



Possession and Other Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Literature

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Possession and Other Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Literature

A dissertation presented
By

Reed Carlson

To

The Faculty of Harvard Divinity School

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Theology

In the Subject of

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Possession and Other Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Literature

ABSTRACT

This dissertation maps the functions of spirit language, rituals, and myths in the Hebrew Bible and in Second Temple Jewish literature. Most studies of these phenomena aim to decode them using modern categories (e.g., mental health, symbolization of oppression, demonization of the ‘other’). In contrast, this project applies models from cultural anthropology and ethnography on possession, trance, and other similar practices from around the world in order to reveal functions not usually associated with spirit texts (e.g., “technologies of the self,” social commentary, therapeutic self-othering, a means to reembody the past). It argues that this literature was a crucial component for constructing conceptions of the self in early Judaism and Christianity. Further, it demonstrates how the problematization of the self in biblical literature led to the enigmatic conceptions of spirit possession and exorcism found in Second Temple Jewish Literature.

Chapter one, “Unfamiliar Spirits,” positions this project at the intersection of two contemporary scholarly discussions in biblical studies that have often proceeded separately (studies on conceptions of “the self” and of “evil”). Chapter two, “What are Spirit Phenomena?” defines the terms “possession” and “spirit phenomena” as they are used in the project and lays out the underlying investigative method of the dissertation. Chapter three provides an overview of previous scholarship on spirit phenomena in both biblical studies and the study of religion. Chapter four, “The Spirit and the Self,” demonstrates how spirit-language is a common mode for

articulating notions of personhood in biblical literature. This conception is labelled the “animating spirit,” because it is conceived as material-like and as a bodily organ that is imparted at birth and extracted at death. Chapter five, “Possessing Spirits,” describes those spirit possession episodes in biblical literature that are temporally limited and imparted for a specific purpose. These spirits can be characterized as good, bad, or morally neutral and their presence is signaled by possession or trance behavior. Chapter six, “Demonizing the Self,” surveys biblical literature and select examples from the Dead Sea Scrolls, showing how the animating and possessing modes of spirit phenomena are not mutually exclusive but rather exist on a spectrum.

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No person, however, has had as much impact on this project or on my sense of academic vocation as Jon Levenson. I could not imagine doing this dissertation (or this degree) under the direction of anyone else. Professor Levenson is a model for the kind of scholar I hope to be, teaching and researching not only with skill and confidence but also with integrity and humility.

Personal acknowledgments are due to my family, especially to my parents, Rod and Melody (my first and best teachers), and to my sister, Allyson (my first classmate and sometimes a teacher too). My son, Anthony, was born during while writing this dissertation and while I cannot say he has always made writing easy; he has made it worth it. Finally, my wife, Britta, has been my generous teammate and critical partner. I doubt that there is single idea in this project that I did not test on her first and she has always responded tirelessly with encouragement, sound judgment, and so much love.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of my grandmothers, who taught me to study the Bible and to listen to the Spirit.

Despite the significant guidance and support that I have received from those named here and others I have missed, mistakes and shortcomings remain, and these are entirely my own. Likewise, for anything in this project that is commendable, exhortative, or true—

—לא לנו יי לא לנו כִּי־לשִׁמְךָ תֵּן כְּבוֹד—

Reed Carlson
Lent 2019
Boston, Massachusetts

DEDICATION

To the memories of

Marguerite Ann Annoni
and
Gracy Ann Carlson

2 Corinthians 4:13

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: UNFAMILIAR SPIRITS

The first recorded murder in rural Brookfield, Connecticut occurred during the early evening on February 16, 1981. Nineteen-year-old Arne Cheyenne Johnson reportedly stabbed and killed Alan Bono (also of Brookfield) on the lawn of a kennel business, which the victim managed. To the police who arrested Johnson several hours after the event, the case seemed ‘open-and-shut.’ The two men had been arguing about Johnson’s girlfriend, Deborah Glatzel, who rented an apartment from Bono. Early reports of the incident summarized that both men had been drinking heavily and that things had apparently gotten out of hand. A few days after the murder, however, a different account took shape, one that would mark the case as a first in United States legal history as well as capture the imaginations of enthusiasts of the supernatural around the world. By the time of the trial, the defendant, his family, and several priests from the Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport claimed that Johnson had been possessed by the devil when he committed the murder.¹

According to members of the Glatzel family, the possession had started nearly a year earlier, not with Johnson, but with Deborah’s eleven-year-old brother, David. The boy had

¹ Julie Stagis, “Killer’s Defense Was Demon Possession,” *Hartford Courant*, April 12, 2014, http://articles.courant.com/2014-04-12/news/hc-250-arne-johnson-20140412_1_bridgeport-diocese-the-courant-minnella; Dudley Clendinen, “Defendant in a Murder Puts the Devil on Trial,” *New York Times*, March 23, 1981, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/03/23/nyregion/defendant-in-a-murder-puts-the-devil-on-trial.html?pagewanted=all>; Lynn Darling, “By Demons Possessed,” *Washington Post*, September 13, 1981, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1981/09/13/by-demons-possessed/3479fa6b-eee3-4233-a2fc-b9defa403504/?utm_term=.b1bcdfl94065

reportedly exhibited several of the conspicuous behaviors western Christians have associated with demon possession for centuries including spasms, an altered voice, disproportionate strength, and visions of demons. There were also reports of his levitation and telekinetic movement of objects in the house. The family had previously enlisted the help of several Catholic priests from their local diocese in what reporters called “lesser exorcisms” (a formal exorcism required the authorization of a bishop, which was never given). In the months after the murder, the Glatzel family provided reporters with several photographs of these rituals including one in which Johnson holds a crucifix to the prostrate boy’s forehead and another in which the crucifix lies broken on the floor while Johnson appears to be holding the boy down. On at least one of these occasions, Johnson had reportedly challenged a demon to leave the boy and to enter him instead, a transfer that the family came to believe eventually took place. All three witnesses to the murder—Johnson’s two younger sisters and his girlfriend, Deborah—testified that Johnson had also showed signs of demon possession in the weeks leading up to the murder, and thus, in that moment, his actions had not been his own.

It did not take long for the remarkable story to gain international attention. Even before the murder, the Glatzel family had enlisted the help of self-proclaimed demonologists Ed and Lorraine Warren who had made a career as authors and lecturers on the paranormal. They later helped publicize the case (in the process, speeding sales of their then recent book). Johnson’s volunteer attorney, Martin Minella, elevated international curiosity in the case by publicly announcing his intent to plea demon possession as a formal defense in court. As Minella explained: “The courts have dealt with the existence of God; now they’re going to have to deal with the existence of the Devil.”²

² Clendinen, “Devil on Trial.”

Minella's grand theological vision for the case never manifested, however. Within days of the murder, the Catholic diocese stopped commenting publicly on the case. The judge eventually disallowed the demonic possession defense on the grounds that it was unprovable and thus irrelevant. A jury eventually found Johnson guilty of manslaughter, implying that he did not intend to murder Bono but only to injure him. Johnson was sentenced to ten-to-twenty years but served only five. He and Deborah Glatzel eventually married and have since remained out of the media spotlight. Despite its anti-climactic conclusion, the case spawned several books and popular magazine stories.³ A made-for-TV movie featuring Kevin Bacon and Andy Griffith was aired by NBC in 1983.⁴ As recently as 2014, the attorney, Martin Minella, reasserted his belief in Johnson's demonic possession at the time of the murder.⁵

Like so many modern accounts of contemporary spirit possession, the case of Arne Johnson exhibits familiar characteristics from generations of western imagination concerning demons, devils, and their misdeeds in the bodies of humans. The descriptions of young David Glatzel as speaking in multiple voices, levitating, cursing, and speaking presciently are as at home in accounts of spirit possession in late antiquity as they are in cable television's late-night "documentaries" on the paranormal. The boy's visions of the devil as a hoofed, hairy, and old man who spoke Latin might have just as easily been relayed by a medieval-era cloistered mystic as by a New England adolescent in the same year as the release of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Further, echoes of the New Testament Gospels can also be heard in this story: The transfer of

³ For example, Lynne Baranski, "In a Connecticut Murder Trial, Will (Demonic) Possession Prove Nine-Tenths of the Law?" *People*, October 26, 1981; Gerald Brittle, *The Devil in Connecticut* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983).

⁴ *The Demon Murder Case*, Directed by William Hale, Written by William Kelley, National Broadcasting Company, March 6, 1983.

⁵ Stagis, "Killer's Defense Was Demon Possession."

demonic presence from David to Arne is reminiscent of Jesus's expulsion of the demoniac into swine (Matt 8:28–34//Mark 5:1–20//Luke 8:26–39). David's violent episodes parallel those of demonized figures in the Gospels (e.g., Matt 17:14–21//Mark 9:14–29//Luke 9:37–43).

Certainly, the circumstances surrounding the murder and subsequent court case remain exceptional but the actual descriptors of the spirit possession itself in this story perpetuate a conventional set of ideas concerning the phenomenon. These attributes remain consistent across similar episodes in North American culture even today—especially among conservative Catholics, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals.⁶ Thus, a good deal of what makes the possession of Arne Johnson remarkable is not so much its supernatural aspects as it is the collision of these strong undercurrents in popular western demonology with the American legal system—an institution that found them completely unintelligible.⁷

In this way, the case poignantly illustrates a significant shift in the modern western imagination concerning spirit phenomena and it is one that will come under examination

⁶ A 2013 poll of one-thousand Americans showed that 57% believed in the existence of the Devil and that 51% believe “someone can be possessed by the devil or some other evil spirit.” These numbers were highest among “born-again” Christians (Devil 86%, Possession 72%). YouGov, “Exorcism,” *YouGov.com*, Sept 12–13, 2013, <https://today.yougov.com/news/2013/09/17/poll-results-exorcism/>. For a sociological study of contemporary belief and practices of these phenomena, see Tanya M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*. (New York: Vintage, 2012), esp. 253–65.

⁷ A related and more recent “collision” involved now deceased United States Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. It occurred after an interview Scalia gave to *New York Magazine* in which Scalia, a devout Roman Catholic, professed his belief in a real, personified devil. When this seemed to surprise the interviewer, Jennifer Senior, Scalia scoffed:

You're looking at me as though I'm weird. My God! Are you so out of touch with most of America, most of which believes in the Devil? I mean, Jesus Christ believed in the Devil! It's in the Gospels! You travel in circles that are so, *so* removed from mainstream America that you are appalled that anybody would believe in the Devil! Most of mankind has believed in the Devil, for all of history. Many more intelligent people than you or me have believed in the Devil.

The interview sparked a minor media fire storm as outlets like the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, *National Public Radio* and a host of cable news channels publicly debated the implications of Scalia's demonology: Were these fit beliefs for a justice in the highest court in the country? Is it rational to believe in personified evil? Does belief in personified evil affect one's ability to make just or ethical decisions? The media controversy was one of many in Scalia's career. Jennifer Senior, “In Conversation: Antonin Scalia,” *New York Magazine*, October 6, 2013, <http://nymag.com/news/features/antonin-scalia-2013-10/>

throughout this project. Put simply, it was not so long ago that being “possessed by the devil” in a New England court of law was grounds for capital punishment.⁸ However, at some point between colonial Salem and 1980s Connecticut, the same phenomenon came to be seen by many as precisely the opposite: a line of legal defense. The fact that this shift occurred even among those who maintained a belief in the reality of spirit possession demonstrates that more had changed than simply a greater public understanding of the workings of the natural world.⁹ Norms around human moral agency, expectations of what constitutes a spirit phenomenon, and conventions about how such things might be recognized had also shifted. Crucially, these developments took place at a scale larger than that merely of the communities that still practiced possession.

The story of the first murder in Brookfield, Connecticut as I have told it above introduces several of the intersecting themes that this dissertation seeks to explore. It stages an opportunity to evaluate spirit phenomena in biblical texts along lines other than just the mapping of ancient metaphysics and myths (though these tasks will prove necessary as well). It also invites forays into both ancient and modern notions of the self and of religious experience. It asks how the interpretation of biblical texts shaped expectations of spirit phenomena in antiquity and how they still do today. In this way, a sensational story like that above is worth discussing at the outset of the dissertation, since, in the bulk of this study, we will encounter very few figures like Arne Johnson, David Glatzel, and their devil. Indeed, one significant goal of this project is to expand conceptions of spirit possession beyond those of this familiar template.¹⁰

⁸ I am grateful to Matthew Rasure for this poignant observation.

⁹ Charles Taylor calls this “disenchantment.” *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 25–41.

¹⁰ This paradigm for spirit possession has been helpfully deconstructed and/or re-evaluated by numerous historians and scholars of religion, notably by those who study historic forms of witchcraft and medieval mysticism.

I. Adopting New Models for Understanding Possession and Other Spirit Phenomena

Unfortunately, among biblical scholars, it has most often been this more limited paradigm (as represented by Arne Johnson) that has characterized our treatment of spirit phenomena in biblical literature—or more often our lack of treatment.¹¹ To some degree, this is understandable. As already noted, for laypeople and scholars alike, spirit phenomena remain some of the most chilling, yet bizarrely fascinating human experiences described in religious literature. In popular western culture, premodern exorcisms, witch trials, and themes from gothic horror fiction remain reliable workhorses in book stores and box offices. In academic circles, scholars can specialize in sub-fields like “witchcraft studies” and “demonology,” employing methods from a variety of disciplines including history, theology, the study of religion, literary theory, cultural anthropology, and psychology. At a popular level, the stories gathered and retold under these banners are often intentionally grotesque and/or exploitatively exotic. Even among scholars—particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—there existed and still persists a temptation to present studies of spirit phenomena and trance experiences as safaris into *another* world, one where the ways of being human are darker and more primitive than what is usually acceptable in mainstream religions and societies.

See, for example, Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003) as well as the sources cited in chapter three of this dissertation.

¹¹ This project will use the term “biblical literature” to refer not only to those texts that eventually became canonized in the Hebrew Bible but also to the larger body of Jewish literature from the Second Temple period that displays a familiarity with them. See discussion in Reinhard G. Kratz, *Historisches und biblisches Israel: Drei Überblicke zum Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 79–99 and D. Andrew Teeter, “The Hebrew Bible and/as Second Temple Literature: Methodological Reflections,” *DSD* 20 (2013): 349–77. Additionally, cognizant of what Adele Reinhartz has called “the vanishing Jews of antiquity,” this project maintains that the ancient terms יהודים and Ἰουδαῖοι are most often best understood as referring to “Jews”—especially when the text relates to forms of “early Judaism.” (These translations are thus preferable to “Judeans” and “Judean religion.”). Adele Reinhartz, “The Vanishing Jews of Antiquity,” n.p. [cited 12 February 2017]. Online: <http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/vanishing-jews-antiquity-adele-reinhartz/>.

Thus, in order to examine the themes laid out above, this project requires not only the conventional historical-critical examinations of a biblical scholar but also an entirely new set of tools. To find these, I have turned to another field, the study of spirit possession (sometimes called “possession studies”). The study of spirit possession is the anthropological, ethnographic, and psychological research of altered or unusual states of consciousness (and their associated behavior) that is indigenously understood as the result of the influence of one or more other personalities—usually a spirit or deity—and often one that has entered the body and taken some measure of control.¹² Anthropologists have recognized multiple forms of spirit possession in cultures around the world:

The highest incidence is found in Pacific cultures and the lowest in North and South American Indian cultures. Belief in possession is widespread among peoples of Eurasia, Africa, and the circum-Mediterranean region and among descendants of Africans in the Americas. It occurs more frequently in agricultural societies than in hunting and gathering ones, and women seem to be possessed more often than men. However, altered states of consciousness, such as trance, are not always interpreted as spirit possession.¹³

As we will see, this field has developed several models and modes of analysis that can prove helpful in biblical studies.

One immediate complication when applying possession studies to biblical texts concerns terminology. Anthropologists and ethnographers have uncovered a variety of spirit possession practices that seem to problematize the very category of spirit *possession*, suggesting that spirit *partnership* or spirit *exchange* are more accurate labels in some instances. These include models where spirit possession is cultivated rather than exorcized, corporate rather than personal, and integral to the social and cultural life of a community rather than marginal. For these reasons and

¹² For a more detailed articulation of this definition and a helpful introduction, see Vincent Crapanzano, “Spirit Possession: An Overview,” *EOR* 13:8687–94.

¹³ Crapanzano, “Spirit Possession,” 8687.

others, I have adopted the term “spirit phenomena” when discussing biblical literature (see my longer discussion of terminology in chapter two).¹⁴ Recent studies by anthropologists and ethnographers into these aspects of possession have revealed significant implications for the wider field of possession studies (see my discussion below).

Despite advances along these lines among anthropologists and ethnographers, among biblical scholars, discussions of spirit phenomena are often subsumed under a much wider inquiry concerning ancient conceptions of evil. The turn of the millennium has seen a considerable increase of research into the origins and development of “evil” in early Jewish literature and, in particular, its influence on rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity.¹⁵ These studies have included not only investigations into so-called evil beings (e.g., Satan, Mastema, Belial, *daimonia*, etc.) and the transformations of their respective myths but also attempts to find an origin for and to define early Jewish conceptions of “evil” itself.¹⁶ Sometimes these

¹⁴ However, because “spirit possession” and “trance” have become the generally accepted terms among ethnographers and cultural anthropologists, I continue their use when discussing this literature specifically. See the brief but helpful discussion of terminology in Bettina E. Schmidt and Lucy Huskinson “Introduction” in *Spirit Possession and Trance: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Bettina E. Schmidt and Lucy Huskinson, (New York: Continuum, 2010), 1–15.

¹⁵ Many works varying in scope and approach could be listed here. Some examples include: Chris Keith and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, eds., *Evil in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity*, WUNT 2 417 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016); Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6:1–4 in Early Jewish Literature*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015); Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts*, WUNT 335 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2011); Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2005); Esther Eshel, “Demonology in Palestine during the Second Temple Period” (Hebrew; PhD. diss., Hebrew University, 1999). See also slightly older studies on similar themes: Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jew, Pagans, and Heretics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). This is not to say that these are new issues in the field. See for example: Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895); Rikvah Schärf Kluger, *Satan in the Old Testament*, trans. H. Nagel (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1967); Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

¹⁶ I would include in this category studies on related concepts like sin and repentance, though some deal with evil more directly than do others. Examples include David Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), Miryam T. Brand, *Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and its*

investigations attempt to discern the supposed intellectual system by which Israelites and early Jews comprehensively justified their own suffering. This is partly because studies of conceptions of evil in modernity tend to focus on “theodicy,” which frames the problem of suffering as one of “intelligibility.”¹⁷ Certainly some streams of biblical tradition did indeed attempt to fit evil into the prevailing intellectual frameworks of their respective eras. However, it would be difficult to find a text that identifies the “unintelligibility” of evil as its distinguishing attribute, as many theorists do today. Indeed, many mysteries were unintelligible in antiquity. Instead, biblical traditions generally tend to focus more on the prevention, announcement, lamentation, and ultimate defeat of evil (often with the deity as implied audience).¹⁸ Thus, when spirit phenomena are studied primarily as they relate to these debates, scholars could be forgiven for assuming that they occur only infrequently in the earliest biblical literature, and even then, only at the margins of the most significant texts.

While this dissertation certainly discusses spirit phenomena within the context of this ongoing scholarly discussion of “evil” (see, especially, chapter six), it hopes to frame them using a second recent conversation in biblical studies, one that heretofore has treated the topic of spirit phenomena relatively lightly. Taking cues from several decades of attention in the study of religion, Bible scholars have recently taken a greater interest in notions of “the self” in early

Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature, JAJ 9 (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2013); Gary Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

¹⁸ See, for example, Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Origins of Evil in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: The Interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4,” in *The Myth of Rebellious Angels*, WUNT 335 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 1–33; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*; John Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Jewish literature.¹⁹ Inquiries into early Jewish notions of the self have investigated biblical views of personhood and individual moral agency as well as ancient notions of religious experience and of embodiment. At stake in many of these studies has been the question of how similar ancient Israelite and early Jewish constructions of the self were to modern ideas, and what role they might play in assessing a genealogy of the western self.²⁰ Many of the hills over which these scholarly battles have been fought are late Second Temple era texts that seem to concern both human interiority and communal identity including prayers, laments, and sectarian interpretation of older texts.²¹

¹⁹ See, for example, Susan Niditch, *The Responsive Self: Personal Religion in Biblical Literature of the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods* (New Haven: Yale, 2015); Carol Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Shannon Burkes, *God, Self, and Death: The Shape of Religious Transformation in the Second Temple Period*, JSJSup. 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live? The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel*, BZAW 301 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000); David E. Aune and John McCarthy, eds., *The Whole and Divided Self: The Bible and Theological Anthropology* (New York: Crossroad, 1997). See also, James L. Kugel, *The Great Shift: Encountering God in Biblical Times* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017). Of course, studies on conceptions of the self have concerned scholars of religion outside of biblical studies for several generations: Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary* (Princeton: Princeton, 1998); Paul Ricoeur, "The Self in the Mirror of the Scriptures," trans. D. Pellauer, in *The Whole and Divided Self: The Bible and Theological Anthropology*, ed. D. E. Aune and J. McCarthy; (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 201–20; Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, eds., *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Mass., 1988); William James, "The Divided Self, and the Process of its Unification," in *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Centenary Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2002; repr., New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), 132–49.

²⁰ These issues are summarized well in Carol A. Newsom, "Toward a Genealogy of the Introspective Self in Second Temple Judaism" in *Functions of Psalms and Prayers in the Late Second Temple Period*, ed. Mika S. Pajunen and Jeremy Penner; BZAW 486 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 63–79. See also a classic text on the topic: Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *HTR* 56.3 (1963): 199–215. See also David Lambert, "Refreshing Philology: James Barr, Supersessionism, and the State of Biblical Words," *BI* 24 (2016): 332–56.

²¹ Some examples, J. Gerald Janzen, "Prayer and/as Self-Address: The Case of Hannah," in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, ed. B. A. Strawn and N. R. Bowen (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 113–28 and Angela Kim Harkins, "Ritual Mourning in Daniel's Interpretation of Jeremiah's Prophecy" *JCH* 2:1 (2015): 14–32. Overall, the discovery and wider dissemination of the Dead Sea Scrolls have played a large part in galvanizing interest in early Jewish understandings of the self. The subject matter of many of the scrolls has also made the issue of evil unavoidable. See Carol Newsom, "Models of the Moral Self: Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism," *JBL* 131:1 (2012): 5–25.

II. The Neglect of Studies on Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Literature

As productive as these two enterprises—studies on evil and on the self in late Second Temple Judaism— have been, spirit phenomena in the Hebrew Bible have been relatively under-examined as they relate to these issues. Aside from the purely practical limitations of scholarly scope, a number of factors have contributed to this neglect. Four of them can be summarized as follows:

A. Overshadowed by Studies of New Testament and Early Christian Pneumatology

Many investigations into Hebrew Bible notions of “spirit” and “spirits” have functioned less as distinct objects of scholarly attention and more as “background” for studies of early Christian and early Jewish pneumatology.²² Spirit phenomena in the Hebrew Bible are thus sometimes categorized according to whether or not they preempt later notions of a Holy Spirit (usually if they are positive or originate from God) or demon possession (usually if they are negative or if they originate from a source other than God).²³ Modes of spirit phenomena in the Hebrew Bible or early Jewish literature that do not fit easily into either of these early Christian paradigms are thus often dismissed or overlooked altogether.

²² See for example, Hermann Gunkel, *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes* and more recently John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

²³ For example, the seminal, six-volume *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, has no entry on “spirits” or “spirit possession” but instead has one entry on the “Holy Spirit” supplemented by various other entries like “Demons,” and “Evil,” as well as on specific figures like “Devil” and “Satan.” David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992). The more recent *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* includes an entry on the “Holy Spirit” but separate entries for “Evil Spirit of God” and “Unclean Spirits.” See the comments in P. Kyle McCarter’s entry, “Evil Spirit of God,” *DDD* 319–20.

B. Assumed Opposition Between Spirit and Intellect

An old but still relatively widespread stereotype persists, which assumes that a person's engagement in spirit phenomena requires a suspension of intellectual faculties. As William Robertson Smith observed in 1881 concerning ancient Israel's "lower" neighbors:

It is not as an intellectual and moral being that man has fellowship with deities that are themselves identified with physical powers. The divine element in man through which he has access to his god lies in the mysterious instincts of his lower nature; and paroxysms of artificially-produced frenzy, dreams, and diseased visions are the accepted means of intercourse with the godhead.²⁴

Thus, for some early interpreters, spirit possession and trance practices exist only in the earliest layers of biblical texts. Julius Wellhausen, for example, argued that the labelling of Samuel as a ראה "seer" in 1 Sam 9:5–10 shows that, originally, a נביא "prophet" was an entirely different figure, one who practiced מתנבאים "prophetic trance" (e.g., the חבל נביאים "band of prophets" in 1 Sam 10:5).²⁵ According to Wellhausen, this distinction (and perhaps the practice itself) had all but disappeared by the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah to the extent that a later scribe could quite mistakenly equate the two terms in a gloss (1 Sam 9:9). As Wellhausen explained, such a historical scheme has the advantage that "Samuel the Seer need not be degraded into one of the flagellants."²⁶

²⁴ William Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church: A Course of Lectures on Biblical Criticism*, rev. and enl. ed. (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1892), 286. Among the earliest anthropologists, spirit possession was taken as universal and self-evident behavior, particularly among proponents of E. B. Tylor's theory for the priority of animism as a universal form of religion. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 2 vols., 6th ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, [1871] 1920), 417–502.

²⁵ Unless otherwise noted translations from Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek are my own. Usually, non-English languages both ancient and modern will appear in translation. In instances where it is relevant, the original may be included either in the main body or in a footnote.

²⁶ "[...] daßalso Samuel als Seher nicht zu einem der Flagellanten zu erniedrigen ist." Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001); Repr. of *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 2d ed. (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1883), 265–66. Unless otherwise noted, translation from German are my own. See my longer discussion of this episode and this term in chapter five.

This tendency among nineteenth-century Bible scholars led some to argue that spirit language in the Hebrew Bible functioned primarily at a theoretical or idealized level—a position that Hermann Gunkel's, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit* (1888), ardently refuted:

It is a fatal error to conceive of the spirit in the Old Testament in such a way that actual religious and moral activity do not belong to it, as “by and large” attributed “to a legend-adorned prehistory” or to an “ideal end time,” and thus to assess the spirit's effects “by and large” not as actual activity but as fantasy.²⁷

While Gunkel's assessment of spirit phenomena as an experience offered an important corrective in biblical studies, his assessment of Second Temple Judaism perpetuated a damaging stereotype (see number four below).²⁸

Gunkel's correction also did not stop later scholars from attempting to deny the existence or authenticity of ecstatic spirit practices alternatively in biblical texts or in the religion of ancient Israel. Some scholars ruled out ecstatic spirit practices on the grounds of a hypothetical distinction between legitimate and illegitimate religious practices:

One may conclude that the orgiastic, vigorous ecstasy is alien to the Israelite prophets. On the other hand, it is found among false and non-Israelite prophets. The ecstasy of [the LORD]-prophets, primitive as well as classical is characterized by a calm, sometimes paralytically calm, seeing and hearing the word of [the LORD], which they feel compelled to forward.²⁹

²⁷ Hermann Gunkel, *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes nach der populären Anschauung der apostolischen Zeit und der Lehre des Apostels Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1888), 4. The work was reprinted with a new preface in 1899 and again in 1909. Gunkel quotes disapprovingly H. H. Wendt, *Die Begriffe Fleisch und Geist im biblischen Sprachgebrauch* (Gotha: Perthes, 1878), 35.

²⁸ Overall, the early twentieth century saw an influx of fascination with supposedly irrational and psychologically aberrant aspects of the Hebrew Bible—particularly the prophets. See, for example, Bernhard Duhm, *Israels Propheten* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1916) and Rudolph Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*. (Breslau, 1917). This trend is discussed in chapter three.

²⁹ Gunnel André, “Ecstatic Prophecy [sic] in the Old Testament” in *Religious Ecstasy: Based on Papers read at the Symposium of Religious Ecstasy held at Åbo, Finland, on the 26–28th of August 1981*, ed. Nils G. Holm (Stockholm: Alqvist & Wiksell International, 1982), 187–200, 200. Out of respect for a wide range of readers, the ancestral name for the God of Israel is rendered here and elsewhere as the traditional “the LORD” in English and as [ׁ] in Hebrew. When quoting others, as here, I have indicated the substitution with brackets.

Other scholars acknowledged that the Hebrew Bible portrayed ecstatic trance in a few cases, but suggested these were imported religious practices—perhaps from Phoenicia.³⁰ More recent scholarship has generally been more open to recognizing possession and other spirit phenomena in the Bible—especially in the prophets (see chapter three).³¹ These studies have yet to be integrated, however, into a full treatment of spirit phenomena in biblical literature.

C. Relegated to the Fringes of the Biblical Chronology

At the other end of the timeline, for some scholars, religious ecstasy did not yet exist in the Hebrew Bible—or at least, not in a form that would be recognizable to later Jews and Christians. This perspective, rather than attributing spirit phenomena to the Bible’s hoary and supposedly more primitive pre-history, relegated them to what was seen as the more fanciful communities and literature of the late Second Temple period. Early scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, argued that the scrolls displayed such prominent borrowing from Persian religion—not least in their conceptions of evil beings—that the influence of earlier biblical literature’s portraits of spirits could have been only marginal.³²

³⁰ See, for example, Simon B. Parker, “Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel” VT 28.3 (1978): 271–85. More generally, the idea that pre-exilic Israelite prophecy condemned ecstatic prophetic behavior is a recurring argument in biblical studies. See Sigmund Mowinkel, “The ‘Spirit’ and the ‘Word’ in the Pre-exilic Reforming Prophets,” JBL 53 (1934): 199–227 and Klaus-Peter Adam, “‘And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them’ (1Sam 10:11b): The Depreciative Use of נָבִיא Hitpa’el and the Comparative Evidence of Ecstatic Prophecy,” WdO 39.1 (2009): 3–57.

³¹ See, for example, the excellent treatment on ecstasy in Martti Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy: Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greek Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2017).

³² See for example, K. G. Kuhn, “Die Sektenschrift und die iranische Religion,” ZThK 49 (1952): 296–316 and Shaul Shaked, “Qumran and Iran: Further Considerations,” *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 433–46. But see the criticism in James Barr, “The Question of Religious Influence: The Case of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity” JAAR 53:2 (1985): 201–25.

D. Characterized Early Judaism as “Spiritually Dry” or Anti-Pneumatic

A final factor that has contributed to the neglect of studying spirit phenomena in biblical literature is the still relatively widespread assumption that while Old Testament prophets and the early Jesus movement described in the New Testament were spiritually energized and aware, the intervening Judaism was comparably dry and even actively opposed to spirit phenomena. The anti-Jewish form of this argument has deep roots in early critical scholarship of the Bible but was synthesized especially acridly in several places by Gunkel:

At the very outset of our investigation we see that Judaism distinguished itself from ancient Israel and from the Christian community by the fact that it produced no or, stated more cautiously, only very few pneumatic phenomena. In essence, then, we are compelled to construct our analogies to New Testament ideas from the Old Testament.³³

Further proof for our contention is that some of the Jewish people who see in Jesus' activity the working of a higher power think he is Elijah or another of the ancient prophets (Luke 9:8). This period appears so spiritually impoverished to them that a man such as Jesus cannot come from it. He is not a child of his time. He must belong to Israel's antiquity, long past and mighty of spirit.³⁴

While the argument today is usually phrased less polemically, the sentiment remains much the same—particularly among New Testament scholars whose works otherwise display admirable sensibility to spirit phenomena in ancient texts.³⁵ This perspective often erroneously holds that the Second Temple period had very little to say about spirit(s):

The single most noticeable "development" of the concept of the רוח of God during the Second Temple period is that there is scarcely any development at all, mostly because there is comparatively sparse mention of the Spirit in the literature.³⁶

³³ Unless otherwise noted, translations are from *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul* (trans. R. A. Harrisville and P. A. Quanbeck II; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979). Here, p. 21.

³⁴ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 68.

³⁵ See a list of examples in Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 115–16.

³⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 910.

Until [the Second Temple] period, the spirit of God has been associated closely with the covenants, both old and new. But now that the covenant has been replaced by the law, (or reinterpreted in terms of the law) as the constituting factor in the reconstructed Jewish community, the spirit's base of operation has been taken away. It can no longer be the spirit of power active at the center of the covenant community. Only the advent of the new covenant will again make this possible.³⁷

In more recent years, this position has been compellingly refuted by several scholars, most extensively by John Levison.³⁸ The implications of this fourth factor in inhibiting research into the spirit phenomena of the Hebrew Bible are given greater attention in chapter three.

E. Exceptions and More Recent Work

Of course, by highlighting these persistent barriers to the study of spirit phenomena in the Bible, I do not mean to suggest that the topic has been completely ignored. Especially when considering the use of evidence from sociology and cultural anthropology, Robert Wilson's 1980 *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* stands as a highly influential standout.³⁹ In this investigation into the social world of the prophets, Wilson made use of some of the foremost scholars on spirit possession and trance of his day, including works by Ioan Lewis and Erika Bourguignon.⁴⁰ Crucially, however, while many anthropologists and ethnographers have since moved on from methods similar to Wilson's more structural-functional approach, biblical scholars have yet to produce a similarly updated treatment of spirit phenomena in the Bible.

³⁷ Lloyd R. Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1972), 122–23.

³⁸ John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, esp. 114–17; *The Spirit in First Century Judaism*, AGJU 29 (Brill: Leiden, 1997); "Did the Spirit Withdraw from Israel? An Evaluation of the Earliest Jewish Data," *NTS* 43 (1997): 35–57. See also, Frederick E. Greenspahn, "Why Prophecy Ceased," *JBL* 108 (1989): 37–49.

³⁹ Robert Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980). See also "Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98.3 (1979): 321–37.

⁴⁰ Ioan M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, 3d ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003); 1st ed. (London: Penguin, 1971) and Erika Bourguignon "The Self, the Behavioral Environment, and the Theory of Spirit Possession," in *Culture and Meaning in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Melford E. Spiro (New York: Free Press, 1965), 39–60.

Also defying the general trend discussed above, advances in the study of spirit phenomena, divination, and prophecy in other ancient Semitic cultures have better equipped scholars to recognize similar phenomena in the Hebrew Bible. Lester Grabbe, Martti Nissinen, and more recently Ingrid Lilly have made significant contributions in this regard.⁴¹ Finally, it should be noted that Pentecostal interpreters as well as scholars writing for and about biblical interpretation in the global south often exhibit an exceptional sensitivity to spirit phenomena in biblical texts that more self-consciously non-confessional researchers sometimes lack.⁴²

III. Possession Studies Trends in Cultural Anthropology and the New Testament

In contrast to this paucity in the study of the Hebrew Bible, in recent years, scholars of New Testament and early Christianity have seen a minor resurgence of interest in spirit phenomena.

⁴¹ E.g., Lester Grabbe, “Shaman, Preacher, or Spirit Medium?: The Israelite Prophet in the Light of Anthropological Models” in *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel*, ed. John Day, LHBOTS 531 (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 117–132 and “Daniel: Sage, Seer ... and Prophet?” in *Constructs of Prophecy in the Former & Latter Prophets & Other Texts*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Martti Nissinen, ANEM 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 87–94; Ingrid E. Lilly, “Conceptualizing Spirit: Supernatural Meteorology and Winds of Distress in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East” in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, eds. J. Baden, H. Najman, and E. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 826–44; and “Rûah Embodied: Job’s Internal Disease from the Perspective of Mesopotamian Medicine” in *Borders: Terms, Ideologies, Performances*, ed. Annette Weissenrieder (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 323–36; Martti Nissinen, ed., *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); and *Ancient Prophecy: Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greek Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2017); Irmtraud Fischer, *Gotteskündinnen: Zu einer geschlechterfairen Deutung des Phänomens der Prophetie und der Prophetinnen in der Hebräischen Bibel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002).

⁴² See, the review of literature in chapter three as well some notable examples: Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, et al. *Interdisciplinary and Religio-Cultural Discourses on a Spirit-Filled Word: Loosing the Spirits* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). See also Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* (London: SPCK, 2008); Daniel Míguez, *Spiritual Bonfire in Argentina: Confronting Current Theories with an Ethnographic Account of Pentecostal Growth in a Buenos Aires Suburb* (Amsterdam: Centro de Estudios y Documentación Latinoamericanos, 1998); R. Andrew Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997). There are many examples of specifically Pentecostal readings of spirit phenomena in the Bible that could be listed here. Some examples include: Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT2 54, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993); Craig S. Keener, “Spirit Possession as a Cross-cultural Experience” *BBR* 20.2 (2010): 215–36; Lee Roy Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges* (Blandford, UK: Deo Publishing, 2008); Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*.

Peter Craffert, Colleen Shantz, John Levison, and Giovanni Bazzana are some of the names associated with this approach.⁴³ A variety of factors have led to this resurgence, including the reevaluation of an older scholarly bias against ‘mystic’ interpretations of New Testament figures that was prominent throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Also fruitful has been the incorporation of anthropological, sociological, and neurological studies of spirit possession—including some of those referenced above. At least four general trends can be identified as having relevance for this dissertation.

A. Dissolving the Barrier Between Spiritual Emphasis and Intellectual Reflection

Some scholars have begun to recognize that, from the point of view of these texts, the presence of spirit influence in a person or community does not necessarily indicate a compromise of intellectual faculty nor signal social marginalization or weakness.⁴⁴ These insights have been accomplished, in part, through a deconstruction of an influential western paradigm of spirit possession. The anthropologist Paul Christopher Johnson argues that for much of the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, anthropologists and scholars of religion operated with a conception of spirit possession that depended heavily on the enlightenment idea that each person was a kind of economic property that could be possessed by the self or another.⁴⁵ This thinking can be identified in figures like Hobbes, Locke, and Kant who helped to theorize the spirit-influenced

⁴³ Peter F. Craffert, *The Life of a Galilean Shaman: Jesus of Nazareth in Anthropological-Historical Perspective*, Matrix: 3; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008); Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle's Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2009); John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*; Giovanni Bazzana, *Christ and Beelzebul: Anthropological Insights on Spirit Possession and Exorcisms in the Early Christ Groups* (New Haven: Yale University, forthcoming).

⁴⁴ See, for example, Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy* and Bazzana, *Christ and Beelzebul*.

⁴⁵ Paul C. Johnson, “Toward an Atlantic Genealogy of ‘Spirit Possession’,” in *Spirited Things: The Work of “Possession” in Afro-Atlantic Religions* ed. Paul C. Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014), 23-45.

person as not in control of his or her own free will. Thus, spirit possession rendered one incapable of participating in rational religion and, in turn, a risk to society economically and politically. These underlying assumptions persisted among early anthropologists and theorists of religion who characterized the various practices of spirit possession cults in the non-western world as at first “primitive” and then eventually as “uncontrolled” and “mob-like.”⁴⁶

These assumptions also allowed early scholars of religion to misunderstand the heritage of possession phenomena in western culture. The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor helpfully characterizes this disconnect as the difference between the “porous” self and the “buffered” self. In the modern conception of the “buffered” self, each human being is protected from outside influence by his or her own distinct individuality and moral will. We might say that there is a boundary between *the inside* and *the outside* of a person, and each of us has the power of invitation and rejection in regard to our own emotions, spirituality, and thoughts. In contrast, the premodern “porous” self naturally assumed that the most powerful and important emotions originated outside of the mind—or better, that there was no boundary at all.⁴⁷ Thus, according to Taylor, “[...] the porous self is vulnerable, to spirits, demons, [and] cosmic forces.”⁴⁸ This is not a sign of weakness or compromised human validity, but a simple fact, and it would seem, in some cultures, an aspect of the self worth nurturing.

⁴⁶ Johnson, “Toward an Atlantic Genealogy of ‘Spirit Possession,’ 40. While I cannot go so far as Johnson in calling spirit possession an entirely “occidental” category from its inception, it is undeniable that in a majority of the scholarly literature, the western intellectual tradition has exercised a disproportionate influence. Johnson, “Toward an Atlantic Genealogy of ‘Spirit Possession,’ 33.

⁴⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 38.

⁴⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 38.

B. Moving Away from “Instrumental” Interpretations of Possession

Many anthropologists have given up on excessively positivist interpretations of spirit phenomena by means of behavioral, psychological, or chemical models and New Testament scholars have begun to take note.⁴⁹ Summarizing the work of others in her field, anthropologist Janice Boddy argues that spirit possession rarely fits neatly into western scholarly categories like “medicine,” “psychology,” or “religion” and thus movement away from empirical and de-contextualizing approaches is necessary if spirit possession phenomena are to be recognized as being primarily about meaning.⁵⁰ With this, Boddy rejects the influential paradigm popularized by Lewis.⁵¹ Lewis’s approach, for example, might read the encouragement of ecstatic, spiritual experience in the dominant religion of a region as an attempt by the leadership class to strengthen and legitimate its authority. A related practice expressed among women and/or a minority cult, for example, might use possession as a spiritual ailment and thus as a means to retaliate against a husband’s mistreatment or else as a “safety valve” to release pent up tension in a repressive social structure. Speaking from a Geertzian perspective, Michael Lambek criticizes Lewis’s methodology as reading against the grain of the native cultural idiom, thereby dismissing significant components of the practices in search of sociopolitical forces that may or may not be at work.⁵² While not denying that elements of power and social critique are native to many or

⁴⁹ For an example the older approach, see J. Keir Howard, “New Testament Exorcism and its Significance Today” *ExpTim* 96.4 (1985): 105–09. For the more anthropologically informed position, see, for example, *Bazzana, Christ and Beelzebul*.

⁵⁰ Janice Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited: Beyond Instrumentality,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994): 407–434, 412.

⁵¹ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*.

⁵² Michael Lambek, “From Disease to Discourse: Remarks on the Conceptualization of Trance and Spirit Possession”, in *Altered State of Consciousness and Mental Health: a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Cross-Cultural Research and Methodology 12, ed. C.A. Ward (London: Sage 1989), 36–61, 37. See also Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

even most spirit possession practices around the world, this project takes seriously the corrective from Boddy and Lambek, and seeks to understand spirit phenomena in the Hebrew Bible within the frameworks it establishes for itself. In this, Lambek's characterization of spirit possession as a "system of communication" is invaluable.⁵³

C. Reading Possession as a Discourse

Perhaps most useful to the biblical scholar, some anthropologists are electing to "read" spirit possession practices as a kind of "text" or discourse, complete with established forms and opportunities for creativity. As Lambek explains describing possession trances in Mayotte:

Trance behavior often strikes the inexperienced observer as wild, uncoordinated, incoherent, and unpredictable, and indeed, it is meant to. However, close observation and discussion with various mediums reveal an underlying "grammar" such that in a competent trancer most behavior can be interpreted as an expression of the identity or attitude of the spirit and the stage or immediate quality of its relationship with the host or interlocutor.⁵⁴

Adapted to the study of the New Testament, this approach has allowed scholars to read exorcism stories in the Gospels and spirit-talk in Paul's letters as a kind of cultural script. Along these lines, Boddy characterizes these theatrical, satirical, and historically perceptive aspects of spirit possession as "metacommentaries on the human world."⁵⁵ Such an interpretive method might be very useful also for scholars of the Hebrew Bible and of Second Temple Jewish literature, particularly when we consider the commentary-like nature of much of biblical literature.

⁵³ Lambek, "From Disease to Discourse," 56–57.

⁵⁴ Lambek, "From Disease to Discourse," 42.

⁵⁵ Boddy, "Spirit Possession Revisited," 423.

D. The Politics of Possession

Finally, many scholars working both in New Testament and Anthropology have recognized that spirit possession very often engages abstractly with political and societal issues. In particular, it has often functioned as a critique or performance of colonialism. While it is certainly true that New Testament scholars have utilized post-colonial lenses for decades,⁵⁶ the observations by anthropologists that, broadly speaking, spirit possession phenomena are prevalent in societies that perceive themselves as victimized by “colonial, national, or global hegemonies” have given this trend in New Testament studies stronger inertia.⁵⁷ It is thus not coincidental that in many of these cultures the active spirit hosts are often women and, in fact, the spirit cult is often characterized as female dominated.⁵⁸

Additionally, scholars have noted that “spirit possession gained force and frequency in the African Americas under and after the regimes of slavery, even compared with Africa itself.”⁵⁹ This position can be overstated, however. Even within the limited scope of a single culture, spirit possession practices are diverse enough that it would be a mistake to reduce these phenomena only to a method of resisting hegemony. Thus, in my treatment of spirit phenomena

⁵⁶ For example, as early as the mid-twentieth century, scholars had recognized the military significance of the name “Legion” in the story of the demoniac among the tombs (Mt 8:28–34/Mk 5:1–20/Lk 8:26–39) and had picked up on its significance as a possible reference to Roman power. See the non-NT specialist J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Contributions to the Study of the Gerasene Demoniac,” *JSNT* 3 (1979): 2–17. The precise significance of this reference, however, is still debated. See Warren Carter, “Cross-Gendered Romans and Mark’s Jesus: Legion Enters the Pigs (Mark 5:1–20),” *JBL* 134.1 (2015): 138–55; Joshua Garroway, “The Invasion of a Mustard Seed: A Reading of Mark 5.1–20” *JSNT* 32.1 (2009): 57–75.

⁵⁷ Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 419. This position was recently qualified by Colleen Shantz who proposed that spirit possession was prevalent not so much in colonial and post-colonial environments as in societies with complex hierarchical structures. Colleen Shantz, “Diagnosing the Pathogen, Treating the Source: Spirit Possession as a Biocultural Phenomenon” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, Boston, MA, 19 November 2017).

⁵⁸ Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 419.

⁵⁹ Johnson, “Toward an Atlantic Genealogy of ‘Spirit Possession’,” 27.

in biblical literature, I follow more recent anthropologists who view possession more broadly as a system of communication and as “an interpretation of the climate of affairs” where the medium or host is caught up socially, politically, or historically.⁶⁰

IV. Thesis

Having now cleared some of the ground, I am better positioned to state the goals and scope of this project. Recognizing that spirit phenomena in biblical literature is a broad topic indeed, this dissertation aims to make one particular point on the subject: I will argue that spirit language and accounts of spirit phenomena were crucial components for constructing conceptions of the self in the Hebrew Bible and in early Jewish literature more broadly. In particular, this dissertation follows the work of several Hebrew Bible scholars cited above in tracing a general trajectory over the course of biblical literature towards relocating “evil” (much more broadly defined than usual) not only *outside* but also *inside* the self and/or community.⁶¹ As this dissertation will argue, this transition was made possible in part by the deployment and redeployment of both spirit language as well as descriptions of spirit possession from the Hebrew Bible.

As a special contribution, this dissertation makes ample use of ethnographic studies of contemporary spirit possession cults around the world as well as utilizes the theories of cultural anthropologists who study these practices today. To clarify: My goal in bringing in this material, is not to argue for some kind of complicated historical relationship between biblical materials and the varied religious traditions that practice spirit possession today. Nor do I wish to wade into what has proven to be a quagmire-like debate regarding the authenticity of such experiences

⁶⁰ Michael Lambek, “On Being Present to History: Historicity and Brigand Spirits in Madagascar,” *Hau J. Ethnogr. Theory* 6.1 (2016): 317–41, 318.

⁶¹ I borrow this use of locative language from Brand, *Evil Within and Without*.

and the ontological status of the supernatural beings they describe. Rather, I wish to show how certain lines of similarity can be drawn across cultures and eras regarding human engagement with spirit-language and spirit possession-type rituals. Put simply, exposure to spirit phenomena of the kind I describe in this dissertation has been a regular human experience for most people in most times and most places.⁶² Recognition and engagement with these phenomena demand certain modes of being in the world that often defy modern, western assumptions—many of which have obscured scholars’ ability to understand spirit phenomena in biblical texts.

For a project of this scope, careful selection of primary texts has been essential. Thus, representative texts have been chosen ranging from the Hebrew Bible, Hellenistic Jewish texts, and the Dead Sea Scrolls (with a few choice examples from the ancient Near East and the New Testament). Two important criteria were used in this selection. First, I chose to expound literature with high concentrations of spirit language. Second, I identified texts that share similar constructions and/or allude to the same traditions. This approach enabled comparison between literature not always compared as well as drew out connections between two prevalent discussions in biblical studies—evil and the self—that have at times proceeded separately.⁶³

⁶² When considering similarities in spirit phenomena across diverse cultures and eras, it may helpful to borrow a concept from evolutionary biology called “convergent evolution.” Much like many different types of organisms have separately evolved the adaptation of flight (e.g., insects, bird, bats, etc.), so also, many cultures have developed similar expressions of spirit phenomena. Significantly, however, these organisms do not accomplish flight in precisely the same manner nor by the use of identical organs. Rather, each organism developed the ability separately. Similarly, it is not necessary for two cultures to share a genealogical link in order for scholars to recognize similarities in, for example, a spirit possession ritual. We might instead look to similar environmental conditions which may have encouraged a convergence in adaptation.

⁶³ See my discussion above. Recently, this approach seeking to map changes to context and language for a concept over a wide diachronic range has been deployed successfully several times in biblical studies, in particular by Jon D. Levenson. Some examples include: *The Love of God: Divine Gift, Human Gratitude, and Mutual Faithfulness in Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale, 2006); and *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale, 1993). Other monographs utilizing a similar method include Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical*; Anderson, *Sin*; and Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

With this approach, it has also been my intention to grapple with the theological implications of spirit phenomena—particularly in how they relate to the broader claims of biblical literature. If the operating definition of “theology” requires explicit mention of the God of Israel, then, indeed, many spirit phenomena in biblical literature may only tangentially qualify. However, if we allow for a wider definition as “the character of ultimate reality and its manifestation in human history,” then spirit phenomena are deeply theological, even when a supreme deity is not mentioned.⁶⁴ It is hoped also that by engaging with several theoretical frameworks not limited to biblical studies (e.g., the self, evil, the relationship between ecstatic experience and the literary traditions that may stem from it, the possibility of academic study of private religious experience), this project can also contribute to the study of religion more broadly.

The sections above have discussed my topic, my approach, and the limitations of past treatments of this material. Sometimes, however, a thesis is best introduced with an example. Before proceeding to the outline of this dissertation, the following analysis of a crucial and arguably undisputed spirit phenomenon text in the Hebrew Bible will demonstrate my intended integration of these themes. As this project proceeds, we will have several opportunities to refer back to this key text.

V. Spirit Possession and the Medium at En-Dor in 1 Samuel 28

There is no shortage of creative approaches to interpreting the enigmatic story in 1 Samuel 28 of Saul’s visit to the medium at En-Dor. Previous strategies have included reading the story in light

⁶⁴ This tension is outlined usefully in Jon D. Levenson, *Esther* OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 24.

of cognate literature as well as offering comparisons with other scholarly disciplines. Interpreters have brought to bear Hittite incantation formulas,⁶⁵ Sumerian-Akkadian necromancer texts,⁶⁶ Babylonian Wisdom poetry,⁶⁷ classical Greek texts,⁶⁸ Ugaritic materials,⁶⁹ traditional South African ancestor cults,⁷⁰ contemporary studies on mental illness,⁷¹ and some have even made gestures towards neuroscience.⁷² While a few of the scholars cited here have discussed 1 Samuel 28 in light of contemporary divination practices in various parts of the world, few have looked at the theoretical work that has been done on spirit possession phenomena in cultural anthropology and sociology.⁷³ The study below shows how the implementation of this evidence offers several solutions to the perennial interpretive issues scholars have faced in this passage.

⁶⁵ E.g., Manfred Hutter, "Religionsgeschichtliche Erwägungen zu 'elohim' in I Samuel 28, 13," *BN* 21 (1983): 32–36.

⁶⁶ E.g., Joseph Tropper, *Nekromantie: Totenbefragung im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament*, AOAT 223, (Kevelaer; Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchen, 1989), 205–27.

⁶⁷ E.g., Mordechai Cogan, "The Road to En-dor," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 319–26.

⁶⁸ E.g., Klaus-Peter Adam, "1 Sam 28: A Comment on Saul's Destiny from Late Prophetic Point of View" *RB* 116 (2009): 27–43; Michael O'Connor, "The Necromancer's Dinner and the Lightness of Ruth" (paper presented at "The Hebrew Bible: Sacred Text and Literature," Detroit, MI, 1 Nov 1988). Cf. the discussion in Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, New York: Schocken, 2002), 312.

⁶⁹ E.g., Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (HSM 39; Scholar's: Atlanta, 1989), 104–17.

⁷⁰ E.g., Stefan Fischer, "1 Samuel 28: The Woman of Endor - Who is she and what does Saul See?" *OTE* (2001): 26–46.

⁷¹ E.g., Gillian P. Williams and Magdel le Roux, "King Saul's mysterious malady," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68.1 (2012): 1–6.

⁷² E.g., Bill T. Arnold, "Soul-Searching Questions About 1 Samuel 28: Samuel's Appearance at Endor and Anthropology," in *What About the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology* (ed. Joel B. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 75–83.

⁷³ But see the recent work, J. Kabamba Kiboko, *Divining the Woman of Endor: African Culture, Postcolonial Hermeneutics, and the Politics of Biblical Translation* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).

A. Setting the Scene for Spirit Possession

The beginning of this story (v. 3) predates Charles Dickens's *Christmas Carol* by several millennia, but its first words accomplish a similar goal as those that begin the nineteenth century novella: "Marley was dead: to begin with."⁷⁴ Indeed, even Dickens's elaboration fits here as well: "There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate."⁷⁵ To compare: "Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and they buried him in Ramah, his city. Now Saul had removed the mediums and the wizards from the land" (1 Sam 28:3). By reiterating Samuel's death (which was already similarly narrated in chapter 25), the narrative emphasizes the truly marvelous nature of what follows. Samuel is dead and moreover his body is buried in Ramah. Further, Saul has turned away the אבות and ידענים from the land. Various English translations have been put forward for these terms including *witches*, *wizards*, *diviners*, and *mediums* but when looking at cognates in other Semitic languages as well as occurrences in other parts of the Hebrew Bible, we see that they refer to specific types of spirit beings (cf. Lev 19:31; 20:6; Isa 8:19; 19:3). As indicated by the OG, the terms were understood by some as referring both to the spirits as well as to the hosts that possess them.⁷⁶

When interpreters read this passage through the lens of dominant stereotypes for spirit possession (exemplified above in the story of Arne Johnson), it is easy to characterize the episode as a marginal practice or as prevalent only at the level of popular religion. Esther Hamori

⁷⁴ Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, ed. Richard Kelly (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843; Ontario, CA: Broadview, 2003), 39. Citations refer to the Kelly edition.

⁷⁵ Dickens, *Christmas Carol*, 39.

⁷⁶ ἐγγαστριμύθους and γνώστας respectively. See Josef Tropper, "Spirit of the Dead," *DDD* 806–09; "Wizard," *DDD* 907–08.

rightly criticizes much of this stream of interpretation as operating with false dichotomies, such as those between “official” and “folk” religious practices or, more broadly, the older “magic” vs “religion” distinction.⁷⁷ While the episode is certainly enigmatic within the corpus of the Hebrew Bible, there is nothing explicit in this section to suggest that practices like this are especially “marginal” other than the fact that Saul has perhaps recently made them so.

In possession studies as well, one repeated refrain among anthropologists is how often possession rituals are treated as normal and expected—even among those who do not participate in them regularly. In an article about Swahili possession cults in coastal Kenya and Tanzania, Linda Giles explains how many of the most avid participants are from wealthy, upper-class, and cosmopolitan families. Several are well-educated, professional, and very involved in public Muslim life—some are even teachers of Qur’an.⁷⁸ In short, she summarizes, none of the participants “can be typified as marginal to Islam.”⁷⁹ So, when we attempt to situate the ritual described in 1 Samuel 28 in the context of the diverse religious practices of ancient Israel, we should recognize that there is nothing a priori about the ritual or this woman that makes the situation especially unusual, rare, or unsavory in any way other than the king’s recent ban. Some commentators overstate this point by making more of the fact that Saul must go in disguise or by night, but these could be understood as necessary parts of the ritual or, more likely, as an effort by Saul to hide his hypocrisy.

⁷⁷ Esther Hamori, *Women’s Divination in Biblical Literature: Prophecy, Necromancy, and Other Arts of Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale, 2015), 19–40.

⁷⁸ Linda Giles, “Possession Cults on the Swahili Coast: a Re-examination of Theories of Marginality.” *Africa* 57 (1987): 234–58, 241–47.

⁷⁹ Giles, “Possession Cults on the Swahili Coast, 243.

Thus, I must agree with Hamori when considering the ritual in light of what we know about the religion of ancient Israel but offer a qualifier when considering the wider context of the Hebrew Bible. It is true that distinctions between “legitimate and illegitimate” or “religion and magic” are largely artificial and probably not very helpful here. However, it would be difficult to show (particularly in its later redactions) any place in the Hebrew Bible that would approve of this form of divination. So, while Hamori’s warnings are helpful, we must also acknowledge that the narrative of 1 Samuel (whether historically accurate or not, whether widespread or not) puts this episode in a different category from other aspects of the cult in ancient Israel.

Next, we see the full extent of Saul’s failure and the ironic tragedy that his life has become:

⁴ The Philistines gathered. They came and camped at Shunem. Saul assembled all of Israel and they camped at Gilboa. ⁵ When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. ⁶ Saul enquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him, not by dreams, by *urim*, or by prophets. ⁷ Then Saul said to his servants, “Seek out for me a woman who is the medium of a ghost (אִשָּׁת בַּעַלְת־אֻב) so that I might go to her and inquire through her.” His servants said to him, “There is a woman who is the medium of a ghost in En-Dor.” (1 Sam 28:4–7)

King Saul, on the eve of a climactic battle with Philistines, seeks guidance from God, who refuses to answer. Like a moralizing politician trapped in an embarrassing scandal, we catch Saul seeking recourse to the very divination practice he himself has prohibited.⁸⁰ But, given what we know of Saul’s experiences with spirits, this conundrum is not surprising. Before Saul even suggests meeting with a medium, the narrative of 1 Samuel has already identified him as a

⁸⁰ The narrative portrays Saul as desperate since the approved forms of divination have not worked for him. See 1 Samuel 28:6 which lists the approved forms of divination as *urim* [and *thummim*] (e.g., 1 Sam 14:41), dreams (e.g., 1 Kgs 3:5–15), and prophets (e.g., 1 Sam 22:5). See Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation*, JSOTSup. 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), esp. chp. 5.

person susceptible to spirit influence. On several previous occasions—which are obviously related to one another—Saul experiences spirit possession.

The first of these phenomena occurs during the coronation narrative in 1 Samuel 10. This experience is arguably positive when Saul is possessed by a רִיחַ [י], a “spirit of the LORD.” This causes him to enter into an involuntary trance (1 Sam 10:6, 10).⁸¹ Samuel himself names Saul’s altered state by explaining to him that because of this possession experience וְנִהְיֶכֶת לְאִישׁ אֲחֵר “You will be turned into a different person” (1 Sam 10:6). Three verses later, the narrator clarifies the purpose of this experience וַיִּהְיֶה לֵב אֱלֹהִים לְבָ אֲחֵר “God changed for him a different heart” (v. 9). Later, in a similar episode, Saul is again compelled by a spirit into a trance, this time as a means to deter his pursuit of David (1 Sam 19:18–24). Though arguably the same experience, this occurrence is more detrimental. Such exposition reveals how spirit language sometimes functions not only to describe possession experiences but also as language for the self and of personhood in the Hebrew Bible (see my discussion in chapter four).

Additionally, several times in the Saul narratives, he is described as habitually possessed by a רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים רָעָה a “harmful spirit of God” (1 Sam 16:14–32; 18:10; 19:9).⁸² This spirit still causes Saul to enter a “prophetic trance” as in chapter ten, but in this this case, the detrimental spirit can only be soothed through music.⁸³ On at least two occasions, a harmful spirit compels

⁸¹ The verb לִהְיוֹת נָבִיא, which I understand to mean something like “prophetic trance” occurs in several places in the Hebrew Bible (Num 11; 1 Sam 10; 18; 19; 1 Kgs 18; 22; Jer 14; 23; 26; 29; Ezek 13; 37; 2 Chr 18; 20) and its meaning is disputed. See my extended discussion of this verb in chapter five.

⁸² Here, “harmful” is to be preferred to the more conventional rendering of “evil.” This spirit of God is not categorically “evil” in the sense that a modern might think of it, but rather, it is harmful or detrimental from the perspective of Saul (from God’s perspective, we might say it is a good spirit, since it is carrying out the divine will). On this, see Ann Marie Kitz, “Demons in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East” *JBL* 135:3 (2016): 447–64

⁸³ Spirits can also be provoked through music, e.g., 2 Kgs 3:15.

Saul to commit violence (1 Samuel 18:11 19:10).⁸⁴ In many but not all of these stories, the verb used to describe the action of these spirits is $\sqrt{\text{צלח}}$ (sometimes translated as “rush” or “seize”)—the same verb used of the actions of the spirits in the book of Judges (see discussion in chapter five).

To compare, anthropologists have noted how spirit possession often manifests itself at first as a type of ailment. In some Somali cultures, for example, the word *sar* refers both to the possessing spirit and the various ailments that they can cause.⁸⁵ In the *bori* possession cults of Niger, spirits choose their hosts by first afflicting their health. These afflicted hosts can attempt to resist the spirits’ influence but by their own account it is almost always better to “give in to the spirit’s demands and seek a balanced and equitable relationship from which both parties can benefit.”⁸⁶ Those afflicted by spirits can seek help from the wider cult where other mediums who have learned to live as hosts can act as mentors. While such a situation is not exactly analogous to Saul, it should be noted that Saul does not seek to exorcize all the spirits that influence him—only the “evil” or “harmful” ones (1 Sam 16:23). In fact, the departure of a good spirit from Saul is seen as a curse (1 Sam 16:14). In this light, Saul’s employment of David to play therapeutic music and his later consultation with a possession professional are well within the paradigm.

⁸⁴ The first instance in 1 Sam 18 is particularly telling. After David eludes Saul’s spear twice, the narrator explains that Saul feared David because God was with him and had departed from Saul (1 Sam 18:12). Even though רוח does not appear here, this passage echoes the story of David’s anointing in chapter sixteen where the almost exact phrase occurs, only with רוח included (1 Sam 16:14).

⁸⁵ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 66–67. See also my discussion of “therapeutic demonization” in chapter six.

⁸⁶ Adeline Masquelier, “From Hostage to Host: Confessions of a Spirit Medium in Niger,” *Ethos* 30 (2002): 49–76, 54.

B. A Professional Spirit Medium

Despite clear evidence to the contrary, popular interpretations have been reluctant to recognize the medium as a professional. For example, despite the popular appellation for this story, the word *מכשפה* “witch” does not appear here (cf. Exod 22:18; Deut 18:10). Rather, what does appear, *אשת בעלת-אוב* (v. 7), seems to be, as Joseph Blenkinsopp argues, a kind of job title.⁸⁷ The term *אוב* occurs sixteen times in the Hebrew Bible and most often it designates the spirit of a dead person.⁸⁸ Thus, “a woman who consults ghosts” as the NJPS has it or “a woman who is a medium” according to the NRSV are defensible translations.

One other intriguing option for translating *אשת בעלת-אוב* exists, however. P. Kyle McCarter Jr. also suggests a translation of “spirit-” or “ghost-wife.”⁸⁹ Hamori rejects this translation because she fears it risks downplaying the woman’s mastery over *אובות* “ghosts” but this requires one to understand the term “wife” as derogatory and as implying subservience.⁹⁰ When we look at studies of possession cults today, we see that spirit-wives and spirit-husbands are very prevalent in some cultures and further, that these identities are not necessarily perceived as degradations of status. In a *Saora* Hindu possession cult in India, for example, both men and women can acquire not only spouses who are spirits but spirit-children as well. In Haiti, as recently as the mid-twentieth century, voodoo marriage announcements between a woman and

⁸⁷ “Saul and the Mistress of the Spirits” in *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll*, ed. A. G. Hunter and P. R. Davies, JSOT Sup. 348 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2002), 49–62, 53. As Hamori demonstrates, the construction has precedents in Sumerian-Akkadian lists of professionals. Hamori, *Women’s Divination in the Bible*, 105–10.

⁸⁸ Hamori, *Women’s Divination*, 106–07. For a discussion of *אוב* and other Semitic cognates see, Harry A. Hoffner Jr., “Second Millennium Antecedents to the Hebrew *’ôb*,” *JBL* 86 (1967): 385–401.

⁸⁹ P. Kyle McCarter Jr. *I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes & Commentary*, AB 8, (Garden City: Double Day, 1980), 420.

⁹⁰ Hamori, *Women’s Divination*, 106.

her spirit husband could be found in local newspapers.⁹¹ Given the diverse ways that hosts can be conceived of having relationships with the dead, we ought not rule out this translation (or at least some element of its meaning) in our interpretation of the medium at En-Dor.

It may also be significant that the title given for this woman is that of the medium of a particular “ghost” (אוב singular) rather than of “ghosts” in general (אובות plural). In many spirit possession cults, it is customary for mediums first to establish a special relationship with one spirit in particular, who then enables the medium to consult other spirits of the dead.⁹²

As the story continues, Saul and his two servants make their way to En-Dor.⁹³

⁸ Then Saul disguised himself, put on different clothes, and he left—he and two men with him—and they went to the woman at night. [Saul] said [to her], “Divine for me by means of a ghost. Bring up for me the one whom I say to you.” ⁹ The woman said to him, “Surely, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off [the use of] ghosts and familiar spirits from the land. So why are you snaring me to get me killed?” (1 Samuel 28:8–9)

When Saul arrives, he requests that the medium קסומי “divine” for him—either an אוב itself or by means of one. The root קסמ√ has not appeared yet in the narrative, but it is a conspicuous word choice when we recall the last time that Saul and Samuel met in 1 Samuel 15. In response to Saul’s failure to complete the חרם “ban” against the Amalekites, Samuel warns Saul in an oracle כי חטאת־קסם מרי ואון ותרפים הפצר “For rebellion is like the sin of divination and defiance like iniquity and idols” (1 Sam 15:23a). In chapter 15, idolatry and divination do not characterize

⁹¹ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 53–55. More recently, see Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

⁹² See, for example, the *espiritistas* of Havana who have their abilities “by virtue of a set of spirit guides through whom they acquire their vision and voice as mediums.” Diana Espirito Santo, “Imagination, Sensation and the Education of Attention Among Cuban Spirit Mediums” *Ethnos* 77:2 (2012): 252–71, 257.

