become, or once were, severe and regular polluters. Since disability prohibited one’s access to the divine, female diviners occupied a rather paradoxical and potentially liminal place in Israelite society, for they bore the possibility of blurring the boundary between the sacred and profane. Casting them as childless not only placed them in non-normative family structures, it reinforced constructions of masculinity by marking their “disability” and placing their fertility in check.¹⁰ Thus, even if still fertile, non-childbearing women were

⁸ Stökl and Corvalho, *Prophets Male and Female*, 6.

⁹ Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 59.

¹⁰ On disability as bolstering constructed forms of masculinity, see Cheryl Strimple and Ovidiu Creangă, “‘And His Skin Returned Like a Skin of a Little Boy’: Masculinity, Disability, and the Healing of Naaman,” in *Men and Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible and*

stigmatized as socially “infertile,” and thus “disabled.” Inversely, male mantics are depicted as fertile husbands and fathers who enjoy normative reproductive lives. Their opportunities to become polluters are periodic at best.

It is within this broader context of fertility, pollution, and divine access that I now should like to move to the second section of this essay and revisit the Hebrew word for “dream,” i.e. חֵלֶם, the etymology for which relates not to sleep or sensory phenomena,¹¹ like expressions for dreaming in other ancient Near Eastern languages, but to male strength and reproductive health.¹² Essentially it means to “be strong, virile, or sexually mature.”¹³ The root bears this nuance in

Beyond, ed. Ovidiu Creangă, BMW 33 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 110–26.

¹¹ Cf. Akkadian *šuttu* (“sleep”) and *munattu* (“slumber”), both constructed with *amāru* (“to see”), *tabrit mīši* = Sumerian *maš₂-g₁i₆* (“vision of the night”), *šubrū* (“cause to see [a dream]”), Hittite *tešḫanna* (“appear in a dream”), Egyptian *qd* (“sleep”) and *mš rswt* (“see a dream”), Coptic *mw* (“sleep”), Greek *ὄναρ ἰδεῖν* (“see a dream”), etc. On the Akkadian *hiltu* as a possible exception, see n. 13 below.

¹² Notwithstanding the suggestion that the root *hlm* means “see,” by A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of the Assyrian Dream Book*, TAPS 46.3 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956), 226. The root *hlm* is found in Ugaritic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Syriac, and Ethiopic. On its use in Ugaritic, see n. 17.

¹³ See, e.g., Arabic *حلم* (*ḥalama*; “dream,” “experience a seminal emission,” “attain puberty,” in Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* [London: Williams & Norgate, 1863], 1.2:631–33 s.v. *حلم*). The Ugaritic root *hlm* also means “dream” and “be a fully grown, mature animal.” See *DULAT* 361, s.v. *hlm* I and II. Note also the polyglot vocabulary entry *ḥu-ul-ma-tu₄* (“strength, potency, soundness”) in John Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription*, HSS 32 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 125. Observe the possible similar semantic development of the Akkadian term *hiltu*, *hištu* (“dream”), if derived from *hālu* (“seep out,” “pollution [during a dream]”). See *CAD* 6:188, s.v. *hiltu*. The association of dreams with nocturnal emissions in Jewish tradition continued into later times, hence the existence of a stone amulet in the form of a phallus now in the possession of Musée Saint-Raymond in Toulouse. The amulet is inscribed with the words “accident of sleep” and with the biblical verse “his bow remained firm” (Gen 49:24). The amulet is noted by Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (New York: Behrman’s Jewish Book House, 1939), 134. On the bow as a phallic symbol, see Harry A. Hoffner, “Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity: Their Use in Ancient Near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals,” *JBL* 85 (1966): 327; Sandra Jacobs, “Divine Virility in Priestly Representation: Its Memory and Consummation in Rabbinic Midrash,” in *Men and Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, ed. Ovidiu Creangă, BMW 33 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 146–70.

two biblical texts.¹⁴ The first, in Job 39:3–4, parallels the birthing of animals with their own sexual maturity and departure from the herd.

תכרענה ילדיהן תפלחנה חבליהם תשלחנה
יחלמו בניהם ירבו בבר יצאו ולא־שבו למו

They crouch and bring forth their young, they send forth their labor pains.
Their sons become virile and multiply in the field, they go out and do not return.

The second use of חלם in this sense appears in Hezekiah's prayer following his near-death experience: ותחלימני והחיני ("and you invigorated me and you enlivened me," Isa 38:16).

Since such texts appear far from notions of dreaming, the standard dictionaries typically distinguish חלם I ("be strong, virile") from חלם II ("dream"). Yet, as Jean-Marie Husser observes, we should not divorce the two.

We should remember that the erection of the penis is one of the physiological characteristics of paradoxical sleep at every age in life. The correlation between seeming sexual arousal and dreams may well have been established at a very early period. It could well have led to a semantic link between dreams and virility, without necessarily taking into account the sexual content of dreams.¹⁵

This link has remained a philological curiosity for those who have studied biblical dreams, and to my knowledge Husser never pursued this line of inquiry further.¹⁶ Nevertheless, I contend that a connection between dreams and male

¹⁴ It is possible that the verb appears with this sense also in Ps 126:1, but the passage is ambiguous. Most English translations understand כחלמים to mean "as dreamers" (e.g., Vulgate: *quasi somniantes*), though the LXX reads: *παρακαλεημένοι* ("comforted ones") and some manuscripts of the Vulgate read *sicut consolati*. The Targum translates: היך מרעה דאתסיאו ממרעהון ("like the sick who were healed of their sickness").

¹⁵ Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*, trans. Jill M. Munro, BibSem 63 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 88.

¹⁶ Ruth Fidler, "Dreams Speak Falsely?" *Dream Theophanies in the Bible: Their Place in Ancient Israelite Faith and Traditions* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes, 2005), 17–18 n. 84–85, 20 n. 96 [Hebrew], argues that the root *hlm* underwent a semantic development from "be strong" to "attain puberty" to "have sexual dreams" to "dream (generally)." However, such a development is unlikely given a general Near Eastern identification of sexual dreams and nocturnal emissions with demonic attacks and bewitchment. See S. A. L. Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams and Dream Rituals*, AOAT 258 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 54–65. Thus, below I account for the semantic overlap (not development) differently.

health and reproduction is central to the Israelite conception of the dream experience and its literary portrayal. Indeed, I aver that we can account for the connection between dreams and virility by positing that the Israelites regarded the dreams of young men as potentially divine only after they reached puberty and entered adult tribal life.¹⁷

In ancient tribal society, the health of the tribe was inextricably fused with each individual's ability to reproduce and contribute members to the group, as Hector Avalos observes: "The terminology and references to illness in the Bible allow one to characterize illness as a condition with visible symptoms that rendered a human being physically and/or mentally unable to fulfill the normal *social and/or physical* role assigned by society."¹⁸ In ancient Israel, a normal social role required having a family, and so an inability to have children, for both men and women, was considered an "illness" that signaled a sort of "death" to the lineage. Thus, childlessness required healing. This is most apparent in the account of Abimelek's wife and servants, who could not bear children until Yahweh healed both Abimelek *and* the women.

וירפא אלהים את־אבימלך ואת־אשתו ואמהתיו וילדו: כִּי־עצר עצר יהוה בעד כל־רחם לבית
אבימלך על־דבר שָׂרָה אִשְׁת־אֲבִרָהָם

God healed Abimelek, his wife, and his female slaves, so they bore children, for Yahweh had hindered all the women in Abimelek's household from conceiving because of Abraham's wife Sarah. (Gen 20:17–18)

Healing signaled the act of restoring someone to a normal state and role in society.¹⁹ It made them whole again. Insofar as Israelites related normality and wholeness to purity,²⁰ we may understand the perception of childlessness as an

¹⁷ Comparative support comes from the Ugaritic corpus, which similarly restricts the dream experience (*hlm*) to young men. Thus, in KTU 1.14 i 40, El addresses Kirtu in his dream as a *glm* ("youth"). Cf. the Arabic cognate *glm* (*galama*; "be sexually mature, be lustful," in Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 6.1:2286–87, s.v. *glm*). In KTU 1.4 iii 4, El hopes to see signs that Baal lives in a dream. On El's virility, see KTU 1.4 iv 38–39, 1.23:30–35, and Baruch Margalit, "On Canaanite Fertility and Debauchery," in *"He Unfurrowed His Brow and Laughed": Essays in Honour of Nicolaus Wyatt*, ed. W. G. E. Watson, AOAT 299 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007), 177–92.