⁹³ The precise location of En-Dor is uncertain but it would seem to me to be a place within Saul’s kingdom. Otherwise, why would the medium express fear at being found out? See discussion in Cogan, “The Road to En-Dor,” 319.

Saul's behavior yet but already within the Hebrew Bible we see that Saul's visit to the medium comes to be seen as a significant rationale for his death (1 Chr. 10:13). This tradition in Chronicles makes explicit what may only be implied in 1 Samuel chapters 15 and 28.

C. Three Difficult Questions for 1 Samuel 28

The actual narrative of the meeting is incredibly sparse, making it the most disagreed upon section of the entire story.⁹⁴ The first portion of the encounter reads:

¹⁰ But Saul swore to her by the LORD saying, "As the LORD lives, no punishment will befall you for this matter." ¹¹ The woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up Samuel, for me." ¹² Then the woman saw Samuel and she cried out with a loud voice. The woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul." ¹³ The king said to her, "Do not be afraid. What do you see?" The woman said to Saul, "I see divine beings rising from (אלהים ראיתי עלים) from the earth." ¹⁴ He said to her, "What is his form?" She answered him, "It is an old man coming up. He is wrapped in a robe." Then Saul knew that it was Samuel and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage. ¹⁵ Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me to bring me up?" Saul answered, "I am distressed severely (צַר־לִי מְאֹד). Philistines war against me and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me by means of prophets or dreams. I have called to you to tell me what I should do." (1 Samuel 28:10–15)

Regarding the ritual itself, three main questions have habitually vexed commentators: 1) When does the ritual start? 2) What is it about seeing *Samuel* that causes the woman to recognize *Saul* in verse 12? 3) How does Samuel appear? These questions are treated in order below.

1) When Does the Ritual Start?

Many commentators see the ritual starting between verses 11 and 12, assuming that the medium must know whom she is raising before she can begin. Because it will be helpful in regards to

⁹⁴ I agree with Hamori that there is nothing in the conversation nor in the passage to suggest that the woman is a Canaanite or that her ritual involves sex acts. Pamela Tamarkin Reis's more sensationalist reading that the medium prepares a vicarious sacrifice and a meal of blood for Saul should be rejected. "Eating the Blood: Saul and the Witch of Endor," *JSOT* 73 (1997): 3–23.

question number three, I propose that the ritual might actually begin between verses 10 and 11—that is, after the medium has received a promise that her life will be saved.⁹⁵ When we compare this passage with contemporary possession cults, we might note that possession rituals are usually neither short nor simple but can take hours and might also involve the medium’s consultation with several spirits along the way.⁹⁶ When she is ready to make the final possession, Saul (who is perhaps also participating in the ritual) speaks the name, “Samuel.”

2) Why Does Seeing Samuel Cause the Woman to Recognize Saul in Verse 12?

The reaction of the woman in verse 12 is sudden and surprising. If she is a professional, why does she cry out? What is it about seeing *Samuel* that causes the woman to recognize *Saul*? Some have argued that the woman is a fraud and did not expect anything to happen, while others have suggested that simply seeing Samuel and Saul together helped her recognize the latter. A few scholars have argued that verses 11–12 are an insertion, but while this may make a hypothetical original kernel of text run more smoothly, it does not explain why a later scribe would opt to confuse an otherwise orderly account.⁹⁷ One conventional argument has been to emend the text, changing Samuel’s name in verse 12 to “Saul.”⁹⁸ In this vein, וַתֵּרָא “she saw” would need to be understood in the sense of “seeing through a disguise” but this is an unattested meaning. Another solution is offered by Hamori and others to emend וַתֵּרָא to וַתִּרְא, thereby changing the root

⁹⁵ Another possibility is suggested by Hamori that the raising does not occur until between verses 12 and 13 and that all before is just preamble. This possibility, however, requires some emendation of the text (see discussion below). *Women’s Divination*, 121.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Michael Lambek, *The Weight of the Past: Living with History in Mahajanga, Madagascar* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2001).

⁹⁷ See the survey of scholarship in Blenkinsopp, “Saul and the Mistress of Spirits,” 54.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Karl Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1902), 180–81.

(from $\sqrt{\text{רֹאֵה}}$ to $\sqrt{\text{יִרְאֵה}}$) and the meaning to “she feared Samuel.” One argument in favor of this reading is that it pairs nicely with Saul’s command for her not to be afraid in verse 13.⁹⁹ There is no manuscript evidence to support this reading, however, and, in any case, it still does not answer the question: Why should the woman be afraid of Samuel when calling him up was precisely what she was trying to do? Further, how does this help her recognize Saul?

In contrast to these partial solutions, I believe that we can accept the Masoretic Text as is and without insertion and read the medium as beginning to host the spirit of Samuel in verse 12. The possession gives her special insight by which she recognizes Saul through his disguise.¹⁰⁰ She cries out, then, not because she is afraid of Samuel or because something has gone wrong in her ritual, but rather because she recognizes her oppressor, King Saul, standing right in front of her.¹⁰¹

The ensuing verses, then, can be read as the expected performance of a possession ritual. In contrast to popular portrayals of spirit possession as violent, sudden, and uncontrollable, in most cults, possession occurs in highly ritualized settings and according to a familiar script (with room for acceptable variations—not unlike musicians riffing on a theme or offering a solo).¹⁰² Even though the ritual has started in verse 12, it is clear that the medium’s personality has not departed entirely (i.e., she continues to speak as herself in vv. 12–14). Again, this is not unusual within the context of contemporary spirit cults where a spirit’s presence may come and go, where

⁹⁹ Hamori, *Women’s Divination*, 121.

¹⁰⁰ Irmtraud Fischer also argues for this: *Gotteskinderinnen: Zu einer geschlechterfairen Deutung des Phänomens der Prophetie und der Prophetinnen in der Hebräischen Bibel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 139.

¹⁰¹ Reis, “Eating the Blood,” 10.

¹⁰² As just one example, see the detailed explanation of a *Lên đồng* ritual in Vietnam in Karen Fjelstad and Nguyễn Thị Hiền, *Spirits without Borders: Vietnamese Spirit Mediums in a Transnational Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 56–67.

multiple spirits may be present (e.g., אלהים in v. 13), and where the host's personality may or may not also be present simultaneously.

3) *How Does Samuel Appear?*

Most commentators believe that Samuel appears as some kind of visual apparition. This perspective is certainly the dominant one when we look at how this episode has often been portrayed in art.¹⁰³ Blenkinsopp argues that the woman is utilizing some visual trick and then throwing her voice.¹⁰⁴ At first, the appearance of a visible ghost may seem to be the answer, not least because the narrative uses the verb for *seeing* so frequently. However, on closer inspection, we notice that Saul is never the subject of any verbs of seeing. In fact, in verses 13–14, he must ask the medium what *she* sees, and it is only after she gives a physical description that he recognizes the ghost as Samuel. Further, the dialogue with Samuel is clustered together, verses 15–19, and within this section the woman does not speak. Her absence is so conspicuous that at least one commentator thinks she has left the room.¹⁰⁵ Thus, I think it is far more likely that the spirit of Samuel has begun to possess the woman and thus she speaks all of his dialogue as his host.¹⁰⁶ For this reason, it may be notable that Samuel addresses Saul in the second person singular in verse 15, “Why have you [masc. sg.] disturbed me [...]?”—perhaps the medium is

¹⁰³ See, for example, the neoclassicist painting by Benjamin West which features a ghostly Samuel draped in white and emerging from a cloud of smoke: *Saul and the Witch of Endor*, 1777, oil on canvas, 16.25 by 23.25 in., London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

¹⁰⁴ This is dependent, in part, on his reading of ἐγγαστριμύθους “ventriloquist” in the Greek (1 Sam 28:3, 7–9). Blenkinsopp, “Saul and the Mistress of the Spirits,” 56. While this may or may not be the intended sense in the OG, the case is considerably weaker in Hebrew and seems to go against the plain sense of the text that the medium is not pulling any tricks but simply doing what she is known to be able to do.

¹⁰⁵ Reis “Eating the Blood,” 13.

¹⁰⁶ We might also say that the woman has begun to possess Samuel's spirit, since the ritual seems to take place against his will. See below.

effectively no longer present. While reading the medium as hosting the spirit of Samuel is not the most popular interpretation, it is not unprecedented. Yehezkel Kaufmann and Tikva Frymer-Kensky have both suggested it.¹⁰⁷

D. The Possession of Samuel at Endor

¹⁶ Samuel said to Saul, “Why do you ask me? the LORD has turned away from you and become your enemy. ¹⁷ the LORD has dealt with you according to what he spoke through me. The LORD has torn (וִיקָרַע) the kingdom from your hand and given it to your neighbor, David, ¹⁸ because you did not heed the voice of the LORD and did not carry out the fury of his anger against Amalek. Therefore, the LORD has done this thing to you this day. ¹⁹ Further, the LORD will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines and tomorrow you and your sons with you will be with me. (1 Samuel 28:16–19)

In answering these three questions, it is significant that we should speak of the woman as *possessing* the spirit of Samuel in this passage. Typically, in instances of possession, we might be tempted to think of the host as *being* possessed passively by spirit(s), but it seems clear to me that here the medium is, in fact, calling up Samuel against his will (cf. v. 15). This is provocative when we consider that there is a substantial amount of work in possession studies dealing with conceptions of agency and accountability in these phenomena. Often a host will engage in disrespectful, taboo, or licentious behavior while under the influence of a spirit, and the community will not hold him or her accountable for it.¹⁰⁸ Among other consequences, this practice allows the host to shift problematic failings or afflictions therapeutically away from the self and onto another agent for which there are established rituals for dealing with it safely.

¹⁰⁷ Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. Moshe Greenberg; Jerusalem: Sefer ve Sefel Publishing, 2003), 87–88; Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, 312.

¹⁰⁸ Ioan Lewis labelled this the “safety valve” aspect of possession, meaning that spirit possession sometimes gives ventilation to suppressed views or feelings either individually or corporately. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 101.

Consider how these conditions might be at work in Samuel's response to Saul (as mediated through the medium) in verses 16–19. The intermixing of Saul's many opponents in this prophecy makes the agency behind it complicated. First, there is the voice of the medium, whose profession Saul has outlawed; second, there is the presence of Samuel whom Saul has grieved and called up against his will (1 Sam 15:35); and, finally, there is the judgment of God who has rejected Saul as king.

At this point, it is worth discussing an aspect of the story that may seem obvious but that nevertheless should be stated explicitly: From the point of view of the text, it really is Samuel whom the medium raises up and his prophecy is every bit as authentic as any other. Further, in recognizing the authenticity of the possession, 1 Samuel 28 does not represent a significant departure from other perspectives on divination in the Hebrew Bible. Among the handful of mentions of divination by means of ghosts of the dead, the veracity of such practices is never disputed (e.g., Lev 19:31; Deut 18:11; 2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24; Isa 8:19; 29:4; 1 Chr 10:13). Rather they are prohibited *because* they are effective and yet not of God (Lev 20:6; 27). This is in contrast to some later biblical literature in which spirits that are not of God come to be seen as actively deceptive as well as more organized in terms of their opposition against God's people. It is tragic, then, that despite his transgression, Saul gains no new information from the possession ritual. In fact, Samuel's prophecy is derivative almost entirely from previous texts.

The question remains: If the solution to the problems of this text really is as simple as the medium hosting the spirit of Samuel, as I (and others) have argued, why have so many interpreters missed it? Frankly, I believe that many readers—particularly modern interpreters—have utilized some of the problematic assumptions I have critiqued at the beginning of this presentation. In particular, a reader operating with a conception of the self as “buffered” would

expect such a breach of this woman's boundaried interiority to be noted explicitly by the text. But, if we grant that the communities behind this story lived in a world with much more porous borders between the "inside" and the "outside" of a person, it would be perfectly natural that this woman's voice be narrated with Samuel as the subject of all the verbs. We would expect it, in fact, since we have already been told explicitly that she is a professional medium.

E. Can the Intercultural Comparative Method Account for Biblical Textuality?

A final question confronts this case study in 1 Samuel 28 and it is a recurring problem for any study that would seek to compare ethnographic reports of contemporary religious practices with ancient biblical texts: To what extent is the comparative method I have just outlined limited by the textuality of the Hebrew Bible? Not only is biblical literature significantly older than the accounts of contemporary spirit possession with which I have compared it, but we also know that it was composed in manners very different from that of most modern literature. Certainly, 1 Samuel 28 is nothing like the field notes of a trained ethnographer, and it is even quite dissimilar from a first-hand account one might obtain by interviewing a spirit medium today.

It is because of this vexing question that I have deliberately postponed any discussion of the provenance of the text until after my analysis. On this issue, by the far most influential perspective (at least in English) has been P. Kyle McCarter Jr.'s 1980 commentary.¹⁰⁹ McCarter argues for an older, pre-deuteronomistic kernel that originally did not specify Samuel as the אֹנֶם raised by the medium.¹¹⁰ The Swiss scholar, Christophe Nihan, however, challenges this popular

¹⁰⁹ McCarter, *1 Samuel*.

¹¹⁰ According to McCarter, the episode was later removed by a conscientious redactor who did not care for Israel's king engaging in a form of divination explicitly prohibited by Deuteronomy. The story was then reinserted with Samuel as part of the "prophetic layer" in the Deuteronomistic History. However, it was potentially put in the wrong place. As scholars at least as far back as Wellhausen have recognized, 1 Samuel 28:1–2 reads very neatly into 29:1 and, when paying attention to geographic signifiers, the story of Saul and the medium could very well fit after 1

reconstruction, arguing instead for a Persian date for the entire composition.¹¹¹ He makes this case by demonstrating how 1 Samuel 28 has more in common with mid-first millennium Mesopotamian divination practices than with older Levantine, Egyptian, or Anatolian practices.¹¹² He also notes how the story is conspicuously aware of other parts of the Bible—most prominently Samuel’s robe and curse in 1 Samuel 15 but also Deuteronomy 18 and 2 Kings 23.¹¹³ If McCarter is correct that there is a very ancient historical kernel here, a path towards analyzing this story as a historical account of spirit possession is more clear. But if Nihan is correct—if not in his timeline, at least in his reconstruction of the tight literary structure of the passage (as I suspect he is)—we are forced to grapple with this portrayal of spirit possession as a literary construct first and only secondarily as the echo of a historical event or practice.¹¹⁴

As I will outline in the next chapter, “What Are Spirit Phenomena?”, it is precisely this approach—spirit phenomena as a literary construct—that I utilize in this project. While my analysis will not ignore the religious experiences of early Jewish communities, any attempt to

Samuel 30. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 417–23. While McCarter himself does not make this particular case, many of the commentators who have followed him have argued for an exilic *terminus ad quem* because supposedly no post-exilic text would describe a dead man as an אֱלֹהִים (v. 13) nor concern itself with what many assume to be an outdated Canaanite practice of divination.

¹¹¹ “1 Samuel 28 and the Condemnation of Necromancy in Persian Yehud,” in *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, ed. Todd E. Klutz (New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 23–54.

¹¹² Brian B. Schmidt, “The ‘Witch’ of En-Dor, 1 Samuel 28, and Ancient Near Eastern Necromancy,” in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: Brill, 1995) 111–29.

¹¹³ In addition to this, Nihan offers a number of examples in 1 Samuel 28 of typical Deuteronomistic language and references. Nihan, “1 Samuel 28”, 34–35. These elements, Nihan argues, are too integral to the chapter to be insertions, and so he sees no need to posit an earlier tradition that has been reworked. Since a number of its elements seem counter-intuitive to Deuteronomistic interests, Nihan resolves that the story is post-Deuteronomistic. See also Joshua Berman’s recent treatment of this passage, in which he maps a close intertextual relationship with Leviticus 19:31–32. *Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2018),

¹¹⁴ Further, as much as we may wish to inquire further regarding the specific ancient beliefs and practices that lie behind this ritual of spirit possession in 1 Samuel 28, the literary message of the narrative itself—namely, to articulate Saul’s failure as a leader in comparison to David—will always obscure an overly historicist orientation.

render a historically accurate portrait of spirit possession practices in ancient Israel and/or early Judaism primarily by means of comparison with contemporary accounts of spirit possession can be only speculative.

VI. The Organization of this Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation proceeds in five chapters. Chapter two is entitled, “What Are Spirit Phenomena?”. In this chapter, I seek to define my terms better for this study as well as to lay out my theoretical foundations. I describe how “spirit phenomena” includes three types of writing in biblical literature: 1) spirit language, 2) descriptions of spirit possession, 3) myths about spirits.

Chapter three is entitled, “Previous Scholarship on Spirit Phenomena in Religious and Biblical Studies.” Beginning with contemporary approaches to studying spirit possession and trance in psychology, the study of religion, and gender studies, I show how trends in these fields have helped shape interpretation in biblical studies. Because my topic covers such a wide range of literature, eras, and related topics, this chapter can be only a summary of notable works.

Chapter four is entitled, “The Spirit and the Self.” This chapter explores one of the most common forms of spirit phenomena in biblical literature, *animating* spirits that are imparted at birth to all living creatures.¹¹⁵ An animating spirit is always present, without a single or inherent moral charge, and is usually reflective of the inner life. Indeed, language concerning an animating spirit is one of the primary methods in which biblical literature describes the self. The relatively wide semantic range of “spirit” (both רוּחַ in Hebrew and πνεῦμα in Greek) is reflected

¹¹⁵ I use the plural, “animating spirits,” in order to clarify that there is no one, overarching notion of *the* animating spirit reflected across biblical literature but several related and interconnected ideas.

in most dictionaries, being translatable also as “breath” and “wind.” As will be argued in this chapter, a less emphasized but still possible translation in many texts—particularly in Hebrew—is “self” or better “[an aspect of the] self.” Some of the most obvious cases for this understanding include those texts which seem to use “spirit” to refer to bodily interiority. In these instances, “spirit” is not all that different from how words that refer to other parts of the body like “heart,” “throat,” and “innards” are used. Spirit language is also utilized in expressions of will. Thus, one’s spirit can be “hardened” and can “yearn” for another.¹¹⁶ Particularly when these texts are read in translation, the spirit’s role in constructing the self is obscured, in part because the language is often taken metaphorically.

Chapter five is entitled, “Possessing Spirits.” This chapter discusses another mode of conceiving of spirits in the Hebrew Bible. In contrast to animating spirits, a possessing spirit is temporally limited and usually bestowed for specific purposes. A possessing spirit is often just that, anarthrous and can be characterized as “good” or “bad” (as well as many other things) and its arrival, presence, and departure is often signaled by a special kind of social experience—what anthropologists and ethnographers sometimes label “possession” or “trance.” One of the most common examples of a possessing spirit in the Hebrew Bible can be found in those instances in which a spirit of God possesses an important figure (often a judge or king) for heroic action. Most of these occurrences are beneficial but some are detrimental to the host. At times the host “plays the prophet” (להתנבא). A possessing spirit is also often present when describing the empowerment of a prophet who speaks God’s word (e.g., 2 Sam 23:2; Isa 61:1; Hos 9:7).

Chapter six is entitled, “Demonizing the Self.” In this chapter, I explore how the *animating* and *possessing* modes of spirit phenomena are not mutually exclusive but rather can

¹¹⁶ E.g., Deut 2:30 and Isa 26:9

be seen as existing on a spectrum. Often both conceptions can be at work in a single text or some hybrid of the two traditions can be seen at work. Indeed, as biblical literature proliferated in the Second Temple period, these two modes of spirit phenomena come increasingly to be interpreted together. Both modes of spirit phenomena require careful attention, maintenance, and discernment by those who have them and those who describe them. This results not only in new spirit phenomena texts but also in new versions of older texts, with innovative notions of spirit phenomena now integrated in. One significant strategy for integrating these two modes of spirit phenomena in this period becomes a component of what Carol Newsom has called “self-alienation” and the problematization” of the self.¹¹⁷ As the *animating spirit* comes to be understood as irreparably faulty, several streams of Jewish tradition also begin to anticipate an intervention by God’s (*possessing*) *spirit*, which will renew, reform, or otherwise repair it. This amounts to a kind of spirit organ transplant in many texts.¹¹⁸ In some instances, this kind of transplant is characterized as an intentionally cultivated alternative spirit possession—one that is holy or righteous.

Chapter six also serves as a conclusion for the entire project. It builds on the conclusions of previous chapters and extends them further into the contemporary discussion of evil in biblical studies. When the problematization of the self meets the increasing speculation about angels, demons, and other non-God divine beings in Second Temple Jewish literature, “evil” as a concept becomes increasingly complex—not just as a moral category but also as a distinct being (or subset of beings). Further, the battleground for God’s conflict expands from the earliest literature, taking place not only in the heavens but also within the self. When rooted in such

¹¹⁷ Newsom, “Toward a Genealogy of the Introspective Self,” 65–66.

¹¹⁸ See Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*

prevalent mythic traditions, it is not difficult to see how in some communities *problematizing* the self became *demonizing* the self, that is, identifying those aspects of the self and the community that are aligned with evil, and then mitigating their influence and/or exorcizing them. Further, in many instances, this process of *demonizing the self* is theologically conceived as being helpful or therapeutic since it enables the person or community to identify and treat those issues within that would otherwise seem insurmountable.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT ARE SPIRIT PHENOMENA?

For many interpreters—particularly homileticsians—spirit phenomena in biblical literature are identified not so much by any particular analytic method as by an inferential process akin to United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart’s candid description of hard-core pornography: “I know it when I see it.”¹ While it is undeniable that my own instincts have often guided my inquiries in this project, I have also attempted to set out for myself a more self-conscious and systematic method. This chapter lays out that approach as well as some of the theoretical structures that support it.

This chapter has two parts. First, I discuss how practices in biblical philology have affected interpretations of spirit phenomena in biblical studies and describe my own method in relation to this past. My approach involves tracing spirit phenomena texts as interpretive “objectiles” whose meanings change over time within the context of a tradition. This section then concludes with a case study in Genesis 1. The second part describes in more detail the three types of spirit phenomena in biblical texts, including examples: 1) Spirit Language, 2) Descriptions of Spirit Possession, 3) Spirit Myths.

¹ *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 378 U.S. 197 (1964).

I. A Method for Mapping Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Literature

Early investigations into spirit and spirits in the Hebrew Bible often took the form of that venerable biblical studies practice usually referred to as a word study.² The previous chapter already identified several key words that would be good candidates for such a study (e.g., רוּחַ and אֵוֶב), but the mechanics of this inquiry are more involved than simply typing these and other notable Hebrew roots into a Bible software program's search bar and then cataloguing the results. We require also an operating theory for how these words relate to their historical and literary context as well as to us as readers. Biblical scholars once comfortably collaborated on this task with other scholars via an area of study called "philology" and more broadly "historical criticism," which eventually encompassed it.³

A. Spirit Phenomena and Philology

As late as the mid-twentieth century, classical philology was the primary scholarly mode of engaging with ancient texts on both sides of the Atlantic. It was a "centerpiece of education" that, at times, even provided theoretical paradigms for "harder" sciences like evolutionary

² See for example, Charles A. Briggs "The Use of רוּחַ in the Old Testament" *JBL* 19:2 (1900): 132–45; William Ross Schoemaker, "The Use of רוּחַ in the Old Testament, and of πνεῦμα in the New Testament" *JBL* 23 (1904): 13–67; Johannes H. Scheepers, *Die Gees van God en die Gees van die mens in die Ou Testament* (Kampen: Kok, 1960); Daniel Lys, "Rûach": *Le Souffle dans l'Ancien Testament*, Études d'Histoire et de Philosophie Ireligieuses 56 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962). See also the early studies cited in Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1964), 23–37; and Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments* (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1972). For more analysis for this method and its influence on this topic, see chapter three.

³ James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Haruko Momma, *From Philology to English Studies: Language and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Hindy Najman, "Configuring the Text in Biblical Studies" in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. Vanderkam*, ed. E. F. Mason, et al., 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 3–22.

biology.⁴ Traditionally, classical philology was oriented around the critical comparison of ancient versions of classic texts and included a wide range of analytical strategies. This description may surprise some contemporary biblical scholars who would consider philology to refer only to the set of tasks commonly assigned to “textual criticism.” However, in the modern period, philology also encompassed efforts at recovering the historical world of the text (both from material culture and in cognate literature) as well as the history of its literary development (so-called “higher criticism”).⁵ Initially, methods of “biblical philology” developed in conjunction with studies in classics and did not differ greatly whether the text was written in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin.⁶ We may take as an example Benjamin Kennicott’s explanation of his own method in establishing critical versions of the Hebrew Bible from the mid-eighteenth century:

The rational and safe Method of proceeding in a Case of this important Nature is—to compare Scripture with itself—to explain a difficult Phrase or Passage by a clear one, that bears some Relation to it—to consider the natural Force of the Original Words, the Tendency of the Context, and the Design of the Writer—to compare the most ancient Editions of the Original with one another, and with the best Copies of the most celebrated Versions.⁷

If we take Kennicott’s “Tendency of the Context” to refer to comparison with what can be known of the assumed author’s culture and era, the above description does not differ greatly

⁴ Sheldon Pollock, “Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World” *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 931–61, 931–32.

⁵ The first to use the phrase “higher criticism” in regard to biblical studies was Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, though he himself attributes it to another scholar, likely Christian Gottlob Heyne, his teacher. See Eichhorn’s *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 5 vols. (Weidmann: Leipzig, 1780–83).

⁶ On the reception of methods and concepts from classical philology in biblical studies, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2d rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), esp. 164–80.

⁷ Benjamin Kennicott, *The State of the Printed Hebrew Text of the Old Testament Considered: A dissertation in two parts. Part the first compares I Chron. XI with 2 Sam. V and XXIII; and Part the second contains observations on seventy Hebrew mss, with an extract of mistakes and various readings* (Oxford, 1753) quoted in Turner, *Philology*, 77.

from how most biblical scholars throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries characterized their work—and even how many still do today. To some degree, each successive “method” in the study of biblical literature—whether Source, Form, Redaction, (and, as some have argued, even Canonical) criticism—can be seen as a development from and attempt at a further refinement of these basic assumptions, ultimately deriving from that old, reliable discipline: philology.⁸

In the mid-twentieth century, however, academic fields relating to history, literature, and religion saw a general destabilizing of similarly philological or historical-critical assumptions as debates over post-modern and post-structuralist theory gained special prominence in scholarly discourse.⁹ Biblical studies was no different, though the unsettling was comparatively slower in the coming and relatively less revolutionary.¹⁰ Among a recent crop of more ‘theory-laden’ scholars, many of the foundational tenets of conventional philology came to be characterized variously as irredeemably historicist, deluded by the myth of objectivity, violent or oppressive, and perhaps most damning, simply boring.¹¹ While biblical studies was comparably better buffered against the whiplash that the ascendance of “theory” wrought in literature departments,

⁸ For more detailed analyses and critiques, see Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011) and Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁹ On the fate of classical philology in the midst of this shift see, Pollock, *Future Philology?*, 934. See also Jan Ziolkowski, ed., *On Philology* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990). For the general phenomenon see Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction, Anniversary Edition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008), 47–78.

¹⁰ The reasons behind this insulation are varied but can be summarized as a combination of confessional concerns, the privileged place that biblical studies and other fields related to Christian theology have traditionally enjoyed in many institutions of higher learning, and the unique way that biblical scholars have historically understood “method” as it pertains to their work. See Moore and Sherwood, *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar*. For opposing viewpoints, see two articles by Ronald Hendel, “Mind the Gap: Modern and Postmodern in Biblical Studies” *JBL* 133.2 (2014): 422–43 and “The Untimeliness of Biblical Philology,” *Philology* 1 (2015): 9–28.

¹¹ See John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007). See also John J. Collins who discusses similar issues in relation to historical criticism, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), esp. chp. 1 and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Democratizing Biblical Studies: Toward an Emancipatory Educational Space* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

“biblical philology” today is still viewed by some scholars in the field with skepticism and at times scorn (even if those same scholars still cultivate the central presuppositions and methods of biblical philology in all but name).

More recently, however, biblical studies has seen a revitalization of interest in philology—particularly textual criticism—through a new emphasis on seeing textual development not as degradation but as a form of interpretation.¹² This trend can be seen as echoing a wider movement in the humanities towards what some have called a “New Philology,” which had its genesis in medieval and literary studies.¹³ Hindy Najman describes these trends in biblical studies in terms of *decomposition* and *recomposition*:

In their nineteenth-century applications, these technes of textual philology were employed on the basis of an assumption that many scholars have more recently repudiated, if not explicitly then implicitly. The assumption is that both fragmentation and redaction are processes of distortion, and that the goal of textual philology is to restore texts to their originary wholeness. Thus, decomposition was employed in order to reconstruct the original and whole sources, in which the meanings of biblical traditions would be most clearly displayed. Similarly, recomposition was supposed to restore the originary whole and thus the authentic meaning of texts that have been received only as fragmentary in either an epigraphic or semantic sense.¹⁴

¹² See, for example, Hindy Najman, “Ethical Reading: The Transformation of the Text and the Self,” *JTS* 68.2 (2017): 507–29; Ronald L. Troxel, “What is the ‘Text’ in Textual Criticism?,” *VT* 66 (2016): 603–26; D. Andrew Teeter, *Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period*, FAT 92 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); C. L. Seow, “Reflections on the History of Consequences: The Case of Job,” in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen*, ed. Joel LeMon and Kent Harold Richards, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 561–86. See also influential antecedents in works like James Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, LEC 3, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986) and Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹³ See Pollock, “Future Philology”; Jürgen Paul Schwindt, ed., *Was ist eine philologische Frage?: Beiträge zur Erkundung einer theoretischen Einstellung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009); Calvert Watkins, “What is Philology?” in *On Philology*, ed. Jan Ziolkowski (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 21–25; Paul de Man, “The Return to Philology,” in *Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 21–26.

¹⁴ Najman, “Ethical Reading,” 514–15.

However, as Najman and countless others have pointed out, there is no need to limit textual meaning solely to a hypothetical original whole. In fact, the same skills—*decomposition* and *recomposition*—can be employed to show just the opposite; that is, an ongoing vitality of meaning in the transmission and interpretive traditions of a text.

B. Interpretive “Objectiles”

A related movement in biblical studies is a significant turn towards studying the ways that later communities have interpreted and “received” biblical texts. While historians and theologians have always been interested in rabbinic and Christian interpretation of the Bible, it is only in the last several generations that large numbers of critically trained biblical scholars have begun incorporating these later interpretive trends into their own work as an aspect of the meaning of the biblical text. Following this trend, Brennan Breed has recently utilized the theories of Gilles Deleuze to articulate a theory of biblical reception history.¹⁵ He proposes treating biblical texts as “objectiles” (object-projectiles) whose meanings change over time and space as contexts change.¹⁶ This approach has the benefit of not restricting the scholar to finding a singular, unitary meaning nor to working within the confines of a single historical context. As Breed describes it:

Scholars should expect to find a broad diversity of readings of a biblical text whose forms change throughout time, just as evolutionary biologists should expect to find a broad diversity of mammals whose forms change throughout time. As a result, no particular actualization is intrinsically better than any other, since there is no ideal form or essence that conditions the process.¹⁷

¹⁵ Brennan W. Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

¹⁶ Breed, *Nomadic Text*, 116–117.

¹⁷ Breed, *Nomadic Text*, 123.

Such an approach has the advantage of not conflating the *text* with its *meaning*. It thus recognizes the role that a reading/hearing community has in determining those meanings.¹⁸ However, this approach is also liable to the accusation of allowing for as many readings as there are readers, essentially making the text mean nothing. Strict historical-critical approaches to interpreting ancient texts avoid this kind of diversity (at least in theory) by judging each meaning according to its adherence to a (reconstructed) version of history. Put simply, there is a clear instrument for control—problematic as it may be. But is such a tool available when one wishes to read ancient texts as “objectiles”?

One possible solution is to continue Delueze’s/Breed’s metaphor by discussing the trajectory of an “objectile.” If we accept that a text and its inseparable interpretations “move” through history and culture, we should also recognize that they often move in a particular direction. When attempting to appraise the accuracy or appropriateness of one reading versus another, we may not be able to label one reading “better” than the other, but we are on firmer ground at least in assessing the proximity of each to an imagined plotted line of a particular text-interpretation trajectory. This trajectory might be called a tradition, a meaning that becomes part of the text even as it helps to direct it. As Hans-Georg Gadamer explains, “we have to recognize the element of tradition in historical research and inquire into its hermeneutic productivity.”¹⁹

We may continue the metaphor still further and note that often (though certainly not always) those factors that affect a projectile early in its flight have a greater influence on where it will eventually end up than those factors which come along later. Such can be said of textual

¹⁸ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

¹⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d. ed, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 284.

“objectiles” as well. Thus, the earliest traditions surrounding a text and its interpretations can sometimes have a disproportionately high effect on its meaning and receptions—even in much later eras. For this reason, many interpreters have turned to studying the earliest communities that cultivated the biblical texts, with particular attention to the “canonical processes” that produced the final forms of the Hebrew Bible.²⁰

Part of what has allowed this shift in focus in biblical studies has been popular adoption of Gadamer’s approach to inquiring into tradition:²¹

Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naive assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project a historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present.²²

When biblical scholars interpret biblical texts, they project onto them historical situations that are necessarily and self-consciously different from the interpreters’ present. They “foreground” the horizon of the past as a way of distinguishing the horizon of the present (with its accompanying prejudices). Yet, as Gadamer explains, since this horizon of the past is itself only superimposed on a continuing tradition, it eventually recombines with itself. The result is neither a text nor an interpretation that can remain static.²³

Such an approach intentionally softens the strict border between static text and fluctuating reception that is so often assumed in biblical studies by mapping changes to the

²⁰ Perhaps most influential were Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1979) and Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*.

²¹ See, for example, Seow, “Reflections on the History of Consequences.” In addition to Gadamer, Seow cites the influence of Hans Robert Jauss, *Literaturegeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft*, Konstanzer Universitätsreden 3 (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag, 1967).

²² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

²³ Breed criticizes Gadamer as being inconsistent on this point, *Nomadic Text*, 9. See also the critique in Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 63.

context and language for a concept over a wide diachronic range. Investigations into ancient context, authorship, and dating are neither ignored (as in a strict Reader's Response approach) nor privileged (as in a strict Historical-Critical approach) but logged as a point on the map of meanings. Such is the approach utilized in this dissertation.

Recognizing that spirit phenomena in biblical literature changed over time, the metaphor of trajectory is again helpful. Within the context of a tradition, words and ideas cannot change so dramatically and quickly that they become completely unrecognizable from one generation to the next—just as points on a line must follow from one to the next.²⁴ In this regard, the process of interpretation and the textualization of that interpretation seen in biblical literature is very much like “the typological method,” a tool used by scholars in a variety of disciplines but named as such in biblical studies primarily by epigraphers studying script forms.²⁵ Whether one is studying ancient script forms, pottery styles, or (to use Cross's famous analogue) an automobile manufactured over several years, the typological method arranges the available data into a progression that maps small changes over time. These small changes compound and over generations can often create entirely new forms, yet in the minuscule, the alterations are subtle.

There are, of course, limitations to such an approach and these should be taken seriously when applying the same method to new fields of data.²⁶ For example, the typological method does not flex well to accommodate factors such as regional differences and intentional

²⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith, “Sacred Persistence: Towards a Redefinition of Canon” in *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jamestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 36–52.

²⁵ Frank Moore Cross, “Alphabets and Pots: Reflections on Typological Method in the Dating of Human Artifacts,” *Maarav* 3.2 (1982): 121–36.

²⁶ Stephen A. Kaufman, “The Pitfalls of Typology: On the Early History of the Alphabet” *HUCA* 57 (1986): 1–14 and “Semitics: Directions and Re-Directions,” in *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. J. Cooper and G. Schwartz (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 273–82.

archaizing.²⁷ But these issues are manifested most problematically when the typological method is used chiefly as an objective tool for dating artifacts and texts.

More fundamentally fraught, however, is the typological method's tendency to assume a consistent, quasi-platonic, "type." For example, by its very organization, a script chart requires that a *hē* always remain a *hē*—even as its form changes. The method is thus compromised if conventional forms are used to signify alternate types, or new types altogether (e.g., when the figures for one language are adopted for use in a dissimilar language, as when Greeks accommodated the form of the Phoenician consonant *hē* to signify a vowel, *epsilon*). An analogous mistake in the identification of spirit phenomena might be to assume that each instance of a particular phrase or situation—no matter how disparate culturally, chronologically, or otherwise—signifies the same phenomenon. In such a scheme, the language used would be merely arbitrary.

To avoid this error, it is best to think with the typological method in the way that it is strongest. That is, not as a strategy for identifying an ideal type across time and space in human culture, but rather as a model for thinking about the relationships between disparate texts and contexts and how they change over time. A new script form fails if it not recognizable to both the previous and successive generation. Similarly, while a certain biblical text or interpretive idea can be utilized and repurposed for new contexts, it must maintain some continuity with its old form if it is to retain any of its past import.²⁸ By thinking about spirit phenomena within the

²⁷ Bruce Zuckerman and Lynn Swartz Dodd, "Pots and Alphabets: Refractions of Reflections on Typological Method," *Maarav* 10 (2003): 89–133.

²⁸ Bernard M. Levinson, *Legal Revision and Religious Renewal in Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 89–94.

context of traditions, we can better account for how language and texts become re-contextualized over time.²⁹

C. Case Study: רוח in a Theological Dictionary

To illustrate these tensions as they relate to this project, we may take as an example an entry for “spirit” (רוח) in a prominent dictionary of Biblical Hebrew. One of the most thorough is the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, which covers such topics as etymology, ancient Near Eastern cognate languages and cultures, and the “lexical field” of רוח before providing several possible definitions (e.g., “wind,” “breath,” “spirit”) with examples of each from the Hebrew Bible.³⁰ This layout is neither surprising nor unique—indeed, one can see how it maps onto Kennicott’s approach very well—but already some modern theorists might criticize how the information has been framed.

To start, the article begins with a section titled, “Etymology and Meaning,” which discusses topics from classical philology like the word’s potential original root, cognates in other Semitic languages, as well as the word’s “basic” meaning—a necessarily broad and somewhat ambiguous definition that is meant to provide a generic concept that enabled the variety of usages for רוח seen later.³¹ Depending on how it is executed, it is this last task that is problematic if it is essentialized. As James Barr warned, “the etymology of a word is not a

²⁹ Levenson, “Historical Criticism,” 122–24.

³⁰ Sven Tengström and Heinz-Josef Fabry, “רוח” *TDOT* 13:365–402.

³¹ Tengström and Fabry, “רוח,” 13:367–68.

statement about its meaning but about its history.”³² While philological inquiry can be an essential tool for uncovering how a language developed historically, the fact remains that knowing a word’s history need not affect how a person uses it contemporaneously.³³ Words can only mean what they mean within a particular context, after all, and the *TDOT* establishes רוּח most emphatically within the context of the Semitic languages and cultures of the ancient Near East.

That context is reinforced throughout the article. The second section on the “Ancient Near East” concerns literature not written in Hebrew or Greek and, in many cases, texts that are located far away geographically and chronologically from the Hebrew Bible. Importantly, the sections concerning the OG and “Later Literature” (i.e., the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Second Temple era texts) are buffered away at the end of the article under separate headings (the latter even with a separate author).

While it is not stated explicitly, we may conclude that the opening portions on etymology and the ancient Near East serve to provide “historical context” for the main and largest sections of the entry, which concern the word’s meanings in the Hebrew Bible specifically.³⁴ For the most part, these two sections move fluidly between discussions of רוּח as it appears in biblical literature and descriptions of different trends in the historical religion of ancient Israel that may

³² James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 1961), 109. See more recently David Arthur Lambert, “Refreshing Philology: James Barr, Supersessionism, and the State of Biblical Words” *BI* 24 (2016): 332–56.

³³ This insight was neither a postmodern original nor an invention of Barr, but rather an ongoing discussion during philology’s heyday. See Turner, *Philology*, 247–51 and William Dwight Whitney, *Language and the Study of Language: Twelve Lectures on the Principles of Linguistic Science* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1867).

³⁴ On the use of so-called “cognate” literature in biblical studies, see Jon D. Levenson, “Historical Criticism and the Fate of the Enlightenment Project” in *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 106–26.

lay behind these usages. The *TDOT* often attempts to trace different tendencies in particular parts of the Hebrew Bible, making distinctions both on traditional source critical grounds (e.g., רוח in Priestly or Jahwist literature) and also on chronological criteria (e.g., “early texts” and “late texts”). In this way, different traditions of רוח in the Hebrew Bible are treated as separate from one another. The *TDOT* fails to consider how these different interpretations of רוח in the Hebrew Bible may have been influenced by one another and ignores the resultant effect of reading all these traditions of רוח together in a single canonical work.

For example, this approach is on display in this entry in the discussion of the role of רוח in creation, a section that centers on long-running debates in biblical studies concerning the phrase: רוח אלהים מרחפת על־פני המים in Gen 1:2c.³⁵ One significant portion concerns the phrase רוח אלהים. The *TDOT* weighs its options: Is it a genitive construction, as many modern translations have it (e.g., “wind of God”)? Or is the phrase instead a superlative wherein אלהים functions not necessarily as a name of God but as a mark of exorbitance (e.g., “a mighty wind”)? The grammatical merits of each are then considered, as are the ways each may or may not correspond to other “ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies.” As Hans Frei identified, this sort of approach typifies a “historical-critical” approach to biblical theology, one that seeks a “unitary meaning”:

[a historical critical approach] meant working out from a text’s words, as used at the time they were written, and the single, and never more than single, meaning of the text and its author, quite regardless of one’s estimate of the soundness of his position.³⁶

³⁵ Tengström and Fabry, “רוח” *TDOT* 13:384. The NRSV translates this as, “[...] while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” See also the more traditional Christian understanding as reflected by the rendering of the KJV, “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

³⁶ Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 165–67.

A more extreme form of this approach might be seen in the *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, in which no fewer than fourteen potential definitions of רוח are offered in order to accommodate the word's approximately 378 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible.³⁷ Ironically, in privileging a word's unitary meaning, the approach of these dictionaries inevitably fragments the text in order to accommodate each particular meaning from what is deduced (but not certain) to be the original setting of each occurrence and author.

We see a related, inherent tension in this approach regarding the use of non-biblical ancient texts. After the summary of ancient Near Eastern cognate literature—some of which present episodes and imagery strikingly similar to those encountered in the רוח texts of the Hebrew Bible—the *TDOT* acknowledges that “[t]his survey of Israel’s neighbors raises the question of the distinctiveness of Israel and the OT.”³⁸ The solution to this similarity is “Israel’s markedly ethnocentric understanding of itself in the midst of the gentile world,” a distinctive emphasis in the Hebrew Bible that “would differ from the pantheistic ideas of Egyptian religion and Mesopotamian mythology.”³⁹ Setting aside the accuracy or inaccuracy of these conclusions, we should note that the method itself is problematic.⁴⁰ The difficulty arises when *uniqueness*

³⁷ Ludwig Köhler, et. al., “רוח,” *HALOT* 3:1195–1201.

³⁸ Tengström and Fabry, “רוח,” 13:372.

³⁹ Tengström and Fabry, “רוח” *TDOT* 13:372.

⁴⁰ This would not be the case if the authors were simply seeking to make taxonomic distinctions for the sake of comparison. By itself, the study of religion (whether ancient or modern) by means of taxonomic classification is a prevalent and useful tool for analysis, even as it runs the risk of totalizing and essentializing, as Jonathan Z. Smith has argued. This method is especially apt for an academic dictionary, which at best seeks to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. Smith, “A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion” *HTR* 89.4 (1996): 387–403, 391–94.

comes to have an implicit value outside of taxonomic purposes.⁴¹ It is in this way that the method used in the *TDOT* reveals itself to be dramatically inconsistent: When the biblical text's meaning is ambiguous, the authors happily borrow meanings from ancient Near Eastern literature that is supposedly more clear. At the same time, however, these same authors must also endeavor to explicate how biblical literature is theologically distinct and unparalleled within the context of its time and place.

This treatment of רוח אלהים in the *TDOT* can be problematized further. From my perspective, the discussion of this troublesome phrase would not be so noteworthy (and thus not so instructive for this project) were there not a more blatant potential understanding of the phrase that the entry simply discounts out of hand:

The primary question is not whether to translate *rûah* as “spirit” or “wind”; even so, the translation “spirit” is less appropriate because it might suggest the notion of a vital cosmos, otherwise alien to the OT, or the notion of a distinct being, as such inconceivable in the OT alongside *’ēlōhîm*.⁴²

Again, setting aside for the moment whether or not a translation of “spirit” need imply these ideas (and whether they really are as “alien” and “inconceivable” to the Old Testament as the *TDOT* suggests), we should note that “a vital cosmos” sounds very similar to the “pantheistic ideas” of surrounding cultures from which the *TDOT* wishes to differentiate the Hebrew Bible. Likewise, the notion that there might be another “distinct being” in heaven besides God would likely put the Hebrew Bible on par with the “Mesopotamian mythology” that the *TDOT* also wishes to treat as foreign. Thus, in order to preserve the supposed uniqueness of the Old

⁴¹ See discussion in Peter Machinist, “The Question of the Distinctiveness in Ancient Israel: An Essay” in *Ah, Assyria... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed. M. Cogan and I. Eph'al, Scripta Hierosolymitana 33 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 196–212.

⁴² Tengström and Fabry, “רוח” *TDOT* 13:384.

Testament, the *TDOT* must reject a translation of רוח it sees as consistent with other literature of the ancient world.

This position in the *TDOT* is revealed to be deeply ironic when we consider several other instances in the Hebrew Bible where God's רוח is clearly an agent active in creation (e.g., Isa 40:12–13; Ps 33:6; Job 26:13; 33:4). These texts and others contribute to one of several significant conceptions of רוח in the Hebrew Bible, that of an “animating spirit” that sustains all living creatures. As I discuss in chapter four, in many texts, this “animating spirit” is not completely devoid of agency or identity and, by its very nature, it is co-possessed both by the living creature and by the God with whom it originated. But, in order to defend the supposed uniqueness of Genesis 1 against other accounts of creation from the ancient Near East, the *TDOT* must read it *against* this meaning that is plainly present within the context of the interpretive tradition in which Genesis 1 takes part.

The ideological commitment that serves as the foundation of these two goals in the *TDOT*—first, to find a singular, unitary meaning, second, both to establish the Hebrew Bible as at home within its ancient Near Eastern context as well as to distinguish it as unique within that same context—is not difficult to discern. As with many other dictionaries of Biblical Hebrew, the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* is, of course, canonically focused, and thus prioritizes the use of רוח in those texts which compose the body of literature that Jews have traditionally called *Tanakh* and Christians, the Old Testament.⁴³ This is clear from a variety of

⁴³ This dissertation prefers the term “Hebrew Bible” but will use these other names when discussing sources that do so. On nomenclature see, Christopher R. Seitz, “Old Testament or Hebrew Bible?: Some Theological Considerations” in *Word Without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 61–74; and Jon D. Levenson, “The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism” in *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 1–32.

clues, not least because (despite the historical-etymological focus) the organization of the article is not strictly chronological.⁴⁴

Thus, the *TDOT* begins from a point of accepting that the Old Testament is a distinct body of literature, one with a theology substantial enough to warrant a fifteen-volume dictionary. Yet in practice, the entry on רוח ignores the context of the communities that cultivated this body of literature (early Jews, and later, also Christians) in favor of the historical background that is said to have birthed its disparate pieces. Since the text can only tolerate one, unitary meaning (and this one, the “original” one), the oldest traditions must be privileged even as they are ultimately cast aside as “pantheistic” and “mythological.” The result is an undeniably particular perspective on the text that is nevertheless presented as being the single, all-encompassing definition—one that is both *historically* accurate as well as *theologically* meaningful.⁴⁵ Such a scheme prevents the *TDOT* from rightfully identifying רוח אלהים in Gen 1:2c as an example of a potential spirit phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible. Since רוח clearly means “wind” in Gen 1:2, the *TDOT* argues, it cannot possibly also be “spirit.” It also causes the entry to arrive at a “meaning” for רוח in Genesis 1 that is at odds with the understandings of early Jewish and early Christian traditions that saw the spirit of God as taking a role in creation.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ For instance, the relatively late book of Daniel is discussed in the Hebrew Bible sections whereas certain parts of the book of 1 Enoch (which are likely either contemporaneous or earlier than Daniel) are discussed in the “Later Literature” section.

⁴⁵ See the critique of this persistent methodological error in the “Biblical Theology” movement in Jon D. Levenson “Why Jews Are Not Interested in Biblical Theology” in *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 33–61.

⁴⁶ My discussion of the reception history of Genesis 1:2c continues in chapter four.

II. Three Types of Spirit Phenomena

If carrying out a simple word search in biblical software and classifying each occurrence of key words is inadequate, how can we best identify spirit phenomena in biblical literature? In the previous chapter, I introduced my topic as encompassing three modes of writing: 1) spirit language, 2) descriptions of spirit possession, and 3) myths about spirits. I am now prepared to describe these types in more detail. Note that these categories are not meant to be mutually exclusive. For example, any narrative account of a spirit possession will inevitably utilize spirit language and may also include a mythic account of how the unseen activities of spirits have affected the parties involved (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:13–28). Thus, this organizational structure, like all such devices in the study of spirit possession, is meant only as a heuristic tool for expanding our understandings of these phenomena.

A. Spirit Language

Like many words in Hebrew that strike modern readers as having a wide semantic range, there are no indications that רוח is a *homograph*.⁴⁷ That is, it is not like the English words *bat*, *down*, or *fine*, each of which can have more than one meaning, though it is unrelated to the other.⁴⁸ Instead, רוח simultaneously can encompass all of these meanings and more. Put differently, it would seem that certain languages like modern American English operate with distinctions between things like “wind” and “spirit” that were less clear in biblical literature and among its earliest interpreters.

⁴⁷ Though it may be onomatopoeic. See lexical discussions in Claus Westermann, “Geist im Alten Testament” *Evangelische Theologie* 41.3 (1981): 223–30; Tengström and Fabry, “רוח,” 13:367–68; Köhler, “רוח,” 3:1195–1201. See also my review of previous scholarship in chapter three.

⁴⁸ Neither is it like other English homographs that are spelled the same but differentiate their meaning through altered pronunciations (e.g., *bass*, *entrance*, or *minute*).

This point is poignantly illustrated in Ezekiel 37:1–14, the prophet’s vision of the valley of dry bones. In the span of these fourteen verses, רוח appears ten times, and a wide semantic range of the word is obviously at work. The NRSV translates the passage as follows:

¹ The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit (רוח) of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” ⁴ Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath (רוח) to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath (רוח) in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath (רוח) in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath (רוח), prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath (רוח): Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds (רוחות), O breath (רוח), and breathe (ופח) upon these slain, that they may live.” ¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath (רוח) came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹ Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ ¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit (רוחי) within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.” (Ezek 37:1–14 NRSV)

Arguably, each English rendering of רוח here is defensible: The idiom for four “winds” and four points on the compass is well known (v. 9b). Yet, when there are references to bones, sinews, and flesh, it makes the most sense that what God would be putting inside of them next is

“breath.” Additionally, Ezekiel’s familiar vision introduction formula in verse 1 speaks of God bringing him out “by a/the spirit of the LORD” ([י]) **רוח**.⁴⁹

Yet, in spite of these perfectly fine translations, it would be unusually dim of us not to realize that in each instance, more than the meaning of just one English word is intended. Indeed, while the examples given above may seem clear, other English renderings for **רוח** in the passage are less so (e.g., v. 9a). At one point, the prophet is instructed to prophesy by means of a **רוח**, to a **רוח**, concerning a **רוח**, which comes from four **רוחות** (!). This high concentration of somewhat tautological spirit language is a testament to the sophisticated pneumatological theology and anthropology at work in this passage and in Ezekiel in general.⁵⁰ This is particularly true in verse 14, “I will put my **רוח** in you (plural).”

As discussed at length in the *TDOT*, this kind of semantic flexibility has parallels in the cultures and languages of the ancient Near East. In several recent articles comparing the function of winds in ancient Mesopotamian medicinal literature with that of **רוחות** in Job and Ezekiel, Ingrid Lilly has argued that, in many instances, **רוח** can be understood as guided winds either on the inside or outside of a person that affect health, mood, and personality.⁵¹ Comparison with ghost-induced illnesses in Mesopotamian literature reveals significant overlap with the maladies

⁴⁹ Usually, nouns that are in a construct relationship with a proper noun are definite though technically the form is grammatically ambiguous. Waltke and O’Connor explain that this point is usually “clear from context” and list one of their examples as 1 Sam 18:10 “a (certain) evil spirit of God” (**רוח אלהים רעה**), Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 241, 13.4c. In this instance in Ezekiel as well as in several other places where “spirit” and “God” are in construct relationship, I am inclined to think that the definiteness of **רוח** is less clear. See discussion in Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 36–41.

⁵⁰ Daniel I. Block, “The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of **רוח** in the Book of Ezekiel” in *By the River Chebar: Historical, Literary, and Theological Studies in the Book of Ezekiel* (Cambridge: James Clark Company, 2014), 140–68. See also Levenson, *Resurrection and Restoration of Israel*, 156–65; Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 205–08.

⁵¹ Lilly, “Rûah Embodied” and “Conceptualizing Spirit.”

caused by these winds.⁵² To the extent that ghosts and winds often work together, the two can become almost indistinguishable. In a similar fashion, scholars have long recognized a precedent in Egyptian literature for describing human breath as originally the property of the gods.⁵³ Thus, even when it is clear from the context that רוח as “wind” or “breath” is being discussed in biblical literature, we cannot be sure that “spirit” to some extent is not also implicit (again, the sharp English distinctions between “wind,” “breath,” and “spirit” does not seem to exist in biblical Hebrew). This fuller aspect of spirit language is particularly pronounced in those instances where a passage may not have originally foregrounded the meaning of “spirit,” but it nevertheless came to be interpreted that way in later tradition.⁵⁴

With this perspective, then, spirit language in biblical literature becomes a productive tool for discussing the means by which humanity inhabits and relates to its world, emotionally, volitionally, and, at times, physically. Consistent across this loose system is a kind of economy of spirits, wherein there can be rationing, stimulus, hoarding, surplus and deficit. As with any economy, individual actors and collectives have varying degrees of agency and power but, ultimately, each remains subject to “market forces.” Against this backdrop, God’s own mastery of the spirit economy becomes a greater emphasis in late Second Temple literature, even as

⁵² Lilly, “Rûah Embodied...”, 328. See also Joanne Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses* (AMD 3. Leiden: Brill, 2006).

⁵³ See the older but influential Johannes Hehn, “Zum Problem des Geistes im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament,” *ZAW* 43 (1925): 210–25. See also Paul van Imschoot, “L’Esprit de Jahvé, Source de Vie dans L’ancien Testament” *RB* 44 (1935): 481–501; Admiel Kosman, “Breath, Kiss, and Speech as the Source of the Animation of Life: Ancient Foundations of Rabbinic Homilies on the Giving of the Torah as the Kiss of God” in *Self, Soul, and Body in Religious Experience*, ed. A. I. Baumgarten, J. Assmann, and G. G. Stroumsa, (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 96–124. On Egyptian views of the body see, Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, trans. David Lorton, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), esp. 26–38.

⁵⁴ As just one example, see my discussion of 1 Samuel 1–2 in chapter four.

certain non-God spirit agents become increasingly hypostasized and personified. This is particularly the case in stories of exorcism and eschatological combat.

Within this now broadened spectrum of spirit language, at least three, non-exhaustive and overlapping modes of spirit language can be identified. As will be seen from the examples that follow, it is rare that any particular text would function in just one mode:

1) Spirit as a Part of the Body

It has long been recognized that the Hebrew Bible often expresses emotion by means of describing the physical symptoms of that state.⁵⁵ This is certainly true in many narrative texts. For example, when Joseph meets his brothers in Pharaoh's court, the hearer is rarely explicitly told that he is sad, angry, or conflicted. Rather, the narrators "shows" us rather than "tells" us: We thus observe Joseph in tears and watch his erratic behavior towards them (Gen 42:24; 45:2; 45:14; 46:29 but cf. 43:30).

Even when an emotion is being expressed explicitly in biblical literature, it is often described using the language of the body. Thus, eyes run with tears (e.g., Jer 9:17; Ps 116:8), bones shake in fright (e.g., Isa 66:14; Ps 6:2), arms are encouraged with strength (e.g., Exod 30:24; Hos 7:15), noses fume with anger (Exod 22:23), and flesh yearns (e.g., Ps 63:2). It may be tempting to argue that these are examples of poetic hyperbole but given the sheer volume of occurrences across the genres of the Hebrew Bible, it is more likely that they are conventional forms for understanding how human bodies work.

⁵⁵ Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*; Mark S. Smith, "The Heart and Innards in Israelite Emotional Expressions: Notes from Anthropology and Psychobiology." *JBL* 117.3 (1998): 427–36.

This point is particularly pertinent when considering how רוח functions to communicate emotion. On the one hand, this is not a new insight. רוח is often discussed in the context of other body part words like לבב “heart,” כבד “liver,” כלית “kidneys,” and נפש “throat.” These words too are often utilized to indicate emotion.⁵⁶ On the other hand, despite nearly identical and sometimes synonymous usage, רוח is sometimes treated differently from these other words by modern interpreters. For example, Wolff in his term-by-term study of these body-parts words distinguishes רוח alone as a “theo-anthropological term,” because more often than the others, it is used to describe aspects and actions of God.⁵⁷ Other interpreters have at times discussed רוח in the Hebrew Bible within the anachronistic paradigm of spirit/flesh dualism.⁵⁸ It could be that רוח receives special treatment by scholars because it does not readily correspond to a part of the modern anatomy in a way that something like “heart” or “liver” does (even if we are aware that ancient writers did not use these words in the same way that a medical textbook does so today).

Instead, I contend that in many biblical texts רוח is simply another component of the body—“an *internal* wind.”⁵⁹ While it is true that a creature’s body would not function without a רוח, this does not make it a different category of organ, since a body would not function without a לבב or a נפש either. With this perspective it should come as no surprise that רוח is used to communicate a wide range of emotions and experiences. One’s spirit can be “troubled” להפעם

⁵⁶ E.g., Deut 15:10; Jdg 19:6; Lam 2:11; Isa 1:14; Ps 13:2

⁵⁷ Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 32.

⁵⁸ David Flusser sees a “spirit-flesh” dualism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, though he argues that it is of a different type than the “spirit-matter” dualism of “Greek and Gnostic thought.” David Flusser, “The Flesh-Spirit Dualism in the Qumran Scrolls and the New Testament” in *Qumran and Apocalypticism. Vol. 1 of Judaism of the Second Temple Period*, trans. Azzan Yadin, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 283–92. This dichotomy is disputed in chapter six.

⁵⁹ Lilly, “Rûah Embodied.”

(Gen 41:8) and “broken” נבאה (Prov 15:13) but also “stirred” להעיר (Jer 51:11) and “revived” להחיות (Isa 57:15).⁶⁰

2) Spirit as an Expression of Will

These last examples overlap somewhat with my second mode of spirit language—“spirit as an expression of will.” One’s spirit can be “hardened” לאמץ when it is obstinate (e.g., Deut 2:30), it can “search” לשחר for another (e.g., Isa 26:9), and can contain deceit רמיה (e.g., Ps 32:2). In this usage too, spirit is not terribly distinct from words like נפש “throat” or לבב “heart.” Indeed, it is often in these first two modes that spirit language most clearly functions as self-language in the Hebrew Bible. Crucially, the concept of the self that emerges is one of the person as essentially and inseparably embodied—though not impermeable.⁶¹ As the following sections demonstrate, the most powerful human emotions, compulsions, and passions often originate from outside of a person, and it is almost always spirit language that is used to describe this interaction.⁶²

3) Spirit as Other

When spirit language is used to describe something internal but, nonetheless, to some degree distinct from the self, I have called it a “spirit as other.” One of the most poignant examples of

⁶⁰ Emotive phrases utilizing רוח in the Hebrew Bible are often treated as metaphor in English translation, obscuring this term’s meaning as a part of the body. See, for example, Job 7:7 and 1 Samuel 1:15, which I discuss in chapter four.

⁶¹ With this description I am reminded of the modern, American farmer and essayist, Wendell Berry, whom I paraphrase: “You do not have a body. You are a body.” Wendell Berry, “The Body and the Earth,” in *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), 97–140.

⁶² Philip Fisher, *The Vehement Passions* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2002).

this is the רוח-קנאה “spirit of jealousy” in Numbers 5, which afflicts the husband who suspects his wife of unfaithfulness. The ensuing ritual seems designed to appease both the spirit and the husband and also acts as a deterrent against rash action.

From the perspective of Proverbs, one’s spirit is often unpredictable and requires regulation. Proverbs 16:32, for example, valorizes one who משל ברוחו “rules his spirit,” explaining that he is better than one who captures a city. The NRSV renders this as “one whose temper is controlled” and similarly the NJPS has “self-control.” While these translations might be technically correct in capturing the message of the proverb, they also obscure, the repeated warning in the collection that one’s spirit is a dangerous liability: “Like a city breached, without walls / is a man without constraint of his spirit (איש אשר אין מעצר לרוחו).”⁶³

Another example for a “spirit as other” can be seen in the book of Ezekiel:

I will give them one heart, a new spirit I will set within them. I shall remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give to them a heart of flesh so that they might walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them. They shall be my people and I shall be their God. (Ezek 11:19–20; cf. 36:26–27)

In this text, the innate human spirit has become so problematic and unruly, that the prophet prescribes God’s intervention in the creation of a new one (but see, Ezek 18:31 where the house of Israel is exhorted to enact the change themselves through repentance). Indeed, some of the most striking examples can be found in late Second Temple literature (though still expressed in the biblical idiom).⁶⁴ Considering Proverbs’ exhortation to rule one’s spirit, we can see that the Community Rule is not making so great a leap when it prescribes that anyone who is ruled by the

⁶³ Prov 25:28; cf. 16:2; 17:27; 29:11

⁶⁴ These texts in Ezekiel and other biblical texts in the tradition are one of the primary subjects discussed in chapter six.

spirits of Belial/troublesome spirits (כל איש אשר ימשלו בו רוחות בליעל) must receive the same judgment as spirit mediums and diviners (CD 12:2).

With this last mode, “spirit as other,” we are much closer to spirit possession than with the first two. Although, as I have endeavored to show above, even when spirit language occurs in a context that does not suggest possession or trance, its articulations and themes were liable to be taken up and expanded that way in new contexts. In this way, spirit language in biblical literature was a building block for descriptions of spirit possession episodes.

B. Descriptions of Spirit Possession

In order to identify texts that may qualify as descriptions of spirit possession in biblical literature, it will be helpful to pay attention to the criteria for these phenomena developed in cultural anthropology. A good place to start is a landmark 1994 essay by Janice Boddy, which gathered several dozen studies from a variety of cultures and surveyed the nearly overwhelming array of modes in which possession occurred. A consistent theme throughout the essay is Boddy’s rejection of overly reductive models that would seek to link the diverse possession practices of the world by a few “master narratives,” usually articulated in largely medical terms.

Additionally, Boddy argues that structural and functionalist approaches are inadequate as well because they inevitably attempt to contain rationally what is an inherently creative and expansive enterprise. In contrast to a reductionist medical explanation, Boddy explains that

[...] possession widens out from the body and self into other domains of knowledge and experience—other lives, societies, historical moments, levels of cosmos, and religions—catching these up and embodying them. Their direction ensures that possession cults are flexible and continuously transformative. It enables adherents to explore multiple refractions of order and morality; to distill the lessons of history; to sift, evaluate and

situate external influences; and to respond. Phenomena we bundle loosely as possession are part of daily experience, not just dramatic ritual.⁶⁵

The “we” in the last sentence refers to anthropologists studying possession phenomena, but it might as well refer to any western academic who would assume spirit possession to be both universally explicable as well as subsumable into culturally familiar intellectual categories. At the conclusion of her article, Boddy turned the microscope around on these scholars and suggested that the question in possession studies had shifted from, “‘How is it that other peoples believe the self to be permeable by forces from without?’ to ‘How is it that Western models have repeatedly denied such permeability?’”⁶⁶

One way to translate Boddy’s insightful challenge to her own field into biblical studies is to adjust our expectations regarding what constitutes a spirit possession event or practice. Rather than putting the burden of proof on spirit possession to show itself according to an expected paradigm (i.e., something similar to an exorcism story in the Gospels), we might instead assume that spirit possession practices (more broadly defined) almost certainly existed at most levels of development in the composition and interpretive traditions of biblical literature. (More self-consciously, we might also recognize that it is, in fact, modern, western culture that stands out for its conspicuous lack of popular spirit possession and trance practices.) We then might ask how these phenomena could be represented in biblical literature.

For answering this last question, Michael Lambek offers the helpful suggestion of shifting the scholarly gaze away from determining the physiological, psychological, social, or

⁶⁵ Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 414.

⁶⁶ Boddy, “Spirit Possession Revisited,” 427. She specifically mentions renewed interest in *mimesis* and the work of Michael Taussig, especially *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

any other external force that supposedly causes possession and trance and instead focusing on the expressions themselves. In a discussion on the difficulties of delineating categories and terms for these diverse practices, Lambek observes that taxonomic theories that are clear enough to analysts rarely map well onto the observable phenomena in practice. He argues that this is because so many theoretical models use a phenomenon's imagined cause as the determining variable. He explains:

While trance, like sex, eating, or vocalization, is “natural” in the sense that, under the right stimuli, it is a condition or activity (or range of conditions or activities) of which the human species at large is capable, the form or manifestation of trance in any specific context is no more “natural” (necessary, unmediated, given) than the model that guides it. Trance may include certain universal features or attributes from which each culture selects points of emphasis (much as a language, viewed phonemically, selects from the range of possible human vocalizations). Yet the institutionalized appearance of trance—its form, meaning, incidence, etc.—is cultural.⁶⁷

Within Lambek's scheme, then, spirit possession is not a puzzle to be solved so much as a language to be translated. It may indeed be communicating an exceptional environmental condition such as an illness, a form of institutional oppression, or any of the other “natural” explanations posited by previous scholars. But it just as soon might (also) be communicating celebration, devotion, satire, lament—or any other part of human culture. It is this aspect of possession that makes it a “system of communication” and thus translatable into a text.

The difference between a human experience and a text is dramatic, however, and the two should not be equated too hastily. How can Boddy's and Lambek's descriptions of spirit possession and trance as practiced in lived culture translate to the study of ancient texts? The Bible, of course, does not contain ethnographic reports or cultural analyses of the kind passed

⁶⁷ Lambek, “From Disease to Discourse,” 38. As discussed in chapter 1, terminology for these phenomena among anthropologists vary. I would not claim that Lambek's “trance” and Boddy's “spirit possession” are synonymous but they are close enough in meaning that we may treat them as such here for the sake of my point.

around among anthropologists. Even if we are certain spirit possession and trance were practiced among the communities that composed and interpreted biblical texts, can we claim to have reliable access to the experiences that might lay behind them?

Fortunately for this project, indologist Frederick M. Smith has already modeled a comparable study with a much wider scope in a book entitled *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization*.⁶⁸ Charting spirit possession in a corpus both dramatically different and many times larger than the Hebrew Bible, Smith nevertheless encountered barriers that might be familiar to biblical scholars. For instance, it was necessary for Smith to identify the various vocabulary for spirit possession and trance across languages and dialects in different types of literature as well as to grapple with the various conventions of these different literary forms. Similar also to this project, Smith acknowledged that spirit possession in classical Indian literature had previously been understudied—in large part because much of the secondary literature regarded it as absent from the primary literature.⁶⁹

For these reasons, *The Self Possessed* can prove instructive for this project—particularly when considering matters of method. Anticipating the concerns I expressed above, Smith recognized an inherent tension in analyzing ancient spirit possession practices by means of ancient texts:

[...] literacy—or, more simply, text—potentially releases the knower from the necessity of intense bodily engagement, from interaction with other beings, human or nonhuman, real or imagined, and, at the same time, establishes self-sufficiency beyond the pale of relational intrusion, a realm in which possession naturally abides.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Frederick M. Smith, *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

⁶⁹ Smith, *The Self Possessed*, 33. This was true both of later commentators from within the tradition and from western scholars observing it from without.

⁷⁰ Smith, *The Self Possessed* [...], 12.

This phenomenological distance releases an ideological bent already present in the primary literature, which is free to stifle the spirit phenomena it describes:

The response of most of the orthodox among Sanskrit *paṇḍitas* [religious scholars and scribes] to the problem of possession, or more generally of human experience itself, was a civilizing and, not incidentally, a benignly controlling neglect, a response not far from that of their more modern Indological counterparts.”⁷¹

Despite these concerns, Smith insists that the problem of textuality is not insurmountable.

Though the prevailing “Sanskritic culture” may have contained an ideological bent that obscured in writing the vibrant spirit possession practices of culture, certain “vernacular” influences (e.g., spontaneity and emotionalism) survive in the literature, which problematizes the assumption by some Indologists of a unified literary ideology against possession.

More helpful to this project still, *The Self Possessed* demonstrates how investigations into spirit possession *as a literary object* can still provide insights on religious experience in antiquity. As a category in the study of religion, “religious experience” has undergone severe re-evaluation (and, for some, outright rejection) as the field has shifted attention towards language, sources of power, embodiment, and materiality.⁷² Citing Robert Sharf and others who have problematized the rhetoric of religious experience in the study of religion, Smith concedes that:

[...] we are not encountering possession directly, but approaching it through the side door of academics, which is to say through linguistic examination, textual description and prescription, ethnographic reportage, and text-critical, anthropological, psychological,

⁷¹ Smith, *The Self Possessed* [...], 12.

⁷² David Chidester has labelled this “New Materialism” in “Material Terms for the Study of Religion,” *JAAR* 68.2 (2000): 367–69. See also Stephen S. Bush, “Are Religious Experiences Too Private to Study?” *JR* 92:2 (2012): 199–223; Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Robert H. Sharf, “Experience,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). In biblical studies see Rodney A. Werline, “Assessing the Prophetic Vision and Dream Texts for Insights into Religious Experience” in *“I Lifted My Eyes and Saw”*; *Reading Dream and Vision Reports in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Elizabeth R. Hayes and Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, LHBOTS 584 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1–15.

literary, and historical interpretations. Similarly, I agree with Sharf that we are not obliged to accept at face value the phenomenological descriptions of these texts and narratives; but neither can we reject or neglect them out of hand as a methodological stance, replacing them with secure propositions of our own making. The hermeneutic of suspicion on which rests much of value in our fields must not become a hermeneutic of mandatory, routine rejection. At this point, no scholar will disagree that texts, as well as performances or orally produced descriptions, are representations that at best asymptotically approach facticity or are themselves the only realities that they can construct.⁷³

Textual descriptions of personal or corporate spirit possession can still be illuminating with regards to religious experience. The key, argues Smith, is that theorists must remain conscientious of context, whether performative or textual. A textual description of a spirit possession ritual thus brings the experience “out of the recesses of unassailable interiority and situate[s] it soundly within material and social practices”—precisely in the domain where the study of religion at large now most comfortably dwells.⁷⁴

Having surveyed several theoretical treatments of spirit possession and trance in ethnography, anthropology, and South Asian literature, we are better prepared to recognize and analyze descriptions of similar practices in biblical literature. Below, I list four types of descriptions of spirit possession in biblical literature. As with the examples of spirit language above, it is rare that any particular text would function in just one mode.

1) Narrative Descriptions of Spirit Possession Events or Rituals

These texts are perhaps the easiest to identify. One conspicuous example has already been discussed in chapter one, Saul’s visit to the medium at En-Dor in 1 Samuel 28. Other examples of narrative descriptions of spirit possession include the seventy(-two) prophesying elders in

⁷³ Smith, *The Self Possessed*, 17.

⁷⁴ Bush, “Are Religious Experiences Too Private to Study?,” 215.

Numbers 11:16–30, the ritual for testing an unfaithful wife in Numbers 5, and Saul’s series of encounters with an antagonizing spirit (e.g., 1 Sam 16:14–23; 18:10; 19:9). Instances of spirit empowerment also qualify here, especially in the book of Judges (e.g., Jdg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 14:6; see also the selection of Joshua in Numbers 27:16–23).⁷⁵ So also do episodes of spirit confusion or frustration (e.g., Isa 19:14; 29:9–10). Similarly, from the perspective of several biblical texts, the decisions of leaders both foreign and domestic are sometimes the result of subtle spirit possessions (e.g., Jer 51:11; Isa 37:7 // 2 Kgs 19:7; Hag 1:14). The description of Bezalel the craftsmen also fits, though this particular instance may be of a less “charismatic” nature than is sometimes assumed.⁷⁶ We may also include in this category narratives about prophetic sign acts or performances of prophecy.⁷⁷ For example, Ezekiel is compelled by a spirit to be restrained in his house, bound and speechless as a sign act (Ezek 3:22–27; cf. 24:25–27; 33:21–22). Indeed, the prophet engages so often in this kind of formulaic yet odd behavior, that we may include other sign acts in the category—even if a key word for “spirit” (e.g., רוח) is missing in that particular instance (e.g., 6:11–12; 12:1–16; 21:23–29 [Eng vv. 18–24]).⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Several verbal constructions are used in these cases ranging from a spirit merely “being upon” וְתָהי עָלָיו (e.g., Num 24:2; Jdg 3:10; 2 Chr 15:1) to “clothing” לְבַשָּׁה (e.g., Jdg 6:34; 1 Chr 12:19) and even “seizing” וְתִצְלַח עָלָיו (e.g., Jdg 14:6; 1 Sam 10:6). See my discussion in chapter five.

⁷⁶ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 36–41.

⁷⁷ For an overview of the phenomenon, see Kelvin G. Friebel, “Sign Acts” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 707–13. See also, *Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts* (JSOTSup 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), esp. 11–78.

⁷⁸ We may tentatively extend this inclusion to other prophetic books, such as the conflict between the prophets Jeremiah and Hananiah, which is performed in a series of sign acts by means of an ox yoke prop (Jer 27–28). See chapter three.

2) *First Person Accounts of Spirit Possession*

While there is substantial overlap between this category and the previous, one important distinction should be recognized—namely the possibility that spirit possession is implied in some texts but obscured to a degree by a first-person point of view. To compare: we have little insight as to what it is like “on the inside,” so to speak, when Saul is seized by a spirit of the LORD, engaged in prophetic frenzy, and “turned into a different person” in 1 Samuel 10:6 (i.e., are we meant to understand that Saul is still conscious? Or has his person been replaced by another presence? Is it a pleasurable experience? Euphoric? Does Saul have rational thoughts or is it all nonsense?). So also, we know little of what it is like “from the outside” when Ezekiel prophesies to the רוח in Ezekiel 37:10 (see full text above). Had someone “been there,” what are we meant to conclude that they would have seen? Was the prophet babbling incoherently to himself? Sitting quietly? Asleep and dreaming? Was he walking through an actual valley but seeing things that others present would have not?⁷⁹ If it was conventional (if not in history, at least as a literary construct) for the utterances of prophets to coincide with possession rituals as it seems they often were (e.g., 1 Sam 10:5; 19:20; 1 Kgs 18:29; 22:10), then even stray references to spirit empowered prophecy should be considered (e.g., Isa 61:1–4; Mic 3:8).⁸⁰

⁷⁹ In these examples, both texts utilize the Dt form of the verb נבא, which occurs infrequently compared to the more standard N form in the Hebrew Bible. While I do not think it necessary for נבא to appear in this form in order to qualify as an example of a spirit phenomenon, there is evidence that, at least in some texts, the Dt is meant to indicate an ecstatic or frenzied state, though this is not always admirable or desirable from the perspective of the text (e.g., 1 Kgs 18:29; Jer 14:14; 23:13; cf. Hos 9:7). This issue is discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

⁸⁰ Importantly, these questions are not sidestepped if we prefer to read prophetic accounts of spirit possession primarily as the products of scribal innovation. Even if Ezekiel’s visions are “only” a literary invention forged in the minds of creative scribes, the spirit possession account still exists as a literary construct, comparable with other forms in biblical literature. Further, it is possible that the scribes responsible for these accounts based their literary inventions on spirit possession practices from their own community and era. Perhaps the process of scribal writing itself was perceived as a kind of spirit possession—after all, the phenomenon of writing in the voice of an ancient prophet is already a form of *literary* spirit possession.

3) *Oracles Concerning Possession*

In addition to prophetic oracles *initiated* by some mode of spirit possession, there are also numerous instances in biblical literature of oracles *about* spirit possession—particularly future possession that is both corporate and positive. See, for example, Isaiah 32:15–18:

¹⁵ Until a spirit from above is emptied out over us,
and a wilderness becomes the fertile field
and a fertile field is deemed the forest,
¹⁶ so that justice dwells in the wilderness
and righteousness resides in the fertile field,
¹⁷ so that the effect of righteousness might be peace,
and the result of righteousness quietude and trust forever,
¹⁸ so that my people might reside in a habitation of peace
in trustworthy dwellings and in quiet resting places. (Isaiah 32:15–18)

The fact that the spirit effects described by the prophet are more abiding and tranquil than momentary and delirious does not disqualify the prophecy from being considered (though we may say that the possession is one of a different character). Indeed, the permanent quality of the abiding peace is all the more reason to appreciate the potency of this spirit emptied out from above. Other examples may include, Isaiah 11:1–5; 32:15; 59:21; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26–27; Joel 2:28–29 [Eng 3:1–2]; and Zech 12:10.

4) *Apotropaic/Exorcistic Intercessions and Liturgies*

Texts in this mode reflect an awareness of a threat from spirits so severe that it requires a divine form of management. These prayers usually feature supplications to a deity or sympathetic spirit for help in discernment and protection.⁸¹ Often they utilize language in the mode of “spirit as

⁸¹ In this sense, these prayers and rituals may be seen as “speech acts.” On the long history of speech act theory in biblical studies, see Andreas Wagner, “Speech Acts: Biblical Hebrew,” n.p. *EHLL*. Cited 6 March 2018. Online: http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1163/2212-4241_ehll_EHLL_COM_00000883. See also, Brevard Childs, “Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation,” *SJT* 58 (2005): 375–92; and John L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

other” as I outlined above—though this is not a requirement. Apotropaic intercession was a well-established literary form in the ancient Near East and fruitful comparison has been made to biblical texts that replicate the tradition even as they transform it.⁸² Scholars have also found evidence (both literary or archaeological) of an apotropaic *Sitz im Leben* for certain texts in the Hebrew Bible including Psalm 91 and Numbers 6:24–26.⁸³ However, some of the best examples of this mode are found in late Second Temple literature.⁸⁴ Indeed, one especially strong example is in the second century BCE book of Jubilees. Though it is now set within a narrative context, many commentators suspect that Abram’s prayer for protection against spirits is borrowed from an existing apotropaic prayer:⁸⁵

¹⁹ That night [Abram] prayed and said:

“My God, my God, God most High,

You alone are my God.

You have created everything:

Everything that was and has been is the product of your hands.

You and your lordship I have chosen.

²⁰ Save me from the power of the evil spirits who rule the thoughts of people’s minds.

May they not mislead me from following you, my God.

⁸² Marian Broida’s 2006 dissertation compares apotropaic intercession forms in Mesopotamia and Anatolia with intercession texts in the Hebrew Bible (including Gen 18:23b–32a; Exod 32:11b–13; 31b–32; Num 13:13b–19; and others). Broida concludes that while ancient Israel’s surrounding cultures engaged in intercessions that were both causative (i.e., “magical”) and persuasive, biblical texts engaged only in persuasive forms. “Forestalling Doom: ‘Apotropaic Intercession’ in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East” (Ph.D. diss. Emory University, 2006). See also Marian W. Broida, “Apotropaic Intercession in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East” in *Studies on Magic and Divination in the Biblical World*, ed. H. R. Jacobus, et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, Press, 2013), 19–38.

⁸³ See background discussion in Esther Eshel, “Apotropaic Prayers in the Second Temple Period” in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Esther G. Chazon, STDJ 48, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 69–88, 70–74.

⁸⁴ Brand, *Evil Within and Without*, 198–217; Eshel “Apotropaic Prayers”; See also David Flusser, “Qumran and Jewish Apotropaic Prayers” *IEJ* 16 (1966): 194–205.

⁸⁵ See discussion in James Kugel, *A Walk Through Jubilees: Studies in the Book of Jubilees and the World of its Creation*, SJSJ 156, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 89–90 and Menahem Kister, “Body and Purification from Evil: Prayer Formulas and Concepts in Second Temple Literature and Their Relationship to Later Rabbinic Literature” / “יצר לב האדם, הגוף והטהור מן הרע: מטבעות תפילה ותפיסות עולם בספרות בית שני ובקומראן וזיקתם לספרות חז”ל ולתפילות” in *Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls / מגילות: מחקרים במגילות מדבר יהודה* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2010), 243–84; Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology*, SJSJ 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 259–61.

Do establish me and my posterity forever.
May we not go astray from now until eternity.” (Jub 12:19–20)⁸⁶

Abram’s prayer reflects a worldview extensively narrated in Jubilees in which “evil” is “an essentially defeated power whose activity has already been subjected to a preliminary judgment.”⁸⁷ Abram’s prayer reflects the concern that even those whose worship and devotion is oriented towards God are still liable to spirit invasion and affliction. In taking this perspective, it is not terribly different from a wide range of other Second Temple era spirit phenomena texts, including numerous sectarian documents found among the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as key texts in the Pauline corpus.

This example from Jubilees is especially noteworthy since, according to the narrative, Abram’s apotropaic prayer is followed by a type of possession experience—in this case, a positive one. The following passage is told from the perspective of the Angel of the Presence who is narrating the story to Moses:

²² When he had finished speaking and praying, then the word of the Lord was sent to him through me: “Now you, come from your land, your family, and your father’s house to the land which I will show you. I will make you into a large and prosperous people. ²³ I will bless you and magnify your reputation. You will become blessed in the earth. All the nations of the earth will be blessed in you. Those who bless you I will bless, while those who curse you I will curse. ²⁴ I will become God for you, your son, your grandson, and all your descendants. Do not be afraid. From now until all the generations of the earth I am your God.” ²⁵ Then the Lord God said to me: “Open his mouth and his ears to hear and speak with his tongue in the revealed language.” For from the day of the collapse it had disappeared from the mouth(s) of all mankind. ²⁶ I opened his mouth, ears, and lips and began to speak Hebrew with him—in the language of the creation. ²⁷ He took his fathers’ books (they were written in Hebrew) and copied them. From that time he began to study them, while I was telling him everything that he was unable (to understand). He studied them throughout the six rainy months. (Jub 12:22–27)

⁸⁶ All translations of Jubilees from James C. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees: Translated*, CSCO 511, (Louvain: Peeters, 1989).

⁸⁷ Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “The Need for Protection from the Evil One and John’s Gospel” in *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts*, WUNT 335 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 187–215, 207.

Readers familiar with the Abraham narratives in Genesis will recognize the passage as rich in allusions. The words of God's promise are recognizable from Genesis 12 as well as from the second angelic address of the *Aqedah* (Gen 22:15–18). Here in Jubilees, as in Genesis 15:5, Abram is gazing at the stars (Jub 12:16). While, in Genesis, the stars function to signify the overwhelming number of Abram's eventual descendants, in Jubilees, the posture has an added significance as Abram rejects the astrological divinatory practices of his Mesopotamian roots and embraces instead the one God who “controls” the very stars he was taught to read (Jub 12:17–18).

Abram having recognized God's mastery of the heavens and prayed for protection from the deleterious incursions of evil spirits, God grants him instead the beneficial incursion of the Angel of the Presence.⁸⁸ As Kugel suggests, the miraculous gift of language may be, in part, triggered by a curious title in Genesis 14:13, “Abram the Hebrew.”⁸⁹ Yet, the presence of this potential exegetical motive makes the portrayal of Abram's experience no less intense. Indeed, the alteration of speech has already been identified as a motif associated with spirit phenomena. Abram's body is transformed through his encounter with the angel: “I opened his mouth, ears, and lips and began to speak Hebrew with him” (Jub 16:26). While this is not quite equal to the ecstatic and temporary xenolalia of Pentecost in Acts 2, the reference to “the day of the collapse” introduces an intriguing connection. According to Jubilees, the Hebrew language had been lost

⁸⁸ The fact that this spirit possession experience is caused by an “angel” rather than by a “spirit” is not as significant as it may initially appear. Categories for “intermediary” figures such as spirits, angels, and demons were considerably more fluid in antiquity than they would eventually become in later traditions. Conceptions of angels varied radically among Second Temple era Jewish groups and literature. See Tobias Nicklas, Karin Schöpfli, and Friedrich V. Reiterer eds., *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception*, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007); Dale B. Martin, “When Did Angels Become Demons?,” *JBL* 129 (2010): 657–77; Andy M. Reimer, “Rescuing the Fallen Angels: The Case of the Disappearing Angels at Qumran” *DSD* 7.3 (2000): 334–53; James C. Vanderkam, “The Angel of the Presence in the Book of Jubilees” *DSD* 7.3 (2000): 378–93.

⁸⁹ Kugel, *A Walk Through Jubilees*, 91.

since the “collapse” of the tower of Babel (Jub 10:22–26; 16:25; cf. Gen 11:1–9). Abram’s experience thus restores to humanity not only the language of Hebrew but also the meaning of the ancient writings that had been illegible. Similarly, the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 has long been read in Christian tradition as an undoing or overcoming of the curse of Babel.⁹⁰ In both instances, God grants language miraculously by means of a spirit possession experience.

As already suggested above, descriptions of spirit possession episodes are often interwoven with mythology about spirits. This leads us to the final category of spirit phenomena in biblical literature.

C. Myths About Spirits

For many readers, this is the first (and perhaps only) category they may think of when hearing about a project on “spirit phenomena” texts in biblical literature. The myths about divine intermediary and/or oppositional figures that we find in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Gen 6:1–4; Job 1–2; 26:12; Pss 74:10–22; Isa 27:1; 51:9–11) often provided exegetical fuel for myths about spirits and other divine beings in Second Temple Jewish literature (e.g., 1 En 1–36; Jub 17:15–18:16; Rev 12:1–12). In antiquity as well as today, these myths are arresting for the imagination and provide compelling objects for in-depth scholarly study. As folklorists and scholars of ancient sagas of many kinds have often explained, by their very nature, myths usually present themselves as etiological and as giving a full account of some contemporary situation or

⁹⁰ The earliest explicit occurrences I have found for this interpretation date to the fourth century CE (e.g., Cyril of Jerusalem [Lecture 17.17]; St Ambrose [Sermo 36.2]; Augustine *Enarrat. Ps. 55*). However, it is possible that the interpretation is older—perhaps even as an intertextual allusion in Acts 2. See Heidi J. Hornik and Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts of the Apostles Through the Centuries*, Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentaries, (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 39–50.

metaphysical reality.⁹¹ In the history of the study of religion, this has sometimes resulted in scholars mistakenly assuming that the exposition or decoding of a myth could (by itself) explain either the fullness or the essence of a certain ritual or tradition.⁹² We find compelling examples of this presupposition at work among early enlightenment Protestant scholars who, through analysis of the myths of the Old Testament, sought a window into the “primitive” religious mind of ancient Israel.⁹³

The distinction between a “description of a spirit possession event” and a “myth about spirits” is not merely pedantic. It is, rather, an attempt to distinguish between an externally observable ritual or practice and an assumption or interpretation about that practice that is internal to the practitioner(s). In a way, this distinction is not dissimilar from how some anthropologists have attempted to differentiate between “trance” and “spirit possession.”⁹⁴ However, in biblical studies (as in anthropology) the line between the two is often grayer than theorists would like.⁹⁵

⁹¹ See, for example, Paul Ricoeur: Myth is “[...] a traditional narration which relates to events that happened at the beginning of time and which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men of today and, in a general manner, establish all the forms of action and thought by which man understands himself in his world.” *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 5.

⁹² “For a critical understanding of the myth, it is first necessary that the myth be entirely divorced from the ‘etiological’ function with which it appears to be identified” Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 164.

⁹³ See, for example, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn and others from the so-called “Göttingen School”: *Einleitung*; Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation Volume 4: From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century*, trans. Leo G. Perdue, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 63 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 211–29.

⁹⁴ “Trance” can thus refer to any dissociated state observable by a third party while “spirit possession” refers to any assumptions about third parties imagined to be responsible for the trance. Erika Bourguignon, *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness and Social Change* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973).

⁹⁵ Lambek, “From Disease to Discourse [...]” 38.

1) The Example of Micaiah ben Imlah

In biblical literature, it is rare to encounter a myth about spirits that is not also accompanied by (or that has not been placed in the context of) spirit language and a description of a spirit possession event. We may take as one example 1 Kings 22, which couches a myth about spirits in the context of a spirit possession ritual. A portion of the text appears below.

⁵ But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, “Inquire first for the word of the LORD.”
⁶ Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred of them, and said to them, “Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?” They said, “Go up; for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king.” ⁷ But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there no other prophet of the LORD here of whom we may inquire?” ⁸ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is still one other by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies anything favorable about me, but only disaster.” Jehoshaphat said, “Let the king not say such a thing.” ⁹ Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, “Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah.” ¹⁰ Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. ¹¹ Zedekiah son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, “Thus says the LORD: With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.” ¹² All the prophets were prophesying the same and saying, “Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king.” [...]

¹⁹ Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him to the right and to the left of him. ²⁰ And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ Then one said one thing, and another said another, ²¹ until a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ ²² ‘How?’ the LORD asked him. He replied, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then the LORD said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do it.’ ²³ So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has decreed disaster for you.”

²⁴ Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah came up to Micaiah, slapped him on the cheek, and said, “Which way did the spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?” ²⁵ Micaiah replied, “You will find out on that day when you go in to hide in an inner chamber.” ²⁶ The king of Israel then ordered, “Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son, ²⁷ and say, ‘Thus says the king: Put this fellow in prison, and feed him on reduced rations of bread and water until I come in peace.’” ²⁸

Micaiah said, “If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.” And he said, “Hear, you peoples, all of you!” (1 Kgs 22:5–12; 19–28)⁹⁶

It has been customary among interpreters of a certain theological persuasion to read this peculiar episode of Micaiah son of Imlah as an especially savage and “primitive prophetic tale.”⁹⁷ More recently, however, some scholars have argued that it is rather a late addition—though perhaps it contains older materials.⁹⁸ Regardless of its vintage, the text is informative for the way it interweaves a description of a spirit possession ritual with an explanatory myth.

The possession ritual may be implied in verse 6, but at least one aspect of it is explicitly demonstrated in verses 10–12.⁹⁹ Here, among the four hundred other prophets, Zedekiah son of Chennanah emerges as an especially charismatic figure, engaging in a sign-act (utilizing a prop set of iron horns) and performing his prophecy in a manner not dissimilar from how Jeremiah or Ezekiel might have done (see discussion above). Although the word “spirit” (רוח) does not appear in these verses, we know that the prophetic activity in this passage is understood as spirit-empowered due to Zedekiah’s later accusation of Micaiah in verse 24: “Which way did the spirit (רוח) of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?” (cf. 1 Sam 16:13–14).

⁹⁶ The story also appears in 2 Chronicles 18 with minor textual differences. See comparison of the two texts in the MT and OG in Simon John De Vries, *Prophet Against Prophet: The Role of the Micaiah Narrative (1 Kings 22) in the Development of Early Prophetic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 11–24.

⁹⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 360–61.

⁹⁸ Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*, trans. J. Bowden; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 166–67. See also R. W. L. Moberly, “Micaiah ben Imlah: the costs of authenticity and discernment” in *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 100–29.

⁹⁹ The motif of one prophet in the right against hundreds in the wrong has already been established by Elijah against the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred of Asherah (1 Kgs 18:17–46).

Commentators have offered varying views as to what readers are meant to make of what happens next in verses 13–18 (particularly in regards to the character of Micaiah as a prophet).¹⁰⁰ What concerns us here, though, is Micaiah’s account of God’s court that follows and how it serves to undermine the possession ritual of Zedekiah and the other prophets (vv. 19–23). Micaiah describes a vision wherein God seeks to deceive the king of Israel (likely Ahab, though perhaps not always in the transmission of the text) into engaging in a military attack that will see him killed. Uncharacteristically, however, the specifics of the plan are not firm and God consults the lesser beings of the divine council, looking for a volunteer. The plan is mulled over and eventually a certain “spirit” (רוח) volunteers to entice Ahab by means of lying to his prophets (v. 21). God consents to the plan and promises the deceiving spirit success.¹⁰¹

The vision is enigmatic for several reasons. First, it is one of only a handful of places in the Hebrew Bible where God’s divine council is described explicitly (cf. Isa 6; Ps 82; Job 1–2). Further, God’s relationship to the action of this spirit seems unusually loose. Readers are left wondering how much freedom this spirit-agent of God might have. We also know nothing of the

¹⁰⁰ One recurring question regards the characterization of Micaiah as either a true or false prophet according to Deuteronomy 18:12. Commentators have also speculated as to the function that his conspicuous dissenting voice may have played in the presumed scribal community behind the episode. See, for example, K. L. Noll, “The Deconstruction of Deuteronomism in the Former Prophets: Micaiah ben Imlah as Example” in *Far From Minimal: Celebrating the Work and Influence of Philip R. Davies*, ed. Duncan Burns and John W. Rogerson (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 325–34; and Ehud Ben Zvi, “A Contribution to the Intellectual History of Yehud: The Story of Micaiah and its Function within the Discourse of Persian-Period Literati” in *The Historian and the Bible: Essays in Honour of Lester L. Grabbe*, ed. Philip R. Davies and Diana V. Edelman (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 89–102.

¹⁰¹ Esther Hamori identifies the רוח שקר here as “the only specific spirit we see in the Hebrew Bible with individual identity and agency” (a notable exception being the [י] רוח). Esther Hamori, “The Spirit of Falsehood” *CBQ* 72 (2010): 15–30. She connects this figure to other spirits, including the antagonistic spirit who oppresses Saul (discussed in chapter one), the רוח רעה in Jdg 9:23–24, and other lying spirits in 2 Kgs 19:7 and Isa 19:13–14. She also discusses related texts (Isa 29:9–10; Job 4:12–21; Hos 4:12; 5:4; 9:7; 12:2). She concludes, rightly, that there is a stronger biblical tradition for a deceiving spirit than has been previously recognized. God tends to send the deceiving spirit for the purposes of “destructive justice” when someone or a group of people is already in the wrong. I would add that it is not clear to me that this is a specific spirit or even a specific type of spirit in heaven but simply a function of any given spirit at a certain time (see chapter five and the limited temporality of possession). See also Moberly’s reading of the vision as a parable below.

spirit's (or God's) motivation in the matter. Is this deceiving spirit especially vindictive or cruel or is it merely obedient? Perhaps more fundamentally, if the entire episode takes place under God's authorization (as, indeed, it seems), are the intentions of the spirit even significant? The theological implications are potentially alarming. As R. W. L. Moberly poignantly puts it: "Does God Lie to His Prophets?"¹⁰²

While some commentators have been morally or theologically scandalized by what seems like a collaborative act of sabotage between God and prophet, Moberly argues that these interpreters are misunderstanding Micaiah's intent. The vision of the heavenly court, in reality:

[...] might be revealing the true nature of the earthly court, i.e., that the manipulation, deception, and self-will might belong solely to Ahab and his prophets, and that they are being displayed to Ahab in an ironic and dramatic challenge.¹⁰³

I find this part of Moberly's interpretation compelling for several reasons. For one, Moberly attempts to take seriously an aspect of the story that has been implied repeatedly, namely, that Micaiah must attempt to make his message heard to a king who is unwilling to listen. In this, Micaiah's initial agreement with the other prophets (vv. 15–16) is no guileful sabotage but a gambit, designed to manipulate the king into demanding a true prophecy (and, perhaps also, for him to recognize the sycophancy of his advisors). The closest biblical analogue to Micaiah's vision, then, is not some hopeless oracle of doom but rather Nathan's parable to David (2 Sam 12:1–7).¹⁰⁴ With this striking description of divine deceit, Micaiah hopes to reveal to the king

¹⁰² R. W. L. Moberly, "Does God Lie to His Prophets? The Story of Micaiah ben Imlah As a Test Case" *HTR* 96:1 (2003): 1-23.

¹⁰³ Moberly, "Does God Lie to His Prophets," 22.

¹⁰⁴ We might say that "The LORD has decreed disaster for you" (1 Kgs 22:23) carries a similar rhetorical force to "You are the man!" (2 Sam 12:7).

how he himself has been manipulated by his own prophetic servants. It is devised to invoke repentance in the form of an aborted invasion.

What is especially pertinent for this discussion of myths about spirits is what the account of Micaiah's vision does to the readers' perception of the spirit possession practiced by Zedekiah and his fellow prophets. The myth, as related by Micaiah, not only explains but also serves to undermine the message of his rivals. However, unlike other stories of prophetic rivalry in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Jer 27–28), Micaiah does not quite make an accusation of false prophecy—at least not in the conventional sense.¹⁰⁵ Rather than calling them frauds or madmen, Micaiah accepts the earnestness with which these other prophets practiced their craft; it is just that they have been deceived.

Because so much of the scholarly literature has concentrated on interrogating the Micaiah story's moral and theological fitness, its significance as a spirit possession episode with an accompanying myth about spirits has been under-examined. This aspect of the story may be put in sharper relief through comparison with an ethnographic account of a contemporary spirit possession. In particular, the various posturing and performing undergone by the prophets in 1 Kings 22 can be shown to have a special resonance with the ethnographic literature.

2) A Parallel in Malagasy Spirit Possession

We may take as just one example spirit possession practices among the Sakalava people who live on the northern and western coasts of Madagascar.¹⁰⁶ Sakalava spirit possession is notable for its

¹⁰⁵ See James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect Upon Israelite Religion*, BZAW 124 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), esp. 83–85.

¹⁰⁶ For several generations, western ethnographers and cultural anthropologists have taken a special interest in Malagasy spirit possession practices. Most of the pertinent ethnographic data for discussions of Sakalava in this dissertation come from Michael Lambek, “The Sakalava Poiesis of History: Realizing the past through Spirit Possession Madagascar,” *AE* 25.2 (1998): 106–27; *The Weight of the Past: Living with History in Mahajanga*,

commonality across various aspects of society and the ways in which it continues to play a significant role in daily life in the post-colonial era. One story, as reported by Michael Lambek, concerns a gathering of several spirits (who were embodied in mediums) at a shrine on the occasion of an especially senior *tromba* (the spirit of a dead ancestor) receiving new clothes.¹⁰⁷ The gathering included spirits from a three-hundred-year span of Sakalava history and living members of the community were also present. In these types of gatherings it is traditional for the most senior spirits to be seated. However, at this event there were not enough chairs. A father spirit refused to allow the assembly to take a chair from his son, who had been paralyzed in life—even though there were older spirits present. When they persisted, he left the shrine, and afterwards his medium regained consciousness and did not rejoin the gathering.

The incident was much discussed later and widely observed that the father had not shown proper respect to his ancestors, who, crucially, had lived during the precolonial period. Indeed, the plot begins to thicken when we learn a little more about these various figures. The father spirit, in life, had been only half Sakalava, *his* father being a member of the Merina (the dominant ethnic group in Madagascar). It is highly significant, then, that when this father spirit is manifest, his medium wears the traditional garb of the Merina and not of the Sakalava (costumes

Madagascar (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2001); “On Being Present to History: Historicity and Brigand Spirits in Madagascar,” *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6.1 (2016): 317–41; and Lesley Sharp, *The Possessed and the Dispossessed: Spirits, Identity and Power in a Madagascar Migrant Town* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); “Playboy Princely Spirits of Madagascar: Possession as Youthful Commentary and Social Critique,” *AQ* 68.2 (1995): 75–88; “Royal Difficulties: A Question of Succession in an Urbanized Sakalava Kingdom,” *JRA* 27.3 (1997): 270–307. But see also James Sibree, “The Sakalava: Their Origin, Conquests, and Subjugation,” *Antananarivo Annual and Madagascar Magazine* 1 (1885): 456–68; Clayton W. Pickersgill, “North Sakalava-Land” *Antananarivo Annual and Madagascar Magazine* 5 (1893): 29–43; Charles Poirier, “Les royaumes Sakalava Bemihisatra de la côte nord-ouest de Madagascar,” *Mémoires de l’Académie Malgache* 28 (1939): 41–101; Maurice Bloch, *Placing the Dead: Tombs, Ancestral Villages, and Kinship Organization in Madagascar* (London: Seminar Press, 1971); Jean Baré-François, *Pouvoir des vivants, langage des morts. Idéologiques Sakalava* (Paris: Maspéro, 1977); Gillian Feeley-Harnik, “Divine Kingship and the Meaning of History among the Sakalava of Madagascar,” *Man* (N.S.) 13 (1978): 402–17; “Sakalava Dancing Battles: Representations of Conflict in Sakalava Royal Service,” *Anthropos* 83 (1988): 65–85.

¹⁰⁷ Lambek, “Poiesis of History,” 119–21.

being a kind of shorthand key for spectators to identify the various spirits). Another layer of complexity reveals itself when we realize that the father was(/is) a Protestant Christian, while his medium at this gathering was a Muslim woman. In popular memory, both figures—the upset father and the paralyzed son—are seen as representatives of a group who made certain concessions to the French occupiers in order to maintain their power. As decoded by Lambek, the issue being communicated in episode at the shrine, then,

“is that of who carries more authority and should be granted greater respect: the earlier rulers, who manifest Sakalava autonomy and power, or the later rulers who were incorporated into the Merina and colonial states and who here also represent the westernized sector.”¹⁰⁸

In this way, the spirits at this gathering expressed their perspectives on this very contentious contemporary issue by means of a prop, in this case, a chair. Further, their performance is given greater meaning and depth when one is familiar with the associated myths believed to be animating the behavior of the mediums.

The preceding story invites us to consider symbolic actions and prophetic performances in the Hebrew Bible as analogues. It also challenges us to re-evaluate the relationship between a description of a spirit possession ritual and its accompanying myth. In 1 Kings 22, the spirit-empowered prophecy delivered by Zedekiah and the other prophets can only be partially understood in light of the prophetic-symbolic act (i.e., the iron horns). As it is presented in this final form of the story, the myth or vision that Micaiah relates of the divine council is also necessary. Similarly, among the Sakalava, it is not enough merely to observe the activity of the human mediums. The identities and postures of the *tromba* must also be considered. Further, rather than reading the myths as causing human behavior, in both instances, it is more

¹⁰⁸ Lambek, “Poiesis of History,” 120.

informative to read the conflicts in the spirit and human realms as reflecting and mutually informing one another.¹⁰⁹

3) *“The Myth of Fallen Angels” in Recent Biblical Scholarship*

By way of conclusion, we may consider one final mythic tradition associated with Second Temple spirit possession that has received an extraordinary amount of scholarly attention in recent years: The “myth of fallen angels” as Loren Stuckenbruck has dubbed it.¹¹⁰ New Testament scholars in particular have taken a special interest in the myth, exploring how it may have functioned as an etiology for the extraordinary presentation of demons and exorcism in early Christian tradition. Some scholars have expanded this impetus to include investigations into the myth as a possible “origin of evil” in Second Temple Jewish theology. Yet, for all this impressive depth and discovery, I believe these studies have pursued, for the most part, only one aspect of spirit possession in early Jewish literature: the demonic. As this dissertation argues, other spirit phenomena (and the relationship they have to conceptions of demonic possession) remain comparatively under-examined.

The tradition of the fallen angels, which survives most extensively in 1 Enoch 1–36 (the Book of the Watchers), is a mythic and exegetical narrative expansion of the curious episode of

¹⁰⁹ Moberly, “Does God Lie to His Prophets,” 9.

¹¹⁰ See the collection of his essays, Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of Fallen Angels*; also Chris Keith and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (eds.), *Evil in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity*, WUNT 2 417, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016). The literature on the topic since the 1970’s is immense. See the bibliography in Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Origins of Evil in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: The Interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4 in the Second and Third Centuries B.C.E.” in *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts* WUNT 335, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 1–35. See also: Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*; Andy M. Reimer, “Rescuing the Fallen Angels”; Philip S. Alexander, “The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment Vol. 2*, ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. Vanderkam; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 331–53; Devorah Dimant, “‘The Fallen Angels’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Books Related to Them” מלאכים שחטאו במגילות מדבר יהודה ובספרים החיצוניים (Ph.D. Thesis, Hebrew University, 1974).

the “sons of God” or “divine beings” (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים) (Gen 6:1–3; 4) and its relationship to the ensuing flood episode. According to the myth, the “sons of God” are, in fact, angels who lusted after human women, descended to earth, and begat monstrous children. The angels then taught humanity forbidden knowledge such as magic, warfare, astrology, and ornamentation. The spread of corruption from this divine invasion is disastrous enough to trigger the flood (cf. Gen 6:4; 5–7; 12) as well as a judgment on the angels (1 Enoch 12). The giant offspring perish in the flood but live on non-corporeally, as “evil spirits” who still hunger and lust after humanity (1 Enoch 15–16; cf. Jub 10:8–9). The tradition survives into several strands in late Second Temple Literature, including the book of Jubilees, the Dead Sea Scrolls and potentially the New Testament.¹¹¹

In addition to providing an explanation for why demonic spirits seem so intent on inhabiting the bodies of humans (i.e., they seek re-embodiment in order to feed their base desires), the myth may have also once provided an explanation for how sin entered God’s creation. In this case, it rivals the Pauline/Augustinian notion of human disobedience as the chief instigator (i.e., Adam in Gen 2–3) and instead shifts at least some of the blame onto an extra-human element (i.e., the fallen angels who taught humanity to sin). The result for some is the recasting of humanity as less a culprit than a victim.

One common unexamined assumption in some of the literature on the “myth of fallen angels” is that beliefs about spirit myths inevitably lead to spirit possession ritual practices. Without dipping too deeply into an old debate in the study of religion about the primacy of either myth or ritual, this chapter has argued that reading the two as affecting one another (rather than

¹¹¹ See overview in Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 169–93.

as one *causing* the other).¹¹² As a supplement to this point, it is worth mentioning that among contemporary spirit possession cults around the world, anthropologists have often noted that conceptions regarding the ontologies, origins, identities, etc. of spirits are often quite varied and vague—even among participants in the same ritual.¹¹³ This suggests, among other things, that beliefs about spirits among those who consort with them regularly are usually far less concrete, systematic, and unanimous than some scholars might have it.

If the myth of fallen angels provided an underlying conceptual framework for demonic or negative possession practices in late Second Temple Judaism, was there a similar mythic structure to support positive possession practices? The most immediate example might be the so-called “Treatise on the Two Spirits” in the Community Rule, though it is difficult to know how wide spread this interpretation of human nature may have been.¹¹⁴ In the chapters that follow, I discuss this possibility by explicating several operative conceptions of spirits in biblical

¹¹² For an overview see Robert A. Segal, “Myth and Ritual” in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John Hinnells (New York: Routledge, 2010), 372–96;

¹¹³ One example can be found in Sakalava spirit possession practices, already discussed. At an annual festival called “the Great Service,” it is customary for humans and ancestral spirits (made present through human hosts) to celebrate together. In 2012, the usual festivities were interrupted by a group of youthful spirits (hosted by mostly young men) dressed in red headbands and waistcloths and wearing white face paint. While the festival is usually a raucous and noisy affair, these *jiriky* spirits were especially uproarious and numerous. More than one observer connected the presence of these spirits to reports of “brigands” in the nearby country, while others insisted that they were the spirits of animals. As Lambek observed:

People disagreed on who the *jiriky* were and where they came from, but they were not worried about this, and did not seem to need to know. Whether the *jiriky* were primarily human or nonhuman, brigands or guardians, or how one interpreted the difference, mattered less than what their sudden arrival indexed and what they did in front of people. Lambek, “On Being Present to History,” 333.

¹¹⁴ While it was once thought that this text served as a foundational theological myth at Qumran, recent scholars have disputed this assumption of its influence. See Preben Wernberg-Møller, “A Reconsideration of the Two Spirits in the Rule of the Community,” *Revue de Qumran* 3.3.11 (1961): 413–41; Charlotte Hempel, “The Treatise on the Two Spirits and the Literary History of the Rule of the Community,” in *Dualism in Qumran*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 102–20; Brand, *Evil within and Without*, 257–74; Mladen Popović, “Light and Darkness in the Treatise on the Two Spirits (1QS III 13–IV 26) and in 4Q186” in *Dualism in Qumran*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 148–65; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “The Interiorization of Dualism within the Human Being in Second Temple Judaism. The Treatise of the Two Spirits (1QS III:13–IV:26) in its Tradition-Historical Context” in *Light Against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World*, ed. Armin Lange, et. al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011), 145–68.

literature—some more mythic than others. As with the examples above, I read these conceptions of spirits not as causing or originating their associated spirit practices but as mirroring and mutually informing them.

CHAPTER THREE

PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP ON SPIRIT PHENOMENA IN RELIGIOUS AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

This chapter provides an overview of significant approaches to the study of spirit phenomena in biblical literature. In chapter one, I already suggested that wider intellectual trends and popular stereotypes regarding demonic possession and “mystical” religious rituals in general have exercised an inordinate amount of influence on interpretations of similar (or similarly categorized) phenomena in biblical literature—even among academics. This chapter will give an intellectual history of how that happened in two parts. First, it surveys dominant approaches to studying possession and other spirit phenomena in mental health, in the study of religion, and in gender studies. Second, it surveys in more detail previous work on these phenomena in biblical studies.

I. Introduction: The Possession of Robert Briggs

Robert Briggs’ troubles started in Advent of 1573 after he attended a theological lecture at the Middle Temple in London.¹ A promising young law student from a wealthy and (likely) Catholic family, Briggs (pronounced “Bridges”) was on the verge of completing his studies

¹ The story of Robert Briggs is adapted from Kathleen R. Sands, *Demon Possession in Elizabethan England* (Westport: Praeger, 2004): 57–74; *An Elizabethan Lawyer’s Possession by the Devil: The Story of Robert Briggs* (Westport: Praeger, 2002); and “John Foxe: Exorcist” *History Today* 51:1 (2001): 37–43. The primary sources for this case are two unpublished manuscripts in the British Library: Harley MS 590, pp. 6–63 and Lansdowne MS 101, folios 165–75.

with a flourishing career as a barrister sure to follow. The particular lecture he attended that December was decidedly Protestant in its perspective and concerned the topic of unforgivable sins. Distressed that he may already be damned, Briggs returned home that night in a melancholy mood. Over the next several months, Briggs became increasingly despondent towards his wife and new baby and eventually attempted suicide on several occasions. Briggs sought the help of a physician who prescribed bleeding, purging, and a sedative.

The nature of Briggs' ailment changed on Easter Sunday 1574 after he fainted and remained unconscious for twelve hours. Over the course of the following day, he lost his senses of sight, hearing, and of feeling (bystanders would prick and pinch him with no response). Then, remarkably, he roused from his stupor and, seemingly unprovoked, quoted each of the Ten Commandments. Briggs then carried on for the next several hours in what was described by witnesses as a complicated theological debate with Briggs offering arguments and then pausing occasionally to listen to an unknown interlocutor. In his speeches, Briggs would often quote long sections of scripture, though the law student had never been known to be an especially dedicated reader of the Bible. This pattern continued for several days with Briggs losing control of his senses but retaining his voice and engaging in what appeared to be a one-sided theological argument. Eventually, it was discerned by those around him that Robert Briggs was being antagonized by the forces of hell and debating with none other than Satan himself.

For the next twenty days, Briggs endured repeated torment from his possessors. In contrast to modern presentations of spirit possession as socially marginal and secretive, this ordeal was highly publicized and authenticated by "scores of students and barristers" who "crowded into the bedchamber daily to witness Briggs's astonishing behaviour and to listen to

his ongoing arguments with Satan.”² As in the beginning stages of his spiritual ailment, Brigges was often immobilized for long stretches of time but was usually allowed to speak. His mood would shift violently between rage, despair, and hysteria. Haunted by delusions, Brigges reported visions of being pursued by a demonic hunting party like a stag and of being chewed to bits in the fangs of monsters and dragons. Satan also tempted Brigges with various sins, which he repeatedly refused. Brigges was encouraged to murder the queen’s chief minister and to lust after a beautiful demoness who attempted to seduce him. At one-point Satan threatened to rip Brigges to shreds if he himself did not rip up a copy of a printed sermon.³

This latter temptation hints at an as yet unmentioned aspect of this story: Brigges’ fiercest debates with Satan concerned the heated theological and political controversies of his day, namely, those surrounding the ongoing English Reformation. Brigges, though most likely raised Catholic, took the Protestant position on such topics as prayers to saints and icons, the role of natural law in creation, and the possibility of good works as a means to salvation. In contrast, on each of these issues Satan was emphatically on the side of Rome. Yet, this conflict was also intensely personal. Brigges was a law student. Once he was called to the bar, it would be expected of him to swear an oath of supremacy, effectively denouncing Rome and thus damaging his relationship with his prominent Catholic family. In this way, the spirit possession of Robert Brigges’ connected his internal conflict between career and family to the much wider conflict that was then ravaging Europe.

² Sands, “John Foxe: Exorcist,” 38.

³ While the sermon is not identified, it was likely a very famous and widely-circulated sermon preached by John Foxe already in its fourth printing by the time of Brigges’ possession, *Sermon of Christ Crucified* (London: John Day, 1570). The contents of the sermon comment on many of the very issues on which Brigges and Satan debated.

The much talked about possession event eventually drew the attention of John Foxe, a popular martyrologist and outspoken critic of the Roman Catholic Church. At that time, the pope had only recently excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I and absolved her subjects of allegiance. The Brigges' possession thus constituted a uniquely embodied expression of the political crisis, an opportunity for intervention that Foxe seemingly did not wish to miss. Foxe conducted a public exorcism, strategically invoking the name of Jesus as a spiritual weapon (cf. Mk 9:38–41), which granted a temporary reprieve to Brigges. Yet the ordeal would persist for another week, continuing in the same familiar pattern. After several hours of spiritual combat each day, Brigges would invoke Christ's name for himself and thereby recover his senses.

Then, one day, without an apparent climax, Satan inexplicably did not return. Brigges had seemingly exorcized himself. The law student eventually recovered fully. He completed his studies, swore the oath of supremacy upon his call to the bar, and went on to enjoy a successful career as a barrister.

This sixteenth century account of Robert Brigges' conflict with Satan may strike modern readers as almost comically partisan (e.g., a Roman Catholic Satan), but this aspect is by no means unique when we compare the Brigges story to other accounts of spirit possession in early modern Europe. This was a period of rapid shift: new ecclesial structures, budding sciences, and the growing influence of printed media. It follows that spirit possession practices would reflect these changing times.⁴

⁴ On some of these shifts, see Andrew Cambers, "Demonic Possession, Literacy and 'Superstition' in Early Modern England," *Past Present* 202:1 (2009): 3-35; Marion Gibson, *Possession, Puritanism, and Print: Darrell, Harsnett, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Exorcism Controversy* (London: Pickering and Chatto: 2006); Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

As already discussed, the story exhibits several aspects of spirit possession consistent with findings of anthropologists. For example, in contrast to what some may expect, Robert Briggs is a prominent member of the upper class. His possession event is not “marginal” nor private, though his status as a Roman Catholic in a newly Protestant nation makes his position somewhat precarious.⁵ Moreover, though unusual and certainly a spectacle, Briggs’ possession also exhibits a kind of structure (e.g., an awareness of the liturgical calendar, a genre of discourse consistent with Briggs’ profession as a lawyer). Whatever else it is, we must admit that there is an aspect of performance to the episode and, in this way, it functioned as an “interpretation of the climate of affairs”—both those of society and, we might expect, those of his personal life.⁶ Indeed, the possession as described is politically aware (e.g., the drama of a temptation to assassinate a prominent minister). It is also presented in such a way that is consistent with older forms of possession so as to be recognizable, though, at the same time, innovating.⁷

Even though we find ourselves caught once again in that familiar hermeneutical problem of trying to sort out the historical Robert Briggs from the ideology of his biographer, we can still speculate as to the kinds of interpersonal pressures that may have hounded Briggs (either the person, or the character) as he neared the completion of his education. Did this supernatural possession experience make the subsequent transition in his life easier to justify? Does the possession experience, supposedly beyond Briggs’ control, somehow relieve him of some of the responsibility for his decision? The possibility is potentially revealing.

⁵ Giles, “Possession Cults on the Swahili Coast.”

⁶ Lambek, “On Being Present to History,” 318.

⁷ For instance, the account employs the medieval Catholic trope of the exorcist as “holy hero” and “God’s champion.” Sands, “John Foxe: Exorcist.”

Perhaps most relevant to this project, however, the possession of Robert Brigges also exhibits an extraordinary sensitivity to and engagement with biblical texts. This is true not only in its rehearsal of possession tropes in the New Testament (i.e., the demon/spirits seizing the host's body [e.g., Mk 5:3–4]; compulsion to self-destructive behavior [e.g., Mk 9:18]; and spirits speaking with the host's voice [Mk 1:24]); but also in Brigges' frequent quotation of the Bible. Remarkably, by adopting the form of a theological debate, the entire possession episode is framed as a contest over the interpretation of scripture (cf. Jesus' temptation in the wilderness [Mt 4:1–11 // Lk 4:1–13]).

The possession of Robert Brigges may be seen as emblematic of a final high point in spirit possession practices in Europe. While it is difficult to catalogue when spirit possession practices may or may not have “peaked” in the early modern period, there are indications that by the mid-seventeenth century reports of possession had begun to give way to growing skepticism—even among ecclesial authorities. Many historians point to a watershed moment in 1599 when puritan minister and noted exorcist, John Darrel, was found guilty of fraud by the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁸ In 1604, the Church of England approved Canon 72, forbidding the practice of exorcism without the approval of a bishop. There is no record of such a license being granted.⁹

Despite early modern Europe's reputation for witch-hunts and trials, recent reevaluation of significant theological writings on demonology from the period reveal that intellectuals were

⁸ Thomas Freeman, “*Demons, Deviance and Defiance: John Darrell and the Politics of Exorcism in late Elizabethan England*” in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2000): 34–63.

⁹ Harman Bhogal, “The Post-Reformation Challenge to Demonic Possession” in *Demons and Illness from Antiquity to the Early-Modern Period*, ed. Siam Bhayro and Catherine Rider, *MRLA* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 359–75, 360. The Roman Catholic Church officially established a similar policy in 1614.

far more likely to adopt nuanced approaches to the subject that attempted to reconcile spirit possession with medicine, mental health, environmental factors, and philosophy.¹⁰ The so-called “demonologists” and “witch hunters” of the era often acted independently of church hierarchies and without the (initial) input of intellectuals.¹¹

Eventually, the propagation of more explanatory interpretations of spirit possession began to take precedence in public discourse (e.g., fraud, misdiagnosed mental illness, or the presence of some environmental toxin). Theologians began to speak more of spiritual ‘torment’ but less of ‘possession.’¹² It is due to shifts like these that the account of the possession of Robert Briggs may, in some significant ways, have more in common with those of Second Temple Judaism than it might with those of eighteenth century England—though it is closer to the latter both culturally and chronologically.¹³ Inevitably, explanatory interpretations of contemporary spirit phenomena beliefs and practices inevitably began to be applied to those in the Bible. Among other consequences, this shift dictated that some of the most prominent

¹⁰ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹¹ Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (New York: Viking, 1996). See also Homayun Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease: An Anthropological Study of the European Witch-Hunts*, *Anthropology and Sociology* 70 (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).

¹² Harman Bhogal points to a theological treatise by John Walker and John Deacon in 1601, entitled *Dialogicall Discourses of Spirits and Divels*, which argued that possession was theologically and ontologically impossible. Possessed persons were rather suffering from melancholy or hysteria and thus more liable to antagonism from evil spirits. The distinction may seem minimal but, in light of broader intellectual trends, this move towards a medical explanation coupled with a relocation of demons from “inside” to “outside” of the person proves to be significant. Bhogal also provides evidence that Deacon and Walker’s theories had influence on interpreters of the Bible, particularly in the form of homiletical exposition of spirit phenomena in the New Testament. Bhogal, “The Post-Reformation Challenge to Demonic Possession.”

¹³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 25–89. See the discussion of this period of transition, including the decline of witch trials and the growing Enlightenment critique of “superstition” in Roy Porter, “Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment, Romantic, and Liberal Thought,” in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 193–282.

interpretations of spirit phenomena in biblical literature began to come from those who were, themselves, not practicing anything like it.

II. Modern Interpretations of Spirit Phenomena

Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment critiques of witchcraft and possession beliefs and practices were manifold and came from several arenas.¹⁴ The section below overviews three, at times overlapping, academic fields that continue to have significant influence on how spirit phenomena are interpreted in biblical literature: mental health, the study of religion, and gender studies.

A. Diagnosing Spirit Possession and Related Phenomena as Mental Illness

While questions of fraud and of madness have never been far from possession episodes, even in antiquity, the turn of the twentieth century saw an increasing tendency to treat possession pathologically.¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, analyzing a famous seventeenth century case of exorcism, concluded that demonic possession was the result of repressed instinctual and harmful impulses—the outbursts of the unconscious.¹⁶ Carl Jung, operating with a different understanding of the unconscious, characterized mental ailments as the contemporary equivalents of ancient spirit possession:

¹⁴ Roy Porter identifies four principal critiques: philosophical, social, scientific, and medical. Porter, “Witchcraft and Magic,” 237.

¹⁵ On fraud, see discussion and bibliography in Cambers, “Demonic Possession,” 6. On madness, see, for example, Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (New York: Routledge, 2006). On growing skepticism in general towards demon possession in Enlightenment Europe see Porter, “Witchcraft and Magic,” 219–36.

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, “A Neurosis of Demoniocal Possession in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Studies in Parapsychology*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Collier, 1963).

We are still as much possessed by autonomous psychic contents as if they were Olympians. Today they are called phobias, obsessions, and so forth; in a word, neurotic symptoms. The gods have become diseases; Zeus no longer rules Olympus but rather the solar plexus, and produces curious specimens for the doctor's consulting room, or disorders the brains of politicians and journalists who unwittingly let loose psychic epidemics on the world.¹⁷

While most modern theorists have recognized early characterizations as oversimplifications, the desire by some to categorize possession behavior into an overarching psychoanalytical framework persists.¹⁸

In contemporary parlance, spirit possession and trance episodes are more often discussed in the context of “dissociation.”¹⁹ Dissociative disorders “are characterized by a disruption of and/or discontinuity in the normal integration of consciousness, memory, identity, emotion, perception, body representation, motor control, and behavior.”²⁰ Since some forms of dissociation are the natural processes of a healthy mind (e.g., a reader's ability to dissociate from his or her environment in order to focus on a written text), there is some debate over which dissociative behaviors are healthy and which should be characterized as a disorder. For instance, there is some evidence that religious adherence is associated with slightly higher rates of certain

¹⁷ Carl G. Jung, “Commentary on ‘The Secret of the Golden Flower’” in *Alchemical Studies*, vol. 13 of *Collected Works*, ed. H. Read, et. al., trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 1–56, 37.

¹⁸ For a recent attempt to contrast Jung with Freud and thus coordinate analytic psychology with recent anthropological and neurological work on spirit possession, see Lucy Huskinson, “Analytic Psychology and Spirit Possession: Towards a Non-Pathological Diagnosis of Spirit Possession” in *Spirit Possession and Trance: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. B. Schmidt and L. Huskinson, (New York: Continuum, 2010), 70–96.

¹⁹ Etzel Cardeña, “Trance and Possession as Dissociative Disorders” *Transcultural Psychology* 29.4 (1992): 287–300; Kate Loewenthal, *Religion, Culture and Mental Health* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 105–24; Stanley Krippner, “Learning from the Spirits: Candomblé, Umbanda, and Kardecismo in Recife, Brazil,” *Anthropology of Consciousness* 19:1 (2008): 1–32.

²⁰ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic And Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5* (5th ed.; Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), 291–307, 291.

types of dissociative behavior and that these practices can have positive effects on mental health.²¹

Some theorists have begun to view at least some forms of dissociative disorders as a type of therapy. For example, dissociative disorders of varying types can often develop as a means to avoid past or present pain.²² Psychologists and anthropologists alike have come to wonder whether this perspective may be extended to (though not to the extent of becoming a reduction of) spirit possession and trance—particularly in non-western settings.²³ This point should not be overstated, however, as spirit possession is often harmful and is regularly recognized as such by both practitioners and theorists alike.²⁴ From the perspective of mental health, then:

Trance and spirit possession states can be understood in terms of dissociation, though there may be culture-specific features which may make these states better categorised as culture-specific. Trance and spirit possession may be unwanted, uncontrolled and malign, or be culturally and religiously channelled responses to stress with some beneficial side-effects, or be deliberately fostered as therapeutic.²⁵

It is often along the blurred lines of culture-specificity where the challenge of categorizing dissociation as harmful or healthy can emerge. In response to this issue, the most

²¹ Many forms of contemplative prayer or meditation may can be categorized as positive, non-pathological forms of religious dissociation. See Loewenthal, *Religion, Culture, and Mental Health*, 107–10.

²² Loewenthal, *Religion, Culture, and Mental Health*, 106.

²³ E.g., Colleen A. Ward and Michael H. Beaubrun, “The Psychodynamics of Demon Possession” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19.2 (1980): 201–07; Tapio Nisula, *Everyday Spirits and Medical Interventions: Ethnographic and Historical Notes on Therapeutic Conventions in Zanzibar Town* (Helsinki: Finnish Anthropological Society, 1999); Eli Somer, “Culture-Bound Dissociation: A Comparative Analysis” *Psychiatr Clin N Am* 29 (2006): 213–26.

²⁴ See, for example, one study that documented higher rates of harmful forms of *cen* spirit possession among former child soldiers in Northern Uganda. These forms of possession were associated with higher rates of PTSD, depression, and attempted suicide. Frank Neuner et al., “Haunted by ghosts: Prevalence, predictors and outcomes of spirit possession experiences among former child soldiers and war-affected civilians in Northern Uganda” *Social Science and Medicine* 75 (2012): 548–54.

²⁵ Loewenthal, *Religion, Culture, and Mental Health*, 124.

recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) clarifies that:

Possession form dissociative identity disorder can be distinguished from culturally accepted possession states in that the former is involuntary, distressing, uncontrollable, and often recurrent or persistent; involves conflict between the individual and his or her surrounding family, social, or work milieu; and is manifested at times and in places that violate the norms of the culture or religion.²⁶

Despite this caveat, anthropologists are often uncomfortable with the inclusion of spirit possession and trance under the category of “dissociation,” seeing it as a strategy for avoiding giving a real answer (i.e., “They are crazy!”).²⁷ Anthropologists will sometimes point to the notorious inadequacy of psychiatric methods in treating non-western spirit possessed persons who are seeking relief, particularly when compared to indigenous methods like exorcism or spirit healing, which are often more effective.²⁸

In light of this background, we may identify a few opportunities but also several new challenges to the incorporation of psychological and mental health-oriented approaches into the interpretation of spirit phenomena in biblical literature. To begin, it should be recognized that even for the most accomplished of mental health practitioners, it can be hard enough to diagnose someone who is sitting in their office adequately—let alone to do so for a literarily preserved personage from another time, place, and language context. Elements of cultural expectation, literary convention, and the uncertainty of authorship each provide their own barriers to such an

²⁶ APA, *DSM-5*, 295.

²⁷ E.g., “The use of terms like *dissociation* and *dissociative state* without further analysis ineluctably implies that altered states of consciousness reflect some degree of psychopathology: used this way, dissociation runs the danger of becoming merely an anthropological euphemism for the older and supposedly discarded answer (‘They are crazy!’) to the question of ‘what is really happening?’” *Emphasis original*. Morton Klass, *Mind Over Mind: The Anthropology and Psychology of Spirit Possession* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 69, quoted in Huskinson, “Analytic Psychology and Spirit Possession [...],” 73–74.

²⁸ E.g., Lesley A. Sharp, “Exorcists, Psychiatrists, and the Problems of Possession in Northwest Madagascar” *Soc. Sci. Med.* 38.4 (1994): 525–42. See also Krippner, “Learning from the Spirits.”

examination. Thus, optimistic attempts to diagnose biblical figures with modern mental illnesses (e.g., the prophet Ezekiel as schizophrenic or the apostle Paul as neurotic) are best rejected as overly positivist.²⁹

This is not to say that contemporary studies in mental health cannot be profitably applied to biblical literature, however. In recent years, scholars utilizing critical lenses related to mental health (including disability and trauma studies) have made significant contributions to biblical studies.³⁰ Among other insights, these approaches have drawn attention to how conceptions of bodies and minds were constructed differently in antiquity as well as to how corporate experiences of trauma could have contributed to the composition and early interpretation of biblical literature.

By analyzing ancient conceptions of mental health, scholars have also complicated the oversimplifying conclusion reached by some interpreters that possession was simply an ignorant way that ancient peoples talked about mental illness. Even cursory readings in English reveal that many texts operate with implicit distinctions between spirit possession and mental

²⁹ E.g., George Stein, “The Voices that Ezekiel Hears,” *The British Journal of Psychology* 196.2 (2010): 101; Paul M. Joyce, “The Prophets and Psychological Interpretation” in *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 133–48. See also the range of psychological ailments theorized to lay behind Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor 12:7) that are surveyed in Adela Yarbro Collins, “Paul’s Disability: The Thorn in His Flesh” in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (ed. Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 165–83, 172. One especially extreme example is Juan B. Cortés and Florence M. Gatti, *The Case Against Possessions and Exorcisms: A Historical, Biblical, and Psychological Analysis of Demons, Devils, and Demoniacs* (New York: Vantage Press, 1975), which moves systematically through the New Testament accounting for each example of spirit possession as an example of mental illness. This is by no means a new approach, e.g., Edwin C. Broome Jr. “Ezekiel’s Abnormal Personality” *JBL* 65.3 (1946): 277–92.

³⁰ See for example, Elizabeth Boase and Christopher G. Frechette, eds., *Bible through the Lens of Trauma* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016); Candida R. Moss and Jeremy Schipper, eds., *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Eve-Marie Becker, et al., eds., *Trauma and Traumatization in Individual and Collective Dimensions: Insights from Biblical Studies and Beyond*, *Studia Aarhusiana Neotestamentica* 2, (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014); Simon Mainwaring, *Mark, Mutuality, and Mental Health: Encounters with Jesus* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014); Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

disability.³¹ For example, in 1 Samuel 21, David mimics the behavior of someone who is mentally ill or disabled in order to disguise his identity:

David rose and fled that day from Saul; he went to King Achish of Gath. ¹¹ The servants of Achish said to him, “Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, ‘Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?”

¹² David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of King Achish of Gath.

¹³ So he changed his behavior before them; he pretended to be mad when in their presence. He scratched marks on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle run down his beard. ¹⁴ Achish said to his servants, “Look, you see the man is mad; why then have you brought him to me? ¹⁵ Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?” (1 Sam 21:11–16 NRSV [MT vv. 10–15])³²

The passage is revealing, since it provides not only a vocabulary for “madness” (ויהתהלל in v. 13 [MT v. 14] and שגעע in vv. 14–15 [MT vv. 15–16]) but also an example of what is understood as stereotypically “mad” behavior (i.e., scratching objects and drooling on one’s beard).³³ Whatever ailment David is feigning, it is likely something similar to what we might call a mental illness or disability.³⁴ Moreover, it does not seem to be connected to a spirit phenomenon in any way.

This example proves especially instructive when it is compared to another instance of mental ailment in 1 Samuel. On several occasions, Saul is said to be antagonized by an “evil” or

³¹ See Mark 3:21–22 where some in the crowd accuse Jesus of being “out of his mind” (ἐξίστημι) but the scribes counter that he “has Beelzebul.” See the discussion of this passage in Bazzana, *Christ and Beelzebul*.

³² See the extended discussion of this passage in Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible* [...], 66–70.

³³ The OG preserves a slightly different reading of David’s behavior. Rather than “scratching” or “making marks” (ויתו) on the doors of the gate, the Greek explains that David “drummed” (ἐτυμπάνιζεν) on them. In my mind, there is no obvious reading to prefer one reading over the other, and in any case, the two actions are similar enough that their narrative function is the same: David engages in a behavior that was publicly believed to be indicative of madness.