¹⁸ Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*, HSM 54 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 248. Italics are the author's.

¹⁹ See Avalos, *Illness and Health Care*, 250. Cf. n. 14 above and the Targum's rendering of the root *hlms* in Ps 126:1.

²⁰ See most famously, Mary T. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966).

illness, as manifesting purity concerns of the social body. While this concern certainly extended to women as well as men, it is males alone who become the object of reproductive concerns when dreams are involved. This is obvious in accounts of so-called “incubation dreams” that involve a promise of progeny or inheritance to men,²¹ such as Jacob’s dreams at Bethel (Gen 28:10–22) and at Paddan-Aram (Gen 37:10–13),²² but it is apparent also by the dread with which dreamers understood enigmatic dreams (e.g., Gen 41:8, Dan 2:3),²³ for they had great potential for portending illness or worse. Indeed, there is more than one account of a dream portending the dreamer’s death (e.g., Gen 20:3, 40:22). For this reason, enigmatic dreams required interpretation, a ritual process that we might best qualify as therapeutic or medicinal, not unlike the healing required for childlessness.²⁴ Thus, in Gen 41:16, Joseph explicitly associates the interpre-

²¹ Evidence for the practice of incubation in cuneiform sources has been found at Ugarit, at Mari, and in Assyria, Babylonia, and the Hittite world, though these texts have not produced much in the way of specific ritual procedures. For Ugaritic incubation texts, see, KTU 1.14 i 20–ii 5, iii 46–49, in which Kirta asks El for descendants in a dream and is given Lady Huraya as a wife. In KTU 1.17 i 15–ii 15, Baal intercedes with El to promise Danel a son. For Akkadian exemplars, see Jean-Marie Durand, *Archives Épistolaires de Mari I/1*. ARM 26.1 (Paris: ERC, 1988), 461; Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 188; Annette Zgoll, “Die Welt im Schlaf sehen—Inkubation von Träumen im antiken Mesopotamien,” *WdO* 32 (2002): 74–101; Alice Mouton, *Rêves hittites: Contribution à une histoire et une anthropologie du rêve en Anatolie ancienne*, CHANE 28 (Leiden: Brill, 2007). For notable exceptions from the first millennium, see Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams*, 212, and Hermann Hunger, “How to Make the Gods Speak: A Late Babylonian Tablet Related to the Microzodiac,” in *Studies Presented to Robert D. Biggs*, ed. Martha T. Roth et al., WCAD 2 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007), 141–51. Of course, incubation practices are attested in Egypt and in the Graeco-Roman world. See Kasia Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes: Dreams and Nightmares in Ancient Egypt* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2003); William V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Gil H. Renberg, *Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World*, RGRW 184 (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

²² In the account at Bethel, the dream’s import for male virility is underscored by God’s threefold mention of Jacob’s future offspring (lit. “seed,” Gen 28:13, 14 [twice]).

²³ On the use of “enigmatic” over “symbolic,” see Scott B. Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, AOS 89 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2007), 6–9, 274–76.

²⁴ The Hebrew terms used for interpreting enigmatic dreams, i.e., פתר and פשר, also mean “solve, resolve, absolve.” On dream interpretation as a curative, juridical, and crisis ritual of transformation, see Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 46–50. For an earlier discussion, see Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 218–20. Akkadian possesses the cognate *pašāru*. The Egyptian term is *wh*’ (“loosen, untie a knot, explain”). Its Coptic form, *woh*, appears in the Sahidic translation of פותר in Gen 41:8.

tations of Pharaoh's dreams with his health and wholeness: אלהים יענה את-שלום ("God will respond with regard to Pharaoh's well-being").²⁵ Thus, the Israelite dream experience was intimately connected to male reproductive concerns.

Indeed, it is no accident that all of the figures said to experience a dream and/or to interpret one are men. Moreover, most of them are portrayed as in the prime of their reproductive lives or as having reproductive concerns. This is most clear with regard to Jacob, Joseph, Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer, the Midianite soldier, Solomon, Job, and Daniel.²⁶ Thus, Jacob's first dream occurs en route to Paddan-Aram on a quest to find a wife. Joseph was seventeen when he recounted his first dream (Gen 37:2). We are not told the ages of Pharaoh's attendants. Nevertheless, cupbearers in Egypt were valued for their youthful beauty in addition to their modesty and trustworthiness.²⁷ Tomb reliefs and other

²⁵ Moreover, Pharaoh's dreams portended periods of fertility and famine for Egypt. One could argue that the use of the word שלום ("well-being") here denotes notions of fulfillment by way of progeny, as is recalled by the words of Eliphaz to Job: "You will know that your tent is complete (שלום). You will visit your oasis and you will miss nothing. You will know that great is your seed (זרעך), and your progeny (צאצאיך), like the grass of the earth" (Job 5:24–25).

²⁶ The others include Abimelek, Laban, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar. We do not know Abimelek's age, but the author does depict him as having a sexual interest in Abraham's wife (Gen 20:3–7). When Laban has his dream, he already has grandchildren (Gen 31:24, 28). Nevertheless, he makes clear that claims of progeny and inheritance are at stake, for as he tells Jacob: "The women are my daughters, the children are my children" (Gen 31:43). We are told of Pharaoh's birthday, but not his age (Gen 40:20). Proposing an age for Nebuchadnezzar is inherently difficult, because of the fictive nature of the story and the distinct possibility that it conflates Nebuchadnezzar's life with that of Nabonidus (Dan 5:20–21). Yet, even if we take the story at face value (i.e., Dan 2:1), then Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the second year of his reign would make him thirty-one years old, young enough to produce children. Nebuchadnezzar II was born in 634 BCE, and he ascended the throne in 605 BCE.

²⁷ See, e.g., William Kelly Simpson, "A Relief of the Royal Cup-Bearer *Tja-wy*," *BMB* 71 (1973): 69–82. Instructive too is the existence of a cosmetic box containing ointments and a mirror belonging to the cupbearer Kemeni now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (no. 26.7.1438). Throughout the Near East, cupbearers were young and selected for their beauty. Tobit 1:22 states that the cupbearer Achiacharus was Tobit's nephew. Since Tobit describes himself as young (1:4), his nephew also is likely young. Josephus too describes Herod's cupbearer in terms of his youthful beauty (*Ant.* 16.8.1). Compare Greek and Roman mythology, in which Hebe (= Roman Juventa), the goddess of youth, served as cupbearer to the gods (*Il.* 5.1–5). See also Ganymede (= Roman Catamitus), whom Homer describes as the most beautiful mortal whom Zeus abducted to become his eternal cupbearer (*Il.* 20.232).

pictorial remains of head bakers also show them to be young.²⁸ The Midianite soldier too must be relatively young to be of fighting age.²⁹ When Solomon had his dream (1 Kgs 3:5–14), he was still a נער (“youth,” 1 Kgs 3:7). Indeed, he is not explicitly labeled “old” until after he had acquired seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kgs 11:4). Job was certainly not a young man, though not as old as his friends (Job 15:10, 32:6), but the loss of his entire family renewed his reproductive needs, as the addition of seven sons and three daughters at the tale’s end demonstrates (Job 42:13).³⁰ Daniel’s age is unknown, but when the chief official saw he was not eating the food prepared for him, he asked, “Why should he (i.e., the king) see you looking worse than the other young men (הילדים) your age?” (Dan 1:10).³¹ Such evidence further supports the notion that the Hebrew חלום denotes a dream experience that bears directly on the virility and reproductive abilities of a male dreamer.³²

²⁸ See, e.g., the images of the royal bakery in the mastaba of Ti at Saqqara and that of Ramesses III in the Valley of the Kings. Depictions of non-royal bakeries too, like that in the tomb of Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum at Saqqara, and in various Middle Kingdom models, show the work to be grueling, and thus performed primarily by young men. For a treatment of artistic remains of bakeries unrestricted to period, see H. Wild, “Brasserie et panification au tombeau de Ti,” *BIFAO* 64 (1966): 95–120.