³⁴ See also Ps 34:1 where the episode is described as when David “changed his discernment” בשנותו את־טעמו.

“detrimental” (רעה) spirit and this manifests itself through his unstable, aggressive, and violent behavior (e.g., 1 Sam 16:14–15; 23; 18:10; 19:9; cf. 20:33). Crucially, none of the vocabulary for “madness” that was used in the David episode appears here. Further, 1 Samuel constructs Saul’s ailment theologically (i.e., as God-sent), though it evokes behavior that modern theorists might associate with mental illness. Clearly, there is some operative distinction in 1 Samuel between mental disability and spirit possession, though the line does not necessarily match contemporary descriptions.

Saul’s affliction is, admittedly, more complicated than David’s—not least because it is presented as legitimate. Indeed, there are many precedents for understanding prophets and poets as stricken “mad” by the gods in antiquity, both in contexts close to ancient Israel and Judaism as well as beyond them.³⁵ Additionally, it seems like at least some references to prophetic ecstasy in the Hebrew Bible are derogatory, either because the practice is seen as fraudulent or because it is recognized as legitimate but prohibited.³⁶ Ultimately, it is better to imagine the relationship between spirit possession in biblical literature and modern conceptions of mental health as two partially overlapping arenas, sharing some similarities but neither encompassing the other.

³⁵ See, for example, an overview of ancient Greek sources on divine madness and the ensuing discussion in Abraham Joshua Heschel, “Prophecy and Psychosis” in *The Prophets* (New York: Harper Collins, 1962), 498–523. See also John R. Levison, “Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders,” *CBQ* 65 (2003): 503–21; Martti Nissinen, “Prophetic Madness: Prophecy and Ecstasy in the Ancient Near East and in Greece” in *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson* (K. L. Noll and B. Schramm, eds.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010) 3–29; Thomas Pola, “Ekstase im Alten Testament” in *Gott fürchten und lieben. Studien zur Gotteserfahrung im Alten Testament* (Biblisch-theologische Studien 59; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2007), 1–77; Robert R. Wilson, “Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination,” *JBL* 98 (1979): 321–37; Laura Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (Harvard Theological Studies 52; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); David M. DiValerio, *The Holy Madmen of Tibet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Eric M. Plakun, “Psychiatry in Tibetan Buddhism: Madness and its Cure Seen through the Lens of Religious and National History” *J Am Acad Psychoanal Dyn Psychiatry* 36.3 (2008): 415–30.

³⁶ See my discussion of this issue in chapter five.

B. Theorizing Spirit Phenomena in the Study of Religion

It is unfortunate that so much of the literature published under the sometimes poorly defined banner of “the study of religion” is liable to a certain kind of sensationalism, especially as it relates to possession and other spirit phenomena. This is true as much for ‘positive’ possession experiences as it is for ‘negative’ ones. Indeed, though presented as revealing or scholarly, many works in religious studies on these phenomena seem intentionally designed to mystify and sensationalize them.

Instead, I concentrate on studies that attempts to find meaning and significance in these beliefs and practices. One of the early efforts in this regards was in the early twentieth century. James G. Frazer labelled spirit possession as any eccentric behavior wherein a person’s actions are attributed to a possessing spirit or deity rather than to his or herself.³⁷ Indeed, among these early anthropologists, spirit possession behavior was taken by many as simply self-evident and universal, particularly for proponents of E. B. Tylor’s theory for the priority of animism as a universal form of religion.³⁸

As the discipline grew more complex, however, so did the distinctions. Thus, Mircea Eliade distinguished between a person who is sent on a spirit journey (a shaman) and one who receives a spirit in the body (a possession priest).³⁹ Ioan Lewis disagreed with Eliade’s categories (in part because shamans can also be possessed by spirits) and instead argued that the

37. James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2011), 20; repr. of *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan, 1890).

38. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 2 vols., 6th ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, [1871] 1920), 417–502.

39. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (trans. Willard R. Trask; Princeton: Princeton University, 1964) trans. of *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l’extase* (Paris: Payot, 1951).

distinction should instead be based on the degree of control maintained by the host.⁴⁰ Erika Bourguignon disputed both theories and argued instead that the distinction was essentially one of behavior versus belief.⁴¹ Recently, the terms themselves have come under criticism. Should a distinction be made between a person being possessed against his or her will and one who intentionally possesses a spirit? Is it even appropriate to speak of spirit “possession” if the culture itself views the experience as a spirit “partnership” or a spirit “union?” More fundamentally, can any one aspect of these disparate phenomena be lifted up as the control by which others are identified? At what point is an attested “spiritual experience” not considered “possession” and then what is it instead? Despite these critiques it seems that, broadly, the discipline has widely settled on the terms “spirit possession and trance” as workable categories, even as theorists simultaneously remain aware of their limitations. For that reason, I have adopted their use here.

Below, I focus on two approaches in the study of religion that have had an outsized influence in biblical studies: a) Evolutionary models of human religious development, and b) the particular construction of “mysticism” as a comparative religious category in the twentieth century.

1) Evolutionary Models of Human Religious Development

Early studies of spirit practices in comparative religion were heavily influenced by evolutionary models of human development, which, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had a tendency to assign spirit phenomena (particularly those of non-western cultures) to what was

40. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 43–50. See also discussion in Schmidt and Huskinson, “Introduction.”

41. Erika Bourguignon, *Possession* (San Francisco: Chandler & Sharp, 1976).

thought to be the more “primitive” stages in a particular culture’s evolution.⁴² So-called “stadial theories,” as they were articulated in the Scottish Enlightenment, were derived by comparing achievements in language, technology, commerce, ethics, religion, and more in cultures around the world and looking for consistent patterns that could be attributed to a universal progression of human society. Different stages were hypothesized with emphases on different aspects of culture (e.g., hunter-gatherer > pastoral nomad > agricultural civilization > commercial society).⁴³ When early comparative religionists encountered (either in person or in print) possession and other spirit phenomena in cultures deemed to be less advanced, it usually followed to describe these practices and associated beliefs as a by-product of primitive humanity. Critically, this also allowed theorists to associate spirit possession with less-developed or “lower” forms of morality, ethics, and overall development.

One voice associated with this approach that would prove particularly influential was Edward B. Tylor, an early English anthropologist whose most famous work, *Primitive Culture*, would shape the discipline for decades.⁴⁴ The version of the stadial theory preferred by Tylor (savagery > barbarism > civilization) incorporated two significant innovations. The first was Tylor’s particular articulation of “animism” as the primeval form of all religion. Animism, for Tylor, was a general belief in spiritual or non-corporeal energy that permeated all things and that often manifested itself as a belief in the distinct will or purpose of the natural world. For Tylor,

⁴² The dominance of this approach has been traced, in particular, to the influence of early Scottish philologists and anthropologists, including Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, Adam Smith, and John Millar. See Turner, *Philology*, 100–01.

⁴³ This particular version, sometimes called “the four stage theory” existed in various forms and with different emphases but the most systematic presentation is commonly attributed to John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks; or, An Inquiry into the Circumstances which give rise to Influence and Authority in the Different Members of Society* (London: J. Murray, 1779).

⁴⁴ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*.

animism derived not from a culture's inferior intelligence but from its insufficient development. Given enough time, any culture would achieve higher forms of civilization, and likewise all higher (i.e., European) cultures had at one time been equally savage. This notion of progress is evident in his approach to understanding demons and spirits:

Demonology, the branch of the science of religion which relates to demons, is much obscured in the treatises of old writers by their taking the evidence too exclusively from among civilized nations, and neglecting what is to be learnt from barbarous tribes, whose ideas of demons, being nearer their primitive state, are comparatively clear and comprehensible.⁴⁵

In this way, one could study the simpler, more primitive cultures as a means to learn about the sophisticated, more perplexing ones.

For Tylor, animism was universal; a point that was evident in the very languages of the world. For example, the ubiquity of “breath” words used as terms for the spirit, the soul, and the self in the world's languages, was taken by Tylor as evidence of primordial animism:

The conception of the soul as breath may be followed up through Semitic and Aryan etymology, and thus into the main streams of the philosophy of the world. Hebrew shows *nephesh*, ‘breath,’ passing into all the meanings of ‘life, soul, mind, animal,’ while *ruach* and *neshamah* make the like transition from ‘breath’ to ‘spirit’; and to these the Arabic *nefs* and *ruh* correspond. The same is the history of Sanskrit *ātman* and *prāna*, of Greek *psychē* and *pneuma*, of Latin *animus*, *anima*, *spiritus*.⁴⁶

Here, Tylor goes on to discuss examples from Slavonic, “the dialects of the Gypsies,” German *geist*, English *ghost*, as well as anecdotal stories of certain rituals concerning the passing of “breath” that can be found in numerous cultures ranging from the “Seminole of Florida” to ancient Rome.

⁴⁵ Edward Burnett Tylor, “Demonology” in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Ninth Edition (ed. Thomas S. Baynes and W. Robertson Smith; 25 vols.; Edinburgh: A & C Black, 1875–89), 7:60–64.

⁴⁶ Tylor, *Primitive Culture* [...], 434.

Tylor's second innovation, "survivals," was also supported by examples from language. Tylor believed that as cultures advanced, certain elements proved particularly persistent, though they no longer functioned as they once had, or even at all. The idea was not unlike what would come to be called "vestigiality" in Darwinian evolution (e.g., wisdom teeth or the appendix in human biology). At the linguistic level, we can see one example of a survival in Tylor's discussion of a modern English idiom:

To write in a modern English book that a child is 'animated by a spirit of disobedience' is to use what a school-master would call a figure of speech; but there was a time when such words simply meant what they said, that there is a real concrete creature, a Spirit of Disobedience, who enters into the child and possesses it.⁴⁷

For Tylor, a spirit phenomenon like possession was an ideal example of a survival, not only because it so concisely typified primitive animism but also because, he presumed, it had no proper place in a developed society and yet it persisted in modern languages regardless.

Tylor's 1889 *Encyclopedia Britannica* article on "Demonology" synthesizes these two innovations into an overarching theory of demonic possession as primarily a primitive explanation for illness:

Among races of low culture, the conception of a ghost-soul being made to account for the phenomena of life (see article ANIMISM) [sic] readily leads to a corresponding theory of morbid states of body and mind. As the man's proper soul causes the functions of normal life by its presence, while its more or less continued absence induces sleep, trance, and at last death, so the abnormal phenomena of disease have a sufficient explanation at hand in the idea that some other soul or soul-like spirit is acting on or has entered into the patient. Among the cases which most strongly suggest this are first, such derangements as hysteria, epilepsy, and madness, where the raving and convulsions seem to bystanders like the acts of some other being in possession of the patient's body, and even the patient is apt to think so when he "comes to himself," and, second, internal diseases where severe pain or wasting away may be ascribed to some unseen being wounding or gnawing within. The applicability of demoniacal possession as a theory to explain disease in general is best proved by the fact that it is so often thus applied by savage races.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Edward B. Tylor, "The Religion of the Savages." *The Fortnightly Review* 6 (1866): 71–86, 82.

⁴⁸ Tylor, "Demonology."

Constructions like Tylor's allowed early scholars of religion to theorize spirit phenomena as something else (e.g., illness, ignorance, superstition) rather than as distinct phenomena in and of themselves. As noted above, by associating spirit practices with savage or primitive cultures, it also allowed theorists to 'other' these practices and thereby miss the ways in which spirit phenomena were manifest in their own societies.

We can see an example of Tylor's influence in biblical studies in the work of another late nineteenth century theorist in the study of religion, William Robertson Smith. W. R. Smith gained early notoriety as the result of his removal as a professor in Aberdeen after he wrote a controversial entry on "Bible" for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* that utilized too liberally the findings of German biblical scholarship.⁴⁹ Some of W. R. Smith's most influential work, however, would be written after that dismissal, and much of it centered on the Old Testament and the religions of ancient Israel. Indeed, his lasting influence would prove to be greater outside of biblical studies than within, as he is regarded by many intellectual historians today as one the founders of comparative religion as an academic field.⁵⁰

In a series of lectures delivered in Aberdeen between 1888 and 1891 (published as *The Religion of the Semites*), William Robertson Smith laid out his theory that ritual was the foundational element of all primitive religion.⁵¹ Human beings were naturally habitual, Smith argued, and would inevitably attach meaning to their regular practices. Working primarily from near eastern texts and languages, both ancient and modern, Smith argued that myths and (later)

⁴⁹ John W. Rogerson, *The Bible and Criticism in Victorian Britain: Profiles of F. D. Maurice and William Robertson Smith* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

⁵⁰ Bernhard Maier, *William Robertson Smith: His Life, his Work, and his Times* (FAT 67; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009). See also, Turner, *Philology* [...], 357–380.

⁵¹ William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: First Series* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1889).

creeds developed after the original reasons behind these primitive rituals had been forgotten.

Rituals were irresistible, according to Smith, but any one particular myth associated with a ritual was optional.⁵²

Though heavily influenced by Tylor's evolutionary models, in prioritizing ritual over myth, Smith departed from him and others who had come before. Reflecting the Protestant roots at the discipline's genesis, many early theorists in the comparative study of religion had put a heavy emphasis on studying religion through the lens of belief, and belief as a product of seeking some explanation for the more perplexing or disturbing aspects of life (see, for example, Tylor's dismissive encyclopedia article cited above). While Smith certainly did not ignore these elements of comparative religion, by treating them as secondary to ritual, he successfully reoriented attention away from individual belief and onto the function of religion as an expression of society.

This refocusing on the religious society rather than on the religious individual is evident in Smith's treatment of the development of demonology. In Smith's evolutionary scheme, instinctual fear of the powerful unknown gave rise to belief in demons in primitive religions but that belief in "gods" (a more beneficent, familiar, and moral type of demon) eventually superseded these superstitions (with Israelite monotheism being the triumphal terminus of this trajectory). The key to this evolution, according to Smith, was the development of civilization. As people came to live together in communities and to practice their religion in a more

⁵² This theory may sound familiar since Wellhausen famously articulated a similar progression from ritual to myth in regard to the development of the major feasts in Israel's cult. Smith and Wellhausen kept up a lively correspondence and friendship after they met in Germany in 1872 and many scholars have pointed out the points of connection between Wellhausen's earlier *Reste arabischen Heidentums* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1897) and Smith's *Religion of the Semites*. E.g., Rudolf Smend, "William Robertson Smith and Julius Wellhausen" in *William Robertson Smith: Essays in Reassessment*, ed., William Johnstone, JSOTSup 189 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 226–42.

organized, “advanced” manner, it was only natural that the imagined location of malign spirits would fade into the wastelands and deserted places far away from the community.⁵³ Spirit possession practices could then be similarly marginalized.

Smith successfully demonstrated that religious beliefs and practices were the product also of societal consensus and not just of independent, meaning-seeking minds. Today, most anthropologists would agree with Smith that spirit possession (as an aspect of religion) occurs only when it is publicly recognized and supported as such (though very few would concur that it is also inversely related to a society’s imagined evolutionary achievement). The fact that spirit possession continues to have such utility for so many societies in the twenty-first century (even those Smith may have once deemed as advanced) would have likely surprised him, though not contradicted his fundamental understanding of possession as a corporate ritual.

In attempting to apply these theories to biblical literature, we may note that possession and other spirit phenomena in biblical literature are often explicitly described as corporate. This is true in narrative contexts (e.g., Num 11:16–30; Jdg 9:23; 1 Sam 19:20–21; 23; 1 Kgs 22:22) and especially prevalent in prophesy (e.g., Isa 44:3; 63:11; Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26–27; Hos 4:12; 5:4; Joel 3:1–2; Hag 1:14; 2:5; Zech 12:10). In fact, it would seem that the default setting for spirit activity in biblical literature is within a community, and that individuals experiencing possession alone are a special exception.

⁵³ Mary Douglas, “Demonology in William Robertson Smith’s Theory of Religious Belief” in *William Robertson Smith: Essays in Reassessment* (William Johnstone, ed.; JSOT Sup. 189; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 274–292.

One especially instructive example can be found in the Community Rule scroll found near Qumran.⁵⁴ The following passage concludes the opening portion of the scroll, which concerns membership and initiation:

^{6b} For through the spirit of the congregation of the truth of God (ברוח עצת אמת אל) may the ways of a man be atoned for, all ⁷ of his iniquities, to see the light of life. And through a holy spirit (וברוח קדושה) to unite in his truth, may he be purified from all ⁸ iniquity. And through an upright and humble spirit (וברוח ישר וענוה) may his sin be purified. And through the humbleness of his self (ובענות נפשו), before all the statutes of God, may his flesh ⁹ be made clean in order to sprinkle the waters of impurity and to consecrate the flowing waters. Let him order his steps to walk blameless ¹⁰ in all the ways of God according to what he commanded for the times appointed to him. Let him not turn to the right or left and not ¹¹ deviate in even one thing from all his words. Then may he be pleasing before God in the atonement of sweet savor and be a party to the covenant of the Yahad forever. (1QS 3:6b–12)

In this section of 1QS, initiation into the community is cast as a spirit phenomenon. With language reminiscent of Psalm 51, “spirit” (רוח) is mentioned three times, each with adjectives detailing the kind of spirit necessary for initiation.⁵⁵ As we might expect, the lines between God’s spirit, the spirit of the community, and that of the initiate are blurred—perhaps there is no distinction.⁵⁶ Further, we cannot be sure how an initiate may or may not have demonstrated their possession of the right spirit(s)—and what rituals may have accompanied these spirit diagnoses—but the passage is clear that the result of a right spirit is righteous action according to

⁵⁴ There are multiple copies and varying versions of the document alternatively called the Community Rule, Rule of the Community, or simply Serek ha-Yahad by scholars. The version consulted here is the longest and most complete version found in cave 1 (1QS). For an overview, see Michael A. Knibb, “Rule of the Community” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Edited by Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam. 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 793–97.

⁵⁵ Anja Klein, “From the ‘Right Spirit’ to the ‘Spirit of Truth’: Observations on Psalm 51 and 1QS” in *The Dynamics of Language and Exegesis at Qumran* (eds. D. Dimant and R. G. Kratz; FAT2 35; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 171–91.

⁵⁶ “The passage thus assembles three different notions of the spirit that carries out atonement and purification. Both the spirit of the true counsel of god and the holy spirit can safely be assumed to proceed from god, but it is clear that all three are considered to be a spirit that is present in the community and represents God’s [sic] presence within the Yahad.” Klein, “From the ‘Right Spirit’ [...], 177–78.

the interpretation of the community. The Yahad thus understands itself as a permanently spirit possessed community, one that initiates new members in part through the recognition of its own spirit as it is active in others.

2) “Mysticism” in the Twentieth Century

A second trend in the study of religion that has had a significant effect on the study of spirit phenomena in the Bible has been the evolution of a supposedly meta-cultural, timeless religious category: “mysticism.” The name most closely associated with this approach historically has been William James.

Though more often associated with psychology and philosophy, recent scholars have put a new emphasis on James’ contribution also to the study of religion.⁵⁷ His best-known work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, focused on first hand religious experience as the primary object of study—rather than on official religious institutions, which he believed developed secondarily.⁵⁸ This approach in *Varieties*, rooted in James’ “pragmatism,” manifested itself in the form of copious descriptions of spiritual experiences as narrated by people from religious traditions around the world and ranging from antiquity to James’ own day. Throughout the lectures, James was careful to avoid any prolonged discussion of whether or not the experiences described were authentic. This was because, for the pragmatist, it is not necessary to assess the legitimacy of a mystical experience:

To the medical mind these ecstasies signify nothing but suggested and imitated hypnoid states, on an intellectual basis of superstition, and a corporeal one of degeneration and hysteria. Undoubtedly these pathological conditions have existed in many and possibly in

⁵⁷ See, for example, David C. Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience* CSRCT 5, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. chp. 3.

⁵⁸ It was originally delivered as a series of Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh in 1901–02. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Centenary ed.; London: Routledge, [1902] 2002).

all the cases, but that fact tells us nothing about the value for knowledge of the consciousness which they induce. To pass a spiritual judgment upon these states, we must not content ourselves with superficial medical talk, but inquire into their fruits for life.⁵⁹

Thus, James argued that scholarly attention should be paid to the effects of religious experiences—particularly when they were positive and developed intentionally, as in the case of religious traditions.⁶⁰

Following this criteria, William James famously developed two primary and two secondary criteria for identifying and comparing “mystical” experiences:⁶¹ 1) ineffability, the quality of being inexpressible, particularly in words, and only transferable through direct experience; and 2) noetic, the quality of seeming to impart some form of knowledge that could not otherwise be gained. These first two qualities, James named as primary but observes two others that are “less sharply marked but are usually found:” 3) transience, the quality of being temporary and unsustainable for prolonged periods of time, and finally 4) passivity, the quality of feeling as if the mystical experience is happening *to* oneself and that one’s will has been suspended.⁶²

James’ emphasis on experience as well as his definition of this term would prove critical in articulating “mysticism” as a major scholarly category for the study of religion in the

⁵⁹ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* [...], 320.

⁶⁰ In this, James was careful to distinguish helpful mystical experiences from madness, which was detrimental: “So much for religious mysticism proper. But more remains to be told, for religious mysticism is only one half of mysticism. The other half has no accumulated traditions except those which the text-books on insanity supply.” James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* [...], 330.

⁶¹ See discussion in George William Barnard, *Exploring Unseen Worlds: William James and the Philosophy of Mysticism* (Albany: State University of New York, 1997), chp 1.

⁶² James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* [...], 295. As it would turn out, it was wise to distinguish between the first and last pairs. James was less familiar with eastern religious traditions than with western ones (as were most scholars of religion at the time) and the final two categories (transience and passivity) would prove less durable in these contexts. James himself would leave these last two out in a later essay published only six months before his death. “A Suggestion About Mysticism” *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods* 7 (1910): 85–92, 85.

twentieth century. “Mystics” and “mysticism” had long been associated in Christian tradition with 1) the non-literal interpretation of scripture, 2) the liturgical mystery of the eucharist, and 3) contemplative or visionary knowledge of God.⁶³ In the nineteenth century, however, and in the hands of academics, “mysticism” took on a new meaning.⁶⁴ Spirit phenomena would come to be one of the central components in this new construction of mysticism.

Mysticism as a category offered many advantages for comparative religionists—particularly for those influenced by liberal Protestantism. Mysticism was ecumenical and even pan-religious. It also seemingly solved the problem posed by unverifiable historical claims present in many religious traditions by locating the supposed essence of religion at the level of individual experience—a realm some assumed to be better buffered against the ravages of empirical inquiry. For many Protestant theologians, modern mysticism thus became a new form of constructive liberal theology, one that might play better with an emerging scholarly discipline—psychology.⁶⁵

⁶³ Louis Bouyer, “‘Mysticism’: An Essay on the History of the Word,” in *Understanding Mysticism* (ed. Richard Woods; Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1980), 42–55.

⁶⁴ On understanding James’ focus on mysticism and experience as rooted in the intellectual trends of nineteenth century New England, see Leigh Eric Schmidt, “The Making of Modern ‘Mysticism,’” *JAAR* 71.2 (2003): 273–302. See also Jeffrey J. Kripal, “Mysticism” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion* (ed. Robert A. Segal, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 321–35; Grace M. Jantzen, “Mysticism and Experience” *Religious Studies* 25.3 (1989): 295–315; and John E. Smith, “William James’s Account of Mysticism: A Critical Appraisal,” in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (ed. Steven Katz; Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 247–279.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, 12th ed. (Boston: E. P. Dutton, [1911] 1930); Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, 2nd ed., trans. John W. Harvey, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958); trans. of *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (Breslau: Trewendt und Granier, 1917); Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth*, 2 vols., trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago, 1992); trans. of *La fable mystique, 1 : XVIe - XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).

As many theorists have also demonstrated, mysticism remained an important category in western scholarship of eastern religions for most of the twentieth century.⁶⁶ This paradigm also extended to how biblical scholars engaged with spirit phenomena in biblical literature. One way in which this manifested was to characterize mysticism as separate from (or directly opposed to) the “rational.” This was by no means a new categorization, as Richard King explains:

The denial of rationality to the Other has been a common strategy in subordinating the Other throughout human history and is by no stretch of the imagination simply a Western phenomenon. Ancient Greek accounts of so-called barbarian states (for example, Herodotus on the Persians) have often portrayed such communities as somehow deficient in their thinking. Within Hindu Brahmanical texts we find a similar tendency to construct a largely undifferentiated category to represent foreign ‘barbarians’ (*mleccha*). Having constructed a largely homogeneous category based upon exclusion and deficiency (‘they are not civilized like us’, or ‘they lack knowledge of the Dharma’) it becomes a comparatively simple move to portray such groups as inferior and lacking in the essential qualities characterized by one’s own particular community. Attribution of irrationality is thus one of a number of oppressive strategies adopted by the xenophobe throughout history and has also proven a useful weapon in the subordination of women in a variety of cultures.⁶⁷

King goes on to demonstrate how eastern intellectual traditions have often been omitted from histories of human philosophical thought due to their “mystical” nature and the assumption that their theological or metaphysical assumptions are culture-specific and thus “tainted.”⁶⁸ As already discussed in the introduction, this same strategy has been utilized by scholars of religion to ‘other’ possession and other spirit phenomena as irrational—both in antiquity and in contemporary communities. In regard to biblical literature, spirit language and descriptions of spirit possession phenomena have often been similarly dismissed—perhaps because it was

⁶⁶ See, for example, Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993) and Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and ‘the Mystical East’* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁶⁷ King, *Orientalism* [...], 25–26.

⁶⁸ King, *Orientalism* [...], 28.

thought that in these moments Israel was the least like its exceptional self or because these texts betrayed the irrationality of primitive human religion.

While Enlightenment notions of “the rational” do not map easily onto ideas about cognition in early Jewish texts, we should note that spirit language is more often used to denote wisdom and knowledge in biblical literature than it is their opposites. For instance, it is because Joshua is “filled with a spirit of wisdom” (מלא רוח חכמה) after Moses lays his hands on him that the Israelites recognize him as his successor (Deut 34:9). Similarly, Joseph’s wisdom in Pharaoh’s court is typified as spirit empowered (Gen 41:38–39). This is especially significant, since Pharaoh’s own “wise men” (חכמיה) are unable to equal him (Gen 41:8).

Another poignant example can be found in the sections of Exodus pertaining to the shrine. For the fashioning of Aaron’s priestly garments, God instructs Moses:

You shall speak to all the wise of heart, whom I have filled with a spirit of wisdom, so that they might make Aaron’s garments in order to consecrate him to act as a priest for me (אתה תדבר אל־חכמי־לב אשר מלאתי רוח חכמה ועשו את־בגדי אהרן לקדשו לכחנ־לי) Exod 28:3; cf. 31:3; 35:31).

English translations often avoid rendering the spirit language here (e.g., NRSV “whom I have endowed with skill” (אשר מלאתי רוח חכמה)). These translations are correct insofar as they capture the sense that throughout this section of Exodus, this terminology is used to differentiate skilled craftsmen from unskilled laborers (e.g., Exod 31:3; 35:31). Yet, as John Levison has noted, the language here is not merely ornamental but designates “the spirit within as an abundant reservoir of skill and knowledge.”⁶⁹ Those Israelites who are said to be “filled with a spirit” here are in fact those who are *most likely* to exhibit skill, knowledge, and (we might imagine) the “rationality” that modern theorists were so attached to.

⁶⁹ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 54.

Finally, we may briefly note that biblical wisdom literature consistently utilizes spirit language to denote creation and wisdom (rather than chaos and disorder). Decades ago, Gerhard von Rad observed that wisdom literature has a tendency to insert wisdom language where spirit language might be expected.⁷⁰ For example, the famous hymn of wisdom in Proverbs 8 likely glosses the “spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2, when Wisdom says:

The LORD created me in the beginning (ראשית) of his work,
first of his deeds long ago.
Ages past I was poured out (נסכת),
from the first, before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths (תהמות), I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding in water. (Prov 8:22–24; cf. 3:19)⁷¹

In short, the portrait of spirit empowerment and possession in biblical literature is overwhelmingly one of wisdom and creativity over against one of irrationality or foolishness.

C. Gender and Spirit Possession

Studies of conceptions of gender as they relate to spirit possession have conventionally progressed along two primary lines of inquiry. The first (and perhaps most obvious) has been investigating the role of gender in cultures that practiced spirit possession. Initial efforts in this regard were made by anthropologists, ethnographers, and comparative religionists who noted, anecdotally at first, that women were often involved in spirit possession rituals at higher rates than men—a fact that seemed consistent cross-culturally.⁷² The second and more recent

⁷⁰ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (vol. 1; trans. D. M. G. Stalker; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 447–48; trans. of *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (vol. 1.; 2d ed.; Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1957). See also Paul van Imschoot, “Sagesse et esprit dans l’Ancien Testament” *Revue Biblique* 47.1 (1938): 23–49.

⁷¹ The Second Temple Jewish scribe Jesus ben Sirah takes Wisdom’s role in creation a step further, ascribing to her a more active part in the formation of the earth (Sir 24:3; cf. Ps 33:6.).

⁷² Some sociologists of religion argue that women participate in religious practices at higher rates than men both publicly and privately and there is some data to back this up. See the overview of studies surveyed in Rodney Stark, “Physiology and Faith: Addressing the ‘Universal’ Gender Difference in Religious Commitment” *JSSR* 41.3 (2002): 495–507 and Alan S. Miller and John P. Hoffmann, “Risk and Religion: An Explanation of Gender

approach has incorporated not only this first project but also interventions against the presuppositions of early, western scholars who operated with their own unexamined conceptions of gender and thus, in some cases, dramatically misconstrued the gender dynamics of the cultures they studied.⁷³ A related and more focused approach has been to analyze the ways in which the influence of larger but later arriving religious traditions (namely, Christianity and Islam) changed gender dynamics in smaller, more localized possession cults.⁷⁴

The most influential study on gender and spirit possession is Ioan Lewis' *Ecstatic Religion*, first published in 1971 with a third edition published in 2003.⁷⁵ Lewis' cross-cultural approach to studying possession notoriously attempted to sort each instance of possession into one of two categories: central and peripheral.⁷⁶ Lewis emphasizes each cult by the gender of its leadership and primary participants. According to Lewis, "central" cults are predominantly male,

Differences in Religiosity" *JSSR* 34.1 (1995): 63–75. Despite this evidence, researchers are divided as to how to explain it (see below). Additionally, the definition of precisely which behaviors do and do not constitute religious practice is in some flux.

⁷³ See, for example, Janice Body, *Wombs, and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zār Cult in Northern Sudan* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Susan Starr Sered, *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister: Religions Dominated by Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Mary L. Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power, and Spirit Possession* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Durre S. Ahmed, *Gendering the Spirit: Women, Religion and the Post-Colonial Response* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Mary Ann Clark, *Where Men Are Wives And Mothers Rule: Santería Ritual Practices and Their Gender Implications* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2005); Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús, *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 183–211; Schmidt, "Possessed Women in the African Diaspora," For a helpful overview, see Mary L. Keller, "Spirit Possession: Women and Possession" *ER* 13:8694–99.

⁷⁴ See the overview in Oyeronke Olajubu, "Gender and Religion: Gender and African Religious Traditions" *ER* 5:3400–3406.

⁷⁵ Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*. See, for example, the comment by Bettina E. Schmidt: "The most important study about possession and gender is still the one published by I. M. Lewis in 1971." Schmidt, "Possessed Women in the African Diaspora: Gender Difference in Spirit Possession Rituals" in Schmidt and Huskinson eds., *Spirit Possession and Trance*, 97–116, 101.

⁷⁶ Lewis' criteria for determining which category a given cult may belong to include whether or not the cult seems to support the existing social order, the degree to which the higher classes participate (rather than just tolerate it), and the degree to which the cult functions as a moralizing agent. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, chps. 5–6.

while “peripheral” cults have more women as well as “men of lower status.”⁷⁷ As already discussed in the introduction, in bifurcating these two modes of possession, Lewis was able to pursue a Weberian-style project, in which each instance of possession becomes an exercise in power and status dynamics. Lewis argues that men use the “central” possession cult to preserve the social order and assert their own authority. Conversely, women use the “peripheral” cult to critique the *status quo*, enhance their own status, and achieve material aims otherwise unattainable.

As an explanation for spirit possession, Lewis’ “instrumental” approach has been controversial (see my introduction). Likewise, as an explanation for gender dynamics in religion, Lewis’s work has been similarly criticized.⁷⁸ Susan Starr Sered, for example, has labelled approaches like Lewis’ “deprivation theories” and argued that they begin from the assumption that possession is an abnormal behavior that results from some kind of societal, sexual, or even nutritional deficiency.⁷⁹ Sered (together with Janice Boddy) suggests an alternative paradigm for conceiving of possession, one that is more positive and nuanced:

Is it possible that possession trance is one of a range of normal human abilities or talents, in much the way that musical ability or athletic ability is? Could it be that in many cultures male socialization prevents most men from developing the ability to embrace the enriching, exciting, **normal** experience of spirit possession? Is it perhaps the case that the vast majority of men, for a variety of psychosocial reasons, are so preoccupied with guarding their ego boundaries or their sense of self from the threat of “invasion” that they reject, or refuse to recognize, a religious experience that involves melding one’s being with another entity?”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ “As we shall often see in the examples which follow, where central and marginal possession religions exist side by side in the same society, the first is primarily reserved for men, while the second is restricted essentially to women, men of low status, or both.” Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 121.

⁷⁸ Lewis addresses some of his critics in the preface to the third edition of his book but does not substantially change his position. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, ix–xxiv.

⁷⁹ Sered, *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister*, 185–93.

⁸⁰ Emphasis original. Sered, *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister*, 190–91. Sered goes on to cite affirmatively Boddy who makes a similar point, *Wombs and Alien Spirits*, 140. Similarly, Schmidt asks “Instead of trying to

As part of her argument, Sered lists several examples of indigenous explanations for the phenomenon, including one participant who explained that women are “softer, easier to penetrate” and thus better candidates for possession.⁸¹ Sered suggests that these emic explanations are consistent with the etic theory of gender socialization.⁸²

However, there is some evidence that gender difference in some spirit possession cults is overstated, perhaps because theorists themselves have been conditioned to see the religious or spirit phenomena domains as inherently feminine. We may look briefly at one case study to demonstrate how complicated this issue can be. Anthropologist Bettina E. Schmidt studies Yoruba-derived religions in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States and has done some work attempting to chart gender dynamics in this family of religions as well as in the history of their study.⁸³ Schmidt has found that in the traditional Oyo-Yoruba religion in Nigeria ideas about gender were more fluid and that they were not often a factor in determining accessibility to different parts of the cult. The Yoruba language is gender-free as well, and many deities were portrayed either as lacking any or without a static gender. Additionally, male and female ancestors were venerated equally by both men and women.

understand why more women are drawn towards spirit possession, we should study why men avoid this ritual practice.” Schmidt, “Possessed Women in the African Diaspora,” 112.

⁸¹ Sered, *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister*, 189.

⁸² Socialization remains a prominent and, for many, convincing explanation for the phenomenon of disproportional female participation in spirit possession. Other theories have been offered, however. Sociologist Rodney Stark, for example, has looked at an analogous question in crime statistics, citing data that certain physiological (i.e., non-socialized) factors make one more or less likely to be a criminal (e.g., male or female, type of body build, levels of testosterone). Using earlier research on differing levels of tolerance for risk among men and women, Stark asks whether or not physiological factors may also contribute to differing levels of religiosity between the sexes, in addition to differences in socialization. Stark, “Physiology and Faith” and Miller and Hoffman, “Risk and Religion.”

⁸³ Schmidt, “Possessed Women in the African Diaspora”; Bettina E. Schmidt, *Caribbean Diaspora in USA: Diversity of Caribbean Religions in New York City* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

Schmidt is careful to point out, however, that it is not that gender did not exist in Oyo-Yoruba, but rather, gender was not a significant indicator for human abilities or qualifications.

For instance:

In the Orisha-religions, the relationship between Orisha and human beings is in general described in terms of ‘wife’ and ‘husband.’ However, the descriptor ‘wife’ for a possessed human does not indicate that the person is always female or becomes female. It is still possible for a man to remain in a heterosexual relationship with a (human) woman despite being the ‘wife’ of an Orisha. In addition, even Oshún, a female Orisha, is the dominant ‘husband’ in this relationship with her ‘children’. The term ‘wife’ has to be seen as a metaphor describing the bond between human being and Orisha but without the limitation to one specific anatomical sex. It does not refer to the female body but to control and subordination.⁸⁴

Western scholars have been divided as to how to interpret this fluidity as it relates to conceptions of gender. Is the relationship between spirit and host essentially gendered because of the husband-wife metaphor or gender-free because the title is irrespective of both the Orisha’s and host’s physiologies?⁸⁵ Schmidt presents evidence that even though wife language was used to indicate subordination, it did not also necessarily indicate prohibition from roles of power. For example, the title “wife” was also applied to specially appointed diplomatic envoys, both male and female, indicating their direct submission to the king and not to lesser chiefs.

In pre-Christian Yoruba, women still held important political and commercial roles, but this changed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as women became increasingly relegated to the domestic sphere. As western influence seeped further into Yoruba culture, gender language in the cult came to take on new meanings. In this way, the question of conceptions of

⁸⁴ Schmidt, “Possessed Women in the African Diaspora,” 103.

⁸⁵ In this discussion, Schmidt summarizes and sorts through several significant studies, sometimes with conflicting data, including: Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Mary Ann Clark, *Where Men are Wives and Mothers Rule*; J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

gender in spirit possession becomes more complicated when one attempts to account for the influences of Islam, Christianity, and British colonialism on Yoruba-derived religions over the past several hundred years—particularly in the diaspora. For example, the high god, Olodumare, who once had no gender became “Father in Heaven.” Female Orisha (minor deities) declined in power in comparison to their male counterparts and ancestor veneration became increasingly focused on patriarchs. Indeed, early ethnographic studies of Yoruba-derived religions from the mid-twentieth century assumed the religions were natively gendered.⁸⁶ Did Yoruba religion change as it became transnational thereby contextualizing the gender dynamics of its host cultures? Schmidt believes so, though its transformation varied in different contexts (e.g., Cuba versus Brazil).⁸⁷

Schmidt’s work is instructive as a case study for several reasons, and her conclusions are helpful as we turn to biblical literature. First, as Schmidt points out, non-western conceptions of gender do not always map well onto the traditional gender constructions of other cultures and this disconnect can affect even those scholars who are trained to be sensitive to such issues. This point should be obvious and yet Schmidt shows how the incorrect gendered assumptions of early ethnographers have continued to lead to the mischaracterization of gender dynamics in these religions today. Second, Schmidt argues that possession should be seen as a normal human practice that can flourish in any context where beliefs in spirits or immanent deities is common. In this way, possession is a social phenomenon that functions within a community when it is

⁸⁶ The Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé was traditionally described as dominated by priestesses while the Cuban Orisha religion (also called Santería) has been characterized as led by male *Ifá* priests. Schmidt, “Possessed Women in the African Diaspora,” 97. As Schmidt notes, more recent studies have disputed these findings, arguing that the scholars themselves were conditioned to see gender differentiation where there was none.

⁸⁷ Schmidt, “Possessed Women in the African Diaspora,” 111.

recognized as such. It follows, then, that as gender dynamics in a society change, so should they change in any attendant spirit possession practices.⁸⁸

To what degree are conceptions of gender a factor in the portrayals of spirit phenomena in biblical literature? Consistent with the fact that the majority of figures in biblical literature are male, it follows that the majority of figures involved in or describing spirit phenomena in biblical literature are also male. Yet, based on anthropological and sociological data, we can postulate that women also participated in possession and other spirit phenomena practices in ancient Israel and early Judaism—perhaps even at a greater rate than men. As mentioned above, most spirit phenomena in the Bible is described as corporate and, in many examples, the presence of women are either explicitly mentioned or can reasonably be assumed (e.g., Joel 3:1–2; Isa 63:10–14; Ezek 37:1–14).

The gender disparity becomes more apparent when we compare male and female figures of like rank or type. For example, Deborah, unlike other judges, is not described as “filled” or influenced by a spirit (Judg 4:4; cf. Othniel in Jdg 3:10; Gideon in 6:34; Jephthah in 11:29; Samson 14:6; 19; 15:14).⁸⁹ Some have argued that, given the importance of patterning and repetition within the book of Judges, spirit empowerment should be seen as a stock feature of the judges and implied for all twelve.⁹⁰ This is defensible—certainly at the literary level—though it

⁸⁸ Recognizing this implicit social function of spirit possession, Schmidt’s article turns towards the cognitive sciences and specifically to studies on the so-called “Theory of Mind.” ToM is the ability one has to conceive of another person’s beliefs, will, emotions, and behavior. Consistent with studies that show how women are generally more empathetic than men, they also tend to score higher on ToM assessments. Schmidt wonders if the ability to theorize another’s mind (while at the same time keep track of one’s own self) is one of the necessary skills for performing spirit possession. She then asks whether ToM abilities are the result of innate physiological differences or are socialized, a question on which the science is inconclusive, though Schmidt would like to say, “both but mostly socialized.” Schmidt, “Possessed Women in the African Diaspora, 108–13.

⁸⁹ See also the “wise woman of Tekoa” in 2 Sam 14.

⁹⁰ E.g., Lee Roy Martin, “Power to Save!?: The Role of the Spirit of the Lord in the Book of Judges” *JPT* 16 (2008): 21–50, 32. Deborah is not the only judge to have no mention of spirit empowerment.

was likely not always true in the transmission histories of these figures. Similarly, many prophets are said to be spirit influenced (e.g., Isa 61:1; Ezek 2:2; Mic 3:8; Zech 7:12), but the same cannot be said for Miriam (Exod 15:20) or Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14–20 // 1 Chr 34:22–28).

Thus, it would seem that the presentation and language used to describe possession and other spirit phenomena in biblical literature sometimes differs for men and women. As already discussed in chapter two, the occurrence of key vocabulary (like “spirit” רוח) is an important indicator for these phenomena in the Bible. Yet, the story of the woman medium at En-Dor in 1 Samuel 28 is one of the most prolonged examples of a spirit possession ritual in biblical literature, yet the word “spirit” does not occur (see my treatment in chapter one). Likewise, in chapter four, it will be argued that the story of Hannah at Shiloh is another example of a spirit phenomenon (though one of a very different type). There is some spirit language in this story (e.g., רוח in 1 Sam 1:15), but it is sparse, and, overall, the narrative seems to focus on other aspects of Hannah’s experience.

Other women in biblical literature assume divinatory, advisory, or otherwise leadership-type roles that are sometimes associated with spirit phenomena yet their stories lack spirit language.⁹¹ We might suspect that some of these activities would have been described differently if the figure(s) at their center had been male, though the sparseness of the accounts precludes a systematic investigation. Along these lines, it is conspicuous that those parts of the

⁹¹ E.g., the pair of “wise” חכמה women in 2 Sam 14:1–24 and 2 Sam 20:14–22; the two keepers of household teraphim (Rachel in Gen 31:19–35 and the mother of Micah in Judg 17:1–6); and the false “daughters of your people who prophesy from their own imagination” in Ezek 13:17–23. These episodes are discussed in Hamori, *Women’s Divination*, 131–47; 167–83; 203–16. See also Richard A. Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel: The Bible and the Rest of the Ancient Near East* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1994).

Hebrew Bible that list forbidden divinatory (and perhaps spirit-related) practices tend to prohibit methods wherein women are (elsewhere) portrayed as more active.⁹²

We will return to these issues in the discussion of spirit phenomena in the book of Tobit in chapter five. For now, this overview continues with scholarship of spirit phenomena in biblical studies.

III. Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Studies

Since there are few studies that have sought to explicate spirit phenomena in biblical literature from the particular lens utilized in this project, there is a wide range of previous biblical scholarship that is relevant, spanning genres such as biblical theology, sociology of religion, and historical-critical studies of religion in the ancient Near East. The overview of texts below is necessarily representative, but I have striven to include additional sources in the footnotes. The first section below is more detailed and surveys major studies of “Spirit(s)” in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and in Second Temple Literature, a class to which this project most closely belongs. The second section is more varied and covers a range of subfields largely through representative examples. In instances where only a portion or particular aspect of a work is pertinent, I discuss what I believe to be most relevant for this project.

⁹² E.g., Deut 18:9–12; Lev 19:26–31; 20:27; Isa 8:19; Mic 5:12. cf. 1 Sam 28:7–9; Isa 47:8–9; and Ezek 13:17–18. It should be noted, however, that these prohibited practices are not the exclusive realm of women (e.g., Num 22:7; 2 Kgs 21:6; Jer 14:14).

A. Studies of “Spirit(s)” in Biblical Literature

This overview begins in the late-nineteenth century with the advent of Hermann Gunkel’s *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes*.⁹³ Aspects of this work could fit into all three categories but Gunkel was so influential that most subsequent studies on spirit phenomena in biblical literature begin by positioning themselves with reference to him.⁹⁴

1) Hermann Gunkel’s Intervention

Readers are more likely to associate the name of Hermann Gunkel with the History of Religions School (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) and with Form Criticism (*Formgeschichte*) than they are with studies of spirit phenomena.⁹⁵ However, Gunkel’s first published work, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit* (1888), was itself a well-known and influential book within his lifetime and determined the contours for studies in spirit phenomena in biblical literature for a century to follow.⁹⁶ Completed as a *Habilitationschrift* while teaching New Testament in Göttingen in his mid-twenties, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit* made a number of interventions that redirected

⁹³ *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes nach der populären Anschauung der apostolischen Zeit und der Lehre des Apostels Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1888). The work was reprinted with a new preface in 1899 and again in 1909.

⁹⁴ See other helpful overviews of similar literature in Tibbs, *Religious Experience of the Pneuma*, 77–112; Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul*, 4–14; Levison, *The Spirit in First Century Judaism*, 17–24.

⁹⁵ Gunkel’s best known work is likely *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), available in English as *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton* (trans. K. William Whitney Jr.; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2006).

⁹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, translations of *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes* are from *The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul* (trans. R. A. Harrisville and P. A. Quanbeck II; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

trajectories set by nineteenth century theologians like Otto Pfleiderer, H. H. Wendt, Johannes Glöel, and perhaps most significant of all, his teacher Albrecht Ritschl.⁹⁷

Among the most important interventions was the orientation of Gunkel's study on the "influences" or "effects" (*Wirkungen*) of spirit experience, rather than on the abstract or ontological nature of the Holy Spirit. He also insisted that New Testament spirit phenomena could not be understood independently from analysis of spirit experience in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, Gunkel's work was directed primarily towards illuminating early Christian pneumatologies, which severely limited his analysis of pre-Christian Jewish texts. In particular, his perpetuation of the anti-Jewish prejudices of his era led him to mischaracterize early Judaism as a-pneumatic, a blind spot that would plague biblical studies for several decades, even after other anti-Jewish assumptions in the field were eventually recognized. The discussion below focuses on four aspects of his work that proved most influential on later studies of spirit phenomena in biblical literature and early Jewish tradition.⁹⁸

a) Emphasis on Effects Rather Than Purposes of Spirit(s)

One of Gunkel's most important contributions to the study of spirit phenomena in biblical literature was the insight that in most biblical texts, spirits were recognized not by their purposes

⁹⁷ Otto Pfleiderer, *Der Paulinismus: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der urchristlichen Theologie* (Leipzig: Fues's, 1873); H. H. Wendt, *Die Begriffe Fleisch und Geist* (Gotha: Perthes, 1878); Johannes Glöel, *Der Heilige Geist in der Heilsverkündigung des Paulus* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1888); Albrecht Ritschl, *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1857).

⁹⁸ Several other treatments and summaries of Gunkel's work on the spirit are readily available, and most focus on Gunkel's primary concern on how Holy Spirit experiences shaped the early church. See for example, Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* and Tibbs, *Religious Experience of the Pneuma*, 77–80. See also, Werner Klatt, *Hermann Gunkel: Zu seiner Theologie der Religionsgeschichte und zur Entstehung der formgeschichtlichen Methode* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 17–36.

but by their effects on a person.⁹⁹ Writing ten years after the initial publication in a new preface, Gunkel described his project in this way:

The real task of my little work was to ascertain the symptoms by which an “effect” of the Spirit was recognized, and in face of the modernizings of exegetes who, without historical reflection and influenced by rationalism, know nothing of the “effects” of the πνεῦμα and render “Spirit” a pure abstraction. It was thus my concern not to describe individual pneumatic phenomena but to set forth what was common to them all and thus the typically pneumatic.¹⁰⁰

In this, Gunkel upended many assumptions of previous scholarship, in particular the idea that the spirit was best identified by its alignment with God’s will. Citing examples like Samson in Judges 14:6, and Saul in 1 Samuel 10:6 and 19:20, Gunkel explains how spirit phenomena are primarily identified by physical effects. Spirits are, in fact, unpredictable (e.g., 1 Kgs 18:7–16) and not necessarily always oriented towards God’s purposes (e.g., Hos 4:12; 5:4; 1 Kgs 22:20–21; Zech 13:2).¹⁰¹ Thus, Gunkel called it a “dangerous error” (*verhängnisvoller Irrtum*) to relegate spirit activity to realms outside of history in biblical literature, as if its influence was only felt in eschatology or the broad strokes of salvation history.¹⁰²

In a similar manner, Gunkel concluded that in neither the Hebrew Bible nor “the popular view” in the New Testament is a person’s piety or morality determined by spirit phenomena.¹⁰³ For example, while modern readers may assume that spirit-endowed prophets distinguished themselves by exceptional acts of righteousness and devotion, they did not attribute their moral life to the spirit. Rather, the spirit was responsible for conferring on them their task of

⁹⁹ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 27–30.

¹⁰⁰ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 2.

¹⁰¹ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 53.

¹⁰² Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 14.

¹⁰³ Gunkel distinguishes “the popular view” of the spirit embodied most fully in Acts from the Pauline view.

proclamation as well as the energy to carry it out. Despite this point, he cites a surprisingly long list of passages that would seem partially (or in some cases blatantly) to contradict this view (e.g., Isa 11:1–2; 28:6; 32:15–20; Ezek 36:27; Zech 12:10; Ps 51:12–14; 143:10) but explains that their ratio to the higher number of non-moralistic spirit passages marks them as insignificant exceptions.¹⁰⁴ In contrast, this project gives a great deal of attention to several of these passages (particularly in chapter six) and suggests that they are key texts for understanding how conceptions of spirits were changing in the Second Temple period.

b) Studying Religious Experience in Antiquity

In this study, Gunkel also struggled with a problem confronting this project (and any project) that is interested in spirit phenomena in antiquity—namely the fraught task of accessing a private religious experience via a written description of it.¹⁰⁵ Gunkel described the issue in this way:

In order to evaluate pneumatic experiences we must first of all sharply distinguish the experience of the pneumatic himself from the interpretation given it by him or his observers. Such interpretation varies according to the cultural epoch and religion of the evaluator. In instances in which we today see nothing but nervousness, illness, or insanity—I am thinking of Saul's melancholy or of the demonic in Jesus' day—the ancient period thought to find supernatural causes. But even interpretation can diverge most widely, according to the various religious epochs. The Israelite prophet of the older period sensed the impact of [the LORD] in his ecstasies and visions; the prophets of the later period dared only think of an angel in such an instance.¹⁰⁶

This reflection from the second preface is revealing. Gunkel seeks to step outside the cultural idiom of each individual era in biblical literature in order to access a supposed root pneumatic experience that was common to all. If this impetus sounds familiar it might be because Gunkel

¹⁰⁴ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 19–20.

¹⁰⁵ See my discussion of this issue in chapter two.

¹⁰⁶ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 5.

can be situated within a broader intellectual trend of his time which recognized religious experience as an object of scholarly study. Perhaps most famous is William James, but Gunkel's work can also be seen as anticipating points that would be made more explicit by Rudolph Otto.¹⁰⁷

Rather than viewing spirit language and descriptions of spirit phenomena as a sophisticated system of articulating the meaning of a wide variety of human activity in biblical literature, Gunkel saw them as a compensatory crutch for misunderstanding and limitation. In this way, he remained consistent with many of his interlocutors. Gunkel, like Wendt and others, maintained that in ancient Israel as well as in biblical tradition, human deeds that defied expectation in their ingeniousness or significance were consequently attributed to a spirit.¹⁰⁸ Originally all activity of this sort was seen as having spirit origins, whether it was a natural phenomenon like a wind storm, a human action like a heroic deed, or an internal affliction like mental distress. For Gunkel, it was an innovation of Second Temple Judaism and of the New Testament in particular to divide these phenomena into categories. Thus, detrimental spirit activity came to be seen as demonic, and those activities that pertained to the church were seen as enacted by angels and/or by God's Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁹

The enduring impact of this approach to studying religious experience in antiquity cannot be overstated—even among those who might otherwise disagree with Gunkel. By disregarding so many of the cultural particulars as accidental to the supposedly more 'authentic,' pneumatic experience, Gunkel (and other theorists of religion in the early twentieth century) were able to

¹⁰⁷ See my discussion of the study of religion above.

¹⁰⁸ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 44–45.

¹⁰⁹ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 48–59.

subsume a wide range of diverse religious expressions into a familiar, intellectual category (see my discussion of ‘mysticism’ above). Indeed, “the fundamental experience of all types of prophecy is ‘ecstasy,’” Gunkel would argue several decades later.¹¹⁰ Arguably, this presupposition and the more sophisticated versions of it that would arise later are potentially just as limiting as the dogmatism that more self-consciously confessional theologians are sometimes accused of in regard to their analyses of spirit phenomena in biblical literature.

c) The Characterization of Second Temple Judaism as Lacking “the Spirit”

One of Gunkel’s reoccurring analytical strategies was drawing parallels between Old Testament and New Testament spirit activity while differentiating both from the supposed intervening Judaism.

But what a powerful impression the *πνεῦμα* must have made when its fullness appeared to a Judaism bereft of the Spirit. Despite that fact, the number of converted Jews must be reckoned as few, which proves how strong the antiprophetic and thus antievangelical tendency in Jesus’ time was, a tendency later culminating in the Talmud.¹¹¹

For Gunkel, late Second Temple Judaism at best only anticipated a future and general outpouring of the spirit but did not experience/recognize spirit phenomena in its own day.¹¹² Certainly, he ceded, this Judaism was not lacking “zeal” in a “religious sense” but it was missing “God’s Spirit.”¹¹³ This characterization of Judaism seems rooted in part in Gunkel’s view of scribal culture and *halakha* in particular as inherently antithetical to spirit experience, a popular

¹¹⁰ Hermann Gunkel, “The Secret Experiences of the Prophets,” Vol. 1, *Expositor* 9 (1924): 356-366, 427-435, here 358.

¹¹¹ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 70–71. See also my discussion of this issue in the introduction.

¹¹² Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 42.

¹¹³ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 69.

assumption that this project challenges.¹¹⁴ The point is particularly salient, since elsewhere Gunkel seems to completely reverse this position when it comes to the study of the Jewish scriptures in the early Christian community: “[In the early Church ...] we may assume that knowledge of the mysteries set down in the Scriptures was held to be a gift of the Spirit. Exegesis of the Old Testament was every bit as pneumatic as the interpretation of glossolalia.”¹¹⁵

While Gunkel certainly did not invent this mischaracterization of early Judaism, he successfully adapted it for an era that was seeing the wider dissemination of Second Temple Jewish literature.¹¹⁶ Thus, he could list a fine sampling of spirit phenomena in works like *The Sibylline Oracles*, *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *Jubilees*, and more but could still somehow conclude that, “From perhaps the Greek period on, this graphic view of the Spirit altogether recedes in the writings of Judaism, although it is not totally absent.”¹¹⁷ This caricature of late Second Temple Judaism as spiritually dry was undoubtedly supported to some degree by a particular interpretation of certain cues in primary texts (e.g., the so-called “cessation of prophecy” in Jewish antiquity).¹¹⁸ But it should also be seen as Gunkel’s unexamined adoption of a number of

¹¹⁴ “And truly, miracles of the Spirit do not arise out of sober study of the Law (see Gal. 3:2).” Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 70.

¹¹⁵ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 37. In my view, this point by Gunkel is actually quite insightful, though he errs fatally by limiting it exclusively to the early Jesus movement and not to other parts of early Judaism.

¹¹⁶ The nineteenth century saw an explosion of interest in Second Temple Jewish works, in part ignited by a popular interest in ‘the orient’ among European intelligentsia at the time as well as by the rapid discovery of additional ancient documents and textual versions. August Dillmann and Jacques Paul (l’Abbé) Migne were two such early assemblers and translators of Ethiopic works into western languages. Between 1850 and 1900 more than fifty editions of “Jewish Pseudepigrapha” appeared in Austria, Italy, Russia, France, Britain, and Germany. None, however, rivaled the lasting influence and widespread acceptance of the German and English editions of “Jewish Pseudepigrapha” by Emil Kautzsch and Robert H. Charles that appeared between 1900 and 1913. See discussion in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1985), 6–17.

¹¹⁷ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 46–48.

¹¹⁸ See, L. Stephen Cook, *On the Question of the “Cessation of Prophecy” in Ancient Judaism* (TSAJ 145; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

assumptions of his era—ideas that he unconsciously accepted even as he unwittingly provided evidence to undermine them.

d) “Spirit” (רוח) as Material in Biblical Literature

A portion of Gunkel’s work weighs in on contemporary debates concerning the materiality of spirit in biblical literature. Gunkel’s position was unequivocal:

Hebrew imagination conceived the Spirit of God as a delicate substance, invisible of course to the naked eye though actually present and thus after the analogy of the wind.¹¹⁹

He quoted favorably Ludwig Friedländer’s monumental work on ancient Rome:

At that time, the vast majority of people were much less capable than they are now of an abstraction that the concept of a purely spiritual existence requires.¹²⁰

This was contra Wendt and others who saw spirit, wind, and breath as incorporeal in biblical imagination, since the terms are often used in expressions of unsteadiness and vanity. For Gunkel, this meant that spirit in biblical literature was not merely *like* the wind, it was in fact *a kind of* wind—one that was perhaps more “mysterious” and “super sensual” (*übersinnlicher*) than those one encounters in nature, but a “substance” (*Stoff*) nonetheless.¹²¹ This explains the use of “spirit” (רוח) as the object for verbs like “pour out” (שפך), “fill” (מלא), and “rest” (נוח). He goes on to coordinate spirit experience with a material concept of spirit, “wherever the activities of the Spirit are vividly experienced, the Spirit is visualized as substance.”¹²² Likewise,

¹¹⁹ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 59.

¹²⁰ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 59. Ludwig Friedländer, *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit von August bis zum Ausgang der Antonine* (5th ed.; 3 vols.; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1881), 3:701.

¹²¹ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 61–62.

¹²² Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 61.

in those communities where spirit was conceived of as immaterial, abstract, and “scholarly,” it became “a desolately barren thought-form.”¹²³

Because Gunkel’s focus was on the effects of the spirit, he did not dwell on issues of its ontology. Nevertheless, Gunkel’s position on the substance of the spirit would become the standard position in the History of Religions School and would shape studies of spirit in early Christianity for decades to come.¹²⁴ Perhaps Gunkel’s lack of elaboration is fitting, since biblical literature is generally unconcerned with this kind of philosophical speculation in a way that might be compared to classical Greco-Roman literature. Gunkel called this naïveté. Sven Tengström goes further:

The OT does not concern itself with questions about the “nature” of things. Observations of the physical world are registered, but they are always associated intimately with human experience and put in the service of analogical thought and metaphorical imagery.¹²⁵

In a way, Gunkel compromised on his goal of not engaging in a discussion of spirit in an abstract sense. His insistence (and that of those who followed him) on how the substance of spirit was conceived (whether one way or the other) obscured the fact that “materiality” and “immateriality” are not especially meaningful categories in the Hebrew Bible.¹²⁶

¹²³ Gunkel cites as examples Wisd. Sol. 1:6; 7:7; 22, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 62.

¹²⁴ See the helpful discussion in Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life* (WUNT 2 283; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 17–18; 35–40. Rabens argues for a more immaterial notion of the spirit in Paul, one that the apostle inherited from his Second Temple Jewish context.

¹²⁵ Sven Tengström, “רוּחַ” *TDOT*, 13:381.

¹²⁶ Though some Hellenistic Jewish texts express interest in materiality in regard to spirits, e.g., Philo. See Hans Leisegang, *Der Heilige Geist: Das Wesen und Werden der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis in der Philosophie und Religion der Griechen, I/1: Die vorchristlichen Anschauungen und Lehren vom ΠΝΕΥΜΑ und der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1919): 75–162.

Hermann Gunkel's influence on the study of spirit phenomena in the twentieth century should not be understated, which is why he has received so much attention here. *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes* introduced several new avenues for exploring spirit phenomena in biblical literature. Several unexamined presuppositions present in Gunkel's work would persist for over a century, however, despite several attempts along the way to correct for them.

2) Paul Volz: An Ignored Corrective

An exceptional study that followed Gunkel was Paul Volz, *Der Geist Gottes und die verwandten Erscheinungen im Alten Testament und im anschließenden Judentum*, "The Spirit of God: Its Associated Phenomena in the Old Testament and in Subsequent Judaism."¹²⁷ The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw other studies on spirit and biblical pneumatology that were influenced by Gunkel.¹²⁸ But, in contrast to these others, Volz's study highlighted the vitality of spirit phenomena and the presence of "fruits of the spirit" not just in early Judaism but in his contemporary Judaism as well.¹²⁹ Volz's study is also notable for its engagement with spirit phenomena in the Hebrew Bible and in early Jewish literature as self-standing theological complexes (rather than as the mere incomplete precursors to Christian pneumatology).

Recognizing these contributions, John R. Levison has observed:

Unfortunately, many twentieth-century studies have followed in the steps of Gunkel rather than Volz and caricatured the [spiritual] vitality of early Judaism. This defective perspective was based in part upon the faulty assumption that Jews during the Greco-

¹²⁷ Paul Volz, *Der Geist Gottes und die verwandten Erscheinungen im Alten Testament und im anschließenden Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910). Translations of Volz are my own. See also Hans Duhm, *Die bösen Geister im Alten Testament* (Tübingen and Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]: 1904).

¹²⁸ See, for example, Heinrich Weinelt, *Die Wirkungen des Geistes und der Geister im nachapostolischen Zeitalter bis zum Iranäus* (Freiburg, Leipzig, and Tübingen: Mohr, 1899); Leisegang, *Der Heilige Geist*.

¹²⁹ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, 144–145.

Roman era believed in the loss of the spirit, a loss that allegedly occurred when the last of Israel's prophets died.¹³⁰

Several other contributions can be noted, briefly.

First, seeking a middle ground between the systematic theologians who preceded Gunkel and the behavior-focused theorists who followed, Volz recognized that a study of both effects (*Wirkungen*) and ideas (*Vorstellungen*) was a necessary precursor to understanding spirit phenomena in biblical literature.¹³¹ In this way, similar to Gunkel, he discussed the “effects” of the spirit (e.g., military empowerment, glossolalia, prophetic speech, empowered emotions, etc.) but also the ideas that may have undergirded these behaviors (e.g., spirit as presence, spirit as fluid, and the relationship between God and spirit).

One of Volz’s important “ideas” was his discussion of the spirit as a person (*Die Geisthypostase*).¹³² Beginning in postexilic texts of the Hebrew Bible and tracing trends into Persian and rabbinic literature, Volz argued that biblical literature anticipated later Jewish conceptions of the spirit as a person or personality distinct from God—though it took different forms in different literature and eras. In Psalm 139, for example, the *Geisthypostase* is a pantheistic sentiment that has nevertheless been “exceptionally well combined” into a monotheistic psalm.¹³³ Elsewhere, the hypostasis of the spirit was conceived as an angel that promoted God’s justice (Job 33:23).¹³⁴ Still, at other times, it was something more powerful or more intimate than an angel (e.g., Isa 63:9; 14). As the idea developed, Volz argued that the

¹³⁰ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 114. On the supposed end of prophecy, see discussion above.

¹³¹ Volz reasoned that scholars do not have access to the actual events but only to ideas about those events. Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, v–vi.

¹³² Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, 145–94.

¹³³ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, 147.

¹³⁴ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, 185.

realm of the hypostasized spirit expanded beyond the Israelite community to encompass also the wider cosmos and all creation. In this way, the spirit becomes a way of talking not only about the relationship between God and God's people but also about something elemental to being human.¹³⁵

Another, less developed but no less crucial contribution was Volz's descriptions of scribal work (including translation) as an effect of the spirit. As discussed above, Gunkel granted this distinction to early Jewish writers who were part of the Jesus movement, but not to those who were the antecedents of rabbinic Judaism. Volz, however, recognized how Second Temple and rabbinic writers praised the biblical texts and their Greek-speaking translators as spirit empowered.¹³⁶ Citing Philo, Volz explained that the translators of the Septuagint were not really translators but rather, "high priests and prophets" who continued in the "most pure spirit of Moses."¹³⁷

Ultimately, one of the most praiseworthy aspects of Volz's work might be his relatively nuanced approach to literature wherein spirits are described as independent or actively opposed to God. In this way, *Der Geist Gottes* would anticipate several themes of his later *Das Dämonische in Jahwe*.¹³⁸ Volz explores those texts in which God (or an aspect of God) appears as "eerie, horrid, pernicious, cruel, fiendish, and nearly satanic."¹³⁹ Rather than partitioning these texts and their associated theological implications into separate discussions, however, Volz saw

¹³⁵ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, 172–73.

¹³⁶ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, 82–83.

¹³⁷ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, 84. *Mos.* 2:39–40.

¹³⁸ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, 2–6; Paul Volz, *Das Dämonische in Jahwe* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1924). I am grateful to Maria Metzler for her allowing me the use of her unpublished translation of this book.

¹³⁹ He cites Exod 4:24; 2 Sam 6:7; 24:1 as initial examples. Volz, *Das Dämonische in Jahwe*, 4.

these perceptions of God (and efforts by later Jewish writers to understand them) as intimately connected to the more positive spirit phenomena of the Bible. Put into the terms of classical systematic theology, we might say that Volz recognized a connection between “demonology” and “pneumatology” that predated the New Testament and that would come to develop differently in Judaism and in Christianity.