²⁹ Num 1:3 states that an Israelite soldier must be twenty years of age or older. Presumably military practices were not that different in Midian.

³⁰ Eliphaz states that he and the friends are older than Job’s father (Job 15:10). For Job’s frightening dreams, see Job 7:14. He lived until he was 140 (Job 42:16). Note too that Job makes reference to his hope for future virility by way of a metaphoric use of the term “bow” (Job 29:20). On this, see Shalom Paul, “The Shared Legacy of Sexual Metaphors and Euphemisms in Mesopotamian and Biblical Literature,” in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 493–94.

³¹ The term appears again in Dan 1:15, 17. The word ילד need not refer to a small child, for it also can be used of a young man (e.g., 1 Kgs 12:8). If the figure whom Ezekiel mentions is our Daniel, and not the Danel known from Ugaritic texts, then he also is said to have children (Ezek 14:20).

³² The account of Abram’s oneiric experience in Gen 15:12–15 states that Yahweh promised him future progeny, though it never employs the term חלום. Instead, we read: “and a deep-sleep (תרדמה) fell upon Abram” (Gen 15:12), and it is during this sleep that Yahweh spoke to him. Gen 12:4 informs us that Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Harran. I suggest that Israelite authors distinguished between חלום and תרדמה when conveying a dream experience, associating the latter with older men. Daniel twice employs the verbal form of the root רדם (“sleep”) when describing angelic visits (Dan 8:18, 10:9). However, in both cases his slumber takes place within the context of a vision (חזון and מראה respectively), and not as a prelude to the vision. Of course, the term תרדמה does not always denote a dream experience, but rather simply a divine sleep dur-

Moreover, even the passages that employ the verb חלם I, “be strong, virile” refer solely to young males.³³ Note that Job 39:3–4, cited above, refers only to the young male offspring, and that the description of Hezekiah’s invigoration in Isa 38:16 follows upon his explicit query concerning his own youth: בדמי ימי אלכה (“Must I go in the prime of my life?” Isa 38:10).

The connection of both חלם I and חלם II to male virility explains why biblical texts accord divine dreams and an ability to interpret them only to men,³⁴ despite the presence of female prophets in Israel and a wealth of comparative

ing which a dream might or might not occur. Thus, God lays a תרדמה on Adam (Gen 2:21) and on Saul and his men (1 Sam 26:12), but their experiences do not include dreams. In fact, Isa 29:10 associates a רוח תרדמה (“spirit of sleep”) not with a theophoric experience, but with closing the eyes of prophets and covering the heads of seers. The only other figure who associates a תרדמה with dreaming is Eliphaz, who tells Job: “A word was stolen to me, my ear took a whisper from it. Amid disquieting visions of night, when deep sleep (תרדמה) falls upon men” (Job 4:12–13). We do not know Eliphaz’s age, but in Job 32:4, Elihu regards him as one of the elders (i.e., זקנים). Further, the text makes Eliphaz the first respondent, thus portraying him as the eldest of Job’s friends by deference. Moreover, Elihu addresses Job’s friends as ישישים (“elderly men,” Job 32:6). Elihu also refers to a תרדמה in Job 33:15, but not as a personal experience. On Job 4:12–13 as a reference to oneiric punning, see Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 185–87.

³³ This is also the case in Ugaritic texts in which we find *hlm* II (“be sexually mature”). *DULAT* 361, s.v. *hlm*.

³⁴ Moreover, this generally holds true for Hellenistic Jewish texts as well. Out of the nearly one hundred dreams mentioned in this corpus, only five belong to women: Miriam (Liber antiquitatum biblicarum 9.10), Rebecca (Jub. 27:1, 35:6), Glaphyra (*Ant.* 17.349–53), Stratonica (Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.206–207), and the wife of Pontius Pilate (Matt 27:19). Interestingly, each of the portraits casts a negative light upon the female dreamer, as observed by Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras*, JSJSup 90 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 120–21. With regard to Rebecca’s dream in Jub. 27:1, I note that it also constitutes an exegetical gloss on Gen 27:41–42. In the latter text, the narrator informs us that Jacob had considered fratricide “in his heart,” but that Rebecca learned of his plans. The Jubilees account explains how she obtained the information by placing it in a dream. In any event, each of the aforementioned dreams represents Graeco-Roman influence. Indeed, one can find many more references to women dreaming in Graeco-Roman literature generally, e.g., Penelope (*Od.* 19.535–53), Atosa (Aeschylus, *Persae* 176–230), Clytaemnestra (Aeschylus, *Choephoroi* 32–36, 526–54; Sophocles, *Elektra* 417–20), Iphigenia (Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Tauris* 42–45), Polycrates’s daughter (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.209), Agarista (Herodotus, *Histories* 6.131), and Perpetua (*Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis* 4), to name a few. See Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Robert K. Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Traditio-Historical Analysis*, AGAJU 36 (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

evidence for female dream interpreters in Syria and Mesopotamia.³⁵ Again, I contend that we can explain the connection between dreams and male virility by positing that the Israelites regarded the dreams of young men as potentially meaningful only after they reached puberty.³⁶

This brings me to the third portion of this study, on the perceived connection between memory and masculinity. Here again, an androcentric conception of female fertility informs the context. As Baruch Levine observes, the Israelite view represents “an appropriation of the mother’s status by the father. The mother, and her ‘belly’ belong to the father; her womb and what grows in it have become his ‘fruit’.”³⁷ Moreover, female fertility, like that of crops and livestock, was considered a blessing that God bestowed upon those who kept his covenant (Exod 23:25–26; Deut 7:14–15, 28:1–24; Ps 127:3), and since the covenant was memorialized in flesh by way of circumcision, the covenant represented what Deborah Rooke has called “God’s claim over the ordinary Israelite male’s fertility.”³⁸ In addition, the blessing of fertility, the covenant, and its memory be-

³⁵ The great majority of recorded dreams in Mesopotamian literature and omen texts also occur to males, though some female dreamers are known. See Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams*, 17–19; Annette Zgoll, *Traum und Welterleben im antiken Mesopotamien: Traumtheorie und Traumpraxis im 3.–1. Jahrtausend v. Chr. als Horizont einer Kulturgeschichte des Träumens*, AOAT 333 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2006).

³⁶ Seeing the root חלם in this context lends greater nuance to Joel’s famous prophecy: אֲשַׁפּוֹךְ אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בֶּשָׂר וּנְבִיאִים וּבְנוֹתֵיכֶם זְקֵנִים חִלְמוּת חִלְמוּת יִחְלְמוּן בְּחֹרֵיכֶם חֲזִינוֹת יִרְאוּ (“I shall pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men will see revelations,” Joel 3:1). This passage has received much attention, especially by scholars of Christianity, since it is quoted in Acts 2:17 as a prediction of the Pentecost experience. However, in the light of the evidence gathered here, we may read Joel’s prophecy as even more novel than hitherto recognized. We may see it as proclaiming a future in which, contrary to societal norms, it is the old men, and not solely those in the prime of their reproductive lives, who will dream divine dreams. Indeed, the words “all flesh,” imply that, previous to the prophecy’s fulfillment, reception of the spirit was selective, and since prophesying women already existed in Israel, the selection must be based on age and not gender. Note too that while Yahweh promises to impart prophecy to males and females alike, both dreams and revelations apparently will remain exclusively male experiences.

³⁷ Baruch A. Levine, “‘Seed’ versus ‘Womb’: Expressions of Male Dominance in Biblical Israel,” in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 340.