3) Daniel Lys: *A Historical-Grammatical Approach*

It was several years before the next significant book length study on spirit phenomena in biblical literature would appear, Daniel Lys’ *‘Rûach’, le souffle dan l’Ancien Testament*, “‘Rûach’, the breath in the Old Testament”.¹⁴⁰ Lys presented the most sophisticated and detailed historical-grammatical study of רוח up to his day and his work remained a standard reference for those working on the subject for several decades. Lys sought linguistic patterns in the usage of רוח in biblical literature, paying particular attention to gender and the presence and absence of articles,

¹⁴⁰ Daniel Lys, *‘Rûach’, le souffle dan l’Ancien Testament*. Etudes d’histoire et de philosophie religieuses (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962). Other studies preceded Lys but many were more oriented towards Christian theology than towards the Hebrew Bible or early Jewish literature. See, for example: Gérard Verbeke, *L’Évolution de la Doctrine du Pneuma du Stoicisme à S. Augustin* (Paris: D. de Brouwer, 1945); and Robert Koch, *Geist und Messias* (Freiburg: Herder, 1950) (cf. his later book, also with a heavily eschatological focus, Robert T. Koch, *Der Geist Gottes im Alten Testament* [Bern: Peter Lang, 1991]). See also several articles by Paul van Imschoot, “L’action de l’Esprit de Jahvé dans l’A.T.,” *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 23 (1934): 553–87; “Source de Vie”; “L’Esprit de Jahvé et l’alliance nouvelle dans l’ A.T.,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 16 (1936): 201–20; “L’Esprit de Jahvé, principe de vie morale dans l’A.T.,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 16 (1939): 457–67; “L’Esprit de Jahvé, source de la piété dan l’ancien Testament,” *Bible et Vie Chretienne* 6 (1954): 17–30 and his Old Testament theology translated into English: *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, trans. Kathryn Sullivan and Fidelis Buck (New York: Desclee, 1965), esp. 122–33, 172–88. Other studies continued along similar vectors set by Gunkel, Weisel, and Volz. See: E. D. Burton, *Spirit, Soul, and Flesh* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1918); Friedrich Büchsel, *Der Geist Gottes im Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1926). See also Schoemaker, “The Use of”; Briggs, “The Use of רוח in the Old Testament”; Johannes Hehn, “Zum Problem des Geistes im alten Orient und im A.T.,” *ZAW* 43 (1925): 210–25; Sigmund Mowinckel, “The ‘Spirit’ and the ‘Word’ in the Pre-exilic Reforming Prophets,” *JBL* 53 (1934): 199–227; Sabatino Moscati, “The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician Cosmogony” *JBL* 66.3 (1947): 305–10; Harry Orlinsky, “The Plain Meaning of Ruach in Gen 1:2,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 48 (1957): 174–82; William D. Davies, “The Old and New Obedience: I. The Lord the Spirit” in *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1948), 177–226.

in order to map its different meanings. The study includes extensive statistics for the term רוּחַ throughout the Hebrew Bible as well as comparisons with נֶפֶשׁ, showing which term is preferred for which meanings, when and where.

Like those before him, Lys charts a range of meanings of רוּחַ including wind, breath, moving air, and spirit. Unlike many of his predecessors, however, Lys understood רוּחַ as beginning neither as an exclusively divine nor human term, but one that helped articulate the relationship between God and creation. In this way, one of Lys's more important contributions was his emphasis on the priority of the theological understanding of רוּחַ in biblical literature. This was in contrast to previous scholars who had argued that human "breath" was the most fundamental understanding of רוּחַ, and that attribution of a spirit to God was a form of anthropomorphizing. Lys, in contrast, argued that the human רוּחַ was a relatively late conception in biblical literature, and then, only as something weak and fleeting.¹⁴¹ Instead, the power of the רוּחַ began with God and it was rather "theomorphism" (*théomorphisme*) that drove its development and extension to human beings.¹⁴²

4) Lloyd Neve: *Evolving Theologies of the "Spirit of God"*

A Lutheran missionary who first became interested in spirit phenomena after encountering Pentecostal Christians in Japan, Lloyd Neve's *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* was the first book-length study of spirit phenomena in the Bible to appear in English.¹⁴³ Completed as a

¹⁴¹ Lys, 'Rûach', *le souffle*, 348–59.

¹⁴² Lys, 'Rûach', *le souffle*, 57 and elsewhere.

¹⁴³ Lloyd R. Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1972). See also Josef Scharbert, *Fleisch, Geist und Seele im Pentateuch: Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie der Pentateuchquellen* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1966); Hans Heinrich Schmid, "Ekstatische und charismatische Geistwirkungen im Alten Testament," in *Erfahrung und Theologie des Heiligen Geistes*, ed. C. Heitman, H. Mühlen (Munich: Kösel,

doctoral dissertation at Union Theological Seminary, Neve acknowledged a significant debt to Lys but took as his jumping off point a modification of Lys's thesis. Neve trifurcated the meaning of רוח slightly differently: not wind, breath, and spirit but instead: 1) wind, 2) רוח in man (whether breath or spirit), and 3) רוח of God. In this way, he sought to extend Lys's study by focusing on those occurrences of רוח in the Old Testament where it specifically referred to the "spirit of God."¹⁴⁴

Neve arranged his study chronologically, arguing that understandings of the spirit of God in the Hebrew Bible transformed over time. The oldest texts saw the spirit as God's power intervening in the course of nature (e.g., Exod 15:8; 2 Sam 22:16). Eventually this notion of the spirit gets extended to the pre-exilic judges, prophets, and kings who act as God's agents via the spirit (e.g., 1 Kgs 18:12; 1 Kgs 22:10; Hos 9:7). At this stage, the activities of the spirit in these texts are still external (in the sense that it does not yet work on the interior, moral dimensions of a person, e.g., Ps 51).

Neve explains that in the exilic and early post-exilic periods, notions of the spirit of God turn inward as biblical texts become more aware of individuals and the inner life (e.g., Jer 11–20; Second Isaiah). Pneumatologies of restoration (e.g., Ezek 37:1–14) partner with pneumatologies

1974), 83–100; Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, "Aspekte des alttestamentlichen Geistverständnisses" in *Sola Scriptura: Beiträge zu Exegese und Hermeneutik des Alten Testaments*, ed. P. Höffken (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 96–106; Henri Cazelles, "Prolégomènes à une étude de l'Esprit dans le Bible" in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift für Prof. Mag. Dr. Dr. J.P.M. van der Ploeg O.P. zur Vollendung des siebzigsten Lebensjahres am 4. Juli 1979*, ed. W. C. Delsman, et. al. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982), 75–90; Marie Isaacs, *The Concept of Spirit: A Study of Pneuma in Hellenistic Judaism and its Bearing on the New Testament* (London: Heythrop College, 1976); Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives Series; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Arvid Kapelrud, "The Spirit and the Word in the Prophets," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 11 (1977–78): 40–47; Ze'ev Weisman, "The Personal Spirit as Imparting Authority" *ZAW* 93 (1981): 225–34; Henri Cazelles, "Daniel Arichea, "Translating Breath and Spirit," *The Bible Translator* 4 (1983): 209–13; Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1980); Frédéric Manns, *Le Symbole Eau-Esprit dans le Judaïsme Ancien*, *Studii biblici franciscani analecta* 19 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1983); Norman H. Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1983), 143–158.

¹⁴⁴ Neve, *The Spirit of God*, 3.

of creation as the spirit becomes more closely associated with the giving of life (e.g., Gen 1:2; Isa 40:13; Ps 33:6; Job 26:13). Neve sees the final period—“from Daniel to Ezra”—as a time of decline for theologies of the spirit of God as Judaism shifted its focus away from acts of power to the law and “[t]he law, by nature, precluded the activity of the spirit.”¹⁴⁵

A final significant perspective present in Neve’s work that can be sensed in later studies was his shift away from Gunkel’s more *Sitz im Leben*-oriented approach. Neve’s focus was on the literature itself and to a lesser extent on the major historical events assumed to lie behind it (e.g., the fall of the northern kingdom or the exile). This can be seen as a correction, since the form critical approach sometimes assumed uniform settings for what were in reality quite diverse spirit texts in biblical literature. However, by moving away from religious experience—even one constructed literarily—interpreters ran the risk of undoing Gunkel’s important insight into the effects of spirit phenomena.

5) Arthur Everett Sekki, *רוח at Qumran*

Sekki’s 1987 dissertation at the University of Wisconsin was the first exhaustive study of the use of *רוח* in the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹⁴⁶ Following in the footsteps of Daniel Lys, Sekki applied a

¹⁴⁵ Neve, *The Spirit of God*, 122. See my refutation of this position in chapter one and in the above discussion of Gunkel and Volz.

¹⁴⁶ Arthur Everett Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruah at Qumran*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 110 (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1989). See a similar, more recent treatment influenced by Sekki, Kvalvaag, “The Spirit in Human Beings”. See also Otto Betz, *Offenbarung und Schriftforschung in der Qumransekte*, WUNT 6, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960); George Johnston, “Spirit and Holy Spirit in the Qumran Literature” in *New Testament Sidelights: Essays in Honor of Alexander Converse Purdy*, ed. Harvey K. McArthur (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1960), 27–43; Werner Foerster, “Der Heilige Geist im Spätjudentum” *New Testament Studies* 8.2 (1962): 117–34; Herbert G. May, “Cosmological Reference in the Qumran Doctrine of the Two Spirits and in Old Testament Imagery” *JBL* 82.1 (1963): 1–14; John Pryke, “‘Spirit’ and ‘Flesh’ in the Qumran Documents and some New Testament Texts” *Revue de Qumrân* 5.3 (1965): 345–60; Secundino Castro, “Experiencia religiosa del Espíritu en la Biblia” *Revista de Espiritualidad* 42 (1983) 7–34; John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), esp. 153–55; Robert W. Kvalvaag “The Spirit in Human Beings in Some Qumran Non-Biblical Texts” in *Qumran between the Old and New Testaments*. ed. Frederick H Cryer and Thomas L. Thompson. Copenhagen International Seminar 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 159–80; Jean Duhaime, “Dualism” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Edited by Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam. 2 vols.

similar methodology, mapping every occurrence of the word in the then published scrolls and categorizing each according to a range of meanings: “God’s Spirit, man’s spirit, angel/demon, wind or breath.”¹⁴⁷ Like Lys, Sekki is relentless in his attention to syntactic-grammatical issues. Sekki’s result, however, is a study generous on data but meager on synthesis—particularly on larger theological ideas. Additionally, the utility of Sekki’s study is limited by several unexamined presuppositions.¹⁴⁸ Among them is an absence of attention to genre in the texts surveyed and a propensity to treat the ideology of the scrolls as a unified whole—a long discarded idea even in 1989.

Sekki’s project begins with a survey of previous literature on the understanding of רוח in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Sekki shows how conceptions of spirits are so robust in the scrolls that many of the earliest scholars studying them assumed that these ideas must have come from elsewhere—either from Zoroastrianism or from early followers of Jesus. As the dating of the scrolls became more secure, however, Christian influence could be reliably ruled out. Likewise, eventually most scholars would come to agree that while some Iranian influences can certainly be detected in the scrolls, it would be difficult to parse out their precise imprint in what had become—at least as presented in the Dead Sea Scrolls—a contextualized, thoroughly “Jewish,” theology of spirits.

Monumental in this regard was a short article published in 1955 by Erik Sjöberg.¹⁴⁹ In it, Sjöberg reversed his earlier position and agreed with K. G. Kuhn (against the scholarly

(Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 215-20; Jörg Frey, “Paul’s View of the Spirit in the Light of Qumran,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Pauline Literature* J. S. Rey, ed., StTDJ 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 239–262.

¹⁴⁷ Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruah*, 1.

¹⁴⁸ These are discussed at length in Maurya P. Horgan, review of *The Meaning of Ruah at Qumran*, by Arthur Everett Sekki, *CBQ* 54.3 (1992): 544–46.

¹⁴⁹ Erik Sjöberg, “Neuschöpfung in den Toten-Meer-Rollen,” *Studia Theologica* 9.2 (1955): 131-37.

consensus at the time) that several of the scrolls portrayed initiation into the community as an internally transformative “new creation” that was intensely spiritual in nature.¹⁵⁰ These ideas, Sekki argues, are consistent with evolving theologies of God’s spirit present in the Hebrew Bible. He goes on to show how the Kuhn/Sjöberg position on Dead Sea Scroll pneumatology became the new consensus among scholars and he essentially seeks to confirm it in his project.

At the end of the exhaustive study, Sekki concludes:

The evidence, then, points to Qumran as an eschatologically oriented community which saw itself as the heir of God's eschatological Spirit and regarded this Spirit as the basis and source of its spirituality. As noted above, however, exceptions to this view can be seen in 1QS 3:13-4:26, 1QH 15 and 4Q186 in which the spirituality characteristic of the sect is given to the sectarian at birth. How or why these alternate and conflicting pneumatologies arose is difficult to determine, but it seems clear from a literary standpoint, at least, that they remained isolated and secondary in Qumranian thought.¹⁵¹

Each of these short observations perhaps should have been unpacked further than Sekki’s project provided. This is true, in particular, for the difficulties in integrating the “alternate and conflict pneumatologies” in the scrolls (e.g., the treatise on the two spirits [1QS 3:13–4:26]). Still, Sekki’s project was a valuable first, dissertation-length effort at studying spirit phenomena in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

6) Manfred Dreytza, *The Theological Use of Ruah*

Manfred Dreytza’s 1989 PhD dissertation at the University of Basel—published as *Der theologische Gebrauch von Ruah im Alten Testament: Eine wort- und satzsemantische Studie*, “The Theological Use of *Ruah* in the Old Testament: A Word and Semantic Study”—offers a

¹⁵⁰ Karl Georg Kuhn, “Die in Palästina gefundenen hebräischen Texte und das Neue Testament,” *ZTW* 47 (1950): 192–211.

¹⁵¹ Sekki, *The Meaning of Ruah*, 223.

helpful summary and synthesis of studies on spirit phenomena up to his day.¹⁵² Dreytza's study also provides more detail than most on conceptions of "winds" in ancient Near Eastern cognate cultures and languages as well as an extensive discussion on the meteorological sense of רוח. Bolstered by an especially thorough discussion of previous scholarship, Dreytza organizes his main arguments synchronically, resulting in an incisive study on theological aspects of רוח in the Hebrew Bible utilizing a modern linguistic approach influenced by John Lyons.¹⁵³ Dreytza distinguishes three functions of רוח as an agent, medium, and patient (*patiens*) of God and compares its usages with other terms such as מַלְאָךְ "angel/messenger" and יָד "hand." He details seven levels of meaning and effects for the term: 1) Mighty Works through People, 2) Mighty Effects on People, 3) Ecstatic Experiences, 4) Wise Aptitudes, 5) Prophetic Speech, 6) Renewing or Reorienting Activity, and 7) A Designation of God's self. Though it might be argued that Dreytza's study offers little new insights, his organization and synthesis of previous scholarship was a welcome contribution.

7) Wilf Hildebrandt, *Spirit Theologically Organized*

Wilf Hildebrandt's *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* was the first scholarly monograph of its kind written from an openly Pentecostal-friendly perspective.¹⁵⁴ Ostensibly, Hildebrandt's analysis sought to "consider relevant pneumatological passages within their

¹⁵² Manfred Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von Ruah im Alten Testament: Eine wort- und satzsemantische Studie* (Basel: Brunnen, 1992). See also Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Ruah bewegt die Welt: Gottes schöpferische Lebenskraft in der Krisenzeit des Exils* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1992).

¹⁵³ John Lyons, *Semantics*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977).

¹⁵⁴ Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1995). See also Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah*, JSOTSup 271 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

[historical] contexts in order to bring forth their plain teaching and instruction.”¹⁵⁵ Yet, in practice, Hildebrandt’s analysis is more likely to draw on insights from Second Temple, early Rabbinic, and early Christian interpretation than from the comparative evidence of ancient Near Eastern cognate cultures, suggesting a greater openness to reception history than his stated method suggests.

Unlike previous books of this genre, Hildebrandt organized his study neither by a reconstructed chronology of biblical texts nor by different proposed definitions for רוח. Instead, Hildebrandt discussed various theological functions of the spirit of God in biblical attention with special attention to the three-fold canon.¹⁵⁶ Though this structure was (at least transparently) more subjective than other schemes, it provided Hildebrandt the opportunity to accommodate for more nuance in the definition of רוח than other scholars surveyed here as well to incorporate examples of spirit texts where the root does not appear.¹⁵⁷

8) John R. Levison, *Gunkel Revisited and Second Temple Judaism Revitalized*

Arguably, John R. Levison has contributed the most significant scholarship on spirit phenomena in biblical literature in the last twenty years.¹⁵⁸ In his most substantial book on the topic, *Filled with the Spirit*, Levison all but claims to take up the mantle left behind by Gunkel and, in offering a continuation as well as a significant correction of his predecessor, attempts to

¹⁵⁵ Hildebrandt, *Spirit of God*, xvii.

¹⁵⁶ Hildebrandt’s primary theological categories were “the Spirit[sic] of God in creation,” “the Spirit and God’s people,” “the Spirit of God in Israel’s Leadership,” and “the Spirit of God in Prophecy.”

¹⁵⁷ Some of these additional texts were too dependent on later conceptions of the spirit (e.g., texts that include doves like Gen 8:8–12; cf. Mk 1:9–11; b. Hag. 15a).

¹⁵⁸ E.g., John R. Levison, “Did the Spirit Withdraw from Israel?”; *The Spirit in First Century Judaism*; “Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders”, *CBQ* 65 (2003) 503–521; *Filled with the Spirit*. Levison and Frey, *The Holy Spirit*.

accomplish twice as much. Levison frames *Filled with the Spirit* as a work of *Religionsgeschichte* and charts the respective evolutions and distinctions of pneumatological beliefs in three sets of literature: 1) Israelite Literature, 2) Jewish Literature, 3) Early Christian Literature. Uncharacteristic of many of the other scholars surveyed here, Levison's work has seen significant cross-engagement from both mainstream academic and confessional scholars.¹⁵⁹ Consistent with the scope of this project, my discussion below highlights four significant contributions from Levison that have influenced the field and this project, which are mostly located in the first two sections.

a) The Anthropology of the “holy spirit”

One of the more significant contributions of Levison's work is the reevaluation of spirit language in the earliest Israelite literature as being references to a created spirit rather than to the creator's spirit. As Pentecostal theologian Max Turner explains, while commenting on Levison's use of lowercased “holy spirit” throughout the book:

[*Filled with the Spirit*] requires us to read nearly all references to ‘holy spirit/spirit of God’ without anachronistically reading them as ‘the Holy Spirit’, i.e. it is not the transcendent divine Spirit, occasionally on loan to humans; rather it is the immanent God-given anthropological spirit: the living heart, mind and soul, ever open to, and influenced by, the Lord himself.¹⁶⁰

Indeed, Levison argues that the earliest Israelite conception of spirit was that of one imparted at life that then departed at death. This was a spirit that was, by definition, present in all of humanity (and perhaps all of creation). It was also a spirit that was permanent and present

¹⁵⁹ For example, *Filled with the Spirit* received endorsement blurbs from a variety of scholars including John J. Collins, Walter Brueggemann, James D. G. Dunn, Alan F. Segal, Susan R. Garrett, and Amos Yong. See, also two lengthy, multi-author “roundtable”-style discussions of *Filled with the Spirit* in two major Pentecostal peer-reviewed journals: *Pneuma* 33 (2011): 25–93 and *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 20 (2011): 193–231.

¹⁶⁰ Max Turner, “Levison's *Filled with the Spirit*: A Brief Appreciation and Response” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 20 (2011): 193–200, 195.

regardless of one's moral behavior or posture towards the creator. With reference to creational texts that utilize "breath" or "spirit" (e.g., Gen 2:7; Job 12:7–10; 27:2–5; 34:14–15; Ps 104:29–30), Levison makes the case that a spirit "that gives life" was the most foundational pneumatological idea present in the Bible and the default conception of Israelite literature.¹⁶¹

b) Reinterpreting Ecstasy and Inspiration

Having established this base conception, Levison moves to other spirit texts in the Hebrew Bible that are more commonly treated as examples of "charismatic" or "empowering" spirit acts (and, by extension, seen, by some, as God's "Holy Spirit"). A text that is sometimes taken as a clear-cut example of a charismatic infilling of spirit is that of Bezalel and the other artisans who construct the wilderness shrine:

¹ The LORD spoke to Moses: ² "See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur of the tribe Judah. ³ and I have filled (וַאֲמַלֵּא) him with a divine spirit (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים)¹⁶² with wisdom, understanding, knowledge and every kind of craftsmanship ⁴ to devise designs, to work with gold, silver, and bronze ⁵ in the cutting of stone for filling and in the cutting of wood to do every kind of craft. ⁶ I myself have appointed with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan, and I have given wisdom to everyone who is wise of heart so that they may do all that I have commanded you." (Exodus 31:1–6)

Levison argues that, in isolation, it is understandable that so many interpreters would read Bezalel as the recipient of a special endowment of spirit specifically given for this purpose.¹⁶³ In the wider context of this passage in Exodus, however, he argues that the spirit here is better

¹⁶¹ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 14–33.

¹⁶² Other options include "the divine spirit," "a spirit of God," or "the spirit of God." See my discussion on the translation of this and similar phrases in chapter five.

¹⁶³ Levison provides several examples of this interpretation, many of them works focused on New Testament pneumatology, Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 59 n. 24. These include James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 648, n. 111 and Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 835.

understood as a filling of the innate spirit given to all of creation.¹⁶⁴ His argument is worth quoting at length:

The narrative symbiosis of heart and spirit suggests that “spirit” ought to be understood similarly, in which case the emphasis would lie here less upon an irruption of the spirit than upon an enhancement of spirit, which is too closely aligned with heart to be understood as a fresh endowment. There is no new heart, no new spirit, in this narrative. There is indeed something new here: at this point in Israel’s history, spirits are, in an unparalleled way, full to the brim with skill, overflowing with competence. Taken alongside the corresponding image of wisdom-of-heart, God’s filling Bezalel with “spirit of God, wisdom,” does not mean that he received an entirely fresh influx of spirit, a rush of the spirit, or a new spirit altogether, though the language of filling may at first blush suggest something akin to this. The parallel between giving wisdom in the heart of the wise-of-heart, filling of the wise-of-heart with a spirit of wisdom, and filling Bezalel with spirit of God and wisdom, suggests that the most suitable interpretation is this: the spirit of God with which God had filled Bezalel and the artisans from the start, the spirit in them that was already the source of skill, was ever more richly enhanced with wisdom, insight, and intelligence at this salutary moment in Israel’s history.¹⁶⁵

Levison then makes similar arguments for other non-charismatic instances of spirit-infilling.¹⁶⁶

Understandably, this conclusion has been a point of contention in the reception of Levison’s book, especially by those ideologically invested in seeing evidence of charismatic, spiritual gifts in the Old Testament.¹⁶⁷ At times, opposition to this relatively minor intervention can be surprisingly fierce, causing one to wonder what is really at stake in such an argument.¹⁶⁸ In my view, the fixation on the *origin* and *timing* of spirit infilling (i.e., whether Bezalel and

¹⁶⁴ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 58–64.

¹⁶⁵ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 62.

¹⁶⁶ E.g., Joseph (pp. 39–41) and Daniel (pp. 74–80).

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, Archie T. Wright, “The Spirit in Early Jewish Biblical Interpretation: Examining John R. Levison’s *Filled with the Spirit*” *Pneuma* 33 (2011): 35–46 and Roger Stronstad, “Review of John R. Levison’s, *Filled with the Spirit* Part III, Early Christian Literature Chapter 3, ‘Filled with the Spirit and the Book of Acts’” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 20 (2011): 201–06.

¹⁶⁸ One likely stake is the doctrine, held by many Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians, that baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second and subsequent infilling of the Holy Spirit that is distinct from the what is imparted in water baptism. See J. Rodman Williams, “Baptism in Holy Spirit,” *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. and enl. ed., ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 354–63.

others were filled with a divine spirit at birth for the purpose of building the tabernacle, or whether it happened later at Sinai) obscures the phenomenon as it is described in Exodus, which is, arguably, focused on other aspects of this spirit.¹⁶⁹ In this way, by focusing on questions of *whose spirit* and *when*, both Levison and his interlocutors fail to recognize the essential permeability of spirits in these texts.

c) Ecstasy and Greco-Roman Imposition on Second Temple Judaism

In Levison's reconstruction of the history of Jewish religion, charismatic and empowering views of spirits do not make their way into biblical literature until the Second Temple period and the advent of Hellenization. The works of Ben Sira, Philo, the Wisdom of Solomon, and other Second Temple Jewish works clear the ground for equating God's holy spirit with stoic notions of the cosmic spirit.¹⁷⁰ Further, Jewish interpreters came to associate the spirit of God with Israel's prophets only after they encountered the ecstasy traditions of Greece (e.g., Pythia of Delphi and Cassandra of Dodona).¹⁷¹ Thus, "there are but slivers of ecstasy, if any at all, embedded in Israel's corporate memory."¹⁷² Among other consequences, these incursions of foreign influence into Jewish culture as well as into the interpretation of Israel's ancestral writings help to make the more fantastic and ecstatic spirit phenomena portrayed in the New Testament possible.

This project has already problematized the interpretive method of attempting to map which elements of a given culture may be taken as authentic and which should be seen as foreign

¹⁶⁹ I return to this issue in chapter four.

¹⁷⁰ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 151–53.

¹⁷¹ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 176–77.

¹⁷² Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 219.

influence.¹⁷³ As with other examples of this approach, in Levison's case, the problem is not in recognizing the parallels but in characterizing the implications. Because Second Temple Jewish descriptions of spirit ecstasy, possession, and trance came to resemble Greco-Roman portrayals of similar phenomena when the two cultures met, should we then conclude that, before Hellenistic tampering, there was no Jewish form of these practices? Is this description of spirit phenomena that is more conversant with Hellenistic categories somehow less Jewish? It is possible that such a genealogy of ideas creates more problems than it solves.

d) Levison's Spirit and this Project

Because *Filled with the Spirit* is so influential, relatively recent, and covers some of the same primary text ground as this project, it is necessary that I conclude this summary with several comments on my posture vis-à-vis Levison.

First, for all the gains that Levison has made in recovering the vital spirituality of Second Temple Judaism, his is still a project primarily oriented towards the New Testament. I do not fault the book this trajectory—it is a worthwhile project—but Levison's discussion of spirit language in Israelite literature is less an explanation of these texts for their own sake than it is an attempt to reorient specifically Christian understandings of spirit phenomena in the Hebrew Bible around a particular narrative. For Levison, the Israelite texts are read in such a way as better to contrast them with Second Temple Jewish innovation and New Testament pneumatology. In this regard, Levison has a lot in common with Gunkel. In contrast, this project, while still, at times, discussing New Testament texts, treats them as some of the many examples of spirit phenomena that can be found in the literature of (late) Second Temple Judaism. Most

¹⁷³ See discussion in chapter one.

importantly, this project seeks to find what roots there are for these expressions within the biblical tradition, without recourse to foreign influence.

Second, in chapters four and five, I utilize categories that at first appear similar to Levison's (i.e., chapter four "animating spirits" and chapter five "transitory spirits"). As will become clear, however, our respective usages of these categories are very different. Levison arranges his discussion into a history-of-religions/evolutionary paradigm. Thus, the "spirit of life" in early Israelite literature should not be wrongfully and anachronistically interpreted by modern scholars as "the spirit of ecstasy" of Second Temple Judaism—and vice versa. Alternatively, I discuss these two conceptions phenomenologically rather than chronologically, suggesting that both exist side-by-side in biblical literature. More significantly, I treat these categories less as distinct types and more as a continuum, with most biblical texts falling somewhere in between. Indeed, it would seem that, in contrast to Levison's strict divisions, many biblical texts attempt to accommodate the existence of both conceptions, which contributes to a continuous font of creative spirit phenomena.

B. Other Scholarship Relevant to this Study

In contrast to the scholars of spirit and pneumatology above, the works discussed below are more varied across the subfields in biblical studies. For each example, I have striven to illustrate precisely how it has influenced this project as well as listed in the footnotes the other notable works on the subject that I have consulted.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ They are arranged in a loose chronological order, though in instances where more than one work is discussed several overlaps have occurred.

1) Robert R. Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Ancient Israelite Prophecy*

Robert Wilson's *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* is one well-known attempt to apply the findings of contemporary social sciences to biblical studies.¹⁷⁵ Wilson surveyed an impressive amount of anthropological and sociological data on prophecy (or prophecy-like) behavior in existing societies around the world. In regards to spirit possession, Wilson consulted the most prominent theorists of his time (e.g., Ioan Lewis, Erika Bourguignon, and others) and employed their findings as part of his program to show how prophets in all cultures do not work in isolation but as a component of the societies in which they are found.¹⁷⁶ By utilizing a relatively comparable category to describe prophets—"intermediaries" for the deity—Wilson sought to make connections between contemporary practices of prophecy with depictions of like-behavior from the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible.

When it was received, Wilson's book was praised for its survey of sociological studies but often criticized for how it applied these findings to the Hebrew Bible.¹⁷⁷ In particular, Wilson applied with too heavy a hand the distinction between *central* and *peripheral* prophecy,

¹⁷⁵ Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*. Social science approaches were especially popular in the last twenty-five years of the twentieth-century—particularly for analysis of prophets and prophecy. See, for example, Alois Closs, "Prophetismus und Schamanismus aus der religionsethnologischen Perspektive," *Kairos* 14 (1972): 200–13; Robert C. Culley and Thomas W. Overholt, eds., *Anthropological Perspectives in the Study of Old Testament Prophecy*, Semeia 21 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981); David L. Petersen, *The Roles of Israel's Prophets*, JSOT 17 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1981); Don C. Benjamin, "An Anthropology of Prophecy" *BTB* 21.4 (1991): 135–44; Lester L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1995); Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Social Roles of Prophets in Early Achaemenid Judah," *JSOT* 25.93 (2001): 39–58. See also Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979); John Pairman Brown, "The Mediterranean Seer and Shamanism" *ZAW* 93.3 (1981): 374–400; Bernhard Lang, ed., *Anthropological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Ronald E. Clements, ed., *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological, and Political Perspectives. Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989).

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, Wilson *Prophecy and Society*, 21; 33–41; and 67.

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, G. W. Ahlström, review of *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, by Robert R. Wilson, *JNES* 44.3 (1985): 217–20; and George E. Mendenhall, review of *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, by Robert R. Wilson, *The Biblical Archaeologist* 44.3 (1981): 189–90.

thereby artificially polarizing texts that often contained elements of both or neither.¹⁷⁸

Additionally, Wilson structured his argument around a stark contrast between Ephraimite and Judean prophetic traditions, a division that often depended on speculative reconstructions of Israelite history. Similarly, his study underappreciated the role that scribal transmission and inner-biblical exegesis likely played in the formation of prophetic oracles as well as in the depictions of the lives of prophets in biblical literature. In this way, Wilson's focus on reconstructing the actual historical societies—rather than on the literary and ideological presentations of those societies—likely undermined the contribution his monograph might have made to biblical studies.

2) Jon D. Levenson, *Evil and The Transformation of the Combat Myth*

Jon D. Levenson's *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* is listed here both as an influential work for this project and as a representative example for a large body of scholarship on creation and the combat myth in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁷⁹ Of special interest in regards to this dissertation are the ways in which Levenson illuminates conceptions of evil in biblical literature—especially as he clarifies them in light of his admirers and critics in the preface to the second edition.¹⁸⁰

In contrast to other theologians who seek to engage evil and its related concepts in the Bible primarily as a problem of theodicy, Levenson clarifies that, “the overwhelming tendency

¹⁷⁸ As already discussed in chapter one, a similar critique has been leveled more broadly at anthropologists of spirit possession in this era, including Ioan Lewis, so it is likely that Wilson was only making diligent use of the tools with which he had been provided.

¹⁷⁹ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*. See also Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973), esp. 77–144; Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (New York: Association Press, 1967); Day, *God's Conflict*, and, of course, the paradigmatic Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*.

¹⁸⁰ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, xv–xxviii.

of biblical writers as they confront undeserved evil is not to *explain* it away but to call upon God to *blast* it away.”¹⁸¹ This is because evil, in biblical literature, is not usually synonymous with *nothingness* or *void* (as it is often defined in philosophical theology), but it is, in fact, “something”—that is, something with a “negative” charge.¹⁸² In one significant stream of interpretation in biblical literature, this *something* is articulated as the forces of chaos, the תהו ובהו of the primordial sea and/or a vicious sea monster. These are the mighty forces whose defeat provide a greater victory than what might be won over the mere privation of existence. According to Levenson, without this conception of evil, the numerous biblical texts that alternatively rejoice in or desperately anticipate God’s victory over an enemy are robbed of their necessary power and drama.

A second emphasis, related to the first, is the participation of God’s people in the defeat of evil through ritual and liturgy. At its heart, this is a criticism of an old and pervasive theological effort to magnify God’s omnipotence and power at the cost of human agency. Such a theological move:

deprives the deeds of human beings of any role in the cosmogonic-soteriological drama: the cultic community is reduced to the status of a passive beneficiary of God’s arbitrary and unmotivated action rather than a junior partner in his continual ordering of the world.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, xvii. Emphasis original. A similar point regarding the modern articulation of the problem of evil primarily as one of *intelligibility* is made by Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought*.

¹⁸² Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, xxi.

¹⁸³ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, xxvi. Levenson highlights the Protestant Reformation and its descendant theological traditions as a source for this theological impetus—not least because of liberal Protestantism’s lasting influence in scholarship and academia. It should be noted, however, that not all Protestant theologies emphasize God’s sovereignty at the expense of human agency. Certain Holiness traditions and the Wesleyan notion of “sanctification,” for example, have been identified as later correctives to this tendency in Reformation theology (as has Pentecostalism).

In Levenson's scheme, then, the ritual of telling and retelling the drama of God's defeat of the forces of chaos is, in fact, a component of that victory.

These two emphases are valuable points to carry over into this study not least because Levenson gets closer than many other scholars who write on this subject to articulating a conception of evil in biblical literature that is both critical and constructive—precisely what I hope to accomplish in this project. The *Chaoskampf* traditions in the Hebrew Bible that Levenson discusses are usually seen as having older and deeper roots in the ancient Near East than many of the spirit-oriented Second Temple texts that take central stage in this dissertation. However, in the chapters that follow, I assume that Levenson's two emphases persisted into late Second Temple Judaism and beyond. In particular, the conceptions of evil found in various apocalyptic texts show how the early Israelite idea of evil as *something* eventually came to be, in the views of some Jewish traditions, evil as *someone*. Further, by internalizing possession and other spirit phenomena, Jewish communities could actually embody the eschatological conflict portrayed in Judaism's ancestral writings and thereby participate in God's ultimate triumph even more consequentially.

3) Carol A. Newsom, *Studies of the Self in Second Temple Judaism*

Carol Newsom's, *The Self as Symbolic Space*, as well as her subsequent work on notions of the self and on human moral agency have been influential not only for this project but also for the field of Second Temple Jewish literature more generally.¹⁸⁴ The unusual manner in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were released and circulated insured that several generations of scholars would

¹⁸⁴ Newsom, *Self as Symbolic Space; The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009); "Models of the Moral Self"; Toward a Genealogy of the Introspective Self."

remain focused on editorial and organizational tasks. Likewise, historical-critical concerns dominated much of the early scholarship on the scrolls, buffering Qumran from wider trends in the humanities (see my discussion in chapter two). Newsom, however, has successfully incorporated aspects of Critical Theory into her studies of Second Temple Jewish texts without compromising on the traditional skills and perspectives of biblical scholars. Two insights in particular that are important for this study are highlighted below.

First, Newsom utilizes discourse analysis to show how Second Temple Jewish texts are designed to *do* things, rather than simply describe them—particularly in regard to shaping communal identity. This is poignantly illustrated in her discussion of the Treatise of the Two Spirits. A significant body of scholarship on the Treatise is focused on reconstructing certain historical circumstances behind the text (i.e., drawing a portrait of the Qumran community, assessing the literary relationship of the Treatise to the rest of 1QS). Other scholarship is focused on discerning the metaphysical worldview of the Treatise (i.e., fleshing out its mythic background or categorizing its theology as dualistic, determinist, etc.). While recognizing these efforts as valuable and worthwhile, Newsom also reminds us not to fixate on what the texts points to at the expense of missing why and how they do the pointing:

Although 1QS 3–4 looks forward to an eschatological resolution of the contradictions of the divided subject, one should remember the immediate literary context of 1QS 3–4 in the Serek ha-Yahad with its elaboration of the disciplines that make it possible for a person to enhance “his insight and the perfection of his way” (1QS 5:24). Thus the almost obsessive cultivation of a properly ordered character at Qumran is at least in part an attempt to resolve symbolically the ideological and historical contradictions created by the political domination of international empires. One only uncovers this, however, by analyzing the symbolic structures and tracing the displacement and repression of the political motive.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space*, 89.

By totalizing all knowledge into a stark moral system, the Treatise casts a vision of the community as able to transcend temporal circumstances beyond its control through obedience and self-discipline. The implication for this dissertation of Newsom's reorientation of scholarly attention towards the function of the Treatise as a constructor of communal identity should be clear: While the Treatise on the Two Spirits admittedly points towards potentially fascinating beliefs about the metaphysical realities of lesser deities in late Second Temple Judaism, it more importantly casts a vision of the moral self as liberated from the contradictions of the present (e.g., the troublesome political realities of Second Temple Judea) and as already participating in God's restoration by means of its eternal inheritance.

A second contribution is Newsom's more recent work on the evolution of the introspective self in early Judaism. Because the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple texts had already reflected at length on human agency, it is not surprising that the Jewish notion of the introspective self evolves specifically along the lines of individual morality. As Second Temple Jewish texts come increasingly to differentiate aspects of the self,

these self aspects become problematic in a manner that creates what I would describe as "self-alienation." That is to say, certain aspects of the self become "other" to the subject, and not just "other," but a feared and rejected other. The ideal self, constituted through the rejection and elimination of these problematic aspects, becomes a concern of significant urgency.¹⁸⁶

This insight proves especially influential for chapter six, where I argue that problematizing the self becomes "demonizing the self" for therapeutic purposes in some Second Temple era texts.

¹⁸⁶ Newsom, "Toward a Genealogy," 66.

4) Annette Reed and Loren Stuckenbruck: *Angels and Demons after the Bible*

While never a subject far from biblical studies, since the turn of the millennium there has been a noticeable uptick of interest among biblical scholars in myths and beliefs about demons, angels, spirits, etc. in the Second Temple period as well as in the separate but often included subject of the problem of evil. Two scholars in particular have emerged as leaders in this arena, both in terms of illuminating the texts that concern these issues and in setting a prominent research agenda for others: Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Annette Yoshiko Reed.¹⁸⁷

Of particular interest is Yoshiko Reed's, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity*. The book is impressive, both in terms of its coverage of primary literature and the scope of scholarly arguments on which it weighs in on. In chapter three, for instance, Yoshiko Reed uses a tour through the reception of the "fallen angels" tradition in pre-rabbinic Jewish texts (e.g., *Jubilees*, the Dead Sea Scrolls) to discuss also the problem of evil in early Judaism. The survey of primary literature brings Yoshiko Reed to a discussion of a theologically revealing conflict in early Judaism: "Competing Etiologies of Evil: Adam, Eve, and the Fallen Angels."¹⁸⁸ Yoshiko Reed demonstrates how reception and transformation of Jewish mythic traditions allowed newer texts to create fresh conceptions of human moral agency as well as to prescribe solutions to the problems of unjust suffering. Throughout the book, Yoshiko Reed moves fluidly between so-called "higher" and "lower" critical methods, including text critical, source critical,

¹⁸⁷ See Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of Rebellious Angels*. See also, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995); Christoph Auffarth and Loren Stuckenbruck, eds., *The Fall of Angels*, Themes in Biblical Narrative 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy North, eds., *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, JSNTSS 267 (London: Bloomsbury, 2004); Keith and Stuckenbruck, *Evil in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity*. Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels; Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, forthcoming).

¹⁸⁸ Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 110–13.

and history of religions approaches, showing how all levels of a text's composition are involved in creating its meaning. It is in this regard that *Fallen Angels* and other works of "New Philology" in biblical studies have served as models for textual approaches used in this project.¹⁸⁹

Loren T. Stuckenbruck's imprint on the field of Second Temple Jewish studies has been no less profound. In particular, Stuckenbruck has made significant contributions in the preparation of critical editions of primary texts as well as on conceptions of evil in the Second Temple period. The influence of his work can be detected throughout this project but one essay in particular should be highlighted here, "The Human being and Demonic Invasion."¹⁹⁰ In this essay, Stuckenbruck discusses six ways the enigmatic demonic material in the Gospels has been treated by contemporary scholars, including various political, literary, historical, and theological approaches. Recognizing that each of these methods is enlightening in its own way, Stuckenbruck nevertheless notes that

each lose some of their force to the extent that they make Jesus' exorcisms illustrate *something else* than what they claim to be: Jesus dealing with people who suffer from invasive demonic control.¹⁹¹

Stuckenbruck goes on to expound how the Gospels portray Jesus' exorcisms as both an apocalyptic and therapeutic ministry. He also comments on the damage that can be done when contemporary interpreters identify demonic possession in the New Testament too uncritically with mental illness.

Stuckenbruck's essay is primarily oriented towards exorcism and the unique spirit phenomena of the New Testament but his methodological questions were influential for me as I

¹⁸⁹ See my discussion in chapter two.

¹⁹⁰ Stuckenbruck, "Demonic Invasion." See also, "The Need for Protection from the Evil One and John's Gospel."

¹⁹¹ Stuckenbruck, "Demonic Invasion," 167.

discerned the tack I would take in this project. With so much focus on charting Second Temple Jewish myths and on explaining (in a modern sense) the curious spirit phenomena described in biblical literature, very few interpreters had examined these phenomena as they may have functioned within the wider world views of the texts and communities that employed them. Was it possible to read these spirit phenomena constructively, rather than as methods of dealing with problems that were not yet understood? In these aspirations, Stuckenbruck proved to be an instructive model.

5) Pieter F. Craffert, Jesus and Shamanism

Pieter F. Craffert's *The Life of a Galilean Shaman* is mentioned here primarily for his role as part of a wave of interest among New Testament scholars in anthropological approaches to studying possession and exorcism in the New Testament.¹⁹² When it was published in 2008, Craffert framed his study as an intervention into Historical Jesus scholarship, calling his book a paradigm shift away from the overly positivist approaches of his predecessors—alternatively either Wrede-influenced skeptics or Schweitzer-influenced apologists. Craffert was criticized both for his assessment of the gravity of his own work and for his simplistic assessment of the state of Historical Jesus scholarship.¹⁹³ Regardless, his work has proven influential as a significant

¹⁹² Craffert, *Galilean Shaman* and “Shamanism and the Shamanic Complex,” *BTB* 41.3 (2011): 151–61. See the earlier, See also, Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy*; Craig S. Keener “Spirit Possession as a Cross-Cultural Experience,” *BBR* 20.2 (2010): 215–36; Stevan L. Davies, *Spirit Possession and the Origins of Christianity* (Dublin: Bardic, 2014); and forthcoming Bazzana, *Christ and Beelzebul*.

¹⁹³ This discussion constitutes a significant portion of the book. See critique in Christian Stecker, “‘The Duty of Discontent’: Some Remarks on Pieter F. Craffert’s *The Life of a Galilean Shaman: Jesus of Nazareth in Anthropological-Historical Perspective*,” trans. Stephen Hamilton *JSHJ* 11 (2013): 251–80 as well as Craffert’s response: Pieter F. Craffert, “Performing ‘The Duty of Discontent’ in Dialogue with Christian Stecker: A Plea for Cross-Cultural Historical Jesus Research,” *JSHJ* 11 (2013): 281–99.

reference point for applications of anthropological approaches to the New Testament and to possession texts in particular.

In parts two and three of this monograph, Craffert applies the anthropological paradigm of “shaman” to the depictions of Jesus in Gospels both canonical and extra-canonical. Craffert synthesizes a definition for shamans and shamanism (out of the myriad of possibilities that have existed in western scholarship and culture for centuries) in this way: First, a shaman is a religious specialist who utilizes altered states of consciousness (ASCs) to provide services to his or her community. Second, this religious specialist exercises a concentration of a variety of services (including healing, the management of spirits, the control of weather) that might otherwise be spread out across multiple individuals. With this definition, some shamanistic functions of Jesus’ ministry might emerge to mind immediately (e.g., healing, exorcism), whereas others require further exposition (e.g., the stories of miraculous catches of fish as shamanistic control of animals, Jesus’ baptism as a shamanistic initiation ritual).¹⁹⁴ Craffert admits that his concept of a shaman is considerably more *etic* than *emic*, and that, indeed, it is just this kind of cross-cultural concept that is necessary to break Historical Jesus studies out of its positivist rut. Expounding Jesus as a historical figure is not as important to Craffert as expounding him as a social type or as a component of a larger social system. In this way, any account of Jesus’ life (including miracles) in the Gospels should be treated as credible even if it is unlikely be historical. The event “happened” socially, as a result of a shared ASC or otherwise, and thus should be

¹⁹⁴ Craffert has been criticized for his use of the term “shaman,” an often problematic category in western discourse, though, in truth, something of an empty vessel into which many different understandings have been poured. See Strecker, “The Duty of Discontent,” 266–69. The term also rankled more conservative interpreters who resented the association of Jesus with a religious office perceived as pagan.

interpreted according to a cross-cultural, anthropological model that can account for such social experiences.

The focus of *Galilean Shaman* on the Historical Jesus (and its associated mountain of scholarship) make Craffert's work instructive for this dissertation in terms of method but less so in terms of content. Further, it must be admitted that the New Testament appears relatively close to the persons and events it describes when compared to the Hebrew Bible and most Second Temple Jewish literature. In this way, there exists the idea in New Testament scholarship that readers might actually be able to access a historical Jesus (or Paul) in a way that simply does not exist for a historical Moses or even a historical Ezekiel. If nothing else, anthropological models are more likely to seem promising for enlightening history when the communities and figures of the past feel relatively well fleshed out in the literature.

Still, Craffert's work is significant for this project because it demonstrates one mode of applying possession studies to biblical studies that I am *not* attempting: that is, making an intervention into how the history of this era and these communities is studied through the imposition of an unapologetically *etic* scholarly construct, "shamanism." Instead, this dissertation attempts to explicate *emic* concepts and vocabulary of spirit phenomena in biblical literature using strategies developed by anthropologists and ethnographers to study similar phenomena in their respective contexts. By searching for and exploring indigenous categories, it is hoped that this project will ultimately be more often complementary to previous scholarship that analyze these texts from different perspectives (whereas Craffert intentionally frames his work as more often contradictory).

6) *Miryam T. Brand, Evil Within and Without*

A valuable resource for my study has been Miryam Brand's *Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature*.¹⁹⁵ Brand surveys a wide range of Second Temple Jewish texts having to do with conceptions of sin and moral agency in extensive exegetical detail. The governing organizational structure of the book is distinguishing between texts that perceive evil and sin as originating "within" the person versus those that see it as originating "without." Brand's introduction makes it clear that these categories are often blurred and ambiguous in the primary literature, though she similarly employs the familiar categories of "determinism" and "free will" throughout, for lack of (as-yet) better terminology in studies of Second Temple Judaism.¹⁹⁶

In part I, Brand identifies a correlation between conceptions of sin and genres of literature in Second Temple Judaism. For example, prayers and petitions tend to emphasize humanity's internal and inevitable sinfulness whereas covenantal texts are more inclined to assume the possibility of moral choice. Philosophical texts (e.g., Ben Sira and Philo) are concerned with distancing God from any blame for human sin at all.

In part II, Brand discusses the portrayal of demons in Second Temple Judaism (i.e., evil "without") with analysis of several figures including the watchers, Belial, Mastema, as well as a concluding analysis of the Treatise of the Two Spirits. In this section, Brand follows the analysis of many other scholars of "dualisms" in Second Temple Judaism and emphasizes the function of these figures primarily as agents of separation between "insiders" and "outsiders."

¹⁹⁵ Brand, *Evil Within and Without*.

¹⁹⁶ Brand, *Evil Within and Without*, 26. See Jonathan Klawans, "Josephus on Fate, Free Will, and Ancient Jewish Types of Compatibilism," *Numen* 56 (2009): 44–90; "The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes, and the Study of Religious Belief: Determinism and Freedom of Choice" in *Rediscovering the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Assessment of Old and New Approaches and Methods*, ed. Maxine L. Grossman, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 145–68.

Brand's study provides a wealth of analysis and categorization but, as Carol Newsom observes in her overall positive review, in terms of her general analytical predisposition, Brand "is a 'splitter' rather than a 'lumper'."¹⁹⁷ Thus, it is hoped that this dissertation can build upon Brand's helpful study by doing some supplemental "lumping" chiefly by outlining some general trends on spirit phenomena that extend across not only the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jewish Pseudepigrapha but in the Hebrew Bible as well.

7) Martti Nissinen, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, Greece, and the Hebrew Bible*

Martti Nissinen has distinguished himself not only as a leading scholar of prophecy in the ancient world but also as an advocate of understanding prophecy as an ecstatic phenomenon.¹⁹⁸ His latest book on the subject, *Ancient Prophecy*, offers a comparative overview of prophecy in several cultural loci of the ancient world in order to offer a wide ranging, general analysis of the phenomenon.¹⁹⁹ It is not surprising that one of the shared aspects of ancient prophecy that

¹⁹⁷ Carol A. Newsom, review of *Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and Its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature*, by Miryam T. Brand, *DSD* 22 (2015): 228–31, 231.

¹⁹⁸ See, for example, Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Peter Machinist (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); "Prophetic Madness: Prophecy and Ecstasy in the Ancient Near East and in Greece." in *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson*, ed. K. L. Noll and B. Schramm (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 3–29.; "Biblical Prophecy from a Near Eastern Perspective: The Cases of Kingship and Divine Possession," in *Congress Volume Ljubljana 2007*, ed. André Lemaire, VTSup 133 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 441–68. See also Peter Michaelsen, "Ecstasy and Possession in Ancient Israel. A Review of Some Recent Contributions" *SJOT* 3.2 (1989): 28–54; David L. Petersen, "Ecstasy and Role Enactment" in *The Place is Too Small For Us: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship*, ed. Robert P. Gordon, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 5 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 279–88. Nissinen is by no means the first to suggest that ecstasy was an assumed aspect of prophecy in ancient Israel and/or the Near East more generally. See, for example, Bernhard Duhm, *Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der israelitischen Tradition* (Bonn: Marcus, 1875); Gustav Hölscher, *Die Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Religionsgeschichte Israels* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914).

¹⁹⁹ Martti Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy: Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greek Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2017).

Nissinen identifies across the ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible, and ancient Greece is “ecstasy.”

Nissinen’s primary framework for defining prophecy is as one of two major forms of divination. As Nissinen defines it, divination is based on a common cross-cultural assumption of *divine-human communication* and differs from “magic” because its purpose is to provide supernatural knowledge, rather than to impart some kind of change in a person or situation (i.e., healing, apotropaism). One form of divination is *technical* or *inductive* and conventionally applies the use of objects or props (e.g., extispicy, astrology, casting lots). This first type is more cognitive in its conception and often requires training in interpretation. The second type is *intuitive, inspired, or non-technical* divination, which is a more direct connection to the divine. It includes dreams, visions, and prophecy. Nissinen acknowledges that these categories are better seen as a scholarly constructs than as an ancient distinction (as should the idea of a cross-cultural phenomenon called “prophecy”). He also admits that these two categories work best in the study of Mesopotamian societies. Indeed, possession and other spirit phenomena in biblical literature (as I am defining them), stretch across these distinctions (including what Nissinen calls “magic”). Additionally, the purpose of spirit phenomena is not always divination and never exclusively such. Still, these definitions are helpful heuristic devices for organizing Nissinen’s study.

In discussing the Hebrew Bible side-by-side with literature from the ancient Near East and Greece, Nissinen establishes “prophecy” (and its associated practices like possession) as a cross-culturally comparable phenomenon. His survey of Mesopotamian literature, for example, includes discussions of omen texts, letters, and descriptions of prophetic rituals in addition to written prophecies and narrative accounts of prophecy. This context helps establish comparable

categories for use in his analysis of the Hebrew Bible while also drawing attention to what is not there. A similar effect is achieved in Nissinen's discussion of the preponderance of Greek epigraphic sources for prophesy, in addition to literary evidence. While the focus of this dissertation is not on situating spirit phenomena in the Hebrew Bible in its ancient context, Nissinen's study (and other similar works) smooth the way for my own cross-cultural comparison of biblical texts with contemporary practices of spirit possession in cultures around the world.²⁰⁰

One of the most helpful aspects of Nissinen's study in regard to this project is his clear and nuanced explanation of the special challenge of analyzing ancient Israelite prophecy by means of the Hebrew Bible. Nissinen acknowledges that it is already difficult for the historian to study prophecy in ancient contexts since we do not have access to those societies the way that an anthropologist might to contemporary ones. Additionally, in the Hebrew Bible, this difficulty is compounded because:

The Hebrew Bible constitutes a special case in the documentation of ancient Eastern Mediterranean prophecy because it includes the only extant collection of prophetic books which now form part of a major section of the tripartite Hebrew canon called Prophets. Hence, in the biblical context in particular, prophecy is literature—not *written* prophecy, that is, prophetic oracles recorded in written form, but distinctly *literary* prophecy, that is, a corpus of literary works that, in their present context, are not immediately connected with any flesh-and-blood prophets whose oral performances may or may not loom in the background. Therefore, the prophetic books are “prophetic” in the sense of literary prophecy, not in that of written prophecy.²⁰¹

While Nissinen acknowledges an undoubtable continuity between the prophetic books and the historical figures and periods they portray, he offers a reminder that the literary work of (largely

²⁰⁰ Though see the risk of utilizing an overly *etic* approach in my summary of Craffert above

²⁰¹ Emphasis original. Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy*, 146. In this, the historical situations portrayed in the Hebrew Bible are even harder to access than many Mesopotamian sources. See also Martti Nissinen, “How Prophecy Became Literature” *SJOT* 19.2 (2005): 153–72.

Second Temple) scribes must also be acknowledged as an element of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible.

Finally, in his chapter dedicated to “Prophecy and Ecstasy” Nissinen explains that in the literature of all three cultures he surveys, some form of altered consciousness is taken as a prerequisite for prophetic activity. Regarding biblical literature specifically, he explains:

The possessive aspect of prophetic activity is strongly suggested by the Hebrew Bible, and there is no need to view this kind of prophecy as an early phenomenon influenced by the so-called “Canaanites.” Attempts to make distinction between the “sober” ecstasy of the biblical prophets and the more frantic, or “orgiastic,” ecstasy elsewhere are arbitrary at best. Different types of ecstasy can certainly be recognized and differences between biblical and other accounts can be shown, but no general dividing line between biblical and extrabiblical prophets can be drawn in this respect.²⁰²

He lists several examples of ecstatic behavior that I have also identified as examples of spirit phenomena (e.g., Num 11:24–30; 2 Kgs 5:26; Isa 6; 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Ezek 3:12–15; 37:1–14). However, as prophecy came increasingly to be identified with the cultivation and interpretation of scripture, spirit- and possession-language was also incorporated (e.g., Sir. 39:1–6; Philo *Spec.* 1:65).

IV. Summary

This chapter has surveyed a range of approaches to understanding spirit phenomena. It has discussed models from mental health, the study of religion, and gender studies. It has also surveyed in more detail previous monographs on the word רוּחַ and on related pneumatological issues in biblical studies. Finally, it provided an overview of other works in biblical studies that have influenced this project, which stretch across various sub-disciplines from biblical studies.

²⁰² Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy*, 184. In this, Nissinen distinguishes himself from and criticizes earlier studies that sought to differentiate classical Israelite prophecy from that of other cultures. See, for example, Simon B. Parker, “Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel” *VT* 28.3 (1978): 271–85, and Gunnel André, “Ecstatic Prophecy in the Old Testament.”

This chapter concludes the introduction to the topic of this dissertation as well as my discussions on methodology and previous scholarship. We are now prepared to explore further how spirit phenomena functioned in biblical literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SPIRIT AND THE SELF

This chapter will map a particular trend in conceiving of spirit(s) in biblical literature that I and others have called the *animating spirit*.¹ While it would be a mistake to postulate an essential type for this conception, in general, the animating spirit can be identified as being imparted at birth to all living creatures and then departing at death. The animating spirit is seen as always present, usually without a single or inherent moral charge, and is often connected to reflections on the inner life. Indeed, as this chapter will show, language concerning the animating spirit is one of the primary methods in which biblical literature articulates notions of the self and of personhood. In contrast to strict dualistic conception of human beings, the animating spirit is often described as being material and even as a part of the body, though one that is *inside* and thus less-accessible than others. We can see these conceptions at work through the various practices of self-cultivation that are connected to the animating spirit in biblical texts. Michel Foucault calls these “technologies of the self”:

[Technologies of the self] permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts,

¹ This is not to infer that each scholar means precisely the same thing when employing this term. Still, the ideas are obviously related. See, for example, Block, “The Prophet of the Spirit”; McCarter, “Evil Spirit of God”; Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, 164–67; and related discussions in Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas*, 143–50; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes im Alten Testament*, 19–31; Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, 28–66; Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 87–103.

conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.²

Foucault's theory can be insightful in illuminating several of the more obscure texts in which spirits are described, though it does not exhaust the function of the animating spirit and can even be misleading if it is treated as exhaustive.

In particular, Foucault's "technologies of the self,"—like many other theories of the self in western intellectual tradition—assume a particular model oriented around *action* that can be limiting when assessing non-Western forms of religiosity. Anthropologists have sometimes called this the "hegemonic paradigm of self-cultivation."³ These conceptions are notably less effective in accounting for models of the person, in which the self is *acted upon* at least as often (if not more so than) as it *acts*. As will be shown in this chapter, the animating spirit in biblical literature is best understood by using both families of paradigms.

The chapter proceeds in three parts. First, it introduces the idea of the animating spirit through analysis of a case study, the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1–2. Second, it surveys various occurrences and language for the animating spirit in biblical literature in order to show the range of its presentation. Third, it shows how the idea of the animating spirit can offer a new perspective on an old problem in biblical studies: the translation of רוח אלהים in Genesis 1:2c.

² Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," 18.

³ See, for example, Amira Mittermaier, "Dreams from Elsewhere: Muslim Subjectivities Beyond the Trope of Self-Cultivation," *JRAI* 18 (2012): 247–65, 249 and the longer discussion below.

I. Introduction: Hannah's Story⁴

For some readers, there are few stories in the Hebrew Bible that engender as much pathos as that of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1–2. Its terseness seems devised specifically to emphasize Hannah's own feelings of insecurity, isolation, and desperation. In contrast to the sweeping narratives of national conflict that will follow in the books of Samuel, Hannah's struggle is conspicuous for its plainness and universality. Her plight resonates not only with other instances of the barren woman motif in the Hebrew Bible but also with readers who have witnessed or experienced a struggle with infertility and who might find in the figure of Hannah a kindred spirit.

In biblical literature, emotional sonority is often expressed in part through the use of spirit language and spirit phenomena. In the case of Hannah's story, it is the notion of the animating spirit that comes through most clearly—this, despite the fact that רוח appears only once in the narrative (1 Sam 1:15). As will be discussed below, the textual transmission and reception of this story in Second Temple Judaism readily associates Hannah with spirits and possession behavior, an interpretive trajectory that, I believe, is anticipated by textual clues in 1 Samuel 1–2.

Though, at first glance, Hannah's story may seem, at best, only tangentially related to the spirit phenomena I have been discussing in this dissertation, I contend that, as with so many other instances of inner-biblical resonance in these first two chapters of Samuel, the narrative makes the connection with expert subtlety. Indeed, commentators of various ideological persuasions have long noted that Hannah's story is uncommonly dense with inner-biblical

⁴ A modified and longer version of this section appears as Reed Carlson, "Hannah at Pentecost: On Recognizing Spirit Phenomena in Early Jewish Literature," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 27 (2018): 245–58. © Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2018 | DOI 10.1163/17455251-02702005.

allusion. Before diving further into my argument, it will be helpful to summarize briefly some of the most recognizable intertextual resonances in this narrative.

A. Inner-Biblical Allusions and Motifs in 1 Samuel 1–2

In a good example of a recurring rhetorical strategy of biblical literature, we are first informed that Samuel will be an outstanding man precisely because his mother is no ordinary woman.⁵ This is true despite the fact that she is introduced by means of her relationship to her husband and her story is told to us in a book that bears her son's name. Indeed, Hannah's extraordinary consequence is signaled immediately. For hearers whose ears still reverberate with Israel's ancestor stories, the simple descriptors in the narrative may sound like echoes: Elkanah has two wives, Peninnah, who has children, and Hannah who does not. Further, although she is barren, Elkanah favors Hannah with a double portion of his sacrifices.⁶ In this story (like so many stories of election in the Hebrew Bible), we do not know why one wife is favored over the other, but we do see the consequences.⁷ Additionally, we are told that Peninnah antagonizes Hannah, which only adds to the suffering of the barren woman.

These kinds of connections continue throughout Hannah's story. On pilgrimage, Hannah enters the shrine at Shiloh and vows that in exchange for the birth of a son, she will "give" the

⁵ Jochebed/Moses and Mary/Jesus are perhaps the most obvious participants in the paradigm. We may also point to Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel. Later Jewish traditions would innovate similar stories for other mothers in biblical literature, including those of Noah, David, and others. See Reed Carlson, "The Boy Who Lived: Transformation of a Theological Motif in Biblical Tradition," *Word and World* 36.3 (2016): 276–84.

⁶ For at least one ancient translator, the connection to the matriarch Rachel was so obvious that an explicit construction for Hannah's barrenness was borrowed in 1 Sam 1:5 from Gen 30:2. Tg. Ps.-J.: "Before the LORD, offspring was withheld from her" (מן קדם יי אתמנע מנה ולד). See Eveline van Staaldvine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel* (SAIS 1; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 190-91.

⁷ This theme of theological election in the Hebrew Bible is fleshed out in Joel Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

child to God (1 Sam 1:11). As Jon D. Levenson has suggested, this particular articulation with “give” (נתַּן) evokes the language of child sacrifice, a “mythic-ritual complex” that is preserved and transformed throughout biblical literature.⁸ In agony, Hannah prays and is approached by the priest, Eli, who, after a conspicuous and drawn out misunderstanding, instructs Hannah to go in peace, “May the God of Israel grant (יִתֵּן) your petition which you have asked from him” (1 Sam 1:17b). In characteristic terseness and in formulaic language, the conception, birth, and naming of Hannah’s son progress quickly. Hannah returns to Shiloh to offer a sacrifice and to deliver the now weaned Samuel to Eli. Fittingly, the episode concludes with a song (1 Sam. 2:1-10), one that has implications beyond its immediate context. Like similar poems (e.g., Miriam’s song in Exod 15 or Deborah’s in Judg 5), Hannah’s song is prophetic and alludes not only to her personal triumph but also to God’s cosmic victory. Positioned as it is, the song is an overture for the continuing saga of Israel and of her son’s, Samuel’s, pivotal part within it.⁹

Commentators have also noted resonances in Hannah’s story with other family narratives in the Hebrew Bible. We may note, for example, that on one level, Elkanah’s question reads with a dark irony: “Am I not better to you than ten sons?” (1 Sam 1:8b).¹⁰ Yet on a canonical level, the husband’s words are a dim foreshadowing of hope, for they echo the plight of another bereft woman, Naomi, in the book of Ruth. On the cusp of embracing her grandson, an ancestor of

⁸ Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 48.

⁹ Like other poems set within the narratives of the Bible, Hannah’s song is positioned at a seam in the wider enneateuchal story. Martin Beck, “Messiaserwartung in den Geschichtsbüchern? Bemerkungen zur Funktion des Hannaliedes (1 Sam 2,1-10) in seinem diversen literarischen Kontexten (vgl. Ex 15; Dtn 32; II Sam 22)” in M. Beck and U. Schorn (eds.), *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis II Regum: Festschrift Hans-Christoph Schmitt zum 65. Geburtstag*, BZAW 370 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 231-52.

¹⁰ Some interpreters read Elkanah here as “oafish.” For example, “Hannah is not recorded as responding to her husband Elkanah here, and some readers will not wonder why.” Keith Bodner, *1 Samuel: A Narrative Commentary* (HBM 19; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 16. However, it is also possible to read his attitude as comforting, since he is reassuring Hannah that he will not divorce her or prefer Peninnah.

David, Naomi's neighbors exclaim to her: "For your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him" (Ruth 4:15b).¹¹

These connections are not just allusions for the sake of allusion, however. They betray cognizance of wider and intersecting sets of concerns. The contest between Hannah and Peninnah, for example, is not only reminiscent of Rachel and Leah but also a participant in the broader theme of sibling rivalry and elected children in the Hebrew Bible, another mythic-ritual complex that concerns—among other things—the theological significance of progeny, inheritance, and sacrifice.¹² In this way, the particularities of Hannah's story become both a commentary and a primary text for these and other ongoing theological discussions across the traditions and eras of biblical literature.¹³

I take this space to summarize some of the more prevalent examples of intertextual allusion in 1 Samuel 1–2 in order to demonstrate how numerous scholars have already recognized this narrative's contributions to several far-reaching theological complexes. Put simply, 1 Samuel 1–2 is not only the story of a barren woman who receives a child.¹⁴ It is also a text dense with intertextual references, which invite informed readers to consider the theological and contextual details of those other texts when interpreting Hannah's story. By recognizing

¹¹ Hannah's story features several intertextual connections to the book of Ruth. Perhaps most obvious are the opening sections, in which puns on the characters' names reveal their narrative function in the story. Additionally, Hannah's "self/throat" (נפש) is described as "bitter" (מרר) (1 Sam 1:10), a name that the bereaved Naomi gives herself (Ruth 1:20). Both Elkanah and Elimelech are "Ephrathites" (1 Sam. 1:1; Ruth 1:2). Both Hannah and Ruth refer to themselves as "your maid" (1 Sam 1:18; Ruth 2:13). A. Graeme Auld sees additional connections to Jonah and Esther and thus associates Hannah's story with "late-biblical storytelling." *I & II Samuel*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 20-54 (30).

¹² On this, in addition to Levenson, *Death and Resurrection* and Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob* cited above, see also Amy Kalmanofsky, *Dangerous Sisters of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 19-36.