³⁸ Deborah W. Rooke, “Breeches of the Covenant: Gender, Garments and the Priesthood,” in *Embroidered Garments: Priests and Gender in Biblical Israel*, ed. Deborah W. Rooke, HBM 25 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 30.

came the privilege of men, as Ilona Rashkow explains: “The Hebrew Bible posits the human penis as the explicit, emblematic and exclusive symbol of religious identity and membership of the communal order. Thus, the penis symbolizes the special link between the society’s God and the (male) members of the community.”³⁹

Moreover, the connection between maleness and memory is not only socially constructed, it is etymological: the words “male” (i.e., זָכָר, *zakar*) and “remember” (i.e., זָכַר, *zakhar*) are cognates (both derive from Proto-Semitic *ḏkr*).⁴⁰ Indeed, in the Bible, it is men who typically remember, who are remembered, who erect memorials, and for whom such memorials are erected.⁴¹ Thus, with regard to Joshua’s erecting of memorial stones, Ovidiu Creangă remarks:

The verticality of these commemorative monuments constructs a phallic symbol representing Joshua’s masculinity. The idea that masculinity and public commemoration are linked is reinforced by physical monuments. Conversely, physical erasure of memory as a result of complete destruction enters the domain of the ‘feminine.’⁴²

³⁹ Ilona N. Rashkow, *Taboo or Not Taboo: Sexuality and the Family in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 75.

⁴⁰ See Athalya Brenner, *The Intercourse of Knowledge: On Gendering Love, Desire and “Sexuality” in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 11–13.

⁴¹ As a gendered male, God too takes an active role in memorializing his covenant. See Thomas Edward McComiskey, “זָכַר,” *TWOT* 1:241–43. On the role of women in memorializing events in song, see Carol L. Meyers, “Miriam the Musician,” in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner, FCB 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 207–30. For a change in this pattern, see Ovidiu Creangă, “The Silenced Song of Victory: Power, Gender, and Memory in the Conquest Narrative of Joshua (Joshua 1–2),” in *A Question of Sex? Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, ed. Deborah Rooke, HBM 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 106–23.

⁴² Creangă, “The Silenced Song of Victory,” 117. On the memorials, see Josh 4:7, 23–24; 7:26; 8:29; 10:27. For texts describing the removal of someone from memory as textual erasure, see Yahweh’s command to Moses: “Write this remembrance (זָכַרְוּ) on a text (בַּסֵּפֶר) and put (it) in the ears of Joshua, for I verily will erase (מַחָה אֶמְחָה) the memory (זָכַר) of Amalek from beneath the heavens” (Exod 17:14). See also his remark: מִי אֲשֶׁר חָטָא לִי אֶמְחָה מִסֵּפֶרִי (“Whoever sins against me, I will erase him from my text,” Exod 32:33). Such pronouncements constitute standard curse formulae attested elsewhere, see, e.g., *CAD* 12:249–51, s.v. *pašāṭu* (“efface, erase”). Often these curses include statements concerning one’s lack of progeny, thus equating the extension of one’s name after death with their offspring. Cf. the losses of the evildoer in Job 18:7–19, which include lack of virility, loss of progeny, and removal from social memory. On the destruc-

It is in this light that we should see Absalom's memorial:

ואבשלם לקח ויצב־לו בחיו [בחיוו] את־מצבת אשר בעמק־המלך כי אמר איך־לי בן בעבור
הזכיר שמי ויקרא למצבת על־שמו ויקרא לה יד אבשלם עד היום הזה
And Absalom took and erected to himself, while he was alive, a standing-stone,
which is in the Valley of the King, for he said, "I have no son so that he might
invoke my name," and he called the standing-stone by his name, and it is called
the "hand" of Absalom to this day. (2 Sam 18:18)⁴³

The androcentric conception of memory is made apparent in the very name for the memorial, for the "hand" is a euphemism for the penis.⁴⁴ Thus, just as

tion of texts as ritual acts of power, see Scott B. Noegel, "The Ritual Use of Linguistic and Textual Violence in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East," in *State, Power, and Violence*, ed. Margo Kitts et al., RDSR 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 33–46.

⁴³ According to 2 Sam 14:27, Absalom had three sons and a daughter. Since they are unnamed, unlike his daughter Tamar, commentators have assumed they died young. For the various scholarly views, see P. Kyle McCarter, *2 Samuel*, AB 9 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 407. The rite of erecting a stone also appears in Ugaritic texts as one of the duties of an ideal son (KTU 1.17 i 26–34). See Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, HSM 39 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 54. R. Gordis, "A Note on the Meaning of יד," *JBL* 62 (1943): 341–44, proposes we read the word יד in the expression יד ושם as "offspring." Sara Japhet, "יד ושם (Isa. 56:5): A Different Proposal," *Maarav* 8 (1992): 69–80, argues that it means "share, portion." Sandra Jacobs, *The Body as Property: Physical Disfigurement in Biblical Law*, LHBOTS 582 (New York: T&T Clark, 2014), 154–78, sees the expression as symbolically representing a man's "name and seed."

⁴⁴ The word "hand" means "penis" also in Isa 57:8; Jer 5:31, 50:15; and in Ugaritic texts (KTU 1.4 iv 38–39, 1.23:30–35). For the Hebrew "hand" as "phallic monument," see 1 Sam 15:12 (Saul), 2 Sam 8:3 (David), Isa 56:5 (eunuchs deprived of sons), and Ezek 21:24. See M. Delcor, "The Special Meaning of the Word יד in Biblical Hebrew," *JSS* 12 (1967): 230–44; Paul, "Sexual Metaphors," 491; Stefan Schorch, *Euphemismen in der Hebräischen Bibel*, OBC 12 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 127–29. In addition to employing the term "hand" for phallus, I note that the word זכרוןך ("your monument") in Isa 57:8 is an allusion to "penis/male." Note similarly that cuneiform lexical traditions show that the root *zakāru* can mean "penis" in addition to "male," "memory," and "image, replica, or concept" (i.e., *gi-iš uš = zi-ka-ru, i-šá-ru, re-ḥu-ú, a₂ = idu ii 34–36, CAD 7:226, s.v. išaru*). See *CAD* 21:16–22, s.v. *zakāru* A; 112–16, s.v. *zikru* A; 116, s.v. *zikru* B. Bolstering the evocative use of "memorial" and "hand" in Isa 57:8 is the verb גלית meaning "you have departed," which can suggest the "uncovering" of clothing, and the verb ותעל ("you have gone up"), which can mean "you have had sex" (e.g., Gen 31:10, 12; 49:4). Moreover, the expression ותכרת־לך מהם ("you have made a covenant with them"), used in conjunction with reference to the "hand," naturally evokes the rite of

one inscribes one's memory on a stone phallus, so does God inscribe the memory of his covenant on the male member.⁴⁵

Masculinity and memory also combined in the practice of oath taking. Though the exact details of the gesture that accompanied oaths have been debated, it is clear that they involved one man touching, holding, or placing a hand near another man's testicles, which are euphemistically referred to as a "thigh" (Gen 24:2–3, 9; 47:29). Scholars have opined that the act established the power relationship between the two parties,⁴⁶ while symbolically threatening the lesser party with sterility or the extinction of his offspring should he dishonor the oath.⁴⁷ Thus, male genitalia bore the mark of the divine covenant and served to memorialize the promise of its fulfillment.⁴⁸ Indeed, the Israelites well anticipated the later rabbinic correlation between memory and masculinity described by Elliot Wolfson:

circumcision, especially when considered in the light of זכרון at the end of the first stich (cf. Ezek 16:17).

⁴⁵ Cf. Jacob's erection of a standing stone (מצבה) following his dream (Gen 28:18). The Ugaritic tale of Aqhat also includes the erection of a stone of an ancestral god as a ritual following an apparent incubation (KTU 1.17 i 44). It is tempting to see the מצבה as phallic in shape and import. Nevertheless, the types of standing stones found in the archaeological record are more diverse. See Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001), 256–62; Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "Will the Real *Massebot* Please Stand Up: Cases of Real and Mistakenly Identified Standing Stones in Ancient Israel," in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. Gary Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, BJS 346 (Providence: Brown University Press, 2006), 64–79.

⁴⁶ The link between virility and power perhaps is best seen in the term און, which means both "generative power, virility" and "physical strength." Indeed, male offspring are described as the strength of the father (e.g., Gen 49:3; Deut 21:17), and Job 40:16 locates this strength in the loins.

⁴⁷ See John H. Elliott, "Deuteronomy 25:11–12 and Biblical Euphemism," in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2006), 161–76; Meir Malul, "More on the *Paḥad Yiṣḥāq* (Genesis XXXI 42, 53) and the Oath by the Thigh," *VT* 35 (1985): 192–200; R. David Freedman, "'Put Your Hand Under My Thigh'—The Patriarchal Oath," *BAR* 2.2 (1976): 3–4, 42; Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 110–16. For an exemplar from Mesopotamia, see Meir Malul, "Touching the Sexual Organs as an Oath Ceremony in an Akkadian Letter," *VT* 37 (1987): 491–92. The practice is fossilized in the etymological relationship between "testimony" and "testes," via Latin *testis*, "a witness or evidence of virility." The rabbis later understood the act to be that of circumcision (Gen. Rab. 59:8).

⁴⁸ Circumcision also came to mark legitimate possession and ownership. See Jacobs, *The Body as Property*, 28–67.

The special relationship that pertains between the two is suggested by the symbolic identification of the *membrum virile* as the seat of memory. This connection is based ... on a word play between *zakhor*, “to remember,” and *zakhar*, “masculine.” The play on words suggests an ontological connection between masculinity and memory, that is, that which most singularly marks the male Jew, the circumcised penis, which bears the scar that affords him access to the site of memory in the Godhead.⁴⁹

Moreover, the interconnectedness has its roots in the origin of circumcision as an ancient fertility rite. As a number of scholars have argued, among the world’s peoples who still practice circumcision, it primarily is performed at puberty or just before marriage.⁵⁰ This fits well the narrative of Gen 17, which depicts circumcision as a fertility rite aimed to guarantee the “semen/seed” of the obedient.⁵¹ As Howard Eilberg-Schwartz espies:

⁴⁹ Elliot R. Wolfson, “The Cut that Binds: Time, Memory, and the Ascetic Impulse,” in *God’s Voice from the Void: Old and New Studies in Bratslav Hasidism*, ed. Shaul Magid (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 105. See also Elliot R. Wolfson, “Re/Membering the Covenant: Memory, Forgetfulness and the Construction of Identity in the Zohar,” in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Haim Yerushalmi*, ed. Elishiva Carlebach, John M. Efron, and David N. Myers (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 226; Elliot R. Wolfson, “Circumcision, Vision of God and Textual Interpretation: From Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol,” in *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism*, ed. Elliot R. Wolfson (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 30.

⁵⁰ For a convenient discussion and bibliography, see Eric K. Silverman, “Anthropology and Circumcision,” *ARA* 33 (2004): 419–45. For the evidence from Ugarit, see N. Wyatt, “The Pruning of the Vine in KTU 1.23,” *UF* 24 (1992): 403–24.

⁵¹ The term “seed/semen” (זרע) bears the positive meaning “offspring” in Gen 17:7 (twice), 8, 9, 10, 12, 19. Note the relevant observation of Tarja S. Philips, “Gender Matters: Priestly Writing on Impurity,” in *Embroidered Garments: Priests and Gender in Biblical Israel*, ed. Deborah W. Rooke, HBM 25 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 48: “Only in Leviticus 12 is circumcision mentioned in the context of impurity, but not the impurity of semen, rather of the parturient’s bleeding, thus contrasting in this context impure female blood with fertile male seed.”

The connection between circumcision and fertility explains why some commentators have been confused over whether circumcision is the covenant or simply a symbol of it.... Circumcision is a symbol that God will make Abraham fruitful and multiply. At the same time, circumcision is also a fulfillment of that promise since the removal of the foreskin symbolically readies the organ for reproduction.⁵²

Based on comparative evidence, Michael Fox similarly argues that in Israel “circumcision was originally and essentially a fertility device associated with puberty and marriage.”⁵³ He bolsters his arguments, *inter alia*, by discussing Gen 34, in which circumcision was required for marriage into the tribe, and Exod 4:24–26, in which the circumcised is called a “bridegroom of blood.” He concludes that only in later times did the Israelite priesthood downplay the fertility aspect of circumcision and move the rite from puberty to birth: “Circumcision was preparation for the most important aspect of this turn in the life cycle—reproduction.”⁵⁴

If this view is correct, and I contend it is, we are left with a remarkable correlation between the Israelite conception of dreams and the original rite of circumcision. Both marked male virility, the time of puberty and/or marriage, and adult membership in the tribe.⁵⁵ The correlation is not fortuitous, for otherwise it would be difficult to explain how one could obtain access to divine knowledge before entering God’s covenant.⁵⁶ Later, when the ritual of circumcision was moved to the eighth day of life, this correlation was lost, but the tradition that only adult males could receive divine dreams and/or interpret them remained.⁵⁷

⁵² Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 148.

⁵³ Michael V. Fox, “The Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in the Light of the Priestly ’*Ōt* Etiologies,” *RB* 81 (1974): 591. Suggested also by Jack M. Sasson, “Circumcision in the Ancient Near East,” *JBL* 85 (1966): 473–76, who proposes that the practice was in place in Canaan already in the Early Bronze Age, ca. 3200 BCE.

⁵⁴ Fox, “The Sign of the Covenant,” 593.

⁵⁵ I note that the rituals of dream interpretation and circumcision were viewed similarly in later times as acts of performative power that made one whole, the former by (re)solving the divine enigma (Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 235–51), and the latter by perfecting the human body (see, e.g., Gen. Rab. 42:3, 46:4, 55:4).

⁵⁶ According to Gen. Rab. 47:10, 48:2, circumcision was a prerequisite to theophany.

⁵⁷ Moreover, though adult male foreigners can receive divine dreams in the Bible, it takes an Israelite male to interpret them. In Judg 7:14, it is a Midianite who suggests the import of his friend’s dream, but significantly, the text never uses the word “interpret” (cf. Gen 40:8, 41:15; Dan 2:16). Nevertheless, it does offer clues to its interpretation. See Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 141–46. The case of Abimelek of Gerar is more complicated.

Nevertheless, unlike the memory of circumcision, which was inscribed externally on the phallus and which served to memorialize the covenant, God inscribed dreams internally on another human organ—the heart.⁵⁸

This brings me to my fourth and final section on the role of the heart as an organ for recording dreams. In my monograph *Nocturnal Ciphers*,⁵⁹ I examined the Israelite conception of dreams within the context of shared Mesopotamian and Egyptian notions of words, signs, and scripts as tools of illocutionary power. I showed that Israelite literati, like their Near Eastern counterparts, understood a word not merely as a referent, representation, or signifier of an object, but as that object itself in the concentrated form of a word.⁶⁰ In essence, the dream as a דבר was both “word” and “object.”⁶¹ I also observed that, much like omens in the

Genesis 20 depicts him as a Yahwist. He converses with Yahweh in his dream and Yahweh saves him from “sinning” against him (21:6). Since Gen 26:1 identifies him as a king of the Philistines, it would appear that the pattern is not entirely uniform. On the other hand, the text is widely regarded as anachronistic, and even Philistines engaged in circumcision during the monarchy. See Avraham Faust, “The Bible, Archaeology, and the Practice of Circumcision in Israelite and Philistine Societies,” *JBL* 134 (2015): 273–90.

⁵⁸ Note similarly the view of Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 89, who likens Israelite dreams to a place or organ: “More precisely, *h^alôm* describes the framework in which something takes place. This happening occurs ‘in a dream’, as if the latter were an objective reality, a space, or an organ, in which something is likely to happen. On the other hand, when it comes to ‘telling a dream’ ... the hallowed expression *spr* (‘t) *hlwm* assumes that *h^alôm* refers to the contents themselves of the oneiric experience.” I agree that dreams have a location, but I specify the organ as the heart of the dreamer onto which God inscribes his words.

⁵⁹ Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*. See similarly the remark of Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 124, “We should be careful about using the term *theophany*, for, contrary to the standard definition of the phenomenon, oneiric manifestations of God are in this context not accompanied by visual images. The recurrent use of verbs like ‘to come’ (*bw*), ‘to stand beside’ (*nšb*, *htyšb*), ‘to appear’ (*nr’h*), seems to describe not so much a visual perception as the sensation of a presence, or a sense of the nearness of the divinity. An oneiric theophany in the Old Testament, is a *theophany without vision* of God.” Italics are the author’s.