¹³ See D. Andrew Teeter, "The Hebrew Bible and/as Second Temple Literature."

¹⁴ Although it would remain a powerful and poignant story, even if it were only that.

these resonances that so many others have noted, I am better able to build the case for acknowledging an additional one of my own.

B. Hannah's Story Revisited

Any reader of the first two chapters of Samuel who is familiar with biblical narrative is likely to be struck by the inordinate amount of attention paid to Hannah's psychological state. Hannah is "provoked" by her rival (1 Sam 1:6); she repeatedly weeps (1 Sam 1:7-8; 10); and her husband asks why her heart is "distressed" (ולמה ירע לבבך) (1 Sam 1:8). The scene in the shrine continues this attention. In her apology to Eli, Hannah confesses that she has been speaking from her "great anxiety and provocation" (מרב שיחי וכעסי) (1 Sam 1:16b). Another part of Hannah's body is described in verse 10; her "throat" (נפש) (but also something like "life force" or "self") is "bitter." It is in this way that biblical literature often "shows" how a person is feeling rather than "tells" it by describing physical changes in the body while sometimes leaving out descriptions of emotions.¹⁵ Thus Hannah "weeps excessively" (ובכה תבכה) in verse 10 as she wordlessly makes her vow.

The convention does not always translate into English versions and this is particularly misleading in verse 15, when Hannah gives an account of herself to Eli. She explains, "I am a woman of hard spirit" (אשה קשת־רוח), a telling phrase that is rendered flatly in the NRSV as "I am a woman deeply troubled" and in the NJPS as "I am a very unhappy woman."¹⁶ In contrast to

¹⁵ See discussion in chapter two and Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*; Smith, "The Heart and Innards in Israelite Emotional Expressions."

¹⁶ There is no exact parallel elsewhere in the Bible, although Auld helpfully compares Ezek 2:4 "hard of face" (קשי פנים) and Ezek 3:7 "hard of heart" (קשי־לב) as well as "hard of neck" (קשה־ערף) (Exod 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6, 13) *I & II Samuel*, 31. He goes on to suggest that "obstinate woman" may be a better translation, given that these parallel phrases suggest stubbornness. While Hannah is certainly determined, it is her anguish that

the assumptions of these translators, it is not clear to me that Hannah is speaking metaphorically—particularly when we take into account how spirit language can often function as self-language in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, she is simply continuing to narrate what is happening to another part of her body in a manner not dissimilar from how “heart” (לב) (1 Sam 1:8; 13; 2:1) and “throat/self” (נפש) (1 Sam 1:10; 15) have already been utilized. Indeed, it is tempting for moderns to put רוח into a different category from words such as “heart,” “throat,” and “innards” (כליה) because רוח does not correspond quite as easily to an organ of a modern anatomy. But this is a misleading comparison. Since we are here engaged with an ancient anatomy, none of these words should be seen as corresponding to anything that might be found in a contemporary medical textbook. The fact that Hannah’s psychological state is described by means of narrating the components of her body as hypostasized third parties should make this point clear. It should also make us pause and reconsider how Hannah’s “spirit” (רוח) may be functioning here.

Along these lines, it is telling though sometimes overlooked that Hannah’s behavior is outlandish enough to warrant the attention of Eli. We may expect that the shrine at Shiloh was imagined as a regular site for fervent, unspoken prayers by desperate people. So, what is it that Hannah is doing that is so disruptive? In verse 12, Hannah “continued excessively to pray” (והיא) (כי הרבתה להתפלל) as Eli takes special notice of her mouth.¹⁷ Literally translated, Hannah is “speaking to her heart,” though her lips only “quiver” (היא מדברת על-לבה רק שפתיה נעות).

the text repeatedly emphasizes, and this may indeed be the very difference signaled by the rarer construction with “spirit” (רוח) instead of “heart.” See also G.W. Ahlström, “1 Samuel 1,15” *Biblica* 60.2 (1979), 245.

¹⁷ The H stem of רבה plus an infinitive is often used to indicate something that is done too much or in overabundance. See, for example, 2 Kgs. 21:6 // 2 Chr 33:6; Amos 4:4; Ezra 10:13. Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 30.

Indeed, “her voice is not heard” (1 Sam 1:13).¹⁸ English translations often reason that Hannah is thinking the words of her prayer and simply mouthing them.¹⁹ However, as Gösta Ahlström observed: “A quiet, tranquil, or silent prayer would certainly not have been mistaken for drunken behavior.”²⁰ Whatever Hannah’s behavior and Eli’s experience with intoxicated petitioners, Hannah’s conduct must have been disturbing in some way, for Eli asks, “How long will you make yourself drunk?” (עַד־מַתִּי תִשְׁתַּכְרִיךְ) (1 Sam 1:14).²¹

Hannah’s defense includes a petition, here translated woodenly: “Do not consider your maidservant a daughter of trouble” (אַל־תֵּתֶן אֶת־אִמָּתְךָ לִפְנֵי בַת־בְּלִיעַל) (1 Sam 1:16a). The phrase “daughter of trouble” in biblical Hebrew (בַּת־בְּלִיעַל) likely means something like “scoundrel” or “troublemaker” and seems especially appropriate to describe someone who is disruptive to the social order.²² We should not glide too quickly over Hannah’s plea here, though. She is insistent that her inner, spiritual strife not be interpreted by Eli as a threat of external mischief. It may be significant, then, that already in Second Temple literature, *bēliyya ‘al* (בְּלִיעַל) comes to be interpreted as the proper name for a troublesome minor deity who (in some texts) can manipulate the behavior of human beings.²³ It is no doubt significant that immediately after Hannah’s song,

¹⁸ I translate על here as a simple dative. See Joüon, Paul and Takamitsu Muraoka. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Subsidia Biblica 27; Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2nd ed., 2006), §133.f.

¹⁹ cf. NRSV: “Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard” and NJPS: “Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard.”

²⁰ Ahlström, “1 Samuel 1,15,” 245.

²¹ This is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where שִׁכְרָךְ appears in the Dt stem, an oddity that the NRSV renders “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself?”

²² Cf. Deut 13:13; Judg 19:22; 1 Sam 2:12; 10:27; 25:17; 1 Kgs 21:10.

²³ S.D. Sperling, “Belial,” in Karel van der Toorn, et al., (eds.) *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 169-71. Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, ch. 3; and Devorah Dimant, “Between Qumran Sectarians and Non-Sectarian Texts: The Case of Belial and Mastema,” in Adolfo D. Roitman, et

Eli's two sons are explicitly named “troublemakers” (בני בליעל) in 1 Samuel 2:12. This transformation of a concept, “scoundrel,” into a figure, “Belial,” has not yet taken place in 1 Samuel 1. However, we can only imagine how a Second Temple Jewish reader might have heard Hannah's plea that she not be mislabeled as a literal “daughter of Belial”—especially if he or she was steeped in a mythological reality in which a demonic figure named Belial habitually tests and antagonizes God's people.²⁴

Given these clues above, it is best to think of Hannah as engaging in something other than quiet, respectful prayer—something we may tentatively label as “trance,” for lack of a better term. This may be what she is expressing in 1 Sam 1:15 when she explains that she is not drunk but rather, “I have been pouring out myself (ואשפך את־נפשי) before the LORD.” As already discussed, the semantic proximity of “self” (נפש) and “spirit” (רוח) in this passage suggests a connection to phrases like “I will pour out my spirit” (אשפוך את־רוחי) in Joel 3.²⁵ As Keith Bodner quips, “[Hannah] tells Eli in no uncertain terms that she has not been pouring in spirits, she has been pouring out her spirit!”²⁶

If we grant that Hannah is indeed engaged in trance or trance-like behavior, her intercession in the shrine becomes much easier to characterize as prophetic, especially since it is already reminiscent of other prophetic theophanies. It sets up the expectation of a divine

al., eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference held at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (July 6-8, 2008)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 235-56.

²⁴ Here בת would be best understood not as a literal “daughter” but as a “member of the group of.”

²⁵ The verb שפך is used with “self” (נפש) on three other occasions in the Hebrew Bible (Ps 42:5; Job 30:16; Lam 2:12) and in these instances, too, the context is that of desperation and despair. In contrast, the instances where the construction is used with “spirit” (רוח) (Joel 3:1-2; Ezek 39:29; Zech 12:10) are all actions by God on people—texts that came to be interpreted in some contexts as the source of ecstatic/charismatic behavior.

²⁶ Bodner, *1 Samuel*, p. 20.

response—perhaps one mediated through a messenger. It also provides teeth for Robert Alter’s critique of Eli:

Eli the priest should be playing the role of man of God or divine intermediary. But at first, he gets it all wrong, mistaking her silent prayer for drunken mumbling, and denouncing her in a poetic line (marked by semantic and rhythmic parallelism) of quasi-prophetic verse. When in verse 17 he accepts her protestation of innocent suffering, he piously prays or predicts—the Hebrew verb could be construed either way—that her petition will be granted, but he doesn’t have a clue about the content of the petition. The uncomprehending Eli is thus virtually a parody of the announcing figure of the conventional type-scene—an apt introduction to a story in which the claim to authority of the house of Eli will be rejected, and, ultimately, sacerdotal guidance will be displaced by prophetic guidance in the person of Samuel, who begins as a temple acolyte but then exercises a very different kind of leadership.²⁷

Thus, Eli’s failure to be the expected divine mediator is a stark contrast to Hannah’s spiritual perceptiveness. It adds to the other indications here that Hannah is meant to be seen as a prophetess. As already noted, her song in 1 Samuel 2 is similar in tone and function to those of Miriam, Deborah, and Jonah.²⁸ In short, due to established literary forms in other parts of the Hebrew Bible, these descriptions of Hannah’s emotional state build up an expectation in experienced readers for a certain kind of spirit experience in Hannah’s story. It is not surprising, then, that later interpreters pulled the episode in this direction.

C. The Early Transmission History of Hannah’s Story

Following the interpretive method explained in chapter two, when exploring the potential for recognizing spirit phenomena in this story, I am considering not only what can be reconstructed as a potential *Urtext* of 1 Samuel 1–2 but also its reception history—including the potential for

²⁷ Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 5.

²⁸ Sacrifices and vows play important roles in both stories, as does a thematic Psalm. Compare Jon 2:2 and 1 Sam 2:1. See Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 20–21.

interpretation even in its textual transmission. Thus, certain small changes in various ancient versions could be taken as intentionally interpretive moves by later scribes.²⁹ This is especially true if we consider how later readers were eager to read Hannah as a prophetess (see below).

This line of interpretation is strengthened as well when we consider Hannah's connection to a yet unmentioned parallel figure, Manoah's unnamed wife, the mother of Samson, in Judges 13.³⁰ Both women are said to be barren, yet they miraculously conceive after a theophany. Both women interact with God independently of their husbands who, in many interpretations, come off as dim-witted or out of touch.³¹ Most relevant for this discussion, both mothers dedicate their sons to a consecrated life before birth. In Judges 13:5, an angel pronounces to Manoah's wife regarding her newly announced son: "A razor shall never be upon his head for a nazirite of God the boy will be from birth." Similarly, in the MT of 1 Samuel 1:11, Hannah vows that if God gives her a son "I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life and a razor shall never be upon his head." Going beyond the MT in establishing this connection are the OG and the Dead Sea Scroll fragment of 1 Samuel 4Q51 (so-called 4QSam^a). Specifically, both textual traditions

²⁹ One example occurs in 1 Samuel 1:8. The Old Greek adds the theologically loaded "Here I am, Lord" (Ἰδοὺ ἐγώ, κύριε) to Hannah's dialogue with Elkanah. The phrase is conspicuous, not least because it is also uttered by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "Here I am" (הִנְנִי): Abraham (Gen. 22.1, 7, 11), Isaac (Gen. 27.18), and Jacob (Gen. 31.11). A second example may be present also in the OG of 2 Samuel 7:1. Instead of God's giving David "peace" (שָׁלוֹם) from his enemies as in the MT of 1 Samuel 7:1, the OG explains: "and the Lord had given him an *inheritance* around from all his enemies around him" (καὶ κύριος κατεκληρονόμησεν αὐτὸν κύκλῳ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐχθρῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν κύκλῳ). Rather than reading this slight change (from שָׁלוֹם to שְׁלֵמָה) as a textual error, we might see it instead as an intentional interpretation of Hannah's song as a prophecy that is later fulfilled by King David: "The LORD makes them inherit (שְׁלֵמָה) a seat of honor" (MT 1 Sam 2:8; cf. OG: καὶ θρόνον δόξης κατακληρονομήσων αὐτοῖς). Among other implications, these text critical examples show how already, in the interpretive minds of those handling the earliest texts of 1 Samuel, Hannah was being read as a prophetess.

³⁰ Several formulaic themes and linguistic constructions clue readers in that both episodes belong to a "type-scene." Robert Alter, "How Convention Helps Us Read: The Case of the Bible's Annunciation Type-Scene" *Prooftexts* 3.2 (1983), 115-130.

³¹ See above and Adele Reinhartz, "Samson's Mother: An Unnamed Protagonist" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 55 (1992), 25-37.

include additional nazirite elements in Hannah’s vow.³² The Dead Sea Scroll even explicitly calls Samuel a “nazirite” in verse 22—a connection that the MT only hints at.³³ Thus, Samuel is portrayed both as a judge (like Samson) as well as a prophet. Consistent with other charismatic leaders in the book of Judges, Samson is repeatedly seized by spirit(s) that empower him for heroic action.³⁴ Similarly, Samuel is portrayed as a master of spirits who can predict (or perhaps manipulate) their activity.³⁵ The climax of this motif comes in 1 Samuel 28 when the prophet is summoned as a post-mortem ‘ghost’ (אֲרוֹם) by means of a professional spirit medium.

The broader point I wish to make by explicating these variant textual traditions is this: Later interpreters of Hannah would come to see her as a prophetess and her experience at Shiloh as an ecstatic one. These small textual changes may be evidence that this interpretive impulse was already pulling 1 Samuel 1–2 in this direction early on at the level of textual transmission. If true, the conclusion is striking: Hannah, who is herself a practitioner of trance, shows herself to be the true forebear of Samuel both biologically and in terms of office. Elkanah, the father, and Eli, the mentor, fade away, both in the narrative and in their significance for later Jewish tradition.

³² To verse 11, the OG adds “and wine and strong drink he shall not drink” (καὶ οἶνον καὶ μέθυ οὐ πίνειται). Similarly, as other scholars have noted, the spacing of 4QSam^a indicates a longer text than the MT, more akin to the OG, perhaps: “then I will set him be[fore you as a nazirite until the day of his death and wine and strong drink he shall not drink and no r]azor shall touch hi[s head.]” ([פניך נזיר] [עד יום מותו ויין ושכר לוא ישתה]) (4QSam^a 1:11). It is likely that the MT preserves the oldest reading. See the discussion in Alexander Rofé, “Midrashic Traits in 4Q51 (So-Called 4QSam^a)”, in Phillipe Hugo and Adrian Schenker, eds., *Archaeology of the Book of Samuel: The Entangling of the Textual and Literary History*, SVT 132 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 75-88 (82).

³³ “a nazirite forever, all the days of his life” ([חיייו] (4QSam^a 1:22).

³⁴ E.g., Judg 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14

³⁵ E.g., 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13, 14; 19:20.

D. Hannah in Second Temple Jewish Interpretation

The emotional poignancy and theological contribution of Hannah's story stretches deep into Second Temple biblical literature. In Tobit, Hannah's song is a model for praise and thanksgiving (Tob 13:2). In 4 Ezra 9:38–10:59, Hannah's is one of several passages in the Hebrew Bible that contributes a template for the fourth vision about mother Zion. In this vision, like Hannah, mother Zion was barren and then is miraculously given a son. She explains that she is "greatly embittered in spirit and deeply afflicted" due to the later death of that son (and the destruction of the city).³⁶

Philo of Alexandria connects Hannah's experience at Shiloh to spirit ecstasy more directly than any other Second Temple Jewish source. In his treatise *On Drunkenness*, the first century Hellenistic Jewish philosopher explains how it is that Hannah's prayer at Shiloh was mistaken for intoxication. Noting that Hannah's name means "grace," Philo expounds:

whatever soul is filled with grace is at once in a state of exultation, and delight, and dancing; for it becomes full of triumph, so that it would appear to many of the uninitiated to be intoxicated, and agitated, and to be beside itself. (*Ebr.* 146)³⁷

Philo does not go so far as to use a term like "spirit" (πνεῦμα) in his description of grace-filled exultation. However, it is evident that he is reading Hannah's story as a type of spirit phenomenon and even as an account of spirit possession. As John R. Levison has noted, Philo borrows this imagery from Greco-Roman traditions of ecstasy—including that of Bacchic possession.³⁸

³⁶ See also Isa 49:14–26; 54:1–10; Ps 113:9. Translation from B.M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1; ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009); repr. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983).

³⁷ Translations of Philo from *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, C. D. Yonge trans. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

³⁸ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 168–70.

For in the case of those who are under the influence of divine inspiration, not only is the soul accustomed to be excited, and as it were to become frenzied, but also the body is accustomed to become reddish and of a fiery complexion, the joy which is internally diffused and which is exulting, secretly spreading its affections even to the exterior parts, by which many foolish people are deceived, and have fancied that sober persons were intoxicated. (*Ebr.* 147)

It is no wonder that Philo explicitly calls Hannah a prophetess who is “possessed by a divinely sent impulse” (*κατεχόμενον ἐκ μανίας θεοφορήτου*) (*Somn.* 1.254). In this, Hannah is not only Abraham’s “disciple and successor” but also a model for spirit-filled ecstasy.³⁹

The tradition of reading Hannah as an ecstatic and spirit-filled prophetess can also be found in Luke-Acts, although the connections are subtler. For example, Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel 2 is clearly a source for the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55).⁴⁰ Further, the annunciation stories of Mary mother of Jesus and her relative, Elizabeth mother of John the Baptizer, fit comfortably into this same “type-scene” as Alter labelled it for Hannah.⁴¹ Also resonating with Hannah’s story, both mothers and sons are said to be filled with spirits.⁴² Moving further along in the author of Luke’s narratives, Hannah’s story likely also shaped his account of Pentecost in Acts 2. Here, like Hannah, the early disciples are engaged in a trance affecting their speech (1 Sam 1:2–4). The scene takes place in a temple (like the shrine at Shiloh) and they also are

³⁹ *Deus.* 5-6. See Ariel Feldman, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Rewriting Samuel and Kings*, BZAW 469 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 9.

⁴⁰ See discussions in Matthew E. Gordley, *Teaching Through Song in Antiquity* WUNT 2 302 (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 307–311; and Feldman, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 12.

⁴¹ In the case of John the Baptizer, it is John’s father, Zechariah the priest, who meets the divine intermediary (Lk 1:5–23), although the completion of the scene and the statement of praise and thanksgiving is still completed by Elizabeth (1 Sam 1:24–25). Cf. also Judges 13.

⁴² Mothers (Lk 1:35, 41; cf. Lk 1:47); sons (Lk 1:15, 80; 3:22; 4:1)

accused of being drunk (Acts 2:13). In contrast, however, the spirit phenomenon at Pentecost is not one of agony but of ecstasy.⁴³

E. The Animating Spirit in Hannah's Story

Is Hannah's story a "spirit phenomenon"? Certainly, if our mold for such an event is determined only by latter Jewish and Christian accounts of demonic possession, exorcism, and other wonders we must answer emphatically 'no'. That being said, we should acknowledge that the story exhibits a strong sense of self-cultivation in its uncanny sensitivity to Hannah's inner turmoil and subsequent relief—a conflict that Hannah describes as affecting her "spirit" (1 Sam. 1:15). Further, Hannah's trance behavior in the shrine at Shiloh is prototypical for prophetic theophanies encountered elsewhere in biblical literature and is a conspicuously consistent transition from the spirit-empowered exploits of the Judges to those of her son, Samuel. Latter traditions would incorporate Hannah's story and her song into the more explicit spirit phenomena of late Second Temple Jewish literature, suggesting that Hannah's story was, at the very least, ripe as source material. In short, Hannah's story betrays cognizance of what might be called an economy of spirit(s), one that flows within the self, through inner-personal relationships, and in connection to God—what I have decided to call the animating spirit.

⁴³ Admittedly some of the connections listed here are more solidly established historically than others. Regardless, for contemporary readers searching for theological resonances between Hannah and later Jewish/Christian literature, these connections are available at least at the level of a literary/canonical reading.

II. The Animating Spirit in Biblical Literature

The animating spirit in biblical literature is rooted in a theological anthropology that differs from those commonly utilized by moderns today—even among those communities that treat these texts as their scripture. This may be best illustrated initially through a negative example.

In an ethnographic study of spirit healing practices among charismatic Catholics in New England, anthropologist Thomas J. Csordas consulted with his subjects regarding the elemental anatomy that undergirded their conception of the person. His description of these assumptions reveals an important distinction between many modern spirit practices and spirit phenomena in biblical literature:

Essential to the Charismatic healing system is a concept of the person as a tripartite composite of body, mind, and spirit. Conceptualization of a tripartite person creates a decisive cultural difference between Charismatic healing and conventional psychotherapy and medicine, insofar as the latter are predicated on a concept of the person as a dualistic composite of body and mind. For Charismatics the spiritual is, paradoxically, ineffable and empirical at the same time. Its ineffability was captured by an informant who said that the reason the spiritual could not easily be discussed was only because we have no language for it, and hence we are forced by default to describe it in the language of emotions. On the other hand, the spiritual is empirical in the sense that phenomena such as evil spirits, or the sense of divine presence, are experienced as real in their own domain, just as are viruses in the somatic and emotional traumas in the mental domains.⁴⁴

It is this conception of the human that Csordas describes as a paradoxical collision of the “ineffable” with the “empirical” that is so foreign to spirit phenomena in biblical literature. The operative theological anthropology of the “tripartite” person, while often framed by the interpretation of biblical texts, nevertheless remains dependent also on modern, medical notions of the body. When God does impart miraculous healing, it is seen as occurring primarily in and

⁴⁴ Thomas J. Csordas, *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 39–40.

through a separate “spiritual” component of a person with the consequences of that spiritual intervention then spilling over into the physical and/or mental realms.⁴⁵

While aspects of this conception are not completely foreign to biblical literature, we would do well to remember that the ancient Jewish communities that nourished these texts did not have recourse to the same empirical categories as moderns do and thus were under less of an obligation to distinguish sharply between the medical, the psychological, and the spiritual. In sum, the borders between these different aspects of a person were far vaguer.

A. The Whole Person in the Ancient Near East and in Biblical Literature

The question of dominant paradigms for conceiving of the person in antiquity is itself an ancient debate in biblical studies. While scholars can be found across the spectrum on this issue, one enduring idea in biblical studies has held that, generally speaking, biblical texts portray a more holistic and embodied view of human life.⁴⁶

On this issue, some of the most helpful discussions have taken place in cognate fields concerning the languages and literatures of the ancient Near East. In an article summarizing views of the person in Mesopotamian tradition, Benjamin R. Foster concludes that “there is little to suggest a concept of a separate, coexisting soul, mind, and body; rather, the body was the essential person.”⁴⁷ This conception does not preclude beliefs in deities, spirits of the dead, or

⁴⁵ This dynamic is especially evident in the popular Pentecostal and Charismatic notion of “deliverance” in which a person is liberated from a demonic influence on their spirit, resulting in the easing or curing of certain psychosomatic symptoms. See Csordas, *The Sacred Self*, 41–42.

⁴⁶ See a helpful summary discussion in Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, 108–22. Recently some scholars have sought to complicate or otherwise disprove this position. See, for example, Richard C. Steiner, *Disembodied Souls: the Nefesh in Israel and Kindred Spirits in the Ancient Near East, with an Appendix on the Katumuwa Inscription* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015); Mark Finney, *Resurrection, Hell and the Afterlife: Body and Soul in Antiquity, Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁷ Benjamin R. Foster, “The Person in Mesopotamian Thought,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Literature*, ed., Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), 117–39, 120. See also Peter

other largely unseen forces as active in the world, however. It simply constructs them differently from the way many moderns might.

One example can be seen in studies of creation stories in ancient Near Eastern myths, such as the second millennium Akkadian flood myth, *Atrahasis*. In this story, human bodies are created by the goddess Nintu from the blood and flesh of a dead deity and then mixed with clay.⁴⁸ This mythic anthropology is described through a wordplay: *ṭēmu* (“intelligence” or “understanding”) comes from the god’s blood, while *eṭemmu* (“spirit” or “ghost”) comes from the flesh. Julia M. Asher-Greve argues that “spirit” or “ghost” is actually the form-giving element in this duo, since intelligence was seen as fading at death, even as the spirit persisted—in some texts, in the very bones of a corpse.⁴⁹ While we should not underplay the significant theological and anthropological differences between *Atrahasis* and other mythological creation narratives in the ancient Near East—including those of the Hebrew Bible—enough similarities exist for us to recognize a “family resemblance.”⁵⁰

We see one such family resemblance in Asher-Greve’s ensuing discussion of these ideas as expressed through Mesopotamian material culture—including graven images of human beings—she explains:

Machinist, “On Self-Consciousness in Mesopotamia” in *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (Albany: State University of New York, 1986), 183–201; Julia M. Asher-Greve, “The Essential Body: Mesopotamian Conceptions of the Gendered Body,” *Gender & History* 9.3 (1997): 432–61; Tzvi Abusch, “Ghost as God: Some Observations on a Babylonian Understanding of Human Nature,” in *Self, Soul, and Body in Religious Experience*, ed., A. I. Baumgarten, J. Assmann, and G. G. Stroumsa, *Studies in the History of Religions* 78 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 363–83; Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, trans. T. L. Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 363–83.

⁴⁸ See Asher-Greve, “The Essential Body,” 447, 452–453.

⁴⁹ Asher-Greve, “The Essential Body,” 447, 452.

⁵⁰ In the sense of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd. ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 31–34.

The self is located in the inseparable unity of body and spirit. Because the self could be re-created and actually be present in an image, Mesopotamian visual representations possessed a form of reality which is difficult to comprehend for modern scholars. [...] The early Mesopotamian conception of the body seems to be that of a self, comprising body and spirit, which can replicate itself in other manifestations such as statues or monuments which are more than symbolic proxies but less than distinct duplicates. The spirit, not a replica but a unique entity, can apparently inhabit several objects simultaneously. In a sort of reciprocal interaction the deity bestows life not only on the human individual but also on all its subsequent images (such as statues or monuments) and these in turn can independently and eternally converse or negotiate with the deity. This conception differs from that of Platonic idealism which regards phenomenal bodies as replicas of an ideal or metaphysical form of the human figure.⁵¹

We might recognize this vital connection that Asher-Greve describes between the deity and the human being as also being expressed in the spirit language of biblical literature.

While, of course, the predominant message in the Hebrew Bible regarding idol worship and the crafting of graven images is prohibitive, the idea of a reciprocal relationship between the creator God and the created human being by means of an animating spirit is often affirmed:⁵²

Just as you do not know how the spirit comes to the bones in the pregnant womb, so you do not know the work of the God who makes everything. (Qoh 11:5)

An Oracle, the word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus says the LORD who stretched out the heavens and established the earth and formed the mortal spirit (רוח־אדם) within him. (Zech 12:1)

Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out
who spread out the earth and its offspring
who gives breath (נשמה) to the people upon it
and spirit (רוח) to those who walk on it. (Isa 42:5)

Their spirit departs when they return to the ground.
On that day, their plans are destroyed. (Ps 146:4)

⁵¹ Asher-Greve, “The Essential Body,” 452. Benjamin Sommer uses the term “fluidity model” to describe something similar but within God’s own self. *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 38–57.

⁵² Several polemical texts seem to presuppose the existence of this kind of relationship, though they deny its presence in idols (e.g., Isa 30:1; 41:29 Jer 10:14; 51:17; Hab 2:19).

It should come as no surprise, then, that, in some texts, the animating spirit is also described as the categorical determiner for created life itself:

As for me, I am going to bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which there is the breath of life (כל־בֶּשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים) that is under the heavens. (Gen 6:17a; cf. 7:15; 22)

Wherever it was that the spirit went, they went, and the wheels went up beside them, for the spirit of the living creatures (רוּחַ הַחַיָּה) was in the wheels. (Ezek 1:20; cf. 1 Kgs 17:17; Ps 31:6; Qoh 12:7)

Crucially, the functionality of the animating spirit is not limited to its being imparted at birth and extracted at death. Often, there is a dynamic and ongoing relationship between the creator and the creature, which is facilitated through this spirit:

Into your hand I commit my spirit.
You have redeemed me, the LORD, true God. (Ps 31:6)

O Lord, on these things people live,
and in them is the life of my spirit.
O that you might restore me, make me live! (Isa 38:16)

Life and steadfast love you have granted me
and your care has preserved my spirit. (Job 10:12)

Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.
May your good spirit lead me on an upright path. (Ps 143:10)

¹² Why does your heart take you?
and why do your eyes flash?

¹³ So that you turn your spirit against God
and cause [such] words to come from your mouth? (Job 15:12–13)

My soul yearns for you (אִוִּיתִךָ) in the night.
And my spirit (רוּחִי) within me earnestly seeks you (אֶשְׁחַרְךָ) (Isa 26:9a).⁵³

⁵³ It has been proposed to change בקרְבִּי to בבְּקֶרֶךְ, thereby creating a parallel with בְּלִילָה: “My spirit, *in the morning*, earnestly seeks you.” There is no manuscript evidence to support this alteration, however, and the word order would still not be consistent between the two stanzas. In this example from Isaiah, the use of first-person verbs is especially telling. Though most modern translations render the phrases as I have (i.e., with the soul/spirit as the subject), the prophet actually speaks in the first-person—suggesting the closeness between the referenced body parts and the prophet’s person.

In discussing this reciprocal relationship, it is important to avoid slipping into language that reflects the assumption of mind/soul-body dualism. This can prove difficult because, in expressing conceptions of the self, biblical literature often utilizes terms usually translated as mind, soul, body, flesh, etc.

One helpful framework for confronting a similar problem in classical Greek literature has been proposed by Brooke Holmes.⁵⁴ Noting that dualistic frameworks are similarly inadequate paradigms when applied to the Homeric epics, Holmes suggests a different paradigm for understanding the person in antiquity, wherein scholars distinguish between the “seen” and the “felt” rather than the “mind/soul” and the “body.”⁵⁵ The “seen” includes not only the externally visible elements of a person but also its human form. Whereas the “felt” refers to “the conscious field that constitutes the unity of the self, as well as the daemonic energies that cut across it.”⁵⁶ If we understand spirit phenomena in biblical texts as referencing the “felt” dimension of personhood, we are better able to recognize how the actions of unseen agencies within and without the person are seen as determinative for understanding human embodied experience.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Brooke Holmes, *The Symptom and the Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁵⁵ Holmes, *The Symptom and the Subject*, 41–83.

⁵⁶ Holmes, *The Symptom and the Subject*, 42.

⁵⁷ To be clear, the spirit that animates a living creature is nowhere described as the God of Israel himself in the Hebrew Bible—at least not in a hypostatic sense. But at the same time, neither is this spirit wholly distinct from the creator God. Like so many of the theological inconcinnities in biblical literature, this is a tension that is repeatedly balanced and reassessed in the tradition.

B. Filled with a Spirit

This “felt” aspect of spirit phenomena may be demonstrated through examining a particular articulation of spirit language that appears in a variety of genres and eras across biblical literature: being “filled with a spirit” or “full of a spirit”:⁵⁸

Now you shall speak to all the wise of heart whom I have filled (מְלֵאֲתִיו) with a spirit of wisdom so that they can make the clothing of Aaron to consecrate him to be a priest for me. (Exod 28:3)

I have filled (וְאֶמְלֵא) him with a divine spirit (רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים), with wisdom, understanding, knowledge and every kind of craftsmanship. (Exod 31:3; cf. 35:31)

Now Joshua son of Nun was full of a spirit of wisdom (מְלֵא רֹחַ חֲכָמָה) because Moses had laid his hands upon him. The Israelites obeyed him and they acted according to what the LORD had commanded Moses. (Deut 34:9)

But as for me, I am full (מְלֵאֲתִי) of strength,
with a spirit of the LORD
and with justice and might
to declare to Jacob his transgression
and to Israel his sin. (Mic 3:8)

If the great Lord wishes,
he will be filled with a spirit of understanding (πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται).
He will pour out his words of wisdom. (Sir 39:6)

These infillings describe aspects of these persons that cannot be “seen” because they concern what is “felt” on the inside—either within themselves or by those in their communities who come under their influence. Similarly, God’s glory is said to fill (מְלֵא) the tabernacle when it was covered by the cloud (Exod 40:34). It is so expansive, in fact, that there is no room for Moses when the tent is occupied (Exod 40:35). Though the fillings of spirit above take place within bodies and not tents, they are no less material—they are “felt” not “seen.” These figures are

⁵⁸ Below I discuss the significance of verb stem in these passages.

filled with so much wisdom, knowledge, and/or justice that there simply is no room for any other kind of spirit.

No scholar has written more extensively on “filled with the spirit” language in biblical literature than John R. Levison, though he reads this phrase with a slightly different emphasis. He and I agree that translations often impoverish the richness of this language through the use of idioms.⁵⁹ However, Levison is conspicuously persistent in pointing away from any charismatic or event-based understandings of “filling with spirit” in the Hebrew Bible. He instead wishes to emphasize the phrase as indicating “fullness” as a status:

Regarding Exodus 28:1–3

the simple phrase “whom I have filled with spirit of wisdom” means something more than might be suggested by similar phrases which suggest initial endowment, such as “upon whom I have caused the spirit to come” or “into whom I have given my spirit.” Filling suggests something more than entry, something other than endowment. Filling connotes completion, full-filling, fruition, wholeness, fullness.⁶⁰

Regarding Exodus 31:1–6; 36:1–2; 35:30–35

Taken alongside the corresponding image of wisdom-of-heart, God's filling Bezalel with “spirit of God, wisdom,” does not mean that he received an entirely fresh influx of spirit, a rush of the spirit, or a new spirit altogether, though the language of filling may at first blush suggest something akin to this. [...] In short, Bezalel and the skilled workers did not first receive the spirit and wisdom at this particular point in time. Their skill, their wisdom, increased to an extraordinary extent.⁶¹

But are such strict denials really necessary or uniformly applicable?⁶² It is unfortunate that Levison cites no specific interlocutors in this section other than Gunkel (with whom he has an ongoing dialogue throughout the book). Whether or not he has them in mind, we may note that

⁵⁹ E.g., The NRSV renders אשר מלאתי רוח חכמה in Exodus 28:3 as “[all] whom I have endowed with skill.” See Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 53.

⁶⁰ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 57.

⁶¹ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 62.

⁶² See similar arguments in his discussions of Numbers 27:18–23; Deuteronomy 34:9; Genesis 41:38; and Daniel 4:5, 6, 15, *Filled with the Spirit*, 68–80.

for readers accustomed to reading these texts as part of the Christian Bible, such an interpretation is not at all unusual. The phrase “filled with the spirit” is more frequent in the New Testament than in the Old, and it is especially critical for the author of Luke-Acts, for whom, arguably, it has a decidedly more event-based meaning.⁶³ But, in arguing against possibly more anachronistic and homiletical interpretations, I believe that Levison discounts more of the event interpretation than is required and thus misses an essential aspect of the way that spirit phenomena are functioning in these passages.

My critique of Levison’s position begins with his understanding of the Hebrew root מלא. He admits that “at first blush” the verb, when used with a direct object, can point to “an initial filling.”⁶⁴ However, he maintains that other constructions more clearly communicate charismatic endowment (e.g., Jdg 3:10 ותהי עליו רוח) and these would have been chosen had the event of filling been intended in these passages. Instead, he argues that מלא “takes the reader in another direction, away from initial filling, and toward fullness or completeness or topping up.”⁶⁵ From this analysis, he concludes:

From the perspective of this simple verb *ml’*, then, the artisans responsible for the temple, and their leaders, Bezalel and Oholiab, are full to the brim with spirit of wisdom. When God says, “whom I have *filled* with spirit of wisdom,” the emphasis lies upon the lavishness of this filling much more than upon the initial gift of this spirit. When, in fact, God filled these people is left entirely out of the picture.⁶⁶

⁶³ e.g., Luke 1:15; 41; 67; 4:14; Acts 2:4; 4:8; 31; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9; 13:52; cf. Eph 5:18.

⁶⁴ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 55. He cites as examples Gen 21:19; 1 Sam 16:1; Jer 33:5; Gen 42:25; and Jer 41:9

⁶⁵ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 56. He cites, as examples, temporal examples: Gen 29:21; Lev 12:4, Lev 12:6; Gen 25:24; Num 6:5; Est 1:5; Jer 25:12; Lev 25:29-30.

⁶⁶ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 58.

What Levison does not adequately address, however, is that in all the instances he cites as examples of $\sqrt{\text{מלא}}$ as meaning *the event of filling*, the verb appears in the D. Likewise, in the vast majority of instances in which he cites it as meaning *the status of being full*, the verb is in the G.⁶⁷ These alterations in meaning are not unique to $\sqrt{\text{מלא}}$, however, but correspond exactly to how we should expect these Hebrew stems to function. To be fair, while the majority of instances of $\sqrt{\text{מלא}}$ in the Hebrew Bible follow this pattern, they are not entirely consistent.⁶⁸ Thus, Levison explains that, “There is no appreciable difference, as far as I can tell, between the *qal*, *niphal*, and *piel* stems of this verb.”⁶⁹ In my view, then, it is not that Levison is wrong to recognize the abiding and permanent nature of spiritual “fullness” in these texts (indeed, this is one of the principal attributes of conceptions of the animating spirit that I have identified). Rather, the point is that he does so at the expense of denying what are clearly descriptions of spirit possession-type *events* as well (especially in those instances in Exodus when $\sqrt{\text{מלא}}$ appears in the D). Levison’s strict either-or approach to interpreting the nature of being “filled with the spirit” obscures how the spirit-language is functioning in these passages.

If Levison’s uncited interlocutors have gone too far in likening Bezalel or Joshua’s fillings to the charismatic possession episodes of Israel’s judges, so also has Levison gone too far in the opposing direction by denying these occurrences their inherent dynamism. To be animated

⁶⁷ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 56. In the list of examples he provides to show how $\sqrt{\text{מלא}}$ means ‘the status of being full’, every example he provides is in the G except for three examples in the D, which are best translated as “fulfilled” (1 Kgs 8:15; 2 Chr 6:4; Jer 44:25).

⁶⁸ There are several places where $\sqrt{\text{מלא}}$ appears in the G with a direct object even though we might expect the D form. See for example, texts regarding God’s command to be fruitful, multiply and “fill”: Gen 1:22; 1:28 cf. 9:1 and texts regarding God’s glory or presence filling a space: Exod 30:34–35; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; Isa 6:1; Ezek 10:3–4; 2 Chr 5:14; 7:1–2. See also Jer 16:18; 19:4; Ezek 8:17; Ezek 30:11; Mic 3:8;

⁶⁹ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 57 fn. 22.

by the spirit of God is not a static state of *τέλος* but an ongoing rhythmic existence of what can be “felt” as filling and emptying. This process is connected to the interplay between the activity of one’s spirit and the ups and down of life itself:

But when they told [Jacob] all the words of Joseph that he had said to them and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. (Gen 45:27)

Moses told this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. (Exod 6:9)

The LORD is near the broken hearted
and the crushed of spirit he saves. (Ps 34:19 [Eng v. 18])

I think of God that I might moan.
I meditate that my spirit might faint. Selah. (Ps 77:4 [Eng v. 3])

Therefore I will not restrain my mouth
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. (Job 7:11)

I suggest that one reason that this dynamic and yet more passive aspect of the animating spirit is consistently difficult for modern interpreters to recognize is the predominance of a particular paradigm of self-cultivation, which is exemplified above in the discussion of Foucault’s “technologies of the self.” It is to an alternative paradigm, one less associated with western forms of religiosity, to which we now turn.

C. The Spirit and the Passions

The paradigm of self-cultivation, which I discussed at the opening of this chapter, is helpful for revealing the functions that religious activity can play in determining identity. Prayer practices in particular, can be fruitfully analyzed using this model, especially since they are sometimes explicit about the anticipated outcome for the person or community that engages in religious

adherence. Scholars of religion have applied this model with great success, for example, in the contemporary study of Islamic devotional practices.⁷⁰

The hegemonic dominance of the self-cultivation model for addressing all forms of religiosity has been criticized, however, particularly in the study of Islam:

The paradigm of self-cultivation equips anthropologists with a vocabulary for describing and analytically engaging with practices such as veiling, attending mosque study groups, or listening to tape-recorded sermons. Yet it offers us little for engaging with a different axis of religiosity, one that valorizes being acted upon, one most vividly expressed in stories of dreams, visions, apparitions, spirit possession, prophecy, revelation, the miraculous, and, more broadly, stories that involve elements of surprise and awe.⁷¹

Leaning on an influential study by Godfrey Lienhardt, Amira Mittermaier refers to this aspect of religiosity as a “passion.”⁷² In this sense, it functions as the opposite of the English word “action,” in relation to the human self. As Mittermaier illustrates, such religious practices as visionary dreams and spirit possession (both in Islam and beyond) are difficult to reconcile with the liberal idealization of the autonomous self and thus also with the paradigm of self-cultivation. This is particularly true for religious practices (such as many spirit possession rituals), whose principal means of participation is to be a witness (either as a spectator or as an observer of one’s own possession). Put simply, witnessing is neither especially “active” or “passive” according to

⁷⁰ See, for example, Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2004); Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

⁷¹ Mittermaier, “Dreams from Elsewhere,” 250. Mittermaier also notes here that several recent studies in the anthropology of Christianity are notably less dependent on this paradigm. “Dreams from Elsewhere,” 249.

⁷² Mittermaier, “Dreams from Elsewhere,” 249. Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: University Press, 1961).

dominant paradigms, but rather another type of phenomenon where seeing and being made to see converge; it is a “passion.”⁷³

That passions can be highly valued within religious systems that do not also function with strict determinist worldviews is also problematic for the paradigm of self-cultivation. The charting of individual “agency” (whether or human or divine) within a given religious practice is of utmost importance when one is answering the question, “How is the practitioner asserting his or her ‘self’ through this practice?” (or, alternatively, “How is the ‘self’ being surrendered?”). But, when it is acknowledged and valued that a passion is originating from outside of a person, the question of individual “agency” not only becomes more difficult to determine, but also descends in priority (at least as far as this question requires a binary answer along the tracks of either autonomy or submission). This is particularly true when a religious practice or experience is implicitly understood as having a consequence beyond itself (as in, for example, if after a purifying spiritual experience, a person or community is expected to live a holier and/or more moral life).⁷⁴

This point may be best demonstrated through an example from Second Temple Jewish literature. The scroll of the Hodayot or “Thanksgiving Psalms” has long fascinated scholars for its especially pronounced sense of the self.⁷⁵ Given the common function of spirit language as

⁷³ Mittermaier, “Dreams from Elsewhere,” 259. See also, Michael Lambek, “Nuriaty, the Saint and the Sultan: Virtuous Subject and Subjective Virtuoso of the Post-Modern Colony,” *Anthropology Today* 16.2 (2000), 7-11.

⁷⁴ Modern scholars, of course, are not obligated to adopt the presuppositions around personhood and agency that their primary texts assume. But recognizing these distinctions is helpful and necessary when attempting to assess how these ideas changed over time.

⁷⁵ 1QH^a was one of the first Dead Sea Scrolls to be discovered and published: Eleazar L. Sukenik, אוצר המגילות הגנוזות (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1954). Unless otherwise noted, text and column numbering follow Eileen M. Schuller and Carol A. Newsom, *The Hodayot (Thanksgiving Psalms): A Study Edition of 1QH^a*, Early Judaism and its Literature 36 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012). Studies informing this discussion include: Eileen M. Schuller, “Petitionary Prayer and Religion at Qumran” in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 29–45; Carol A. Newsom, “Apocalyptic Subjects: Social

self-language in the Hebrew Bible, we should not be surprised to find it prevalent also in the Hodayot.⁷⁶ Additionally, many of these occurrences of spirit language serve to contribute to what has often been called a determinist theological framework that undergirds many of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁷⁷

[Blessed are you, O God of compassi]on on account of the spirits that you have placed in me (מרוחות אשר נתתה בי). I will [f]ind a ready response, reciting your righteous acts and (your) patience. (1QH^a 4:29)

You yourself have formed the spirit and determined its activity [from of old] אתה יצרתה [ה מעולם] רוח ופעולתה הכינות. And from you (comes) the way of every living being. (1QH^a 7:35)

You formed every spirit, and [their] work [you determin]ed, and the judgment for all their deeds. (1QH^a 9:10–11)

I wait hopefully, for you yourself have formed the spi[rit of your servant, and according to] your [wil]l you have determined me (1QH^a 18:24).⁷⁸

As Eileen Schuler has observed, “the very choice of the thanksgiving genre is an expression of a certain theological stance.”⁷⁹ From this point of view, it would seem that thanksgiving, rather than petition, is a more appropriate stance towards a God who has already determined fate.

Construction of the Self in the Qumran Hodayot,” *JSP* 12.1 (2001): 3–35; *Self as Symbolic Space*; Angela Kim Harkins, “The Performative Reading of the Hodayot: The Arousal of Emotions and the Exegetical Generation of Texts” *JSP* 21.1 (2011): 55–71; *Reading with an “I” to the Heavens: Looking at the Qumran Hodayot through the Lens of Visionary Traditions* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012); Jason Maston, “Anthropological Crisis and Solution in the Hodayot and 1 Corinthians 15,” *NTS* 62 (2016): 533–48; Shem Miller, “The Role of Performance and the Performance of Role: Cultural Memory in the Hodayot,” *JBL* 137.2 (2018): 359–82.

⁷⁶ By my count there are more than eighty occurrences of רוח in the extant columns of 1QH^a.

⁷⁷ For a survey, see Mladen Popovic, “Apocalyptic Determinism” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014), 255–70. See also Klawans, “Fate, Free Will, and Ancient Jewish Types of Compatibilism” and my discussion in chapter six.

⁷⁸ See also 1QH^a 7:26; 9:17; 9:30–31; 15:9; 18:24

⁷⁹ Schuller, “Petitionary Prayer and the Religion of Qumran,” 38. She adds that while the Hodayot text clearly takes its cues in terms of language, themes, and imagery from the Psalter, it freely innovates and omits from the thanksgiving literature as it sees fit. This suggests that if the hymnists had wished to add more petitionary content to the scroll, it is unlikely that any restriction to an established form would have prevented them from doing so.

At the same time, we should acknowledge that there are many types of determinism; a theology of supremacy does not require an anthropology of passivity. To recognize that God has ordered creation and will someday set it right is not the same as surrendering one's own participation in that culmination. Indeed, especially since the turn of the millennium, scholars have highlighted a relatively high degree of flexibility for human freedom in in the Scrolls, despite what would seem to be their deterministic framework.⁸⁰ Jonathan Klawans has labelled these attempts to maintain both determinism and free will in late Second Temple literature as "compatibilism."⁸¹

In the Hodayot, spirit language is often employed to communicate compatibilism. For example, petitionary prayers that utilize spirit language are scattered throughout the Hodayot, perhaps most conspicuously in column eight:

²⁶ Blessed are you, O Lord, great in counsel and mighty in deed, because all things are your works. Behold you have determined to do me gr[eat]

²⁷ kindness, and you have been gracious to me in your compassionate spirit and for the sake of your glory. Righteousness belongs to you alone, for you have done all these things.

²⁸ Because I know that you have recorded the spirit of the righteous, *I myself have chosen to cleanse my hands according to your wil[l.]* (אני בחרתי להבר כפי כרצו[נך]) The soul of your servant abhors every

²⁹ malicious deed. I know that no one can be righteous apart from you, *and so I entreat you with the spirit that you have placed in me* (ואחלה פניך ברוח אשר נתתה בי) that you make

³⁰ your kindness to your servant complete [for]ever, cleansing me by your holy spirit and drawing me nearer by your good favor, according to your great kindness [wh]ich you have shown. (1QH^a 8:26–30)⁸²

⁸⁰ See summary in Klawans, "Fate, Free Will, and Ancient Jewish Types of Compatibilism," 57–58.

⁸¹ He borrows this term from contemporary discussions in philosophy. See Klawans, "Fate, Free Will, and Ancient Jewish Types of Compatibilism," 48.

⁸² Italicized portions are of special interest. Other examples may include 4:35–36 and 5:14. See also 19:33–34.

Any attempt to trace individual agency in this prayer would be dizzying. The hymnist acknowledges that these petitions are in line with God's own will, and yet, they are chosen (בְּחֵרָה, ln. 28). Moreover, the hymnist makes these requests by means of the very spirit that God has given him (ln. 29).

As outlined above, throughout biblical literature and especially in the Dead Sea Scroll sectarian texts, spirit language is often taken up to describe the passions. The animating spirit is both within one's control and outside of it, both intimately familiar and tragically foreign, both an aspect of one's own self and someone else's. The paradigm of self-cultivation, thus, can only take us so far in examining the animating spirit in biblical literature. It is conceived also as a force outside of the self, often that of the creator God. With this in mind, we turn to a perennial debate in biblical studies—one on which the idea of an animating spirit may shed some valuable new light.

III. The Animating Spirit in Genesis 1:2

Having set forth my understanding the animating spirit and its function in biblical literature, we may close this chapter by returning to an argument begun in chapter two concerning the phrase רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים in Gen 1:2c. Recall that I identified two recurring interpretive cruxes in this phrase: The appropriate rendering of רוּחַ as “wind,” “spirit,” or “breath” is the first. The other is whether or not רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים should be understood as an element within the primordial chaos, a created substance, or some aspect of the creator. Since chapter two discussed the former issue at some length, so here we can now look more closely at the latter. However, my argument below seeks to sidestep somewhat the traditional ruts of this debate by demonstrating how Genesis 1:2c

can and has been understood as an aspect of the animating spirit, a concept that—as I have outlined above—can be construed as an element of the person, God, as well as a third party.

A. Spirit and Creation in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish Literature

Because chapter two has already discussed this passage at some length, it will be helpful to continue with those interpretive trajectories within the Hebrew Bible where God's רוח is understood as an agent in creation:

Who has measured in his hand the waters
and marked with a span the heavens?
[Who has] measured the dust of the earth,
weighed with a scale the mountains,
and the hills in a balance?
Who has fathomed the spirit of the LORD (רוח [י])
or, as his counselor, instructed him? (Isa 40:12–13)⁸³

By a word of the LORD, the heavens were made
and by the spirit/breath of his mouth (וברוח פיו) all their host. (Ps 33:6)⁸⁴

By his spirit (ברוחו) the heavens were made beautiful,
his hand pierced the fleeing serpent. (Job 26:13)

The spirit of God (רוח-אל) made me
and the breath of the Almighty (נשמת שדי) gives me life. (Job 33:4)

Each of these passages evokes God's spirit within the context of creation to various degrees.

Commentators have also pointed to more subtle connections directly to Gen 1:2c within biblical

⁸³ Here, רוח implies something similar to “mind” or “will.” See Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, 54; 62. See also 1 Cor 2:14–16.

⁸⁴ Odil Hannes Steck prefers the translation “breath of God” for רוח אלהים in Gen 1:2c, given its affinity to the role of speech in creation and the connection to this Psalm. *Der Schöpfungsbericht der Priesterschrift: Studien zur literarkritischen und überlieferungsgeschichtlichen Problematik von Genesis 1,1–2,4a*, 2nd ed., FRLANT 115 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 235–37.

traditions of creation, including Genesis 1 imagery in the building of the tabernacle, in the Song at the Sea, and in Ezekiel's valley of dry bones.⁸⁵

The account of creation in Psalm 104 is an especially rich parallel to Gen 1–2:4a and an instructive example. Of particular interest is the role of God's רוח in creation:

When you hide your face, they are dismayed.
When you gather their breath (רוחם), they die
and they return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit (רוחך), they are vitalized (יבראון)
and you renew the face of the ground (Ps 104:29–30).

The core of Ps 104 has long been recognized as being closely related to an Egyptian hymnic tradition, suggesting its great antiquity.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, we may also note an inner-biblical exegetical thread. For example, Ps 104 features language and themes from both Gen 1–2:4a (e.g., יבראון in 1 Sam 1:30a) and Gen 2–3 (e.g., the giving of breath as life in 1 Sam 1:29).⁸⁷ While discerning the precise historical back-and-forth is probably hopeless, it would seem that a

⁸⁵ E.g., Tabernacle: Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 269; Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 78–99, esp. 84. Song at the Sea: DeRoche, “The *rûah* ’*ēlōhîm* in Gen 1:2c: Creation or Chaos?” in *Ascribe to the LORD: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie* (eds. L. Eslinger and G. Taylor; JSOT Supplement Series 67; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 309–15. In Ezekiel, the creational imagery from Gen 1 is often combined with that of Gen 2, see John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*, Biblical and Judaic Studies 7 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 129–42.

⁸⁶ See discussion and bibliography in J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel*, JSOT Supplement Series 111 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 226–30. See also, Mark S. Smith, “The Near Eastern Background of Solar Language for Yahweh,” *JBL* 109.1 (1990): 29–39 and Paul E. Dion, “YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god: The Double Legacy of Egypt and Canaan as Reflected in Psalm 104,” *ZAW* 103.1 (1991): 43–71. Reinhard G. Kratz identifies the oldest core of Ps 104 as a participial series: 104:2b–4, 10a, 13a, 14b, 15, 32. *Historical and Biblical Israel*, 72.

⁸⁷ A translation of “create” for ברא is not necessarily wrong here, but we should note that it is likely something more than that (hence “vitalize” above). As with Genesis 1, this is not a case of *creatio ex nihilo*. Instead God is providing life to the creatures listed in the Psalm; they are being *animated* by God's spirit (cf. the description of the vital and healthy cows and grain in Pharaoh's dream, Gen 41:2; 4; 18; 20). Some commentators may be reluctant to attach this sense of “vitalize” to ברא in Genesis 1:1 as well, but at the very least we can say that this is the psalmist's understanding of the tradition. Cf. also Gen 2:7b though without the verb.

relationship of mutual influence between the Genesis creation accounts and that of Ps 104 is likely.⁸⁸

In attempting to date these texts relative to one another, it is not unusual for scholars to coordinate the idea of spirit's role in creation with the supposed historical progression of the texts. For example, Lloyd Neve has argued that creation emerged as a major theme during the exile and that the association between creation and spirit first appeared in texts of this era, which he identifies as the Priestly source, Job, Deutero-Isaiah, and some of the Psalms.⁸⁹ Building on Neve's theory, Scott Ellington has argued that while references to the spirit of God as a creative force are infrequent in the Torah and Prophets, the connection is widely featured in a variety of Psalms and in the writings in general, "[...] that part of the Old Testament which was canonized last."⁹⁰

Regardless of whether or not one accepts this or another historical reconstruction, we should note that when consulting these cognate creation and spirit texts, they are not especially helpful in answering the interpretive crux outlined above. Are these spirits meant to be seen as something of the nature of God, something that God has made, or something unique to the individual person? The difficulty is not that these passages offer starkly contradictory answers so much as they do not seem to be particularly interested in the question. The focus is on the effects of God's spirit on creation rather than on its origin or ontology. Michael DeRoche argues that in

⁸⁸ See Matthias Köckert, "Literargeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche. Beobachtungen zu Ps 104" in *Schriftauslegung in der Schrift: Festschrift für Odil Hannes Steck zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, eds. R. G. Kratz, T. Krüger, and K. Schmid (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 259–79; and Hermann Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart: Eine Theologie der Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 21–49.

⁸⁹ Neve, *Spirit of God*, 64–71. See also Scott A. Ellington, "The Face of God as His Creating Spirit: The Interplay of Yahweh's *panim* and *ruach* in Psalm 104:29–30" in *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 3–16.

⁹⁰ Ellington, "The Face of God [...]," 8.

Gen 1:2c “[...] the *rûah* ’ēlōhîm is a hypostasis for ’ēlōhîm, the one used when the text wants to stress the impending creative activity of the deity and his ability to control the primeval waters.”⁹¹ He may be on to something, but we should also acknowledge that once this spirit takes its place within creation, it remains there and continues to animate it, both corporately and at the level of the individual.

This idea of an interconnected spirit of creation was not lost on later Second Temple era and early Jewish interpreters.⁹²

“For when Adam sinned and death was decreed against those who were to be born, the multitude of those who would be born was numbered. And for that number a place was prepared where the living ones might live and where the dead might be preserved. No creature will live again unless the number that has been appointed is completed. For my spirit creates the living, and the realm of death receives the dead. And further, it is given to you to hear that which will come after these times. For truly, my salvation which comes has drawn near and is not as far away as before.” (2 Bar 23:4–7)⁹³

I said, “O Lord, you spoke at the beginning of creation, and said on the first day, ‘Let heaven and earth be made,’ and your word accomplished the work. And then the Spirit was hovering, and darkness and silence embraced everything; the sound of man's voice was not yet there. Then you commanded that a ray of light be brought forth from your treasures, so that your works might then appear.” (4 Ezra 6:38–40)⁹⁴

Let all your creatures serve you,
for you spoke, and they were made.
You sent forth your spirit, and it formed them;
there is none that can resist your voice. (Jdt 16:14 NRSV)⁹⁵

⁹¹ DeRoche, “Creation or Chaos,” 318.

⁹² For a discussion of these and other early Jewish texts connecting spirit and creation, see John R. Levison, *The Spirit in First Century Judaism*, AGJU 29 (Brill: Leiden, 1997), 250–51.

⁹³ Translation from A. F. J. Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1.; ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009; repr. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983). See also 2 Bar 21:4, “O hear me, you who created the earth, the one who fixed the firmament by the word and fastened the height of heaven by the spirit, the one who in the beginning of the world called that which did not yet exist and they obeyed you.”

⁹⁴ Translation from B. M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1.; ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009; repr. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983).

⁹⁵ See John R. Levison, “Judith 16:14 and the Creation of Woman,” *JBL* 114.3 (1995): 467–69.

In these texts, a muted idea in Genesis 1:2c—the hypostasis of God as a רוח—is not only more pronounced but also more situated within a systematic understanding of humanity’s relation to God.

We can recognize a similar impulse in the transmission history of some of these relevant passages. For example, the OG translates רוח in Genesis 1:2c as πνεῦμα, rather than with ἄνεμος, the term it tends to prefer when a natural “wind” is unambiguously meant (e.g., Exod 10:13; Zech 2:6; Ps 1:4). Another example is the version of Ezekiel 37 preserved in the fragmentary 4QPseudo-Ezekiel. C. D. Elledge points out that Pseudo-Ezekiel adds the repeated refrain “and it was so” (ויהי כן) in his version, thereby tying the story together more tightly with Genesis 1 (cf. Gen 1:7, 9, 11, 15, and 24).⁹⁶ The spirit-induced vision of the valley of dry bones is already evocative of Genesis 2 (e.g., Gen 2:7), but the tradition preserved in 4QPseudo-Ezekiel also wishes to interpret Genesis 1 and 2 in light of each other, thereby enriching the understanding of spirit (and God’s breath) in creation.

B. Rebutting the Holy Spirit

The question remains, then, if early interpreters were not especially interesting in pinpointing the nature of the spirit in creation, how did later interpreters come to be so preoccupied with it? As it would turn out, a great deal of the controversy surrounding the translation of Genesis 1:2c has involved assessing and deconstructing early Christian pneumatological readings of this passage. For the premodern Church, the image was often paired with a translation of מרחפת as “brooding,” which, when coordinated with imagery from the New Testament (e.g., Matt 3:16;

⁹⁶ C. D. Elledge. *Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism 200 BCE–CE 200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 79–80.

Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32) allowed for the רוח אלהים in Gen 1:2c to be understood as referencing the Holy Spirit.⁹⁷ Thus, historical-critical scholars since the eighteenth century have attempted to resituate the text in its ancient Near Eastern context and out of the Church Fathers' dogmatic framework. One early influential idea was articulated by August Dillmann, who read Genesis 1:2c as referencing a "world egg"—and thus grouped Genesis 1 with other mythic traditions as far afield as India, China, and Finland (as well as more locally in Phoenicia and Egypt).⁹⁸

Among twentieth century interpreters, "wind" became a prominent proposed corrective for the "brooding" idea. The influential Genesis commentary by Claus Westermann, for example, discusses this problem at some length, ultimately settling on "God's wind" based partially on the pairing with רחפ in verse 2b as well as on Mesopotamian cosmogonic parallels.⁹⁹ John Day also prefers "wind" on the basis of a perceived dependence of Gen 1 on Ps 104.¹⁰⁰ Gerhard von Rad's form-critical approach, even sought to divorce רוח אלהים completely from the creative process:

⁹⁷ See, for example, Origin *Hom. Isa.* 4.1 and Tertullian *Bapt.* 4. It is possible that a Jewish interpretive tradition associating bird imagery in Genesis 1:1–2 predates these Christian sources (cf. Deut 32:11) but any potential surviving witnesses to it are later (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 2.4 and b. Hag. 15a).

⁹⁸ August Dillmann, *Die Genesis* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1875). This interpretation leaned heavily on the traditional understanding of מרחפת as "brooding." Following Dillmann, Julius Wellhausen also read מרחפת as "brooding" and lamented the supposed replacement of this immanent God with a later "transcendent" one, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 296. Hermann Gunkel also preferred "brooding" and attempted to support this reading with Phoenician and Greek evidence, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 7–8. However, as scholars' understandings of ancient Near Eastern languages and literature grew more sophisticated into the twentieth century, the translation "brooding" slowly grew out of favor (see below).

⁹⁹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, trans. J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 106–10. See also J. M. Powis Smith, "The Syntax and Meaning of Genesis 1:1–3," *AJSL* 44 (1927–28): 108–15 and "The Use of Divine Names as Superlatives," *AJSL* 25 (1928–29): 212–13; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed., trans. J. H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 49; Jennifer Dines, "Imaging Creation: The Septuagint Translation of Genesis 1:2" *HeyJ* 36 (1995): 439–50.

¹⁰⁰ John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 49–53.

The declaration [i.e. “storm of God” or “terrible storm”], then, belongs completely to the description of chaos and does not yet lead into the creative activity; in fact this “spirit of God” takes no more active part in creation. The Old Testament nowhere knows of such a cosmological significance for the concept of the spirit of God.¹⁰¹

In contrast, in a work that predates his most notable contributions on the canonical approach, Brevard Childs rejects the translation “wind of God,” preferring “spirit of God,” arguing that throughout the Bible, whenever the spirit of God (either [י] or אלהים) is spoken of, “the usual meaning is of a supernatural, divine power which breaks into human life causing actions which surpass the normal human capacity.”¹⁰² Despite this departure, however, Childs ultimately agrees with von Rad and others that, syntactically, verse 2c does not begin the creative process:

It merely expresses a relationship of co-existence between 1.1 and 2 since 1.2 describes a chaotic condition existing independently of God’s creative activity. Moreover, the unresolved tension between these verses is of such a nature as to suggest that we are dealing with materials foreign to Israel’s tradition. Where else in the tradition of Israel do we hear of a primeval reality existing independently of the LORD?¹⁰³

Ultimately, then, the רוח אלהים in Gen 1:2c is seen by many of these scholars as a remnant of the precreation chaos. Perhaps not coincidentally, theologically speaking, this is about as far from the Holy Spirit as one could get.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ von Rad, *Genesis*, 49–50. Despite his broad claim, von Rad’s assumed *Sitz im Leben* for Gen 1:2c is not the entire Hebrew Bible but the community behind the Priestly source specifically as well as the “overpowering environment of cosmological and theogonic myths” from which it wishes to distinguish.

¹⁰² Brevard Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, SBT 27 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1960), 35.

¹⁰³ Childs, *Myth and Reality*, 36–37.

¹⁰⁴ There are, of course, ancient precedents for reading רוח as “wind” in this verse. See for example Targum Neofiti and the discussion in Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Neofiti 1: An Exegetical Commentary to Genesis*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 2000), 57–58. See also *Gen. Rab.* 2.4.

C. The Animating Spirit and Genesis 1:2c

While acknowledging the necessary corrective to Christian pneumatology that these scholars have provided, we should ask whether or not the impulse has gone too far. First, there is the question of how the incorporation of this evidence from cognate literature is controlled. As Michael DeRoche points out (and as the diversity of sources cited here attests), when one's principal evidence is comparison with ancient Near Eastern parallels, data can be marshaled to support both the reading that the **רוח אלהים** is created as well as that it is an aspect of the creator.¹⁰⁵ Second, and more to my point here, by separating the ideas of spirit and creation in Genesis 1:2c, these modern scholars are in conflict (often intentionally) with the reception of this passage not only among early Jewish interpreters but also within the Hebrew Bible itself. In contrast, this chapter has demonstrated a conception of the animating spirit that keeps the **רוח אלהים** associated with creation without falling into the trap of privileging early Christian interpretation. I have shown how the animating spirit pervades not only a broad range of living creatures but also a wide breadth of biblical literature. It is not God's Holy Spirit as defined in Nicene theology.¹⁰⁶ But it is no less an aspect of God that is imparted to God's creatures, equipping them to live and multiply within creation.

It is also not wholly distinct from God's empowering spirit, the subject to which we next turn.

¹⁰⁵ DeRoche, "Creation or Chaos", 303–18.

¹⁰⁶ We might add that it is not necessarily contradictory, either.

CHAPTER FIVE POSSESSING SPIRITS

The title of this chapter is intentionally ambiguous. Below, I describe both spirits that possess human beings in biblical literature as well as instances in which humans are portrayed as possessing (or in some other way acting upon) spirits. I argue that these types of interactions, “spirit possession” as broadly defined by the anthropological literature discussed throughout this project, are a diverse and underrecognized phenomenon in biblical literature. To do this, I have divided the chapter into three parts.

First, I organize the various spirit possession phenomena into broad categories based on syntactical construction. Among other observations, I demonstrate how these spirit phenomena differ from those of the *animating* spirit discussed in chapter four because these spirits are *transitory* and imparted for a specific task. Having organized the relevant texts, I offer four conclusions based on the data: 1) animating and possessing spirits can often be distinguished by the use of “upon” על or “in” ב; 2) some possession phenomena in biblical literature are “executive” but most are “pathogenic”; 3) material-like conceptions of spirits persist even in the possessing type; 4) polemics against spirit possession in biblical literature have been overstated.