⁶⁰ Recently, I have argued that the belief in the illocutionary power of signs derived from perceiving them as miniature embodiments of the objects they represent. See Scott B. Noegel, “Scale Scriptitious: The Concentration of Divine Power in the Ancient Near East,” in *The Miniature and the Minor in the Ancient Greek, Roman, and Near Eastern Worlds: An Interdisciplinary Investigation*, ed. Jonathan L. Ready (forthcoming).

⁶¹ Thus, when Abimelek awakes from his dream, the narrator refers to his experience as follows: “And he related all these matters/words (הדברים) in their ears, and they were exceedingly afraid” (Gen 20:8). Similarly, when Joseph angered his brothers by relating his dreams, we are told: “But his father kept the matter/word” (הדבר; Gen 37:11). Note also that after Pharaoh relates his enigmatic dream to Joseph, he is told: “This is the

various ancient Near Eastern compendia, literary accounts of dream divination often demonstrate that interpretations were based on the dream as if it had been put into writing. I thus demonstrated that a dream had the ontological status of a text.⁶²

As a number of texts show, the human heart was considered the seat of one's memory.⁶³ Thus, Jeremiah could say of the ark of the covenant: *ולא יעלה על-לב ולא יזכרו* ("it will no longer arise upon the heart, and (so) they will no longer remember it," Jer 3:16).⁶⁴ Since dreams required one's memory to recall them, they too were naturally conceived as texts inscribed upon the heart. Thus, Jeremiah refers to the heart as a locus for dreams in his denunciation of prophets who falsify their interpretations: *עד-מתי היש בלב הנבאים נבאי השקר ונביאי תרמת לבם* ("how long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, and the prophets of the deceit of their heart," Jer 23:26)?⁶⁵ Note similarly that when Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that God will interpret his dreams, he identi-

word/matter (*הדבר*) that I spoke to Pharaoh: God is showing Pharaoh what he is doing" (Gen 41:28). Note similarly the view of Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 89–89, that a vision "never designates a vision as such, but rather a 'revelation,' the 'vision' of God's word. In spite of the primary meaning of *hzh*, therefore, when *h'ôm* and *h'ôn* exist in parallel, it is not so much in order to underline the visual character of the dream, as to draw attention to the capacity that the dreams have of making extra-sensorial perceptions during sleep." The veracity of Husser's observation is apparent in Job 33:15–16: "In dreams, a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while they slumber upon a bed. Then I shall reveal (to) the ears of men and seal their instruction." Note how, despite the mention of ears, the dream's contents are not said to be "spoken" or "heard," but rather "revealed" (*יגלה*). See also how Daniel received word of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams: "In a vision of the night (the) mystery was revealed (*גלי*) to Daniel" (Dan 2:19).

⁶² In Israel, this taxonomy also allowed dream interpreters to distinguish the contents of "theophoric" dreams from the making or conjuring of divine images.

⁶³ Cf. David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), who argues that, throughout the ancient Near East, the process of internalizing texts by memorization, i.e., "inscribing them upon the heart," was a male-oriented enterprise that aimed to educate and enculturate elite young men for leadership roles. For Carr, this informs how Israelite textual traditions were shaped to instill a predominantly male gender identity on the elites who acquired them.

⁶⁴ The same idiom occurs in Jer 44:21, and in reverse sequence in Isa 65:17. Similarly, one is forgotten "from the heart." Thus, the Psalmist cries: *נשכחתי כמה מלב* ("I am forgotten from the heart like one who is dead," Ps 31:12), and not, as the KJV renders: "I am forgotten as a dead man out of my mind."

⁶⁵ Jeremiah does not denounce oneiromancy generally. In fact, he adds: "Let the prophet whose dream is with him recount the dream, and the one with whom my word is with him speak my word truthfully" (Jer 23:28).

fies them with his heart: ורעיני לבבך תנדע (“so that you might know the thoughts/pur-poses of your heart,” Dan 2:30).

While translators often render the Hebrew לב/לבב as “mind,” rather than “heart,” in order to convey its function as a place of memory, its description as a writing surface for divine words suggests that we think of it not in the Cartesian sense, but more literally.⁶⁶ Indeed, the notion that gods could inscribe their intentions on the internal organs of living creatures is well known to students of Near Eastern extispicy. At least since the Old Babylonian period, Mesopotamian extispicers were examining the hearts of animals and they could refer to their internal organs generally with the cognate term *libbu* (“heart”),⁶⁷ or more descriptively as the *tuppu ša ilī* (“tablet of the gods”).⁶⁸

The notion that the divine could inscribe a message upon the human heart is a logical extension of this widespread belief.⁶⁹ Moreover, analogues for this concept exist in a number of later Greek texts that connect human viscera to

⁶⁶ A more active role for the heart during sleep appears in Song 5:2, in which the lover declares: אני ישנה ולבי ער (“I was sleeping, but my heart was awake”). If the text indeed describes a dream (in accordance with Abraham Ibn Ezra), it is the only place in the Hebrew Bible in which a woman is said to dream, and as such, it represents a reversal of gender roles. Nevertheless, the text does not explicitly refer to dreaming. On gender reversal as a theme in the Song, see Scott B. Noegel and Gary A. Rendsburg, *Solomon’s Vineyard: Literary and Linguistic Studies in the Song of Songs*, AIL 1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 156–57.

⁶⁷ See Ulla Jeyes, “Divination as a Science in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *JEOL* 32 (1991–92): 33.

⁶⁸ See Ulla Koch-Westenholz, *Babylonian Liver Omens: The Chapters Manzāzu, Padānu and Pān Tākaltu of the Babylonian Extispicy Series Mainly from Aššurbanipal’s Library*, CNI Publications 25 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2000), 13.

⁶⁹ In this light it is worth noting that extispicy also was an exclusively androcentric enterprise: both the extispicers and the animals they selected (usually a *puḥādu* [“lamb”] or *immeru* [“ram”]) were invariably male. See Jeyes, “Divination as a Science,” 33. Parallels between the Israelite view proposed here and extispicy also include a shared sense of the necessity for purity. Like the extispicers and the animals they selected, the retention of sacred memory in Israel required one to be unblemished. It required a pure heart from which one’s sins had been erased. Thus, we hear in Ps 51:11–12: “Remove my sins from your presence, and erase (מחה) all of my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart (לב טהור), and renew in my innards (בקרבי) a steadfast spirit.” See similarly Isa 43:25: “I, even I am he who erases (מחה) your transgressions for my own sake, I remember your sins no more.” On the purity of extispicers and their animals, see Jeyes, “Divination as a Science,” 29–30; W. G. Lambert, “The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners,” in *Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994*, CM 10, ed. Stefan M. Maul (Groningen: Styx, 1998), 141–58. In Mesopotamia, a close relationship between prognostic dreams and extispicy also existed, the latter often performed to verify the former. See Butler, *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams*, 25–26, 30, 39–41.

divine dreams, such as the Asclepian temple stela at Epidaurus, the Hippocratic treatise *On Regimen*, and Plato's *Timaeus* (all from the fourth century BCE). The stela at Epidaurus shows that patients believed that Asclepius healed them during their dreams by performing invasive operations on their internal organs. Hippocrates argues that dreams of cosmological phenomena, such as falling stars, signify bodily ailments. For him, the dream does not constitute a cure, but a symptom, and while the cosmos here is not a god per se, it bears a trace of divinity. In the *Timaeus*, Plato argues that it is the human liver that facilitates the soul's reception of divine messages through dreams.⁷⁰ Though I cannot do justice to the complex ideas that inform each of these sources, they do reveal, despite their obvious differences, a general belief in the interconnectedness of dreams, the divine, and human organs as a locus for memory. In his study of dreams and human viscera, Peter Struck summarizes the Greek view as follows: "Dreams do not stand outside the rather common Mediterranean tendency, exhibited in extispicies of all kinds, to see the divine in the viscera."⁷¹ I submit that we may place the Israelite conception of the heart, whether understood as the specific organ or a general reference to the viscera, in this context.