The second part of the chapter focuses on a specific verb, להתנבא. This term has conventionally been understood to refer to ecstatic or frenetic forms of prophecy (often associated with spirit possession); this definition has, however, recently been called into question. After reviewing recent scholarship criticizing the traditional position, I argue for an

understanding of **להתנבא** as meaning “playing the prophet,” which can but does not necessarily imply spirit possession phenomena.

Having established a baseline for understanding spirit possession in biblical literature, in part three, I discuss an expansive example of spirit possession in biblical literature that is further from the mold established in parts one and two. Specifically, I demonstrate how the function of angels and demons in the book of Tobit as *copresences* can be analogously compared with contemporary possession practices in *Regla de Ocha* (Santería).¹

I. Possessing Spirits in Biblical Literature

Departing from the majority of secondary literature related to this topic, I do not divide my discussion by era (e.g., ‘Spirit in the Persian period’) or by literary markers (e.g., ‘Spirit in Isaiah’ or ‘Spirit in the Writings’). Instead, I have organized the discussion by syntactical construction in order to recognize several broader strokes by which these phenomena are described.

A. Different Semantic Constructions for Possessing Spirits

Among the texts discussed below are those that many scholars might think of when first hearing about a project concerning “spirit possession” in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, it is helpful to start with these “strong” examples before moving onto those that might defy a certain set of expectations. To begin, one of the simpler methods for recognizing possessing spirits in biblical literature is identifying spirits who are the subjects of verbs in which humans are the direct or indirect object.

¹ I borrow the term “copresence” from Beliso-De Jesús, *Electric Santería*. See discussion below.

1) Locative Constructions

A frequent articulation of this type is relatively open-ended in its meaning: “a/the spirit was/is upon...” (e.g., וְתָהי רוּחַ עָלַי or רוּחַ עָלַי):

Balaam looked and he saw Israel camping tribe by tribe and a/the spirit of God was upon him (וְתָהי עָלָיו רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים). He lifted up his oracle, saying... (Num 24:2–3a; cf. 2 Chr 15:1; 20:14)

A/The spirit of the LORD was upon [Othniel] (וְתָהי עָלָיו רוּחַ-יְיָ) and he judged Israel: He went out to war and the LORD gave into his hand King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram and his hand prevailed against Cushan-rishathaim. (Jdg 3:10; cf. 11:29)

Let our Lord command his servants before him that they may seek someone who is skillful in playing the lyre. When a/the harmful spirit of God is upon you (בְּהִיּוֹת עָלֶיךָ רוּחַ-יְיָ) (אֱלֹהִים רָעָה), he will play it in his hand and it will soothe you. (טוֹב לְךָ) (1 Sam 16:16; cf. 16:23)

Then Saul sent messengers to take David. When they saw the company of prophets prophesying (נִבְּאִים) with Samuel standing at the head over them, the spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul (וְתָהי עַל־מְלָאכֵי שְׂאוּל רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים) and they also entered a prophetic trance (וַיִּתְּנָבְאוּ גַם־הֵמָּה). (1 Sam 19:20; cf. 19:23)

As for me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD: My spirit which is upon you (רוּחִי אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיךָ) and my words which I set in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, or from the mouth of your children, or from the mouth of your children's children, says the LORD, from now until forever. (Isa 59:21)

The spirit of the LORD is upon me (רוּחַ אֲדָנִי [יְיָ] עָלַי),
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the oppressed he has sent me
to bind up the brokenhearted
to proclaim to the captive liberation
and to the prisoners release. (Isa 61:1)

It is noteworthy that this construction seems to be able to designate a variety of phenomena, ranging from offering a prophetic oracle, to providing charismatic leadership, to triggering what I argue below is “playing the prophet” (לְהִתְנַבֵּא). It is also significant that this construction is applied equally to what are arguably positive or desirable spirits (Jdg 3:10; 11:29; Isa 61:1),

those that are detrimental and undesirable (e.g., 1 Sam 16:16) as well as those that are morally neutral or at least difficult to discern (e.g., 1 Sam 19:20).

2) *Specific Verbs*

The prevalence and utility of the “a/the spirit was/is upon...” construction makes the occurrences of other, more specific verbs all the more conspicuous. As many commentators have noticed, there is an especially high concentration of spirit possession language in the book of Judges:

But the/a spirit of the LORD *clothed* Gideon (ורוח [יי] לבשה את־גדעון) and he sounded the trumpet and Abiezer was called out after him. (Jdg 6:34; cf. 1 Chr 12:19; 2 Chr 24:20)²

The/A spirit of the LORD began to *stir* [Samson] (ותחל רוח [יי] לפעמו) in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol. (Jdg 13:25)

The/A spirit of the LORD *seized* upon [Samson] (ותצלח עליו רוח [יי]) and he tore apart [the lion] like one might tear apart a kid with bare hands. He did not tell his father or mother what he had done. (Jdg 14:6; cf. 14:19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13; 18:10; 19:9)

The vagueness and infrequency of these constructions have not deterred interpreters from attempting to differentiate what specific ideas might be signaled by these verbs.³ Without more information, however, it is difficult to discern if some technical definitions might be offered to distinguish them from one another. For example, it would be difficult to argue for a qualitative difference between a spirit *being upon* (ותהי עליו רוח-[יי]) Othniel but *clothing* Gideon (ורוח [יי] לבשה את־גדעון), when both judges are similarly empowered to be victorious in battle against

² Typically, לבש in the G means “to put on,” which would suggest a meaning here of the spirit *wearing* Gideon. Most translations, however, render the verb as “clothe” (cf. both meanings in Job 29:14). See the extended discussion of this issue in Martin, “Power to Save?!” 34–37. For the counter argument, see Nahum M. Waldman, “The Imagery of Clothing, Covering, and Overpowering” *JANES* 19 (1989): 161–70. I side here with Martin.

³ See, for example, Martin, “Power to Save?!” and Jannes Reiling, “Holy Spirit,” *DDD*, 419–20 who draws a distinction between “animistic” and “dynamistic” manifestations of spirits that is not dissimilar from my own “animating” and “possessing” categories.

Israel's enemies.⁴ Still the color and vigor of this language should not be passed over, since it suggests that the incredible richness of these experiences cannot be adequately described by any particular linguistic formula—an aspect of spirits in Judges that Lee Roy Martin calls “the untamable gift of the energizing presence of [the LORD].”⁵

The use of specific verbs with a spirit as subject and humans as object is by no means limited to the book of Judges. In addition to similar examples in the former prophets, certain writing prophets—especially Isaiah and Ezekiel—contain a high frequency of spirit possession language:

When a spirit of jealousy *crosses over* him (ועבר עליו רוח־קנאה) and he is jealous of his wife that she has defiled herself or when a spirit of jealousy passes over him and he is jealous of his wife and she has not defiled herself; (Num 5:14; cf. 30)

A/The spirit of the LORD *departed from* Saul (ורוח [י] סרה מעם שאול) and a detrimental spirit from the LORD *tormented* him (ובעתתו רוח־רעה מאת [י]). (1 Sam 16:14; cf. 15; 16)⁶

As soon as I have gone away from you, the spirit of the LORD will *carry* you (ורוח [י]) (ישאך) I know not where. (1 Kgs 18:12a; cf. 2 Kgs 2:16)⁷

⁴ From a historical-critical perspective, it is best to think of these different verbal choices as the particular preferences of the various sources utilized by the editors of the book of Judges. See, as just one example, a suggested compositional history for the book in Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament*, trans. John Bowden (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 202–08.

⁵ Martin, “Power to Save?!” 26. Martin shies away from using the term “possession,” but he does not define the term as I have in this project.

⁶ Note that the relationships these two spirits have to God are described differently. The first is a/the spirit of the LORD (רוח [י]), whereas the second is a spirit from the LORD (מאת [י]). While the first spirit is to some degree an aspect of God's person, the second is not a categorically “evil” spirit but simply one that is detrimental to Saul (the concept of categorical evil is in flux in biblical literature, see chapter six). Though this spirit's influence on Saul specifically is deleterious, it is arguably still ‘good’ or ‘beneficial’ from God's perspective. See Esther J. Hamori, “The Spirit of Falsehood,” *CBQ* 72 (2010): 15–30.

⁷ This example is especially exceptional for several reasons. First, it is described in the second-person voice, where one character (Obadiah) explains to another (Elijah) what he perceives to be the latter's interactions with a spirit of God. Second, it portrays not just altered behavior or internal experience as a result of spirit influence but a miraculous feat of translocation (cf. 1 Kgs 18:46; 2 Kgs 2:11). Nathan MacDonald suggests this may be what Ezekiel is describing from a first-person perspective (Ezek 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5), “The Spirit of YHWH: An Overlooked Conceptualization of Divine Presence in the Persian Period” in *Divine Presence and Absence in Exilic and Post-Exilic Judaism*, ed. Nathan MacDonald and Izaak J. de Hulster, FAT2 61 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 95–119, 99–100.

When the company of prophets who were in Jericho saw him at a distance they said, “A/The spirit of Elijah *rests upon* Elisha” (נחה רוח אליהו על-אלישע) (2 Kgs 2:15a; cf. Isa 11:2)

For the mouth of the LORD has commanded
and his spirit has *gathered* them (ורוחו הוא קבצן) (Isa 34:16b)⁸

Like cattle going down into the valley,
a/the spirit of the LORD *gave* them *rest* (רוח [יי] תניחנו) (Isa 63:14a)

A spirit *entered* me (ותבא בי רוח) as he spoke to me and it *set* me *on my feet* (ותעמדני על-) (רגלי) and I heard him speaking to me. (Ezek 2:2: cf. 3:24)

A spirit *lifted* me (ותשאני רוח) and I heard behind me the sound of a great quaking.
Blessed is the glory of the LORD from its place. (Ezek 3:12; cf. 14; 8:3; 11:1; 11:24; 43:5)

The spirit of the LORD *fell upon* me (ותפל עלי רוח [יי]) and he said to me, “Say, ‘Thus says the LORD: This is what you think, house of Israel. The things that come into your spirit/mind (רוחכם), I know.’” (Ezek 11:5)⁹

Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.
May your good spirit *lead* me (רוחך טובה תנחני) (Ps 143:10)

A spirit *passed over* my face (ורוח על-פני יחלף) (Job 4:15)¹⁰
the hair of my flesh bristled.

By listing these examples here, it is not my intention to equate them (though some correspondences are inevitable¹¹). Rather, these examples demonstrate the spread of possessing

⁸ The textual transmission of this verse is complicated, and it is possible that the MT represents an effort at harmonization between different versions. Within the wider context of this passage, it is clear that the “them” that the spirit is gathering refers to the wilderness animals and demons described in vv. 11–15.

⁹ For a fuller treatment of רוח in Ezekiel specifically, see Block, “The Prophet of the Spirit.”

¹⁰ On this translation, see Shalom M. Paul, “Job 4:15: A Hair Raising Encounter,” *ZAW* 95.1 (1983): 119–21. David Clines argues that when רוח is masculine, it cannot mean “spirit” and must mean either “wind” or “breath” (but cf. 1 Kgs 22:21). *Job 1–20*, WBC 17 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 111. I am inclined to agree with James E. Harding who argues that the phrase is intentionally ambiguous, evoking both “wind” and a figure in the divine council, “A Spirit of Deception in Job 4:15? Interpretive Indeterminacy and Eliphaz’s Vision” *BI* 13.2 (2005): 137–66.

¹¹ E.g., there may not be a large semantic difference between the ותעמדני על- and ותשאני constructions in Ezekiel.

spirits across genres and eras in biblical literature as well as their resistance to systematic organization.

3) God Causing Humans and Spirits to Interact

Another construction used for communicating spirit possession in biblical literature puts God as either the explicit or implied subject of a verb that brings humans and spirits into some kind of interaction:

God sent a detrimental spirit between Abimelech and the lords of Shechem (וישלח אלהים) (רוח רעה בין אבימלך ובין בעלי שכם) and the lords of Shechem acted treacherously with Abimelech. (Jdg 9:23)

Here is my servant, I uphold him,
my chosen one, in whom I delight.
I have put my spirit upon him (נתתי רוחי עליו)
He shall bring forth justice to the nations. (Isa 42:1)

Draw near to me, hear this:
From the beginning, I did not speak in secret.
From the time anything came to be, I was there.
Now the Lord GOD has sent me and his spirit (שלחני ורוחו). (Isa 48:16)

The LORD has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes (העיר [יי] את־רוח מלכי מדי) because. (Jer 51:11b; Ezra 1:1)

He answered and said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel, ‘Not by might, not by power but rather by my spirit (ברוחי),’ says the LORD of Hosts.” (Zech 4:6)

Their hearts they made hard against hearing the law and the words that the LORD of Hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. (שלח [יי] צבאות ברוחו ביד הנביאים) (הראשנים) (Zech 7:12a; cf. Neh 9:20, 30; 1QS 8:19)

Like the examples listed above, these constructions occur with a variety of phenomena, including those instances with both beneficial and detrimental occurrences of possessing spirits. Of special interest are those instances of uninvited and perhaps unconscious possessions where God influences a foreign leader towards a particular action that is beneficial for God’s people (e.g.,

Jer 51:11; Ezra 1:1; perhaps also Jdg 9:23). Additionally, in several instances, God accomplishes tasks *by means of* his spirit (ברוח; e.g., Zech 7:12; Neh 9:30).

Initially, it may strike one as a significant theological distinction whether God is the subject of a possessing verb or if it is some kind of spirit. However, the same kinds of phenomena can be described in both constructions. For example, prophets are described as delivering oracles in both instances (e.g., Num 24:2–3a; Ezek 11:5; Zech 7:12). Especially in instances where the acting spirit is described as belonging to God (e.g., Isa 59:21; 61:1), it does not seem that the subject of a possessing verb (whether or God or a spirit of God) is a principal distinction in this literature (see better options for drawing distinctions below).

4) Humans Acting Upon Spirits

A final, smaller category that should be mentioned is that of humans acting upon spirits of various kinds. A few examples of these phenomena might fit just as well into the discussion of animating spirits as an aspect of the self in chapter four as they do here. This is especially true when the biblical texts discuss what might be called in English “self-control” or “self-possession:”

One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty
One who rules his spirit (ומשל ברוחו) is better than one who captures a city. (Prov 16:32)
NRSV: “one whose temper is controlled”
NJPS: “To have self-control”

A fool *vents all his spirit* (כל־רוחו יוציא בסיל)
but a wise one stills it back. (Prov 29:11)
NRSV: “gives full vent to his anger”
NJPS: “vents all his rage”

As seen here, most English translations capture a significant aspect of the likely meaning through the use of idioms. Indeed, consistent with other wisdom texts, patience is lifted up as preferable to impetuosity. However, as already discussed in chapter four, the poetic style of this spirit

language is meant not only to have aesthetic value but also as a means of recognizing that spirits can be overwhelming and wild—even when they are one’s own. Such phrases reveal an underlying conception that a spirit of any kind may require a degree of management and attention—even if it is not fully hypostasized as a separate being.

There are other, less internalized examples of humans acting upon spirits. Particularly through the use of music:

Whenever a spirit of God came to Saul (וְהָיָה בְּהִיטּוֹ רוּחַ-אֱלֹהִים אֶל-שָׁאוֹל),¹² David would take the lyre and he would play it in his hand. It was soothing to Saul and beneficial to [Saul] (וְטוֹב לוֹ) and the detrimental spirit would depart from him (וְסָרָה מֵעָלָיו רוּחַ הָרָעָה). (1 Sam 16:23)

In this passage (already discussed in chapter one), David soothes Saul as well as his detrimental spirit through the use of music. The use of music is a common strategy also in spirit possession cults around the world both in antiquity and contemporarily.¹³

A related passage appears in 2 Kings:

[Elisha said,] “Now bring me a musician.” As the musician played the hand of the LORD was upon him (וְהָיָה עָלָיו יָד-יְיָ) and he said, “Thus says the LORD...” (2 Kgs 3:15–16a)

Though the word רוּחַ does not appear here, the surrounding context clearly suggests a possessing spirit ritual. In order to prophesy, Elisha requires the help of a harpist, perhaps because his skills are inhibited when used to aid the king of Israel (cf. v. 13).¹⁴

¹² Unlike in vv. 14–16, רָעָה does not appear here (though the OG has *πνεῦμα*). The MT version (which may be older) could be taken as additional evidence that “evil” or “detrimental” does not define the identity of the spirit but merely describes its effect upon Saul.

¹³ Judith Becker, “Listening Selves and Spirit Possession,” *The World of Music* 42.2 (2000): 25–50.

¹⁴ The only other places where “the hand LORD was upon him (וְהָיָה עָלָיו יָד-יְיָ)” appears in the Hebrew Bible are in Ezekiel (Ezek 1:3; 3:22; 8:1; 37:1; 40:1), where it clearly signals spirit phenomena (e.g., “The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD... Ezek 37:1).

A final example of humans acting upon spirits appears in Isaiah 63:7–11 as a part of the prophet’s reflection on God’s acts of power on behalf of Israel. The text is somewhat more obscure than other examples in this category since it appears as a prophetic lament rather than as part of a narrative:

¹⁰ But they rebelled
and they grieved his holy spirit (ועצבו את־רוח קדשו).
He became an enemy to them
and he himself made war against them.
¹¹ Then he remembered the days of old,¹⁵
Where is he who brought them up from the sea
with the shepherds of his flock?
Where is he who set in him his holy spirit? (השם בקרבו את־רוח קדשה). (Isa 63:10–11)

The holy spirit here is likely an aspect of God’s own self—effectively *God’s* animating spirit. Thus, the gravity of Israel’s rebellion is emphasized all the more by the intimacy with which God’s wound is described. Likely alluding to this passage in Isaiah, the author of Ephesians explains that disunity in the early church is a cause of grief to the holy spirit (Eph 4:30), since the community is made up of “one body and one spirit” (v. 4).

B. Conclusions Regarding Possessing Spirit Texts

From the short summary above, we can make several general observations about possessing spirits in biblical texts: 1) In contrast to the omnipresent animating spirit discussed in chapter four, the possessing spirits discussed here are more transitory and generally serve a specific purpose; 2) in most instances, the presence or personality of the human host remains present with the possessing spirit—in some cases, humans may be unaware that they are being influenced by a spirit; 3) corporate spirit possession is just as frequent as individual possession, and 4) the

¹⁵ The MT continues here משה עמו. I follow the OG and omit the phrase.

associated language and behaviors of the possession event are substantially the same whether the spirit is deemed good, bad, morally neutral, or of a mixed character.

Several other, more far reaching conclusions can also be made.

1) Animating and Possessing Spirits: “Upon” על and “In” ב

The majority of possessing spirit instances thus far reviewed have varied in their operative verbs and subjects but have consistently utilized “on” or “upon” (על) as the connecting preposition. As highlighted in other chapters, however, other prepositions can be used with “spirit” (רוח)—especially common is “in” (ב). I suggest that one of the primary indicators for distinguishing between the animating spirit (which persists) and a possessing spirit (which is transitory) in biblical literature is coordinating them with the use of ב or על respectively.¹⁶

There are numerous examples of ב with the animating spirit. In addition to the constellation of examples discussed in chapter four, this usage is scattered across biblical literature:

Then the LORD said, “My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever...” (לֹא־יָדוֹן רוּחִי בָאָדָם) (לעלם). (Gen 6:3a; cf. v. 17; 7:15; 22; Ezek 37:5, 10, 14)

When we heard, our hearts melted and no man had any spirit left (וְלֹא־קָמָה עוֹד רוּחַ בְּאִישׁ) because of you. (Josh 2:11a; cf. 5:1)

My spirit remains within you (וְרוּחִי עֹמֶדֶת בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל). (Hag 2:5b cf. בקרבו in Isa 63:11 above)

In his hand is the life of all the living
and the spirit of every human flesh (וְרוּחַ כָּל־בֶּשֶׁר־אִישׁ). (Job 12:10; cf. 32:8, 18; Isa 42:5; Zech 12:1)

¹⁶ The idea to track the use of prepositions rather than the operative verbs was first suggested to me by Carol Newsom.

If this hypothesis is correct, it changes dramatically how certain texts, which have often been understood to describe something more like a possessing spirit, might be interpreted. For example, Joseph in Pharaoh's court (Gen 41:38) and Bezalel at the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod 31:2–3) have both been interpreted as examples of charismatic, possession-type spirit phenomena though both, in fact, use a **ב** construction.¹⁷

While I believe that in the majority of cases, this distinction holds true, there are several exceptions that should be noted. Some are exceptions that prove the rule:

The spirit of the Lord speaks *through me* (**בִּי**) and his word is upon my tongue. (2 Sam 23:2)

In this case, the **ב** is instrumental (i.e., “by means of”) rather than locative.¹⁸ I believe that this text could be read as a possessing spirit.¹⁹

Another exception need not be problematic for this argument when it is considered within the context of other, similar passages:

I will put a spirit in him (**הִנְנִי נֹתֵן בּוֹ רוּחַ**) so that he will hear a rumor and return to his land. I will cause him to fall by the sword in his land. (2 Kgs 19:7//Isa 37:7)

This text would seem to be a strong example of a possessing spirit, despite the fact that it uses the **ב** construction. In fact, it is similar to several texts already discussed in which God acts upon a leader to bring about political or otherwise large-scale changes (Jdg 9:23; Jer 51:11; Ezra 1:1).

¹⁷ See my discussions of these texts in chapter four.

¹⁸ Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 98.

¹⁹ Two other infrequent constructions should also be noted. The first is with **אֵל**: “The next day a detrimental spirit of God seized Saul (**וַתִּצְלַח רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים רָעָה אֶל־שָׁאוּל**) and he played the prophet (**וַיִּתְנַבֵּא**) in the midst of his house” (1 Sam 18:10a; cf. 2 Kgs 2:9). In this instance, it is clear from context that this belongs with other similar examples of possessing spirits. The second construction is with **עִם**: “But my servant Caleb, because there is a different spirit with him (**הִיְתָה רוּחַ אַחֲרֵת עִמּוֹ**) and he has followed me fully, I will bring him into the land where he went, and his descendants will possess it (Num 14:24).” Similarly, it seems clear from context that this is an animating spirit.

However, in these three examples, a **על** or **ב** formula does not appear (**בין** in Jdg 9:23; the H form of **עורל** in Jer 51:11 and Ezra 1:1; cf. Isa 19:14). Notably, in each of these instances, it is likely that the host is not meant to understand that he is under the influence of a spirit.

I think these unusual (but not out-of-place) phenomena combine elements of both animating and possessing spirits and it is possible that the mixed syntax reflects this. Several other texts fit into this category (e.g., Ezek 11:19a; cf. 18:31; 36:26–27; Ps 51:12; 1QH^a 5:35b–36a; and several examples 4QBarkhi Nafshi). This body of texts is the subject of chapter six.

Finally, two examples from the book of Ezekiel completely defy the system as I have laid it out above: Ezekiel 2:2 and 3:24. Both texts use **ב** constructions with what are clearly examples of possessing spirits. Overall, it is not surprising that it is Ezekiel that should provide so many exceptions, since the book is loaded with spirit phenomena, often described with unique constructions (e.g., **ותפל עלי רוח** in Ezek 11:5). Here again, it may prove helpful to look to some of the theoretical work on spirit possession in cultural anthropology, especially a distinction some scholars have made between “executive” and “pathogenic” forms.

2) Most Possession Phenomena are “Pathogenic,” not “Executive.”

Emma Cohen has written about two types of spirit possession which she calls “executive” possession and “pathogenic” possession.²⁰ In contrast to older attempts at creating cross-cultural typologies of possession, Cohen argues that her categories may be more applicable, since they are “informed and constrained by recurrent features of evolved human cognition that guide

²⁰ Emma Cohen, “What is Spirit Possession? Defining, Comparing, and Explaining Two Possession Forms,” *Ethnos* 73.1 (2008): 101–26.

perception, representation, thought and action.”²¹ I suggest that these categories may also provide helpful heuristic tools for understanding possession in biblical literature, even as we recognize that these phenomena are contextualized differently in varied settings.

Cohen describes *executive possession* as entailing the perceived presence of an incorporeal agent within a person’s body who temporarily affects that person’s behavior and thoughts to the extent that the host’s actions can be attributed to the agent rather than to the host. Cohen argues that the executive type engages cognitive tools that concern notions of intentional agents in the world. The executive type is what many readers may think of initially when imagining spirit possession, but, as I have argued throughout this project, I believe it is present only minimally in the biblical and early Jewish literature.

The situation is different with the *pathogenic* type, however. Cohen describes this as the perceived presence of an agent (with or without a will or identity) that can cause physical effects such as disease as well as psychological effects such as hallucinations or depression. They can also affect a person’s luck, financial fortune, or the ways that they are perceived by others. In the pathogenic model, spirits can also lie dormant. Further, pathogenic spirits can have positive or relatively benign effects on a person. The pathogenic type, according Cohen, engages human cognitive models having to do with representations of contamination. One crucial difference between the two types is that in the pathogenic model, the host’s personality or identity remains present and is not supplanted by a spirit.

Of course, the wide range of human spirit possession phenomena cannot be completely sorted into binary categories of any type. As will be discussed in chapter six, animating and

²¹ Cohen, “What is Spirit Possession?,” 103. Contrast this, for example, with Lewis’ often criticized distinction between “central” and “peripheral” forms of ecstatic religion (see chapter one).

possessing conceptions of spirit phenomena had a tendency to converge, particularly in late Second Temple biblical literature. Still, Cohen's categories are helpful for identifying how the more active possessing types of spirit can still be conceived as somewhat passive. It is not necessary for Samson or Ezekiel to surrender control of their bodies in order for their experiences to qualify as spirit possession. This framework may also help explain why certain syntactical systems for differentiating types of spirits that seem relatively consistent (e.g., כּ and עֵל) can still function despite exceptions.

3) Material-like Conceptions of Spirits Persist Even in the Possessing Type

As already introduced in chapter four, the image of spirit as a material-like substance (sometimes of determined amount) persists even into conceptions of possessing spirits. Language like pouring and filling are especially prevalent:²²

After, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh (אֲשַׁפֹּךְ אֶת-רוּחִי עַל-כָּל-בָּשָׂר),
your sons and your daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions. (Joel 3:1)

I will pour out upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication (וְשִׁפְכִי עַל-בֵּית דָּוִד וְעַל יוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם רוּחַ חֵן וְתַחֲנוּנִים) so that they might look to me, the one they have pierced,²³ and they shall mourn him like the mourning of an only son, and weep bitterly over him, like the bitter weeping over a first born son. (Zech 12:10)

²² See discussion of this image in chapter four.

²³ The rendering of this phrase is disputed, not least because it is read as a messianic prophecy in John 19:37. Following the variant note in the BHS, the NRSV elects to read אֵלַי אֵת as an insertion: "when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him." The NJPS, meanwhile, elects to change the verb: "and they shall lament to Me about those who are slain...." For my purposes here, it is not necessary to resolve the issue but only to recognize that the result of the pouring out of this "spirit of grace and supplication" is profound, corporate mourning. For an overview of text critical issues, see William Randolph Bynum, "Text-Critical Review of Zechariah 12:10" in *The Fourth Gospel and the Scriptures: Illuminating the Form and Meaning of Scriptural Citation in John 19:37*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 144 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 59–109.

The LORD has mingled (NRSV: “poured out”) within her a spirit of confusion ([י] מסך) and they have caused Egypt to stumble in call its deeds as a drunkard staggers in his vomit. (Isa 19:14; cf. 29:10)

Until a spirit from on high is emptied out upon us (עד־יערה עלינו רוח ממרום)
and the wilderness becomes a fertile field
and the fertile field is accounted as a forest. (Isa 32:15; cf. 44:3)

These images betray a more material conception of רוח, one that discusses spirits as if they could be imparted in portions:

Then the LORD came down in a cloud and he spoke to him. He took from the spirit which was upon him and put [it] upon the seventy elders (ויאצל מן־הרוח אשר עליו ויתן על־שבעים) (איש הזקנים). As the spirit rested upon them, they entered a prophetic trance and they did not do so again. (Num 11:25; cf. v. 29)²⁴

As they crossed Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I might do for you before I am taken from you.” Elisha said, “Let me have a double-portion of your spirit” (ויהינא פי־שנים) (ברוחך אלי). (2 Kgs 2:9; cf. Sir 48:12)

These stories suggest a conception of spirit as a resource available in only a finite amount, a kind of spirit economy where God is the principal distributor. A common link in texts with these more material conceptions of spirit is that of a prophetic mantle or office being passed from hand to hand (cf. Num 27:18; Deut 21:17; 34:9; 1 Kgs 22:24; perhaps 1 Sam 10:12a).²⁵

It is notable that some texts tend to differentiate spirits by means of quantity (i.e., doubling, portioning, filling, etc.), while others are more concerned with quality (i.e., good, bad, jealous, etc.). I have not been able to find an example in the Hebrew Bible where the two

²⁴ See full discussion of this pericope below.

²⁵ Thereby bringing the story of Israel’s prophets and the spirit more in line with the vision of post-exilic texts like Zechariah 7:12 and Nehemiah 9:30. See MacDonald, “The Spirit of YHWH,” 106.

concepts indisputably function together.²⁶ Thus, it could be that both existed as alternative methods for recognizing and characterizing different spirit phenomena.

The two ideas begin to function together, however, in later Second Temple era texts. Some texts would take the uneven or unequal distribution of God's spirit in humanity as a given, and account for it as a consequence of God's will:

And you have caused your servant to have insight [... lo]ts of humankind. For according to (their) spirits you cast (the lot) for them between good and evil, [and] you have determined [...]°°tm their recompense. And as for me, I know from the understanding that comes from you that through your goodwill toward a p[er]son you mul[tiply his portion] in your holy spirit (ברצונכה בא[י] ש הרב[יתה נחלתו] ברוח קדושך). Thus you draw him closer to your understanding. (1QH^a 6:22–24)

God also testifies to it through signs and omens and various miracles and by gifts of the holy spirit, according to his will. (Heb 2:4; cf. Titus 3:6)

In these chronologically later examples, it is difficult to tell which kind of spirit is operating (either animating or possessing). As suggested above and discussed in the next chapter, this may be because the two conceptions came to be increasingly conflated in late Second temple texts.

4) Polemics Against Spirit Possession in Biblical Literature Have Been Overstated

It has been suggested by several interpreters that ancient Israelite prophecy distinguished itself from surrounding cultures through intentionally avoiding charismatic or possession-type practices, or at least that these phenomena were not indigenous to Israelite religion.²⁷ While this

²⁶ It might be suggested that a text like Joel 3:1, which references both “pouring” and God’s spirit specifically, has both systems functioning together, but the reference is so oblique, it is difficult to know how developed either idea is here.

²⁷ See, for example, Mowinckel, “‘The Spirit’ and ‘the Word’ in the Pre-Exilic Reforming Prophets,”; André, “Ecstatic Prophecy [sic] in the Old Testament,” Parker, “Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel,” and Adam, “‘And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them’ (1Sam 10:11b).”

position has been refuted, it would seem that some limited polemics of this kind can be found in the Hebrew Bible:²⁸

The prophets are nothing but wind (והנביאים יהיו לרוח),
for the word is not in them.
Thus shall it be done to them. (Jer 5:13)

The days of punishment have come.
The days of recompense have come.
May Israel know:
The prophet is a fool,
The man of the spirit is crazy. (משגע איש הרוח) (Hos 9:7a–b)

²⁷ At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Shout louder, for he is a god. He is musing or relieving himself or on a journey. Perhaps he is sleeping and will wake up. ²⁸ They shouted louder and they cut themselves with swords and spears as was their practice until blood poured out over them. ²⁹ When noon passed, they played the prophet (ויתנבאו) until it was time to offer the oblation, but there was no voice, no answer, and no response. (1 Kgs 18:27–29)

However, an accusation of fraud or improper execution should not be confused for condemning an entire practice. For example, most possession cults contain some system for appraising good and bad practices as well as evolving criteria for discerning fraud and legitimacy.²⁹

Even the final example from 2 Kings 18 need not necessarily be seen as a condemnation of possession practices. It is true that the fruitless ecstasies of the prophets of Baal are an extreme foil to Elijah’s own superbly efficacious and humble prayer (vv. 36–38). Elijah’s posture towards his opponents, however, may be interpreted as a part of the prophetic showdown. As described by anthropologist Erika Bourguignon, Elijah’s mocking tone and theatrics would be quite at home in some Haitian possession cults:

²⁸ See my discussion of this issue in chapter one. For charismatic prophecy in ancient Israel corroborated by evidence from surrounding cognate cultures, see especially, the work of Martti Nissinen, “Prophetic Madness:” and “Prophecy and Ecstasy” in *Ancient Prophecy*.

²⁹ For a discussion of strategies for legitimation in Brazilian Candomblé, for example, see Mattijs van de Port, “Circling around the *Really Real*: Spirit Possession Ceremonies and the Search for Authenticity in Bahian Candomblé,” *Ethos* 33.2 (2005): 149–79.

It is interesting that the gods are approached with a very considerable mixture of banter and respect. There is respect, indeed, reverence and awe, in asking the gods for help, yet it is recognized that when they come during ceremonies, they wish to enjoy the drums and the dancing, the food and drink, and generally to have a good time, and a great deal of ribald talk and banter takes place. Not only do the spirits themselves approach their faithful in this manner, but they accept and expect such talk in return. Religious activity is not a solemn-faced affair, but one in which there is a good deal of humor and verbal fencing, aspects of behavior which are not foreign to everyday, human, social interactions.³⁰

Against this background, we might choose to read the conflict at Carmel not only as a conflict between rival cults but also as one between rival cultic practices—an issue that is equally contentious throughout biblical literature. Finally, if the Hebrew Bible does indeed contain polemics against charismatic or frenzied possession phenomena specifically, this by itself might be taken as evidence that such rituals were practiced in some sectors of the cult in the history of the literature.

II. “To Play the Prophet” (להתנבא)

A perennial scholarly debate regarding spirit phenomena in biblical literature has concerned how best to understand and translate a particular verb, להתנבא.³¹ In Biblical Hebrew, the root נבא appears most frequently as a noun meaning “prophet” or as a verb in the N stem, usually meaning “to prophesy.” The focus of my discussion here, the Dt stem, occurs comparatively less

³⁰ Bourguignon, “The Self, the Behavioral Environment, and the Theory of Spirit Possession.” 53.

³¹ See the review of literature in Adam, “‘And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them’ (1Sam 10:11b)” and overview of previous scholarship in Christophe Nihan, “Saul Among the Prophets (1 Sam 10:10–12 and 19:18–24): The Reworking of Saul’s Figure in the Contexts of the Debate on ‘Charismatic Prophecy’ in the Persian Era” in *Saul in Story and Tradition*, ed. Carl S. Ehrlich and Marsha C. White, FAT 47 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 88–118. Other sources informing my discussion below include: Hermann Gunkel, “The Secret Experiences of the Prophets”, *Expositor* 9, vol 1 (1924): 356–366, 427–435; vol. 2 23–32; John V. M. Sturdy “The Original Meaning of ‘Is Saul Also Among the Prophets?’ (1 Samuel 10:11,12; 19:24),” *VT* 20 (1970): 206–13; Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*; Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology*, 159–162; Benjamin D. Sommer, “Reflecting on Moses: The Redaction of Numbers 11” *JBL* 118.4 (1999): 601–24; Levison, “Prophecy in Ancient Israel”; Nissinen, “Prophetic Madness”; MacDonald, “The Spirit of YHWH”

frequently: just under thirty times in the Bible, being especially prevalent in the books of 1 Samuel and Jeremiah.³² Below, I lay out a case for understanding this verb as meaning to “act like a prophet” or “to do the things commonly associated with prophets”—an idea I imperfectly render as “playing the prophet.”³³

The conventional definition for the verb among scholars has held it to refer to a particular form of ecstatic frenzy, trance, or spirit possession, a definition that takes its cues from Saul’s frequent engagement in the behavior (1 Sam 10:5–6, 10, 13; 18:10; 19:20–21, 23–24). See, for example, how the NRSV renders the verb when Saul is the subject:

Then the spirit of the LORD will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and be turned into a different person. (1 Sam 10:6 NRSV)

The next day an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved (וִיתְנַבֵּא) within his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand; and Saul threw the spear, for he thought, “I will pin David to the wall.” But David eluded him twice. (1 Sam 18:10–11)

Gunkel went so far as labelling these occurrences “glossolalia” and likening them to the events of Pentecost described in Acts 2.³⁴ While the definition “playing the prophet” can and sometimes does imply something like this idea, I believe it can encompass other types of typical prophetic behavior.

As scholars have noted, the conventional definition of “ecstasy” or “frenzy” is not fitting for every occurrence of the verb, and it may be a mistake to take the Saul examples in 1 Samuel

³² Num 11:25–27; 1 Sam 10:5–6, 10, 13; 18:10; 19:20–21, 23–24; 1 Kgs 18:29; 22:8, 10, 18 // 2 Chr 18:7, 9, 17; Jer 14:14; 23:13; 26:20; 29:27; Ezek 13:17; 37:10; 2 Chr 20:37. For an overview and extended bibliography, see Hans-Peter Müller, “נָבִיא” *TDOT* 9:129–50.

³³ I use “playing” not necessarily in the sense of doing something disingenuously or poorly (i.e., “What are you playing at?”) but more so in the sense of playing a part or a role at which a person can be skilled or unskilled, genuinely motivated or not. See, for example, תַּשְׁתַּרר “you play the prince” in Num 16:13.

³⁴ Gunkel, *The Influence of the Holy Spirit*, 31.

as the normative conception for other instances.³⁵ While it is true that in several texts that use this verb, no prophetic words or oracles are recorded (e.g., 1 Sam 18:10; 19:20–24), in other places, specific prophetic messages are explicitly associated with **להתנבא**:

The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is yet one man by whom to inquire of the LORD, Micaiah son of Imlah. But I hate him because he never prophesies (**יתנבא**) anything good about me but only bad.” (1 Kgs 22:8a; cf. v. 18; // 2 Chr 18:7; v. 17)

These instances show how, when one is “playing the prophet,” recognizable prophetic oracles may result, which suggests that a more nuanced definition may be necessary.

One alternative is to understand the N form of **נבא** as a specific formula for indicating the delivery of an oracle, whereas the Dt reflexive stem refers to a specific sense of “playing the prophet.” This is consistent with other ways in which the Dt form is utilized for other verbs in the Hebrew Bible.³⁶ On this, Jonathan Deane Parker’s 2015 PhD dissertation is the most complete study available.³⁷ This division may map especially well onto the use of the verb in the book of Jeremiah:

There was also a man playing the prophet (Dt: **מתנבא**) in the name of the LORD, Uriah son of Shemaiah, from Kiryat-jearim. He prophesied (N: **וינבא**) against this city and against this land according to the words of Jeremiah. (Jer 26:20)

The LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying (N: **נבאים**) lies in my name. I did not send them. I did not command them. I did not speak to them. A lying vision and

³⁵ See, for example, criticisms of the conventional view in Levison, “Prophecy in Ancient Israel.”

³⁶ E.g., **אבל** in the G means “to mourn.” In 2 Samuel 14:2, Joab instructs the wise woman of Tekoa to “play the mourner” using the Dt (**התאבלי-נא**); **שכר** in the G means to be(come) drunk. In 1 Sam 1:14, Eli chastises Hannah for playing the drunk (**תשתכרין**) at Shiloh. For more examples, see Adam, “‘And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them’ (1Sam 10:11b),” 8–12. He also suggests that the Dt form usually implies fraud or inappropriate behavior. On this point we disagree as I discuss below.

³⁷ Jonathan Deane Parker, “Moses and the Seventy Elders: Mosaic Authority in Numbers 11 and the ‘Legend of the Septuagint’” (PhD diss., Durham University, 2015), see esp. chp. 2. Parker suggests that because the elders are recognized as having authority and import (especially in later interpretive tradition) it is likely not spirit possession that occurred in the tent but prophecy. I suggest that there is no reason it could not be both.

worthless divination and the deceit of their minds they are playing the prophet (Dt: מתנבאים) with you. (Jer 14:14; cf. 23:13)

This understanding is employed also at times in popular translations:

²⁶ The LORD himself has made you priest instead of the priest Jehoiada, so that there may be officers in the house of the LORD to control any madman who *plays the prophet*, to put him in the stocks and the collar. ²⁷ So now why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who plays the prophet for you? (Jer 29:26–27 NRSV)

Yet, as helpful as this division in meaning may prove to be, it is only a partial solution.

Two significant questions remain unanswered: First, does “playing the prophet” refer to assuming a social status or office that is not one’s own (i.e., the equivalent of impersonating a police officer at the scene of an accident). Or rather, does it mean engaging in a particular behavior usually associated with prophets (i.e., temporarily electing oneself to direct traffic around the scene of an accident until professionals arrive)? Second, does the appearance of להתנבא imply spirit possession? These questions are treated in order below.

A. “Playing the Prophet.” Status or Behavior?

Several scholars have reacted against the conventional understanding of להתנבא as referring to ecstasy by countering that it instead refers to assuming social status. As noted above, Klaus-Peter Adam argues not only that להתנבא has been mistakenly associated with ecstatic trance by modern scholars but that, in certain situations, it indicates assuming the role of prophet inappropriately.³⁸ As he explains:

From a pragmatic viewpoint, the meaning of the stem may serve to express an author's distance from a figure in a narrative. The author may deliberately make use of the Hitpael in order to declare a certain act as inappropriate or not suitable for the respective person.

³⁸ Adam notes only three instances in the Hebrew Bible where the verb carries no negative undertone: Jer 26:20; Ezek 37:10; and 2 Chr 20:37, “'And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them' (1Sam 10:11b),” 19.

Falsely *pretending* to be in a certain social position of / to be in a certain status is the attached value judgment.³⁹

Adam sees this meaning not only in Saul's behavior but also in the episode of the seventy-elders in Numbers 11 and with Micaiah ben Imlah in 1 Kgs 22.

John Levison also pushes back against the traditional ecstatic interpretation but chooses a different strategy. He argues that **להתנבא** does indeed indicate a particular prophetic behavior in Numbers 11—just not ecstasy. Rather, it is “a visionary experience within a controlled cultic setting to support Moses as he leads the Israelites.”⁴⁰ He differentiates this story (and other instances of **להתנבא**) from those of Saul, who is a special exception, since his brushes with prophecy result in violence, embarrassment, and madness.⁴¹ Saul's is the negative example, according to Levison, proving that, despite his playing the prophet, Saul is not *among* (i.e., “one of”) the prophets (1 Sam 10:12; 19:24).

Overall, Levison is especially concerned with removing any notion of ecstasy, frenzy, or chaos from **להתנבא**. See, for example, his description of 1 Kings 22:

Moreover, the action of [Zedekiah ben Chenaanah], while they continued prophesying, suggests a large measure of physical and mental control, quite different from Saul's experience, particularly when the latter is described in detail in 1 Samuel 19. Zedekiah ben Chenaanah rose up, made a pair of iron horns, and predicted that the kings would gore the enemy to death. The prophets concurred: “Go up to Ramoth-Gilead and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king” (1 Kgs 22:11-12). This sequence would appear to indicate that prophesying in a central religious context, whatever else it may

³⁹ Adam, “‘And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them’ (1Sam 10:11b),” 20. Emphasis original.

⁴⁰ Levison, “Prophecy in Ancient Israel,” 504–05.

⁴¹ “The impetus for inspiration differs as well in these narratives. Saul was drawn into a communal prophetic experience that was already taking place under the influence of harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres, instruments used frequently in many societies to induce ecstatic possession and trance. There are no such corresponding details in Numbers 11, where the elders prophesied once Moses had placed them around the tent and the Lord was said to come down in the cloud, speak to Moses, and distribute the spirit. There is no mention of the influence of music or dance nor of a band of roving ecstatics into whose aura the elders were drawn.” Levison, “Prophecy in Ancient Israel,” 511.

have entailed, consisted of comprehensible actions and words proffered to support a ruler's intentions.⁴²

This is consistent with the overall program in Levison's later monograph, *Filled with the Spirit* (see my longer discussion of this work in chapter four).

In my view, both scholars are right to recognize that a simple definition of “prophetic ecstasy” for **להתנבא** is inadequate. However, their respective analyses are distracted by attempting to load the verb with additional categories. Adam wishes to see **להתנבא** as a primarily pejorative term, despite the fact that at least three of its occurrences are indisputably positive.⁴³ Contra Adam, I do not see why other texts (esp. 1 Sam 10; Num 11) need be seen as depreciative uses of **להתנבא** (see below).

Similarly, Levison's coordination of where there is and is not control, frenzy, and ecstasy in prophetic narratives goes beyond the evidence of the biblical texts. As I have already shown in chapter one, there is no reason that a spirit possession ritual—which, admittedly, may strike an uninitiated observer as chaotic—could nevertheless be orderly, ritualized, and practiced ‘within a controlled cultic setting.’ His charge that the conventional interpretation of **להתנבא** does not account for “the clear failure of uncontrolled prophetic behavior to provide Moses with the administrative help he requested” is valid only if one has a very limited view of what ecstatic possession experience might be able to accomplish within cults that practice it.⁴⁴

⁴² Levison, “Prophecy in Ancient Israel,” 517.

⁴³ Adam does acknowledge these three instances (Jer 26:20; Ezek 37:10; and 2 Chr 20:37) and argues that the Dt can be used to indicate the temporary nature of “playing the prophet,” “And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them’ (1Sam 10:11b),” 19. I am not convinced by this argument as Adam provides no control for showing when an instance of the verb may be pejorative or when it may simply be noting temporality.

⁴⁴ Levison, “Prophecy in Ancient Israel,” 504. For example, “playing at prophecy” may function as a God-ordained deputization of these seventy-elders for duties previously reserved only for Moses. See Parker, “Moses and the Seventy Elders.” As Levison notes, part of the difficulty in interpreting Numbers 11 is its composite nature and

In answer to the initial question, then, I believe it is impossible to distinguish the social role of a prophet from its associated behaviors, especially when one is “playing the prophet.” We may take as an example, 1 Samuel 10, an episode Adam interprets as a distanced, depreciative view of Saul and this group of prophets. Adam describes Saul as joining the other prophets in “pretending” to prophesy, but how might he do this without adopting certain recognizable prophetic behaviors?

To conclude, **להתנבא** must refer to a range of activities commonly associated with prophets, which thereby elevate one to that status (e.g., spirit-induced ecstatic trance, perhaps, but maybe also criticizing a king or associating with prophets). In contrast to Levison and Adam’s definitions, this meaning is broad enough to encompass the wide range of occurrences of **להתנבא** in the Hebrew Bible. For example, it can apply both for Saul’s engaging in violence against David while “playing the prophet” (1 Sam 18:10), and Ezekiel’s obeying God’s command to prophesy to the spirit by “playing the prophet” in his vision (Ezek 37:10).

B. Is **להתנבא** Spirit Possession?

The short answer, as might be presumed from my analysis above, is that “playing the prophet” can imply spirit possession but does not necessarily need to. This answer requires some qualifications, however.

A connotation of spirit possession is highly dependent on what is assumed to be stereotypical prophetic behavior by the community—both those who engage in and witness such events as well as those who later tell the stories and hear them. As discussed in chapter two,

complicated literary history, including its relationships to older Pentateuchal texts like Exodus 18 and 24. See Sommer, “Reflecting on Moses.”

charting these assumptions across the trajectory and transmission of a text is not only a historical question but also a hermeneutical one. Even if an early version of a story used **להתנבא** in a way that did not connote spirit possession, that previous intention would not necessarily prevent a later community's version or response to that story from reading it as such. Two scholars who have attempted to chart these changing dynamics in **להתנבא** texts, though in different modes, are Christophe Nihan and Nathan MacDonald.⁴⁵

In his interpretation of Saul's **להתנבא** texts, Nihan argues that the final versions of the "Is Saul also among the prophets" stories in 1 Samuel 10 and 19 are the products of a post-exilic, post-Deuteronomic debate about the validity of charismatic prophecy.⁴⁶ He argues that interposed into the 1 Samuel 10 account are verses 10–13a, an early midrash that subverts the earlier Deuteronomist understanding of empowerment by the **רוח אלהים** (as militaristic), in favor of one of charismatic prophecy.⁴⁷

¹⁰ They came there to Gibeah and a band of prophets met [Saul]. The spirit of God seized upon him and he played the prophet in the midst of them (**ותצלח עליו רוח אלהים ויתנבא**) (Dt **בתוכם**). ¹¹ When all who knew him previously saw him prophesying (**נבא**) with prophets, the people said to one another, "What has happened to this son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" ¹² A man from there answered, "Who is their father?" Therefore, it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" ¹³ When he finished playing the prophet, he went to the high place. (1 Sam 10:10–13)

⁴⁵ Nihan, "Saul Among the Prophets" and MacDonald, "The Spirit of YHWH."

⁴⁶ Nihan builds this interpretation on a wealth of previous scholarship that suggests that these sections are late additions to the narrative of 1 Samuel. "Saul Among the Prophets," 88–90.

⁴⁷ Citing Ludwig Schmidt, Nihan argues that **ויבאו שם הגבעתה** in v. 10a and **ויבא הבמה** in v. 13b mark this insertion with a *Wiederaufnahme* (repetitive resumption). Nihan, "Saul Among the Prophets," 92; Ludwig Schmidt, *Menschlicher Erfolg und Jahwes Initiative. Studien zu Tradition, Interpretation und Historie in Überlieferungen von Gideon, Saul und David*, WMANT 38 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1970), 115–116.

Specifically, Nihan argues that this post-exilic group was interested in “unofficial” or “non-professional” charismatic activity, which was ordained not by one’s office but by God’s spirit.⁴⁸

In this, he connects 1 Samuel 10 to another post-exilic text that depicts ecstatic prophecy, Numbers 11:

²⁴ Moses went out and he told the people the word of the LORD. He gathered seventy men, each from the elders of the people, and he stationed them around the tent. ²⁵ Then the LORD came down in a cloud and he spoke to him. He took from the spirit which was upon him and put [it] upon the seventy elders (**וַיֹּצֵא מִן־הָרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו וַיִּתֵּן עַל־שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ** (הַזִּקְנִים)). As the spirit rested upon them, they played the prophet (**וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ**) but they did not do so again. ²⁶ Two men remained in the camp, one was named Eldad and the other was named Medad and the spirit rested upon them (**וַתֵּנָּח עֲלֵיהֶם הָרוּחַ**)—they were registered but had not gone to the tent. They played the prophet (**וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ**) in the camp. ²⁷ A boy ran and spoke to Moses. He said, “Eldad and Medad are playing the prophet in the camp. ²⁸ Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, one of his chosen men, answered and he said, “My Lord, Moses, stop them.” ²⁹ Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for me? Would that all of the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them.”

In Nihan’s perspective, it is especially significant that Eldad and Medad’s prophetic activity takes place away from the shrine and without Moses’ supervision. In this, the paradigmatic prophet, Moses, does not directly mediate the pair’s prophetic activity. Instead he merely permits and even praises it.

Nihan goes on to contrast these stories with a latter account of Saul “playing the prophet” in 1 Samuel 19:18–24.

²³ [Saul] went there to Naioth in Ramah. The spirit of God came upon him as well (**וַתְּהִי** (**עָלָיו גַּם־הוּא רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים**)). As he was going, he played the prophet (**וַיִּתְנַבֵּא**) until he came to Naioth in Ramah. ²⁴ He also stripped off his clothes and he also played the prophet before Samuel. He lay naked all of that day and call night. Therefore, it is said, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Samuel 19:23–24)

According to Nihan, the purpose of this story is two-fold: First, it wishes to discredit the theological vision of ecstatic prophecy advocated in 1 Samuel 10 not by attacking its legitimacy

⁴⁸ Nihan, “Saul Among the Prophet,” 97.

but rather its value and prestige. Saul and his men are made to look foolish and ineffectual in their naked, ecstatic prophesying at the foot of Samuel, who notably does not participate. Second, it seeks to reassert the classic Deuteronomistic vision of prophecy embodied in figures like Moses, Samuel, and Jeremiah, who do engage in ecstasy.⁴⁹

Even if Nihan's reconstruction is, at times, speculative, his approach remains helpful because it offers a more dynamic understanding of *להתנבא* texts in the Bible.⁵⁰ If he is right in interpreting 1 Samuel 10 and Numbers 11 as positive portrayals of spirit possession but 1 Samuel 19 as negative—as I believe he is—his reconstruction maintains a consistent understanding of *להתנבא* across texts despite their assuming differing perspectives on the value and purpose of charismatic prophecy. This is evident in how both texts use the proverb (which likely predates both), “Is Saul also among the prophets?” The younger 1 Samuel 19 is probably more in line with the earlier sense of the phrase (i.e., “Even though Saul is traditionally associated with spirit phenomena, this does not by itself include him in the company of God's servants, the prophets.”), whereas 1 Samuel 10, motivated by an interest in lifting up ecstatic spirit possession (perhaps outside the oversight of the official cult), found Saul to be the perfect figure to make their point (i.e., “Saul's unlikely reputation but nonetheless undeniable inclusion among the prophets proves the value and effectiveness of ecstatic, spirit possessed, prophecy”).

The account in 1 Samuel 19 stands out for another reason as it is one of the few clearly involuntary episodes of spirit possession in the Hebrew Bible. As argued above, most stories of

⁴⁹ Nihan, “Saul Among the Prophets,” 101–6.

⁵⁰ As just one example, Nihan goes too far when he follows other interpreters in speculating that Eldad and Medad were the names of unofficial charismatic prophetic circles in Persian Yehud. “Saul Among the Prophet,” 97. For a similar perspective on the subsequence of 1 Samuel 19 to chapter 10, , though arguing for a pre-exilic date, see Bernhard Lehnart, “Saul unter den ‘Ekstatikern’ (ISam 19,18–24)” in *David und Saul im Widerstreit – Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit: Beiträge zur Auslegung des ersten Samuelbuches*, ed. Walter Dietrich (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 205–23.

possessing spirits in biblical literature portray possession that is welcomed and often intentionally cultivated by the host. These then proceed with the host's personality remaining present and more or less 'in control.' Saul and his messengers, however, are clearly at cross purposes with the spirit of God. In this, the episode is consistent with numerous descriptions of spirit possession in contemporary cults.

One example comes from an account of a traditional possession cult among the Edo people in Benin City, Nigeria. Here, as in a few biblical accounts, the description of a spirit's transgression into a person's body is conceived in violent language. It is also recognized as a part of the possession ritual:

Indeed, the act of possession is conceived in terms of "sexual intimacy" and so the expression *akom afa no*, he or she has been possessed by a deity, signifies the invasion of the privacy of an individual by the spirit. The expression *afa no* is employed when a man has sexual intercourse with a woman against her consent.⁵¹

As already argued above, the majority of possessing spirit accounts in the Hebrew Bible are positive and more collaborative than what we find in this description of the Edo and in 1 Samuel 19. Indeed, this seems to be precisely the point of this passage.

Since the 1 Samuel 19 account seems designed not only to lift up David at the expense of Saul and his messengers but also to denigrate a particular expression of spirit possession, we can draw a separate conclusion before moving on: In the majority of episodes in which God's spirit is involved in possession in the Hebrew Bible, the host experiences the possession as positive and empowering, provided that they are acting in accordance with God's will. Moreover, their personality remains present and 'in-control' throughout the experience. In contrast, spirit hosts

⁵¹ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Spirit and Spirits in African Religious Traditions" in *Interdisciplinary and Religio-Cultural Discourses on Spirit-Filled World: Loosing the Spirits*, ed. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Kirsteen Kim, and Amos Yong (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 41–53, 48.

who act at cross-purposes with God are more likely to experience possession as an invasion or deception (e.g., Jdg 9:23; 1 Sam 16:14; 18:10; 1 Kgs 22:20–23; Isa 29:10). Additionally, their personalities may be suspended, and the episode may have embarrassing or even deadly consequences (e.g., 2 Kgs 19:7; but cf. Jer 51:11; Ezra 1:1).

A final perspective on the question, “Is **להתנבא** spirit possession?” is provided (indirectly) by British biblical scholar Nathan MacDonald, who suggests that the “spirit of the LORD” became an increasingly prominent theological framework for understanding the presence and absence of God in the Persian period.⁵² MacDonald sees the book of Ezekiel as a turning point, which helped to inaugurate a sustained interest in spirit phenomena in post-exilic communities⁵³:

Many of those who wrote in the Persian period had the sense that God's presence had eluded them and that Israel's experience fell short of what she had known prior to the fall of Jerusalem. Consequently, in this period the hope was expressed that God's spirit would be active more widely, amongst all Israelites and perhaps even the whole world. This hope was typically expressed as something that would occur at, or as a precursor to, the breaking in of God's final salvation.⁵⁴

MacDonald goes on to chart three “distinguishable hopes” in post-exilic texts that resulted from this situation. The first, the “hope of widespread prophetic activity,” is evident not only in texts that describe this phenomenon vividly (e.g., Joel 3:1) but also in narrative **להתנבא** texts (e.g., Num 11, 1 Sam 10), which portray non-prophets engaging in spirit empowered prophecy. Under the influence of Ezekiel, prophecy comes increasingly to be understood as a spirit phenomenon, accessible to anyone filled with the spirit of God. A second stream, “the hope of justice,” is

⁵² MacDonald, “The Spirit of YHWH.” MacDonald sees it as a subsequent development to the deuteronomistic **שם** and priestly **כבוד** theologies, pp. 95–98.

⁵³ MacDonald, “The Spirit of YHWH,” 103.

⁵⁴ MacDonald, “The Spirit of YHWH,” 107–8.

especially pronounced in Isaiah (e.g., Isa 11:1–5; 42:1–4; 61:1–3). The third, “the hope of a new inner disposition,” is discussed at length in chapter six. MacDonald’s recognition of the changing role of spirit phenomena in post-exilic texts, specifically as functioning to create theologies of God’s presence, helps contextualize how these **להתנבא** texts may have developed and been transformed in early Judaism. It also establishes a plausible historical situation for explaining how conceptions of animating and possessing spirits began to merge.

To conclude this section: I have laid out a case for understanding **להתנבא** as meaning “to play the prophet.” I have argued that, especially in post-exilic texts and onward, most early Jewish readers and hearers of biblical literature would have associated possession and other spirit phenomena with this verb. This analysis poses a final question: Were conceptions and practices around possessing spirits general more prevalent in the post-exilic period? The analysis presented by Nihan and MacDonald would seem to suggest this conclusion. However, I would qualify it: Rather than arguing for more prevalence, I suggest that possession and other spirit phenomena became more systematically organized in the post-exilic period, and thereby, they came to be more closely associated with God’s spirit.⁵⁵

III. Possessing Spirits in the Book of *Tobit*

I conclude with a special example of possessing spirits in the Book of Tobit. As suggested at the outset of this chapter, the examples discussed above are more readily identified as examples of possessing spirits in biblical literature. Nonetheless, having demonstrated that attention to anthropological literature might inform how more expansive conceptions of possessing spirits

⁵⁵ See chapter six.

may be active in these texts, I believe we are better prepared to recognize similar phenomena in this book.

Tobit is a pseudonymous, fictional novella likely composed in the fourth to second centuries BCE originally in Hebrew or Aramaic but surviving in its entirety only in Greek manuscripts.⁵⁶ It is an example of what is sometimes called late-biblical storytelling or a “Jewish novel,” featuring more fleshed out characters as well as a tight, self-contained literary structure.⁵⁷ The book is cognizant of numerous texts from the Hebrew Bible and displays its biblical literacy through allusion, quotation, and interpretation of previous texts. Tobit tells its story from the first person perspective of the eponymous and pious Naphtali man, who was exiled to Assyria in the eighth century. Tobit, his family, and his fellow Israelites must navigate life in the diaspora, maintaining their Jewish identity through the trials of persecution, illness, courtship, and financial ruin.

Spirits in the form of angels and demons play a crucial role in the narrative of Tobit and, while there are no “possessions” in the conventional sense, the presentation of these divine beings can be fruitfully treated as examples of spirit phenomena. In this regard, it is helpful again to borrow concepts from cultural anthropology, where theorists must often make comparison cross-culturally across various terminologies and indigenous phenomenologies. One scholar whose work will prove helpful in this study of Tobit is Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús, an

⁵⁶ See Merten Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit*, BZAW 220 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994); Carey A. Moore, *Tobit*, AB 40A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1996); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, Commentaries in Early Jewish Literature (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003); Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér, eds. *The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology*, JSJSup 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Tobit.” *OEBB* 2.

⁵⁷ See Lawrence M. Wills “Tobit as Tale and Novel” in *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 68–92.

anthropologist who studies African diaspora religions among Latinx communities in the Americas.

A. *Copresence(s)* in Santería and Tobit

Beliso-De Jesús uses the term *copresence(s)* to refer to the host of spirits, deceased ancestors, and deities that practitioners of Santería interact with on a daily basis (*Oricha*).⁵⁸ Santería priests engage these spirits via various modes, including possession and trance practices, but also by talking with them in conversation, sensing their presence on their skin or in their body, and walking with them from place to place. The copresences of Oricha can also be engaged through various media like music and television and, more recently, through videos of possession rituals uploaded to the internet. According to Beliso-De Jesús's analysis, the transnational nature of Santería religion is essential to the characterization of these spirits as copresences. Oricha cannot be limited geographically to one place or person. They can travel through human contact but also electronically, as in, for example, the viewing of a DVD.⁵⁹ Finally, a copresence can provide guidance and special knowledge but also illness or a curse.

We may note several points of contact between Beliso-De Jesús's notion of copresences in Santería and the presentation of angels and demons in the book of Tobit. We can look first at Raphael, the angel who accompanies Tobit's son, Tobias, as he traverses the exilic landscape of ancient Mesopotamia. Ostensibly, Raphael works in the service of Tobias on his quest to reclaim a small fortune of saved silver in a faraway city. More often, however, Raphael functions as a guide and consultant, directing Tobias's steps (cf. Tob 4:18–19) as he journeys through the

⁵⁸ Aisha M. Beliso-De Jesús, *Electric Santería*. See also her "Santería Copresence and the Making of African Diaspora Bodies" *Cultural Anthropology* 29.3 (2014): 503–26.

⁵⁹ An example encounter with possession through the viewing of a DVD is narrated in Beliso-De Jesús, 41.

dangerous territory of Israel's colonizers, negotiates an endogamous marriage, and heals the respective ailments of his bride, Sarah, and his father, Tobit. To reinforce this role, Raphael is called "Azariah" (a name that can be translated as "The LORD has helped").⁶⁰ While Raphael is certainly not presented as the spirit of a dead ancestor, he is undeniably and somewhat opaquely identified with Israel's antecedents and it is for this reason that Tobit decides to trust him (Tob 5:11–14).⁶¹ Further, Raphael is certainly present to Tobias and the other characters but not exclusively. His is also a transcendent existence. Raphael travels from heaven where he delivers the prayers of petition to God (Tob 3:16–17; 12:12) and follows the exorcized demon Asmodeus into his exile where he binds him in "the remotest parts of Egypt" (Tob 8:3). Finally, Raphael is not recognized as an angel until all conflicts have been resolved (Tob 5:4; 12:11–22). Indeed, the narrative seems to delight in little ironies and turns of phrase as characters come near but never quite arrive at Raphael's true identity.

Like many possession cults around the world, practitioners of Santería will often employ particular herbs, ritual objects, and traditional foods for use in ritual settings. Often, the geographic origin of a particular herb, rock, or icon is just as important as its kind, since certain places are perceived as imparting additional power.⁶² In this regard, Raphael's instruction in the matter of preparing the medicinal fish is especially significant (Tob 6:1b–9). Though the story is set faraway, the book of Tobit consistently recalls distant Jerusalem as a site of power and

⁶⁰ Likely, it is also an allusion to Eliezer ("my God is help") in Genesis 15:2. According to some ancient traditions of interpretation (which were perhaps familiar to Tobit) Eliezer was also the unnamed servant in Genesis 24 who was instrumental in the courtship of Isaac and Rebekah.

⁶¹ It may be said that Tobit puts an inordinate amount of emphasis on death, burial, and the appropriate treatment of ancestors and elders. As Beliso-De Jesús demonstrates, this is not an unusual quality in the religious practices of people with a transnational, diasporic identity.

⁶² On racial religious landscapes and their relationship to notions of "authenticity" in spirit possession practices, see chapter 3, "Pacts with Darkness" in Beliso-De Jesús, *Electric Santería*.

promise (e.g., Tobit 1:4–7; 5:14; 13:8–17; 14:5–7). The Tigris river, from which Tobias unexpectedly encounters “a large fish” (cf. Jon 1:17), is far from Israel’s ancestral land but it never the less yields to God’s providence. With the supernatural guidance of Raphael, Tobias procures two powerful medicines though he remains in exile, precisely what is needed to address the curious ailments of Sarah and Tobit. Consistent with many contemporary possession cults, sickness and demonic oppression are linked in the book of Tobit. Thus, for example, the same fortuitous fish both exorcizes Asmodeus and heals Tobit’s eyes.

As suggested above, possessing spirits in (pre-New Testament) biblical literature rarely seize control of a person to the extent that their personality is suspended and can no longer control their own actions. Willing hosts must thus cultivate a different kind of possession, one that is more attentive to how (God’s) spirits may be active in the world around them. The same may be said for certain forms of Cuban *espiritismo* possession. As described by anthropologist Diana Espirito-Santo:

For Cuban *espiritistas* the experience of human – spirit interaction is far from confined to ‘event’ formats such as moments of ecstasy or revelation; it is a normal extension of the development of a particular kind of self, one that is aware of and connected to a landscape in which the dead are incipient and immanent, and in which perception can be naturally educated over time to reveal what the world really is.⁶³

Arguably, the narrative of Tobit invites its readers to cultivate just this kind of perception within themselves. God and God’s agents are active in the world in ways that are not always obvious and can be missed (as evidenced by the characters in Tobit). But a faithful reader might recognize God (and God’s servants) nonetheless, through faithful sensitivity and obedient service.

⁶³ Espirito-Santo, “Imagination, Sensation and the Education of Attention,” 253–54.

B. Gender and Possessing Spirits in Tobit

While Raphael is a pervasive copresence in the book of Tobit, he is not the only supernatural actor in the story. Another major copresence is Asmodeus, a demon as conspicuous as he is cryptic. This figure and his relationship with Sarah connects to another issue discussed in this project (chiefly chapter three), gender and spirit phenomena.