Moreover, since dreams and the rite of circumcision both marked male virility and the time of puberty and/or marriage, the heart and the phallus naturally were brought into comparison as competing loci for divine memory.⁷² It is in this light that I aver we understand periodic references to the human heart in phallic terms. Thus, the heart can be either circumcised (e.g., Deut 10:16, 30:6; Jer 4:4) or uncircumcised (e.g., Lev 26:41, Jer 9:25, Ezek 44:7).⁷³ Indeed, the

⁷⁰ On these texts, see Peter Struck, "Viscera and the Divine: Dreams as the Divinatory Bridge Between the Corporeal and the Incorporeal," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. Scott B. Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler, MH 8 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 125–36. Interestingly, Plato refers to dream contents as εἰδωλα ("images"), rather than words, even though dreams were put into words to interpret them. On the latter as it pertains to Greek traditions, see Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 191–233.

⁷¹ Struck, "Viscera and the Divine," 125.

⁷² Of course, the heart also served as a locus for covenantal love. See William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77–87.

⁷³ The connection between circumcision and fertility also appears in Lev 19:23, which refers to an unpruned plant as uncircumcised. As organs for delivering and receiving memories, the lips and ears also can be considered uncircumcised if they are not ritually prepared for the divine word (e.g., Exod 6:12, Jer 6:10). Herbert J. Huffmon, "Gender Subversion in the Book of Jeremiah," in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text

heart, like the penis, could be inscribed with God's covenant. See, for example, Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the covenant, נתתי את־תורתִי בקרבם ועל־לבם, אכתבנה ("I will place my law in their innards, and I will write it upon their heart," Jer 31:33),⁷⁴ and similarly his description of Judah's sin as כתובה בעט ברזל בצפרן שמיר חרושה על־לוח לבם ("engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point upon the tablet of their heart," Jer 17:1).⁷⁵ The conception of the heart in phallic terms might also explain the denominative root לבב ("ravish"), which often appears in sexually charged contexts.⁷⁶

Corpus Project, 2002), 250–52, argues that Jeremiah employs the term "circumcision of the heart" as an ideology aimed to include women in Yahweh's covenant.

⁷⁴ In Jer 23:16, the prophet also refers to some of his contemporaries by saying: חזון לבם ידברו לא מפי יהוה ("a vision of their heart they speak, not from the mouth of Yahweh"). The statement aims not to invalidate dreaming as a method of obtaining divine knowledge, but to castigate prophets who interpret dreams without divine inspiration. Note that the prophet again characterizes the experience as a word recorded on the "heart."

⁷⁵ The idiom "tablet of the heart" also appears in Prov 3:3, 7:3; and with significant variations in Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 788: μνήμοισιν δέλτοις φρενῶ ("recording tablets of [the] mind"). The expression likely has its origins in Mesopotamia. Note that the Egyptian expression *hjt tp ib* ("inscribe upon the heart") makes no reference to tablets, because papyrus was the primary medium for writing. Interestingly, one finds the expanded Greek idiom *πλαξίν καρδίας σαρκίνας* ("fleshy tablets of the heart") in 2 Cor 3:3. Is the use of the term *σαρκίνας* ("fleshy") evidence for a more literal understanding of the heart as an organ for recording the new covenant? On the meaning "fleshy," see LSJ, 1584, s.v. *σάρκειος*. Some New Testament scholars suggest that the passage echoes Jer 31:33; Ezek 11:19, 36:26, and that the fleshy heart characterizes its obedient nature in contrast to a heart of stone. Cf. Paul's discussion of circumcision of the heart by spirit, rather than the letter (Rom 2:27–29). On these matters, see Thomas E. Provence, "Who is Sufficient for These Things?: An Exegesis of 2 Corinthians ii 15–iii 18," *NT* 24 (1982): 54–81; Thomas R. Blanton, "Spirit and Covenant Renewal: A Theologoumenon of Paul's Opponents in 2 Corinthians," *JBL* 129 (2010): 129–51.

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Song 4:9: מעניך [באחת] כלה לבבתי באחד ("you aroused me, my sister, O bride, you aroused me with but one of your eyes"). On the sexual connotations of לבב, see N. M. Waldman, "A Note on Canticles 4, 9," *JBL* 89 (1970): 215–17. The root also appears in Job 11:12: ויש נבוב ילבב ועיר פרא אדם יולד ("Can a hollow man be aroused, can the colt of a wild ass give birth to a man?"). The parallel with ילד suggests that לבב relates to reproduction. I thus translate the latter as "aroused" rather than "be mindful" or "be two-hearted." Though exegetes often render נבוב as a "hollow" or "empty-headed" man (based on an Akkadian cognate meaning "play the flute," *CAD* 11.1:8, s.v. *nabābu*), one wonders whether the root נבב suggests a man unable to produce semen. He would then be a "hollow pipe," as it were (à la the vulgar English idiom "shooting blanks"). The verse would then suggest that a man unable to produce semen would share the same chances for reproduction as an ass giving birth to a human.

Furthermore, the notion that the heart could be thought of in phallic terms is not unique to ancient Israel. Indeed, the word “heart” serves as a euphemism for the penis in Babylonian rituals for healing male impotence.⁷⁷ These texts bear the Sumerian and Akkadian titles *ša₃-zi-ga* and *nīš libbi*, respectively, meaning “rising of the ‘heart.’”⁷⁸ The rabbis adopted this practice and thus, they too

Interestingly, b. B. Bat. 12b connects Job 11:12 with the root נוב in Zech 9:17. While נוב usually means “prosper” in the sense of “bearing fruit,” the rabbis connect it to נבב, (“hollow”) and render it with sexual connotations: “R. Abdimi from Haifa said: ‘Before a man eats and drinks he has two hearts, but after he eats and drinks he has only one heart, as it says, “ואיש נבוב ילבב” (Job 11:12) ... “R. Huna the son of R. Joshua said: ‘If a man is a wine drinker, even though his heart is closed like a virgin, the wine opens it, as it is said: “New wine shall open (ינובב) the maids”’” (Zech 9:17). See also 2 Sam 13:6, in which Amnon makes known his intentions concerning his half-sister Tamar: ותלבב לעיני and שתי לבבות ואברה מידה. Translators usually render the verse, “Let her prepare before me two cakes that I may eat from her hand,” and certainly her baking shortly afterwards shows that this is its outward meaning. Nevertheless, the use of לבב as “ravish” and its use with “eyes” in the aforementioned passage from Song of Songs, together with the fact that the word “eating” can be a sexual euphemism, suggests that the passage possesses added allusive power. The LXX renders לבבות with δύο κολλυρίδας (“two little cakes”), though the diminutive form κολλυρίδας also can refer to a medicinal salve. See LSJ, 972, s.v. κολλύρα. On the euphemism, see Paul, “Shared Legacy,” 495–97. Note that the Akkadian cognate *labābu* only means “rage.” See *CAD* 9:7, s.v. *labābu*.

⁷⁷ Akkadian texts describe impotence as a *libbu* (“heart”) that is *lā išari* (“not straight”). The latter also constitutes an illocutionary pun on *išaru* (“penis”). The idiom comes to denote anything impure, unjust, polluted, or irregular. Thus, here too an inability to reproduce is equated with abnormalcy and pollution. See *CAD* 7:226, s.v. *išaru*. The cognate Hebrew expression ישר לב (“upright of heart”) does not bear this meaning. The Akkadian *nīš libbi* (“lift the heart”) also finds a cognate in the expression גשא לב, but the Hebrew signifies the will of a person in nonsexual contexts (e.g., Exod 35:21, 36:2). Underscoring the euphemistic nature of the term *libbu* is that, when used in reference to a woman, it can refer to her womb. See *CAD* 9:165–66, s.v. *libbu*. Note also the Sumerian medical expression *ša₃ giš₃* = Akkadian *lib išari*, lit. “heart of the penis” (possibly read as *muštinnu*), i.e., “urethra”, in *CAD* 9:169, s.v. *libbu*. Cf. the Egyptian *Hymn to Osiris*, recorded on the stele of Amenmose (Paris Louvre C 286), which also uses the word *ib* “heart” for “penis.” It describes Isis’s successful effort to arouse “weary” (i.e., deceased) Osiris as follows: *sīswi nnw n wrd-ib hnp mw=f irwt iw’w* (“[She] raised the inertia of the weary of ‘heart,’ [she] received his seed, bore an heir,” line 16).

⁷⁸ See Robert D. Biggs, *Ša.zi.ga: Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations*, TCS 2 (Locust Valley: Augustin, 1967); Robert D. Biggs, “The Babylonian Sexual Potency Texts,” in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 71–79; Irving L. Finkel, “On Some Dog, Snake and Scorpion Incantations,” in *Mesopotamian*

employed the word “heart” euphemistically when describing a cure for impotence.⁷⁹ The correlation between the heart and the phallus in Mesopotamian and later rabbinic texts further supports the notion that such an association existed in ancient Israel.

In summary, my examination of dreams and dream divination in ancient Israel has maintained four interrelated theses. First, I have argued that examining the androcentric constructions of Israelite mantics from the perspective of fertility and pollution allows us to see their literary portrayals as registering an equally androcentric correlation between access to divine knowledge and male fertility. The depictions follow a general pattern that identifies male mantics with normative reproductive experiences (individual wholeness and societal health), and female mantics with a lack of reproduction (disability).⁸⁰ Second, I have argued

Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretive Perspectives, ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn, AMD 1 (Groningen: Styx, 1999), 211–52. On the subject generally, see Leonid Kogan and Alexander Militarev, “Akkadian Terms for Genitalia: New Etymologies, New Textual Interpretations,” in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001*, ed. Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 311–21. One finds a similar semantic development with the word *kabattu* (“liver, innards, mood, mind”), cf. *šamhāte lina’ā kabtassu* (“let prostitutes amuse his ‘mind’”; The Descent of Ištar, 129–130).

⁷⁹ B. ‘Erub 29b: “If a man suffers from weakness of the ‘heart’ (חולשא דליבא) let him obtain the flesh of the right flank of a male beast and excrements of the shepherd (understand: ‘cattle’) (produced in the month) of Nisan, and if excrements of cattle are not available, let him obtain some willow twigs, and let him roast it (i.e., the flesh on the twig), eat it, and after that drink diluted wine.” For the rabbinic usage and its derivation from Babylonian medicinal practices, see Mark J. Geller, *Akkadian Healing Therapies in the Babylonian Talmud*, Preprint 259 (Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, 2004), 27–28.

⁸⁰ The androcentric classification of male and female divinatory abilities according to whether they produce children is just one of several dichotomies that illustrate how constructions of gender (and their inversions) inform conceptions of reproduction, pollution, and access to divine knowledge. Deborah W. Rooke, “The Bare Facts: Gender and Nakedness in Leviticus 18,” in *A Question of Sex? Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, ed. Deborah W. Rooke, HBM 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 35, observes that the portrayals of women in the incest laws of Leviticus 18 “use the bodily terminology of relatedness and nakedness to categorize certain forbidden females as conceptually ‘inter-sexed’ in relation to the males to whom they are forbidden, thus effectively characterizing the women as ‘pseudo-males.’ Such women are seen as dangerous, because they blur the category boundaries of male and female.” According to Nicole J. Ruane, “Bathing, Status and Gender in Priestly Ritual,” in *A Question of Sex? Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, ed. Deborah W. Rooke, HBM 14 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 79, the laws of bodily emissions follow a

that this context informs the etymological and textual association of dreams and dream divination with male virility and reproduction. It suggests that the Israelites regarded the dreams of young males as potentially divine only after they reached puberty and entered the covenant. Third, I examined the androcentric conception of memory and memorials, especially as it relates to circumcision, and I raised a number of parallels between circumcision as a fertility rite and the conception of divine dreams. Finally, I turned to the heart as an organ for recording dreams and other memories. I proposed that this function finds parallels in extispicy and in later Greek treatments of dreams and I advanced the possibility that the competing roles of the heart and phallus as loci of memory explain the periodic literary treatment of the heart in phallic terms.

I submit that each of the theses allows us to understand the Israelite dream experience with greater nuance and that when combined, they account for some of the more curious features concerning biblical dreams.⁸¹ They demonstrate

gendered pattern in which a woman who has ejaculatory intercourse with a man must follow the same ritual procedures as a man who has had a seminal emission, whereas a man who has had sex with a menstruant must follow the procedures of a menstruant: “The sexual partner contacts the same impurity as the source and has the same ritual treatment. Thus, ritually speaking, intercourse has the power to change a sexual partner into a person of the opposite gender.” Gender inversions relating to divine access are known elsewhere in the ancient Near East as well, most famously in the cult of Ishtar. See Zainab Bahrani, *Women of Babylon: Gender and Representation in Mesopotamia* (London: Routledge, 2001), 141–60. Mouton, *Rêves hittites*, 7, also discusses the gendering of ritual objects during Hittite incubation rituals. During the process, the patient holds a spindle and distaff symbolizing the feminine side, but he receives a bow and arrows after passing through a magical gate, thus “illustrating his reacquisition of virility.”

⁸¹ Viewing gendered constructions of mantics from the perspective of fertility and pollution also sheds light on some of the variations to the patterns for female diviners noted by Hamori, “Childless Female Diviners,” like Rebekah and Rachel. Implicit in the story of Rebekah is the threat that she might have miscarried (Gen 25:22–24). We are told that she did not consult Yahweh until she felt that *התרצו הבנים בקרבה* (“the sons had crushed each other inside her,” Gen 25:22). Her query to Yahweh explicitly identifies her as a potential infertile parturient: “If it is so (i.e., that I am to have a child), why am I this way?” (Gen 25:22). In the story of Rachel’s theft of the *teraphim* (Gen 31:34–35), the author embeds Rachel’s role as a pollutant in her claim that she was menstruating. In one move, the author casts Rachel as a pollutant while putting the household gods in a contaminated position beneath her. Such texts again allow us to place depictions of female diviners within a wider context of fertility and pollution. Therefore, while biblical narratives do not portray every female with access to divine knowledge as childless or belonging to a non-normative family structure, they do mark their “disability” and place their fertility in check. Indeed, one could argue that the stories of Rebekah and Rachel mark their “disability” in pronounced ways, precisely because they do not fit the societal pattern. This also is apparent in the story of Miriam’s attempt to challenge Moses as

that, much like circumcision, literary depictions of dreams marked a liminal moment that registered one's reproductive abilities and fitness for divine access.⁸² They too recorded a memory of the divine, but unlike circumcision, which marked it on the phallus, they were recorded on the "fleshy tablets of the heart."⁸³

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God's primary spokesperson (Num 12). When she and Aaron protest, only she is stricken with leprosy, a punishment that marks her as a severe polluter and removes her prophethood from the social body. Thus, the narrative depicts her attempt to compete with male diviners as a transgression of the social norm deserving of a polluted state above and beyond that marked by her childlessness. Though her pollution did not relate to reproduction, the connection was not lost on Aaron, who describes her state as that of an infertile parturient: "Please do not make her like a stillborn boy who goes out of his mother's womb and his flesh is half eaten away" (Num 12:12). Tarja S. Philips, *Menstruation and Childbirth in the Bible: Fertility and Impurity*, StBibLit 88 (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 25, argues that that the account of Rachel's *teraphim* emphasizes fertility more than pollution. I suggest the categories are not mutually exclusive.

⁸² These findings stand in accord with my previous observation in *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 178: "Insofar as the redactors have accurately preserved the *techne* of dream interpreters, they also have legitimized the divinatory powers of the biblical characters who employ it, and by extension, of those in Israelite society most likely to employ such a hermeneutic—priestly or prophetic authors or redactors. This fits well the legitimating function of biblical narratives that report the so-called 'message dreams.'"

⁸³ On this expression, see n. 75.

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PERCHANCE TO DREAM

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