We learn about the demon at the same time that we are introduced to Sarah, when she is being chastised by a servant:

Because [Sarah] had been given to seven husbands and Asmodeus, the wicked demon, had killed them before they had been with her according to the way put forth for wives. So the maid said to her, “You are the one killing your husbands! Indeed, you have already been given seven husbands and have not borne the name of one. (Tob 3:8)⁶⁴

The disparity in presentation between Raphael and Asmodeus invites readers to compare how they relate to their respective human counterparts. Additionally, as Beate Ego has, the discussion of gender in Tobit is incomplete without acknowledging the disparate ways men and women relate to spirits.⁶⁵

In an influential article exploring feminist issues in Tobit, Amy-Jill Levine observes: “Emphasizing the acute threat to identity posed by the exilic collapse of boundaries and then diffusing that threat by reinscribing distinctions, *Tobit* brings stability to an unstable world.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Unless otherwise noted, translations from Tobit are based on the longer version of the book, preserved most completely in Codex Sinaiticus.

⁶⁵ “In my opinion, a feminist approach to this issue, and to *Tobit*, as a whole, should start by focusing on the relationship between Sarah and the demon, and should try to characterize the figure of Sarah as depicted through this relationship.” Beate Ego, “A Self-Response to ‘Textual Variants’” in Brenner-Idan, *A Feminist Companion to Tobit and Judith*, 75–77, 75.

⁶⁶ Amy-Jill Levine, “Redrawing the Boundaries: A New Look at ‘Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit’.” in *A Feminist Companion to Tobit and Judith*, ed. Athalya Brenner-Idan with Helen Efthimiadis-Keith (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 3–22, 4. this article was revised from the original, “Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit” in *Diaspora and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel*, ed. J. Andrew Overman and Robert S. McLennan; South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 41 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 105–17.

Levine goes on to make the case that the sharp border Tobit repeatedly constructs between the domains of men and women is one such mitigating distinction against instability, though it is possible that this situation is more descriptive of historical realities than it is prescriptive.⁶⁷ Regardless, the heightened tension brought about by dislocation, exile, and threatened identity, the conception of gender in Tobit can be seen as creating a semblance of control—even if it is only control of the respective roles of Jewish men and women.⁶⁸ Within this structured arrangement, it follows that spirit phenomena would be presented differently among men and women as well.

At first, it may seem that no one knows the cause of Sarah's curse, since it is only through the narrator that we know of Asmodeus (though a conversation between Tobias and Raphael later clarifies that a demon's influence is suspected, Tob 6:14–16). Moreover, we do not know why Asmodeus afflicts Sarah. We are given a hint, however, in the shorter version of Tobit 6:15 where Tobias explains that “a demon loves [Sarah]” (δαιμόνιον φιλεῖ αὐτήν). The explanation is short but likely contributed to an expansive reception of Asmodeus as a demon of lust and perversion into the Middle Ages.⁶⁹

There is an added significance to the relationship between Asmodeus and Sarah that is more than just sexual, however. Beate Ego has argued convincingly that the term used to

⁶⁷ A less drastic position is held by Beverly Bow and George W. E. Nickelsburg who argue that though Tobit portrays a world ruled by patriarchy, certain elements seem to undermine or “twist” that governing order. “Patriarchy with a Twist: Men and Women in Tobit” in *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Women in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. A.-J. Levine; SBL Early Judaism and its Literature 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 127–44.

⁶⁸ Levine phrases this quite strongly: “By constraining women's roles, by using women as token of exchange to preserve kinship and economic ties, by depicting them as the cause as well as the locus of despair, and by removing them from direct contact with heaven, the Jewish male has brought order to his Diaspora existence.” Levine, “Redrawing the Boundaries,” 22.

⁶⁹ See, M. Hutter, “Asmodeus,” *DDD* 106–8.

describe the exorcism of Asmodeus in the longer version of Tobit, “loose” (λύω, e.g., Tob 3:17), is the translation for the Aramaic word פטר, a technical term for divorce in the Talmud (*b. Git.* 65b) and elsewhere.⁷⁰ This rendering may be informed by other post-exilic traditions (as well as non-Jewish myths) of male heavenly figures lusting and abducting human women.⁷¹

With the added perspective of Ego’s analysis, we can recognize a principal distinction between the figures of Raphael and Asmodeus (aside from the obvious disparity in their cosmic alignments): Raphael is a public figure and Asmodeus is decidedly not. Raphael interacts regularly with those around him (though he is rarely recognized as his true self). He travels across borders and functions in several economic and religious arenas. In contrast, his foil, Asmodeus is entirely domestic in the book of Tobit. His realm concerns private, family matters (though his actions have grave public consequences) and Sarah and her would-be husbands must suffer and combat his influences in private. In this, the respective arenas of the two copresent spirits mirrors the gender determined realms of Tobias and Sarah. Significantly, the solution to Sarah’s problem must come from outside her assigned space.

The exorcism scene in Tobit 8:1–9 is perhaps the best example of a spirit phenomenon in the book. On his and Sarah’s wedding night, Tobias uses the fish’s liver and heart to cast out Asmodeus, who flees to Egypt. There, he is bound by the angel, Raphael (Tob 8:3). The ritual is followed by Tobias and Sarah’s saying a prayer, the principal subject of which is marriage (vv.

⁷⁰ Cf. Mt 5:31–32; 1 Cor 7:27. Beate Ego, “The Banishment of the Demon in *Tobit*: Textual Variants as a Result of Enculturation” in Brenner-Idan, *A Feminist Companion to Tobit and Judith*, 67–74.

⁷¹ E.g., 1 En 1–36; Jub 5:1; 1 Cor 10:11. Some of these traditions are linked to exegesis of the cryptic reference in Gen 6:1–3. See Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*; Stuckenbruck, “Origins of Evil in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition.”

5–8). Yet, couched as it is after the exorcism, it takes on an added apotropaic function, given that the nature of Sarah’s affliction was an assault on the relations between a wife and husband.

This exorcism scene is one of the most explicit instances of specifically demonic possession found in pre-Christian Jewish literature. The use of magic objects and the absence of any notion that Sarah’s agency is superseded perhaps puts the story in a slightly different category than the exorcism accounts in the Gospels (but cf. Jn 9:6–7). Nevertheless, these episodes create a host of new questions not yet fully considered. Perhaps most relevant to this project is this: How did notions of animating and possessing spirits interact and contribute to later Jewish ideas about demonic possession and exorcism? It is to this issue we now turn.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: DEMONIZING THE SELF

This chapter concludes the project by venturing into an already noisy discussion regarding the origin and development of conceptions of evil in Second Temple Judaism. Its approach, however, is not via the usual routes. As outlined in the introduction, many studies of these issues focus on mapping the various mythologies of evil that appear in biblical and Second Temple Jewish texts, often as a way of identifying which conceptions may have been assumed and transformed by later literature and communities.¹ While projects of this type have made important contributions to biblical studies, there is the risk of overlooking significant aspects of possession and other spirit phenomena in these texts if the focus remains only on cosmology and myth. In contrast, this project has sought to illuminate how the category of spirit experience is described in early Jewish texts, particularly in reference to communal ritual possession practices. Thus, seeking to make a new contribution, this chapter approaches the question of “evil” in early Judaism through a lens provided by studies of the phenomenology of the self in biblical texts (see chapter one introduction).

¹ See discussion and sources cited in chapter one. This approach is especially favored by scholars whose primary purpose is to illuminate New Testament conceptions of evil and demonology. See, for example, Eric Sorensen, “Possession and Exorcism in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism” in *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, WUNT2 157 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 47–74 and Derek R. Brown, “Images of Satan in Biblical and Second Temple Jewish Traditions” in *The God of this Age: Satan in the Churches and Letters*, WUNT2 409 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 21–60.

This chapter is divided into three parts. First, I discuss biblical texts that describe spirit phenomena in a medical idiom and introduce this idea via a final case study in contemporary spirit possession, *Umbanda* public ceremonies (*sessões* or “sessions”) in Brazil. Specifically, I argue that the idea of “transplanting the spirit organ” (e.g., Ezek 11:19; Ps 51:12–14), which emerged in post-exilic and Second Temple Judaism, combines elements of both the animating and possessing spirit conceptions discussed in chapters four and five. Second, I look at several examples in the Dead Sea Scrolls where this spirit organ transplant tradition is transformed into a “demonization” of the self, a transformation that is distinctly therapeutic in nature. In particular, I suggest that the dominance of the pure/impure framework for understanding demons and exorcism reflects this emphasis on therapy.² Finally, in part three, I conclude this chapter and this project by suggesting several ways that this project can be expanded and clarified once it is prepared for publication as a book. I also summarize what I see as its primary contributions to the study of spirit phenomena in biblical literature.

I. Describing Spirit Phenomena Using a Medical Idiom

While for many modern readers, the realms of medical science and spirit possession may seem about as far from one another as two human phenomena can be, in many cultures both ancient and modern, the two are intimately related if not synonymous. Before exploring how these ideas interact in biblical texts, a contemporary example of spirit possession is presented below.

² “Therapy” is the term preferred by Stuckenbruck, “The Human Being and Demonic Invasion,” 161–88.

A. *Umbanda* Public Possession Ceremonies

Umbanda is an African-descended religion practiced most prominently in urban areas of Brazil, though it has spread throughout the Brazilian diaspora.³ Similar in practice to other Yoruba influenced traditions, *Umbanda* is notable for its elevation of Catholic and Spiritist symbols (and, likewise, its relative demotion of the more conspicuous African imagery). A twentieth-century innovation that stems from older, Afro-Brazilian religions like Candomblé, *Umbanda* has been seen by some scholars of religion as operating “on the border between Afro-Indigenous ritual and Christian rationalism” due, in part, to its emphasis on psychological and medical therapy through spirit possession.⁴ For the purposes of this project, I expound these psychologically therapeutic aspects of *Umbanda* specifically below.

The principal religious services of *Umbanda* take places at *centros*, gathering places founded by a *chefe* (chief) or *mãe/pai de santo* (mother or father of the saints) and administered by a team of mediums. The hierarchy of the administrative mediums is reflective of each medium’s perceived skill in possession and it is usually those recognized as the most adept who host the highest-ranking spirits (i.e., those spirits understood to be the most gifted in healing and counseling). The mediums dress for the ceremony in all-white outfits; the women even wear nurses’ uniforms.⁵ As congregants gather for the ceremony, many of them obtain a token from an attendant, which will permit them to have a consultation with the spirit of their choice. As the ritual begins, the participants genuflect to an altar featuring Catholic saints and conduct the

³ Rachel E. Harding, “Afro-Brazilian Religions,” *ER* 1:119–25, 124–25. Other sources informing this section include Diana DeG. Brown, *Umbanda: Religion and Politics in Urban Brazil*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) and Steven Engler, “Umbanda and Africa,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 15.4 (2012): 13–35.

⁴ Harding, “Afro-Brazilian Religions,” 124.

⁵ Brown, *Umbanda*, 80, 96.

defumação of evil spirits with incense and cigar smoke. Participants begin to sing and move about the room. As they do so, the mediums intermittently stop dancing, jerk their bodies rapidly, and are eventually overcome by the presence of a spirit to whom they act as host. As they do so, their bodies and voices are altered and they are given certain ritual accoutrements, which, among other purposes, help to designate which spirit they have possessed.

The anthropologist Diana DeGroat Brown describes her visit to one such *centro* in an affluent suburban community. The *chefe* has received the spirit of Pai João (Father John), a venerated *Preto Velho* (the spirit of an enslaved African ancestor) who is the highest ranking and most effective spirit healer present. His arrival is indicated by the *chefe* walking bent over with age, carrying a wooden staff, and smoking a pipe. Brown describes what happens after each of the expected spirit visitors have arrived:

At this point, the singing and clapping stop. The ritual area appears to be the scene of restless disorganized activity, and to the inexperienced observer it may even appear that the service is ending. On the contrary, it is about to enter its most important phase, the period of *consultas* (consultations), when the members of the congregation are able to consult with the spirits about their problems. Spirit consultants, who possess high-ranking, fully initiated mediums, station themselves at intervals around the ritual area and prepare to give consultas... [Pai João's] first client is a woman who has not obtained a *ficha* (token) for a consulta but who is obviously very ill. She is led directly to Pai João, who greets her with a kindly air and listens attentively to her problem.⁶

Most of those seeking consultations are suffering in mind or spirit.⁷ The therapies prescribed range from home remedies to exorcisms and they are sometimes delivered in a ritual code that non-possessed attendants must translate for the congregants.

⁶ Brown, *Umbanda*, 82.

⁷ In a survey of 465 visitors to an *Umbanda* centro, 64% of the problems brought for *consultas* were health related. Brown, *Umbanda*, 97.

In Brown's descriptions, the *consultas* are conducted with a "bureaucratic" precision.⁸ Attendants direct congregants to the spirits indicated by their tokens in a decorous and sedate atmosphere. This environment is punctuated, however, by moments of intensely ecstatic possession. Nevertheless, these events are expected and controlled with a professionalism akin to a hospital triage room:

[S]ervants help to protect clients who may themselves become possessed during a consulta. Possession states often occur spontaneously among clients during consultas, or they may be induced by the spirit consultant as a part of the cure or evidence of spirit persecution. In contrast to the extremely controlled possession states achieved by experienced mediums, possession, when it occurs among those inexperienced in controlling it, is often violent, and clients must be protected from injury to themselves or to others.⁹

Indeed, medical similes are not out of place in descriptions of *Umbanda* rituals. As Brown observes, the white nurses' uniforms "give the ceremonies, particularly during the *consulta* period, the appearance of large public medical clinics and reinforce their image as proper places for the treatments of illness."¹⁰

Umbanda ritual as explicated above, demonstrates the many resonances of the medical idiom in communities that practice possession and other phenomena. It also exemplifies how spirit possession can be a cultivated practice with functions more complicated than simply expressing conceptions of personified evil. As the numerous possession cults discussed in this project demonstrate, *Umbanda* is not the only contemporary possession cult identified by anthropologists to employ a medical idiom. However, it is one of the few I have encountered in my research that adopts the imagery of modern medicine so conspicuously. This is especially

⁸ Brown, *Umbanda*, 85.

⁹ Brown, *Umbanda*, 83.

¹⁰ Brown, *Umbanda*, 96.

true of the *consultas*, which might be seen as emblematic of the ways in which spirit possession mixes aspects of medicine, psychology, religious piety, and performance of ethnic identity. As I argue below, such a recipe may also apply to instances of spirit phenomena in biblical literature.

B. רוח and Ancient Medicine

Interconnections between winds, spirits, and medicine have been relatively well-documented in Mesopotamian literature but recognition of these same dynamics in biblical literature has only recently become a focus for scholars.¹¹ One contributing factor may be the problem of what medical historian Karl-Heinz Leven has called the problem of “retrospective diagnosis.”¹² Ancient written descriptions of illnesses and symptoms—even those that seem especially detailed or “objective”—are simply too far enculturated into the medical theories of the time to provide any reliable data for a modern medical professional to make a reliable diagnosis. Nevertheless, because biblical scholars can sometimes be especially preoccupied with assessing the historical realities of the texts and figures that they study, it may be tempting to read past the plain language of how biblical authors describe their ailments in an effort to reveal ‘what is really happening’ in a modern sense. Put differently, it is a simple thing to ignore Job’s repeated insistence that his affliction is one of bitter and out of sort spirits (e.g., Job 6:4; 7:7; 7:11; 9:18;

¹¹ See, for example, Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means* and John Z. Wee, ed., *The Comparable Body: Analogy and Metaphor in Ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman Medicine*, Studies in Ancient Medicine 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), esp. 72–121, J. Cale Johnson, “The Stuff of Causation: Etiological Metaphor and Pathogenic Channeling in Babylonian Medicine.” See also my discussion of Ingrid Lilly’s work below who suggests that, as far as discussions of conceptions of illness in biblical literature go, the paradigms of liquids and humors, while not out-of-place, have eclipsed the equally relevant paradigms of winds and spirits.

¹² Karl-Heinz Leven, “‘At times these ancient facts seem to lie before me like a patient on a hospital bed’—Retrospective Diagnosis and Ancient Medical History” in *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine*, Manfred Horstmanshoff and Marten Stol, eds., Studies in Ancient Medicine 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 369–86.

17:1; 19:17), if one is convinced that his real problem can be found by leafing through a modern medical dictionary.

One exception whose work has instead illuminated the connections between winds, spirits, and medicine in biblical literature is Ingrid Lilly. In a series of articles and a forthcoming book, Lilly illuminates the medical aspects of biblical רוּחַ texts in part through comparison with ancient Near Eastern medicinal and cosmological texts.¹³ Lilly demonstrates how, in many ancient Mesopotamian medical texts, “personal wellbeing is contingent on the drama of divine winds.”¹⁴ Specifically, the causes and matching treatments for various human ailments (including headaches, coughs, chills, intestinal problems, and fevers) are spirit-related.

Lilly discusses several examples across her published work but one of the most compelling is her discussion of the Babylonian *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, the *Poem of the Righteous Sufferer*, a text that tells of a Babylonian nobleman who suffers unjustly. “[The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer] speaks to a body of iatric literature about medical ailments, physical unwellness, and psychic distress that employs climatic metaphors to describe both the problem and the solution.”¹⁵ Notably, this composition utilizes the imagery of Babylonian *chaoskampf* traditions but reimagines the drama as an internal struggle within the sufferer’s body. For example, in the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish*, the storm god, Marduk, employs an *imḥullu* (wind) to defeat the watery chaos deity, Tiamat (Tablet IV). However, as Lilly notes, in the

¹³ Ingrid Lilly, “Conceptualizing Spirit”; “Rûaḥ Embodied,” and *Cosmic Storms and Malaised Bodies: An Anthropology of Spirit in the Ancient Near East, Hebrew Bible, and Second Temple Jewish Literature*. Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

¹⁴ Lilly, “Conceptualizing the Spirit,” 838. Further, “winds, ghosts, and demons have more than overlapping symptoms in common. Conceptually, they all invade the body from the outside” Lilly, “Rûaḥ Embodied,” 328.

¹⁵ Lilly, “Conceptualizing the Spirit,” 838.

Poem of the Righteous Sufferer, the *imḥullu* is not a weapon in the heroic deity's arsenal but the very cause of the sufferer's internal distress.¹⁶ Marduk must instead drive this wind away, in order to bring healing.

Lilly suggests that similar conceptions are at work in certain biblical רוּח texts, especially those that seem inordinately concerned with spirit workings in and upon the human body (like Ezekiel and Job). See, for example, her discussion of Job's conception of the body:

Early in Job's second speech, he asks "is my flesh bronze?" (6:12). This question reveals the fundamental medical anxiety Job will confront in each of his subsequent speeches about his illness: his body does not have a hard boundary, leaving his internal *rûaḥ* vulnerable to dangerous penetrations. Indeed, Job's first statement about his own medical condition points to the dilemma of his *rûaḥ*, "the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my *rûaḥ* drinks their poison" (6:4) and in 7:20, Job asks "why have you made me a target?" Job's skin is porous, his flesh is vulnerable, and as the target of a divine scourge, it is his *rûaḥ* that becomes sick.¹⁷

Because human beings are porous bodies with spirit-winds constantly moving in and out, the drama of the spirits within are affected by (and can affect) those without. These interactions include not only weather events but also the cosmic conflicts in which the deities of wind and spirit engage.

This dynamic is especially pronounced in Ezekiel, whose spirit possession is as much affliction as it is advantage:

Mesopotamian and West Asian combat myths portray a protagonist deity at war, often with destructive consequences for rebellious lands or mountain tribes who have grown too strong and no longer need the gods. Ezekiel's combat rhetoric assumes this mytho-setting, his voice enacting a strident moral and ethical assault on his native mountain home – accusing it of rebellion and godless self-sufficiency. Even as his voice draws on

¹⁶ Lilly, "Conceptualizing the Spirit," 838.

¹⁷ Lilly, "Rûaḥ Embodied," 330–31

the martial power of triumphant ANE combat gods though, his body is distressed, weak, and mutilated. The spirit does not strengthen, but rather weakens his body.¹⁸

Thus, spirit drama that takes place at the level of human anatomy is reflective of those conflicts that characterize divine cosmology. In the case of Ezekiel, possession also empowers the host to speak with the moral authority of the possessing deity.

Having now surveyed several contexts where spirit phenomena are conceived and described in a medical idiom, we are now posed to explore a specific case study in biblical texts where these dynamics are also active.

C. Transplanting the Spirit Organ

I return now to an article by Nathan MacDonald, which I first discussed in chapter five.¹⁹

MacDonald argues that the Spirit of the LORD was an important but relatively underexamined theological strategy for conceiving of God's presence in the post-exilic and Second Temple periods. In particular, MacDonald identified the "hope of a new inner disposition" as one of the foundational expectations for how this spirit might manifest itself.²⁰ In my discussion, I suggested that rather than seeing spirit phenomena as becoming more prevalent in the post-exilic and Second Temple periods (as many scholars do), we should instead see them as becoming more systematically organized and, thereby, more closely associated with God's (holy) spirit specifically. Below I trace one such pattern of increasing organization. Specifically, I suggest

¹⁸ Ingrid Lilly, "A Moral Voice from a Spirit-Possessed Body?: Babylonian Medical Cosmology in the Hebrew Prophet Ezekiel" (paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for the Anthropology of Religion, San Diego, CA, 17 Apr, 2015), 1–2.

¹⁹ MacDonald, "The Spirit of YHWH."

²⁰ MacDonald, "The Spirit of YHWH," 113–18.

that traditions which hoped “for a new inner disposition” came to articulate this hope using spirit language and to be framed as expecting a solution in the form of a spirit possession-type event.

1) Deuteronomy 10:12–13, 16 and 30:6

To begin, several scholars have identified a network of interconnected biblical texts that seems to expect an imminent moral transformation within God’s people (e.g Deut 10:12–13; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 31:31–34; Ezek 11:19–20; 18:31; 36:26–27; Ps 51:12–14).²¹ Likely fueled by the Deuteronomic notion that obedience was the principal means of preserving the divine relationship and its blessings, the prescription for treating Israel’s chronic disobedience is described in these places with surprisingly physical imagery:

¹² So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to serve the LORD your God with all you heart and with all your self, ¹³ to keep the commands of the LORD and his decrees which I myself am commanding to you today, for your own good ... ¹⁶ Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your hearts and do not stiffen your necks any more. (Deut 10:12–13, 16; cf. Lev 26:41)

Given the ways in which this project has explored the materiality of self-language in biblical literature, the notion of a physical and moral surgery of this kind should not surprise us. Indeed, the idea that a person’s judgment might correspond to a component of the body is not ‘merely’ figurative but likely reflects anatomical assumptions not dissimilar from those that informed the Mesopotamian medical texts which Ingrid Lilly discusses.

²¹ On this section, see Thomas Krüger, “Das menschliche Herz und die Weisung Gottes: Elemente einer Diskussion über Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Tora-Rezeption im Alten Testament., in *Rezeption und Auslegung im Alten Testament und in seinem Umfeld; ein Symposium aus Anlass des 60. Geburtstags von Odil Hannes Steck*, Reinhard Kratz and Thomas Krüger, eds., OBO 153 (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag, 1997), 65–92; Anja Klein, *Schriftauslegung im Ezechielbuch: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Ez 34–39*, BZAW 391 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 81–110; “From the ‘Right Spirit’ to the ‘Spirit of Truth’”;

As exemplified in the text above from Deuteronomy 10, it is likely that in certain (probably older) parts of this tradition, it was expected that Israel ought to enact this transformation by themselves. Yet, at some point the expectation shifted (perhaps after the triumphant expectations for the return from exile proved overly optimistic). Given that even after enduring the judgment of exile, Israel remained stiff-necked and disobedient (at least according to some), it seems that some inheritors of this tradition came to believe that God would need to act unilaterally in order to correct Israel's wayward inner moral organ²²:

The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants in order that you might love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your self so that you might live. (Deut 30:6)

This exchange of the transforming agent (i.e., from Israel to God) reveals a significant assumption underlying these texts: the repeated moral failures of God's people are not only the result of a lack of will. There is, in fact, some internal flaw that actively prevents obedience and it is one that only God can alleviate.

2) Jeremiah 4:4, 9:26, and 31:31–34

Similar trajectories with different but related imagery can be detected in other biblical books.²³

Jeremiah, for example, takes up the language of the circumcision of the heart:

Circumcise yourselves before the LORD,
Remove the foreskins of your hearts,

²² "In its more pessimistic moments, biblical literature seems to doubt that human beings can bring about the necessary internalization or refortification on their own.... To get Israel back into the mode of covenantal service therefore requires nothing less than God's own gracious intervention, an act of divine *hesed* that replaces their hardened disposition or, as some biblical texts put it, their "uncircumcised heart," with an orientation that facilitates the love of him." Jon D. Levenson, *The Love of God: Divine Gift, Human Gratitude, and Mutual Faithfulness in Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 27.

²³ The imagery is prevalent into the late Second Temple Period as well. See several examples cited below as well as Acts 7:51.

O men of Judah, dwellers of Jerusalem.
Lest my wrath come out like fire
and burn with no one it
because of the evil of your deeds. (Jer 4:4; cf. 9:26)

Yet elsewhere in the book, the agent for triggering internal moral transformation is once again re-identified as God:

³³ But this is the covenant which I have made with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my *torah* in their midst and upon their hearts I will write it. I will be their God and they will be my people. ³⁴ No more will they [need to] teach one another saying, “Know the LORD,” for all of them will know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD.
For I will forgive their iniquity
and their sin I will remember no more. (Jer 31:33–34)

Here, the language of circumcision has been cut away, but in its place is a more concrete allusion to God’s written commands. “My *torah*,” though likely not yet corresponding precisely to the Pentateuch of latter Jewish and Christian tradition, is indeed something that can be written. Still, it is only God who can do so on the human heart.

3) *Ezekiel 11:19–20, 18:31, and 36:26–27*

A third set of examples which move the tradition still further can be found in Ezekiel:

Cast away from upon yourselves all your transgressions, which you have committed against them and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit (ועשו לכם לב חדש ורוח חדשה). Why should you die, O house of Israel? (Ezek 18:31)

As in Jeremiah and Deuteronomy, Ezekiel has examples both of Israel enacting (or being urged to enact) their own inner transformation (Ezek 18:31) as well as those where God is the actor:

¹⁹ I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them (ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם). I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and I will give them a heart of flesh ²⁰ in order that they may walk in my statutes and keep my judgments and do them. They shall be my people and I will be their God. (Ezek 11:19–20; cf. Ezek 36:26–27)²⁴

²⁴ Klein points out that Ezek 36:23b–32 is missing from an early textual witness in the Greek (Pap. 967) suggesting that this portion may be a later addition. “From the ‘Right Spirit’ to the ‘Spirit of Truth,’” 174.

Two innovations are notable in the Ezekiel texts. First, Ezekiel has couched these moral transformations in spirit language. It is not enough for Israel to modify their heart—they must also obtain a new spirit. Second, in contrast to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah, the moral organ has not simply been circumcised or written upon, but completely replaced. As Jacqueline Lapsley observes:

The language of the new heart and the new spirit most clearly reveals what is at stake for Ezekiel: the *internal* recreation of the people. The language of the heart transplant reveals the deep concern for a total transformation of the inner life... The distinctly human quality of the heart ... and the distinctly divine origin of the heart make for a curious image. A heart truly human in substance must be wholly divine in origin.²⁵

Extending Lapsley's point one step further, we may ask how the conversation would change if the word "heart" לב were exchanged for the word "spirit" רוח?²⁶ Such a text would not only qualify as a spirit phenomenon but more specifically as a spirit possession. Indeed, this would be an instance of a positive possession in which God inserts a holy agent inside a human being, thereby altering their behavior and will. As it happens, this is precisely what is prescribed in Psalm 51.

4) Psalm 51

One final example in this stream of interpretation is especially indicative of how the expectation for inner moral transformation came increasingly to be characterized as a spirit phenomenon:

¹² A clean heart create for me, O God.

and an upright spirit renew within me (רוח נכון חדש בקרבי).

¹³ Do not cast me out (אל-תשליכני) from your presence,

and your holy spirit do not take from me (ורוח קדשך אל-תקח ממני).

²⁵ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, 165–66. Emphasis in the original.

²⁶ Indeed, in some texts they are synonymous. See discussion in chapter two.

¹⁴ Restore for me the joy of your salvation
and sustain [in] me a willing spirit (וְרוּחַ נְדִיבָה תִּסְמְכֵנִי). (Ps 51:12–14 [Eng. vv. 10–12])

Psalm 51 has been, in many ways, the paradigmatic text for understanding repentance in both Jewish and Christian tradition for two millennia.²⁷ What is less often recognized however, is that Psalm 51 is also, arguably, the most sophisticated reflection on the nature of spirit possession in the entire Hebrew Bible. This overlap is not accidental.

The psalmist's prayer reflects a deep insecurity about his own ability (and, as later traditions have come to extrapolate, the ability of all humanity) to restore oneself to right moral status. Indeed, sacrifice—that reliable ritual of purification and absolution—is singled out specifically as an inadequate atoning mechanism:

¹⁸ For you do not delight in sacrifice,
were I to offer a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

¹⁹ A [proper] sacrifice to God is a broken spirit (רוּחַ נִשְׁבָּרָה),
a broken and crushed heart, O God, you will not despise. (Ps 51:18–19 [Eng. vv. 16–17];
cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:11–17; Jer 7:22–23; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6–8; Ps 40:6–8; 50:7–11; Prov 21:3)

The only pleasing sacrifice is, in fact, a broken spirit, that is, one that God's holy spirit can replace with an “upright” (נָכוֹן) and “willing” (נְדִיבָה) one.²⁸ Or, alternatively, a conventional sacrifice can and should be offered but not without an accompanying broken spirit. In either case, repentance is cast as a type of spirit phenomenon.

²⁷ David Lambert has recently questioned whether this is an accurate reading of Psalm 51, and indeed, whether the traditional theological idea of repentance is appropriate to ascribe to any biblical text. Lambert, *Repentance*, esp. pp. 39, 62, 65. This argument is rooted in Lambert's belief that the biblical texts do not portray the idea of a “self” in any way that could be meaningfully discussed by modern interpreters. Chapter two disputes this idea by suggesting that spirit language often functions as self-language in the Hebrew Bible. See also my review: Reed Carlson, review of *How Repentance Became Biblical*, by David Lambert, *Syndicate Theology* 3.6 (2016): 43–46.

²⁸ “Broken spirit” (רוּחַ נִשְׁבָּרָה) here is likely meant in the sense of being humble and “placable.” It is the opposite of having a “stubborn” or “stiff-necked” spirit (קָשָׁה; e.g., Deut 2:30; cf. 1 Sam 1:15 and discussion in chapter two).

To accomplish this, Psalm 51 (and to a lesser extent, the texts cited above in Ezekiel) must integrate the two conceptions of spirit phenomena that I have identified in this project. Consistent with the paradigm for the animating spirit, which I discussed in chapter four, the psalmist acknowledges a permanent and sustaining spirit within himself that is necessary for life. However, this animating spirit has become irredeemably faulty and, consistent with other biblical texts that expected internal transformation, the psalmist has reconciled himself to the fact that he cannot repair his moral organ alone. Thus, he must also utilize the second conception of spirit phenomena, which I described in chapter five, the possessing spirit. The psalmist invites God's holy spirit to possess him, to remove (or exorcize) his existing faulty spirit and to replace it with one more amenable to following God's will (cf. Ps 143:10).

II. Therapeutic Demonization of the Self in Second Temple Judaism

These two modes for conceiving of spirits—animating and possessing—continued to be integrated in later Second Temple Jewish literature. Below I survey several key examples from the scrolls found near Qumran that show how this trend developed and branched into different traditions. In particular, I continue focusing on texts that foreground “therapeutic” aspects of spirits and demonization.

A. Spirit Possession and Purity

An issue sometimes sidestepped in contemporary conversations regarding “the origin of evil” in Second Temple Jewish literature is the relatively prominent place given to concerns over purity and impurity in primary texts when discussing issues of spirits and demons.²⁹ This may be

²⁹ For example, purity/impurity is a relatively minor theme in Wright's *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, showing up most prominently only in his review of previous literature.

attributable, in part, to the fact that many of the scholars writing about spirit possession do so from the perspective of New Testament and Early Christianity, bodies of texts that, as a general rule, make a point of distancing themselves from the purity laws of the Hebrew Bible.³⁰ Still, the most frequent adjective used to describe detrimental possessing spirits in the canonical Gospels is “unclean” or “impure” (τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα).³¹ This should not surprise us, since the most frequent adjective used to describe the subject of *beneficial* spirit possession is “holy” (πνεῦμα ἅγιον).

As will be demonstrated below, these conceptions of spirit possession are rooted in vibrant Second Temple Jewish traditions. In particular, these traditions were often more concerned with articulating notions of the problematization of the self and of how this might be rectified than with mapping out the origins of categorical evil.

1) The Damascus Document and the Genesis Apocryphon

Some of the more surprising confluences of the different themes discussed in this chapter occur in the cave 4 fragments of the Damascus Document and the Genesis Apocryphon. Specifically, both compositions integrate notions of spirit phenomena, skin disease, and Levitical purity laws.

Our first example is the cave four fragments of the Damascus Document (i.e., 4Q266–273; sometimes called “4QZadokite Fragments” or “Fragment on Skin Disease”).³² The

³⁰ See my discussion of how this perspective has limited scholarship on spirit phenomena in biblical literature in chapter one.

³¹ Some version of the phrase occurs at least twenty-one times in the New Testament.

³² The Damascus Document or Rule was first discovered in the Cairo Genizah and its manuscripts were dated to the tenth and twelfth centuries CE. The antiquity of its original composition in the third–second centuries BCE was confirmed when fragments were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, some of which contained portions not attested in the Genizah. On provenance, see Ben Zion Wacholder, *The New Damascus Document. The Midrash on the Eschatological Torah of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Reconstruction, Translation, and Commentary*, STDJ 56 (Leiden:

fragments contain a prolonged exegetical expansion on the laws concerning “skin diseases” (נגיעים) in Leviticus 13–15. What is most relevant to this discussion is that this composition “offers an etiological explanation for the genesis of skin disease.”³³ Specifically, skin disease is caused by spirits. For example:

... and the scab a blow of wood, stone, or any blow when the spi[rit comes and takes hold] (or better: “possesses” (הר[וה וא]חזה) of the artery, making the blood recede upwards and downwards, and the artery [...]. (4Q269 f7:2–3)³⁴

The priest shall examine (him) on the seventh day: if the [spi]rit of life (והנה רו[ח החיים]) moves up and down and the flesh has grown ... is healed] the scab. The priest (need) not examine the skin of the flesh. (4Q269 f7:6–8)

... when the priest sees that the spirit has entered the head or the beard as a blockage (or “to possess”? (והנא באה הרוח ברוש או ובזקן באוחזותה) [...] under the hair turning its appearance to fine yellowish; for it is like a plant which has a worm under it which severs its root and makes its blossom wither. (4Q266 f6 i 6–8)

“And the priest shall order that they shave his head, but not the scall” (Lev 13:33). This is in order that the priest may count the dead and live hair and see whether any has been added from the live to the dead during the seven days, (in which case) he is unclean; while if none has been added from the live to the dead, and the artery is filled with bl[ood] and the sp[ir]it of life (נמלא [ד]ם ור[ו]ח החיים) moves up and down in it, the plague is [healed]. (4Q266 f6 i 9–12)

Thus, it would seem that one purpose of the composition is to coordinate the various purifying actions taken by priests in Leviticus 13–15 with corresponding spirit-related diagnoses.

Though the text is fragmentary, it is possible to reconstruct something of the ancient spirit-anatomy that underlies the composition. Like the Babylonian medical texts cited above, it would seem that the management of spirits is essential to the maintenance of human physiology.

Brill, 2007), 3–4. See also, Joseph M. Baumgarten, “The 4Q Zadokite Fragments on Skin Disease” *JJS* 41 (1990): 153–65; Elisha Qimron, “Notes on the 4Q Zadokite Fragment on Skin Disease” *JJS* 42 (1991): 256–59.

³³ Baumgarten, “The 4Q Zadokite Fragments,” 162.

³⁴ All translations of 4Q266–273 are based on Baumgarten, “The 4Q Zadokite Fragments.”

In this case, spirits seem to have seized or blocked the flow of blood, causing skin disease. In this way, the purity rites of the Levitical priests come to be described as a type of exorcism.

A similar perspective on skin disease is articulated in the Genesis Apocryphon, this time in a narrative context.³⁵ When the king of Egypt takes Sarai from Abram (cf. Gen 12:10–20), the Apocryphon elaborates on the “plagues” (נגעים, v. 17) that afflicted him and his household. After Abram prays, entreating God to protect Sarai from Pharaoh, God responds:

¹⁶ That night, God Most High sent a spirit of plague (רוח מכדש³⁶) to afflict him and every man in his household, an evil ¹⁷ spirit (רוח באישא) that continuously afflicted him and every man in his household. Thus, he was not able to have sex with her and he did not have intercourse with her though she was with him ¹⁸ two years (1QapGen [1Q20] 20:16–18)

As other commenters have noted, the affliction spreading from Pharaoh and across his household would have likely been understood as a kind of skin disease—a type of impurity.³⁷

Similar to the fragments of the Damascus Document discussed above, the solution for this spirit-skin disease is a form of exorcism. Once he discovers the truth that Sarai is not Abram’s sister but his wife, Pharaoh demands that Abram intervene to heal him:

²⁷ “Here is your wife, take her. Get yourself away from ²⁸ all the provinces of Egypt. But now, pray for me and for my household that this evil spirit might be exorcized from us” (ותתגער מננה רוחא דא באישתא). So I prayed for him, the blasphemer. ²⁹ I lay my hands upon his head. Then the plague was removed from him and the evil [spirit] was exorcized

³⁵ The Genesis Apocryphon was composed in Aramaic and has been dated between the second century BCE and the first century CE. It is one of the premier examples of Second Temple Jewish “parabiblical” writing (or “rewritten Bible”) and is based on the text of Genesis. Many scholars have noted its interconnections with Enochic literature and the book of Jubilees, which are also discussed in this project. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Cave 1: A Commentary*, 3rd ed., BibOr 18b (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2004); cf. Michael Segal, “The Literary Relationship between the Genesis Apocryphon and Jubilees: The Chronology of Abram and Sarai’s Descent to Egypt,” *Aramaic Studies* 8.1–2 (2010): 71–88; Todd E. Klutz, “The Grammar of Exorcism in the Ancient Mediterranean World: Some Cosmological, Semantic, and Pragmatic Reflections on How Exorcistic Prowess Contributed to the Worship of Jesus” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus*, ed. Carey C. Newman, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 156–65.

³⁶ Most commentators read this as מכתש

³⁷ See Klutz, “The Grammar of Exorcism,” 157; cf. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon*, 210.

[from him] (ואתפלי מנה מכתשא ואתגערת [מנה רוחא] באשתא) and he was healed.
(1QapGen [1Q20] 20:27–29)

Some interpreters have pointed out parallels between this passage and the exorcisms of Jesus, noting in particular the ritual act of laying on hands (e.g., Luke 13:10–13).³⁸ Certainly the connections should not be ignored, but Todd Klutz has pointed out an important distinction: In the Genesis Apocryphon, Abram prays that the evil spirit “might be exorcized” (ואתגערת), using a passive voice.³⁹ Jesus, in contrast, exorcizes spirits directly without an implied deferral to the authority of another (e.g., Mark 5:1–20).

These two examples, the Damascus Document and the Genesis Apocryphon, highlight an aspect of spirit possession in late Second Temple texts that is often underemphasized by later interpreters. The primary framework in both compositions for understanding spirit phenomena is that of purity and impurity.⁴⁰ Admittedly, spirit possession was just one of several arenas where certain elements in Second Temple Judaism came to conflate notions of purity/impurity with righteousness/unrighteous.⁴¹ But in contemporary scholarly conversations, concerns about evil have often eclipsed those of purity. This has led to some misunderstandings. For example, as Klutz points out, rituals that are designed to expunge impurity are naturally temporary.⁴² Cast in the framework of purity/impurity, the necessity of repeated exorcism is not evidence of the

³⁸ See, for example, Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 44 and Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 66. See discussion of these texts in Klutz, “The Grammar of Exorcism,” 157–58.

³⁹ This is the sense of the Gt or “Ithpeel” stem. See Klutz, “The Grammar of Exorcism,” 157–58.

⁴⁰ Even when the Dead Sea texts describe mythological spirit beings, it is often accompanied by language of impurity. See, for example 4QBerakhot [4Q286 f7.2:1–5].

⁴¹ See Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, esp. 75–79.

⁴² “While there are rituals that help you to get rid of the impurity, their effectiveness is only temporary, for demons, like many forms of impurity, have a nasty habit of coming back.” Klutz, “The Grammar of Exorcism,” 161.

therapy's ineffectiveness in combatting eschatological evil, but simply of its routine nature (cf. Luke 11:24–25, a parable where an unclean spirit returns after being cast out). This point is nowhere better evidenced than in that Second Temple era Jewish exorcist extraordinaire, Jesus of Nazareth, whose miracles primarily concern issues of impurity (e.g., raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and exorcizing demons).⁴³

2) *The Hodayot*

For further examples of the therapeutic demonization of the self in Second Temple Judaism, we return to the Hodayot, already introduced in chapter four. As with the Damascus Document and the Genesis Apocryphon discussed above, the Hodayot also cast notions of purity and impurity as issues that concern spirit phenomena. In contrast to those texts, however, the Hodayot more directly interconnect morality with impurity. Specifically, purification of sin is portrayed as an internal spirit phenomenon that concerns a person's moral organ:

²²... And a perverted spirit you have purified from great sin (ורוח נעוה טהרתה מפשע רב) that it might take its place with ²³ the host of the holy ones and enter into community with the congregation of the children of heaven. And you cast for a person an eternal lot with the spirits ²⁴ of knowledge, that he might praise your name in a common rejoicing and recount your wonderful acts before all your works. (1QH^a 11:22–24; cf. 4:38; 9:34)

Note that, like Psalm 51 and the internal transformation texts of Ezekiel, it is only by God's miraculous intervention that the speaker's spirit has been purified.

Likewise, it is a repeated refrain throughout the Hodayot that one gains the ability to recognize God's righteous actions and wisdom upon the spirit *by means* of that very same spirit. Additionally, it is not always clear if the act of recognition and petition comes before or after God's purifying act. Some texts seem to suggest that, though morally compromised, it is

⁴³ E.g., Matt 10:8. See Klutz, "The Grammar of Exorcism," 163.

nevertheless the speaker's own spirit that enables these prayers for purification (e.g., 1QH^a 8:29–31).⁴⁴ But other passages imply that the spirit of knowledge and wisdom is granted only after God's intervention:

I, your servant, know by means of the spirit which you have placed within me (ברוח אשר נתתה בי). (1QH^a 5:35b–36a; cf. 6:36)

Here we have what may strike us as a contradiction in the same vein as those concerning determinism which I discussed in chapter four in regard to the Hodayot. Can these two perspectives be reconciled?

As suggested already in chapter four, the perspective presented on spirits in Psalm 51 and the Hodayot is not as contradictory as this inconsistency may initially indicate. One's spirits are not always entirely one's own and only God has the power to keep a spirit under complete control. Further, these passages portray a repeated and almost indulgent deference to God and to God's holy spirit (and a matching contempt for the self and the self's impure spirit). This strongly suggests that charting who had agency of which spirit when is a relatively minor concern in these texts.

Conversely, the tendency towards outlandish self-rebuff in the Hodayot has been noticed by several scholars, and it is consistent with other Qumran texts cited above which present the human self as irreparably immoral and disobedient.⁴⁵ Indeed, this seems to be an intentional strategy within the composition. As Carol Newsom explains:

[I]n the Hodayot the self enacts its own nothingness in radical contrast to the being of God. To its pollution corresponds the holiness of God; to its guilt, God's righteousness;

⁴⁴ This passage is also discussed in chapter four of this project.

⁴⁵ See Brand, *Evil Within and Without*, 61.

to its inability to will and to do, God's uniquely autonomous will and creative power; to its lowliness among the works of God, God's own absolute incomparability.⁴⁶

Newsom labels these expressions "masochistic sublime."⁴⁷ It is worth nothing that, within the context of the Hodayot, self-loathing can serve as a means of praise. The less that the self becomes, the greater is the glory given to God who redeems that self and purifies it.⁴⁸

This point is analogous to one of the central tenants in Jon Levenson's *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*.⁴⁹ When the peril of primordial or monstrous evil is emphasized in the Bible, it does not function as a threat to God's supremacy (or to "monotheism" more generally). Rather, as these forces have come to be portrayed in biblical literature, emphasizing their power only serves to heighten God's magnificence, since the biblical narratives assume that evil has already been defeated once and will be defeated again. The greater the power of evil, the more impressive is the one who defeats it.

Recognizing this analogue helps forge a link between the theological anthropologies described using internal spirit language in the Hodayot and those described using cosmic myths about spirits in other Second Temple Jewish literature.⁵⁰ It also helps to explain how spirit language—which in earlier biblical literature was used primarily as a way to describe either the innate animation of life or a temporary, charismatic empowerment by God—came to be so closely associated with the moral transformation of the self and the personification of evil in Second Temple Jewish literary traditions.

⁴⁶ Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space*, 220.

⁴⁷ Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space*, 220.

⁴⁸ Cf. 2 Cor 3:12–18

⁴⁹ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, see esp. the new preface pp. xv–xxviii.

⁵⁰ Recall, as well, the employment of *Chaoskampf* traditions to describe the distinctly internal and medical problems of the Babylonian *Poem of the Righteous Sufferer* discussed above.

Finally, perhaps more than any other composition reviewed in this project, the Hodayot root spirit language within a material framework (tersely exemplified in the recurring phrase “spirit of flesh” רֹחַ בֶּשָׂר, 4:37; 5:15; 5:30). As Miryam Brand explains:

The internal desire to sin is portrayed as *sinfulness tied to human physicality*. The human in her physical essence is particularly sinful and base. At the same time, the need for divine help is incorporated into the author’s belief in the predestination of the wicked and the righteous and the predetermination of all human action.⁵¹

This outlook also helps to explain how problems of purity/impurity have come to be paired with problems of morality/disobedience in the Hodayot. To allow an impure spirit to persist in one’s body is to doom that body to perpetual sin. Thus, drastic physical transformation becomes necessary if that spirit is to be purified.⁵² This is precisely what we find in our next text, 4QBarkhi Nafshi.

3) 4QBarkhi Nafshi

An unusual exorcism is described in 4QBarkhi Nafshi, a non-sectarian fragmentary prayer text composed no later than the second–first centuries BCE.⁵³ First, the prayer seamlessly integrates

⁵¹ Brand, *Evil Within and Without*, 68.

⁵² On notions of the body in Qumran literature, see Alexandria Frisch and Lawrence H. Schiffman, “The Body in Qumran Literature: Flesh and Spirit, Purity and Impurity in the Dead Sea Scrolls” *DSD* 23 (2016): 155–82.

⁵³ This date was obtained paleographically since the text contains minimal internal chronological indicators. David Rolph Seely, “Barkhi Nafshi,” No Pages *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Cited 8 March 2019. Online: <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195084504.001.0001/acref-9780195084504-e-51>. Other resources informing this section include David Rolph Seely, “The Barkhi Nafshi Texts (4Q434–439),” in *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Conference on the Texts from the Judean Desert, Jerusalem, 30 April 1995*, ed. D. W. Parry and S. D. Rick (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 206–208; “Implanting Pious Qualities as a Theme in the Barkhi Nafshi Hymns” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years After their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman, et al. (Jerusalem : Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 322–31; George J. Brooke, “Body Parts in Barkhi Nafshi and the Qualifications for Membership of the Worshipping Community” in *Sapiential, Liturgical, and Poetical Texts from Qumran: Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies Oslo 1998*, ed. Daniel K. Falk, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 79–94; Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, Brand, *Evil Within and Without*, 42–48; Kister, “Body and Purification from Evil;” Tigchelaar, “The Evil Inclination in the Dead Sea Scrolls.”

imagery and terminology from Deuteronomy 30, Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36, and Psalm 51 to describe God's act of repairing the petitioner's faulty moral organ:

He has circumcised the foreskins of their heart. (4QBarkhi Nafshi [4Q434] 1 i.4)

⁵ You have commanded my heart and my inner parts you have honed, lest they forget your statutes (לבי פקדתה וכליותי שננתה בל ישכחו חוקיכה). ⁶ Upon my heart you have appointed your law and my inner parts you have opened, and you have prevailed over me. (4QBarkhi Nafshi [4Q436] 1 a+bi.5–6)

As the survey of Dead Sea Scroll texts up to this point has demonstrated, this theological anthropology is not at all out of place in the scrolls, though the pastiche of relevant biblical texts is, perhaps, especially dense.

Where Barkhi Nafshi differs (or goes further) than other texts is in how it assigns blame for these moral shortcomings to body parts. Notably, as we might expect, these flawed parts can be removed:

a+bi.10 ... [heart of stone] you have [e]xorcized from me (לב האבן ג[ערתה ממני]) and you have set a pure heart (לב טהור) in its place. An evil inclination [you have] exorcized [from my inner parts] (יצר רע גער[תה מן כליותי])... *vacat* ^{ii.1} ...[and a holy spir]it (ורוח) you have set in my heart. Lustful eyes you have removed from me and it gazed upon all ² [of your ways.] Stiffness of [n]eck you have sent away from me and you have made it humility. Also, rage you have removed [from me and you have set] ³ [in me a spirit of lo]ng patience (לי רוח אר[וך אפים]). Haughtiness of heart and arrogance of eyes you have [...] from me. [A spirit of deceit] ⁴ [you have destroyed]. ([רוח שקר אבדת]) (4Q436 1 a+bi.10–ii.4; cf. parallel 4Q435 2 i.1–5)

The use of the root גער “exorcize” or “rebuke” is especially conspicuous here.⁵⁴ Though occurring here in what we might call a moral-medical context, the verb can have a distinctly militant overtone—especially in the scrolls. For example, it is the same verb used of God's

⁵⁴ Cf. The Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen [1Q20] 20:27–29) discussed above where the same root (in Aramaic) describes Abram curing Pharaoh's skin disease.

eschatological act of banishing Belial and his armies in the War Scroll (1QM 14:10).⁵⁵ Here, however, the petitioner uses the verb to describe how God has exorcized a part of his body, what textual critics have suggested was his “heart of stone” (cf. the discussion of Ezekiel above). If the reconstruction is correct, it is notable that the replacement heart is described as “pure” rather than as one of “flesh” as in Ezekiel. Informed by Psalm 51, 4QBarkhi Nafshi has conflated notions of purity with those of righteousness and prescribed exorcism as the most effective way to obtain both within the self.

This argument is strengthened when we look at the second exorcism of the “the evil inclination” or *Yetzer HaRa* (יצר הרע) that follows. As Miryam Brand argues:

Hence, in 4Q436 1 i–ii the evil inclination is paralleled on the one hand with the heart and on the other with sinful inclination such as the “lechery of eyes” removed by God in 4Q436 1 ii.1 This indicates that despite the use of the verb *gʿr*, the *yēšer raʿ* here is an *internal* evil inclination and not an external spirit.⁵⁶

This internal spirit, then, is something very much like a possessing, detrimental spirit, and that is, in fact, very similar to how many people would describe a demon. Consistent with many of the accounts of demonic possession surveyed in this project both contemporary and ancient, this evil inclination causes pain both mental and physical and manipulates its host into engaging in unwanted thoughts and actions (in this case sin and disobedience).

The “evil inclination” has been treated most completely by Ishay Rosen-Zvi, who traces conceptions of the *Yetzer HaRa* through its relatively infrequent occurrences in biblical and Second Temple Jewish literature into its maturing as a complex theological concept in rabbinic

⁵⁵ Tigchelaar connects this to God’s “rebuke” גער of the satan in Zech 3:2. Tigchelaar, “The Evil Inclination,” 351–52.

⁵⁶ Brand, *Evil Within and Without*, 47.

sources.⁵⁷ The Qumran texts, Rosen-Zvi argues, occupy a middle ground between biblical notions of the *yetzer* as “thoughts” or “plans” and those of rabbinic literature as a reified, quasi-independent being.⁵⁸

In this regard, 4QBarkhi Nafshi is instructive. Rosen-Zvi notes that unlike other internal components listed in this text, the “evil inclination” is not repaired or fortified but removed completely. This usage is similar to the only other place in the Dead Sea Scrolls where the phrase *יצר הרע* occurs:

אל תשלט בי שטן ורוח טמאה מכאוב ויצר רע אל ירשו בעצמי
Let Satan not have dominion within me nor an unclean spirit. Let neither pain nor evil inclination take possession of my bones. (11QPs^aPlea [11Q5] 19:15–16)

From the perspective of these texts, it would seem that though every human is born with a *יצר*, we could live just fine (or better) without it. This is in contrast to the “heart” and “spirit,” which cannot be removed completely but only replaced.⁵⁹ Notably, as with the medical texts discussed above, the *יצר הרע* is in the same category (or manifests in a similar manner) as a physical ailment (e.g., “pain” *כאוב*).

Taking Rosen-Zvi’s analysis as a baseline, it should be asked whether or not one can call the evil inclination a true “demon” if its origin was as a part of its host’s body and if it does not have its own distinct personality. As discussed in the introduction, notions about the ontologies of spirits are incredibly diverse, not only cross-culturally but even within a single possession cult. Thus, it should not surprise us if it were to be shown that more than one notion of

⁵⁷ Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*.

⁵⁸ Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desire*, 44.

⁵⁹ See Menachem Kister, “‘Inclination of the Heart of Man,’ the Body and Purification from Evil” / “יצר” in *Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls VIII* / מגילות מחקרים במגילות מדבר / לב האדם, הגוף ובטיהור מן הרע, ed. M. Bar-Asher and D. Dimant (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Haifa Univ., 2010), 243–84.

demonization was operative in early Judaism simultaneously. Still, though 4QBarkhi Nafshi is arguably the closest, these examples of spirits and purity are not yet the fully-fledged mythological exorcisms encountered in later literature like the New Testament Gospels. A final aspect of demonization will help establish a link between exorcism in these Dead Sea Scrolls traditions and the New Testament traditions and it is to this arena that we turn next.

B. Spirit Possession and Eschatology

In this final discussion, I wish to look at a second mode of therapeutically demonizing the self in Second Temple literature: conceiving of possession and other spirit phenomena in light of Jewish eschatological expectations. One text can serve as a representative example.

As introduced already in chapter two, the second century BCE book of Jubilees is replete with spirit phenomena, including episodes of cosmic warfare, apotropaic prayer, and demonic tampering with God's people. Proving John Collins' point that "the apocalyptic explanation of evil lies in its eschatology, at least as much as in its protology," the crux of these phenomena is the flood narrative, in which God binds Mastema and his associated spirits and dictates the extent of their influence for the remainder of human history (Jub 10:8–14).⁶⁰ Among other implications, this event indicates that, in Jubilees, after the flood, Mastema and his evil spirits operate as an already defeated power with only a limited purview for mischief. We should note also that a considerable amount of cautious comfort is delivered through the narration of this event: The comfort is that there is a ceiling on the extent that Mastema and his spirits can assault God's people. The caution is that this does not completely neuter their power:

⁶⁰ The exegetical and expansive relationship this narrative has to Genesis 6:1–4, to the Enochic tradition and to other Second Temple apocalyptic texts has been discussed extensively. See, in particular, Collins, "The Origin of Evil in Apocalyptic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls" (quote pg. 26); Stuckenbruck, "Origins of Evil in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels*; Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*.

During the third week of this jubilee, impure demons began to mislead Noah's grandchildren, to make them act foolishly, and to destroy them. (Jub 10:1)

Though Mastema and his spirits can no longer win the cosmic war, they are allowed to drag others down into defeat with them.

Consistent with other Second Temple Jewish literature discussed above, Jubilees presents the problem of demonic influence primarily as one of impurity, evoking the language of Psalm 51, Deuteronomy 30, and other biblical texts in the "inner transformation" tradition. See, for example, Moses' apotropaic prayer and God's response (italicized portions are of special interest):

²⁰ May your mercy, Lord, be lifted over your people. *Create for them a just spirit.* May the spirit of Belial not rule over them so as to bring charges against them before you and to trap them away from every proper path so that they may be destroyed from your presence. ²¹ They are your people and your heritage whom you have rescued from Egyptian control by your great power. *Create for them a pure mind and a holy spirit.* May they not be trapped in their sins from now to eternity. ²² Then the Lord said to Moses: "I know their contrary nature, their way of thinking, and their stubbornness. They will not listen until they acknowledge their sins and the sins of their ancestors. ²³ *After this they will return to me in a fully upright manner and with all (their) minds and all (their) souls. I will cut away the foreskins of their minds⁶¹ and the foreskins of their descendants' minds. I will create a holy spirit for them and will purify them in order that they may not turn away from me from that time forever.* ²⁴ Their souls will adhere to me and to all my commandments. They will perform my commandments. *I will become their father and they will become my children.* ²⁵ All of them will be called children of the living God. *Every angel and every spirit will know them.* They will know that they are my children and that I am their father in a just and proper way and that I love them (Jub 1:20–25; cf. 10:1).

Like the biblical texts it evokes, Jubilees expects that God will intervene within his people to alter their moral interiority. Like Psalm 51 specifically, it conceives of this intervention as a spirit phenomenon that combines notions of the animating spirit and the possessing spirit. Yet, Jubilees takes this tradition still further.

⁶¹ Better "hearts." See Kugel, *A Walk Through Jubilees*, 25.

Unlike those texts discussed above, which employed the same biblical traditions to narrate this inner transformation, Jubilees features no subtle abstraction or quasi-hypostatization of the offending spirits. Rather, informed by the Enochic traditions, these spirits have names, goals, and personalities.⁶² Counterintuitively, however, as the agency and independence of these spirits increases, so too does God's mastery over their fate. See, for example, the title Noah uses for God in Jubilees 10:3. As James Kugel observes:

[Noah] rightly addresses his prayer to **God of the spirits which are in all animate beings** [*better*: flesh], cleverly adopting this phrase from Num 16:22, 27:16 and giving it a new twist: "God, you are also the God of those demons/spirits who, though they are **spirits**, nevertheless are in **flesh**, that is, they can get inside human beings and make them misbehave."⁶³

The therapeutic point here is indirect but firm: though the enemy is clever and terrifying, the God of the ancestors remains supreme.

In its portrayals of the patriarchs and ancestors engaging in apotropaic practices and prayers, Jubilees transforms the heritage of biblical spirit phenomena still further. These traditions that once referred to cultivation and attention to the self-spirit in the Hebrew Bible now pertain to the management of independent evil spirits. Further, the ultimate defeat of these spirits has become tied to a cosmological and eschatological timeline. Practices of self-purification and cleansing are thus only mitigating efforts. They are temporary reprieves from a constant threat that will persist until the end of time. Like the uncircumcised heart of Deuteronomy, the heart of stone in Ezekiel, and the problematic spirit of Psalm 51, the only permanent solution to the problem of impure spirits—whether inside or outside—is God's final eschatological victory.

⁶² See Stuckenbruck, "Origins of Evil in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," esp. 24–32.

⁶³ Kugel, *A Walk Through Jubilees*, 82. Emphasis is original showing quoted text.

III. Spirit Possession, the Self, and Personifying Evil: Next Steps and Major Contributions

Above, I have surveyed several examples from the Dead Sea Scrolls of how spirit possession was conceived and treated using conceptions of purity/impurity. I suggested that these practices developed in part out of a desire to demonize the self and the self's community therapeutically. I showed how notions of animating and possessing spirits—originally separate ideas in most examples from the Hebrew Bible—came to operate in tandem in several Dead Sea Scrolls texts. I then highlighted how these ideas could be seen as operative in a mythological and eschatologically focused context, using the book of Jubilees as an example. Below, I suggest some next steps for this project as I prepare it, I hope, for eventual publication. I then summarize what I see as its primary contributions to the study of spirit phenomena in biblical literature.

A. Next Steps

This final chapter has remained focused on making one particular point about the therapeutic demonization of the self in Second Temple Jewish literature. Along the way, however, it has hinted at several other avenues of exploration that have been opened up by this project. Three of these directions are described below in the form of a preliminary agenda for converting this dissertation into a book.

1) Add More Sources that Integrate Eschatology with Spirit Phenomena

The discussion of the book of Jubilees above introduced how eschatological texts that feature spirit beings may be read as having a therapeutic purpose. One important text not discussed explicitly in this section (though referenced frequently throughout the dissertation—especially in chapter three) is the so-called “Treatise on the Two Spirits” found in the Community Rule.

Among other curiosities, the Treatise relocates the eschatological conflict between the forces of good and evil to an internal battleground within each person. This suggests a conception of the human self as perpetually conflicted by design. It also assigns cosmic consequences to each individual moral action, no matter how seemingly insignificant. Regardless of a person's status or station, they can contribute to the war that will decide the fate of creation through obedience and right action. Rather than discussing this text in pieces across the project, a dedicated section may be necessary for the eventual book. Other important texts to discuss in this section might include the Visions of Amram and the War Scroll.

2) Trace the Evolution of Ancient Israel "Enemies" into Early Jewish "Evil"

The discussion of these additional Dead Sea Scroll texts may fit best into an additional chapter that discusses how the therapeutic demonization of the self is adopted into Second Temple Judaism's growing interest in the multiple unseen agencies of the universe. As suggested above, the earliest traditions in the Bible envision divine beings not allied with God primarily as a militaristic or monstrous enemy. These older biblical traditions often underemphasize evil as immoral or sinful in favor of playing up their fierce power and destructive tendencies. In contrast, in many late Second Temple texts, evil stops being only an enemy that seeks to defeat God's people, and becomes also a paradigmatic sinner.⁶⁴ Further, as can be seen in the numerous apotropaic prayers and narratives of demonic combat in the Second Temple period, evil is also a trickster or a tester who wishes to entrap God's people into sin.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ We should note that this transformation is already taking place within the Hebrew Bible when we compare, for example, the evolving presentations of Pharaoh in the Exodus traditions and in Ezekiel.

⁶⁵ I have written on this topic elsewhere. Reed Carlson, "Provocateurs, Examiners, and Fools: Divine Opponents to the *Aqedah* in Early Judaism" *CBQ*, forthcoming.

3) Connect More Directly to New Testament Spirit Phenomena

Throughout this project, I have often utilized New Testament examples of spirit phenomena as a type of negative example. My primary reason for this strategy was to liberate readers from a particular mold for understanding what constituted possession and other spirit phenomena (what I often referred to as the “conventional” model). In this last chapter, however, I have attempted to build a bridge between the models I identified in this project and those presented in the New Testament. This aim may be best accomplished by adding a final chapter (perhaps integrated into the one suggested above) that makes these connections more plain and discusses several strong examples in the New Testament (especially the Gospels).⁶⁶

B. Major Contributions of this Study

Having listed succinctly what I have *not* done (yet), can I summarize what it is that I have accomplished?

First, I have defined and illuminated “spirit phenomena” as a rich and underappreciated theological category in biblical literature. I have done so by mapping the functions of spirit language, rituals, and myths in the Hebrew Bible and in Second Temple Jewish literature. Whereas most studies of these phenomena aim to decode them using modern categories (e.g., mental health, symbolization of oppression, demonization of the ‘other’), I have applied models from cultural anthropology and ethnography on possession, trance, and other similar practices from around the world in order to reveal functions not usually associated with spirit texts in the Bible (e.g., “technologies of the self,” social commentary, therapeutic self-othering, a means to reembody the past). More broadly, my research into ancient texts in which the self is conceived

⁶⁶ It may also make the book more marketable to publishers and potential readers alike.

as unbuffered from outside forces has raised a new question: “How did modern interpreters come to deny such permeability?”

Beyond enriching our understandings of ancient Israel and early Judaism, this project has implications also for public discourse and for contemporary faith communities in the western world—especially those whose beliefs about spirits differ radically from those found in the Global South. By positively comparing biblical texts with contemporary spirit possession, my project has challenged colonial stereotypes of many non-Western religious practices as primitive or harmful.

Second, I have charted two major modes of conceiving of spirit phenomena in biblical literature—the animating and the possessing—and while I am certainly not the first to identify these trends, I am the first to do so at such length after John R. Levison so ambitiously attempted to strike them down. As he explains in the introduction of his own book on spirit phenomena:

I hope to redraw the relationship between the initial endowment of the spirit and what Gunkel would refer to as the mysterious effects of the spirit. It is time to supplant Gerlemann's distinction between the anthropological-psychological spirit and the charismatic spirit, between Lampe's soul and the actual spirit of God, and between Horn's essentially physical breath and the charismatic spirit that inspires judges and prophets. The two, the so-called life principle and the spirit of God, I am convinced, were understood to be one and the same. The initial endowment of God's spirit at birth must not, therefore, be understood as an inferior presence, a merely physical reality, in comparison with charismatic endowments, but rather in its own right as a vital and powerful presence with its own supernatural effects.⁶⁷

Though never framed explicitly as a response to Levison, he has been a frequent conversation partner throughout this project and more than once an interlocutor with whom I have disagreed. While my categories are not identical to those that Levison critiques, they are similar enough that

⁶⁷ Levison, *Filled with the Spirit*, 12. Here Levison references Gillis Gerlemann, “Holy Spirit,” *RG*, 3rd ed. (1958) 2:1270 and Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, “Holy Spirit,” *ABD* 3:260.

my project could be seen by some as a post-Levison update to the old consensus. I believe that this is only partially correct, however.

On the one hand, the differences between Levison's approach and my own could be chalked up to one of chronology. Levison believes that these notions of the animating and possessing spirit were always integrated whereas I suggest that they came to be so over time.⁶⁸ On the other hand, however, our differences are also ideological. In my reading, Levison has effectively attempted to make all instances of spirit phenomena in biblical literature examples of the animating spirit. He simply clarifies that the animating spirit is more dynamic, charismatic, and overpowering than was once believed. In contrast, I have spent a good portion of my project attempting to do the converse, that is, apply certain stereotypical attributes of the animating spirit (e.g., systematic, cultivated, communal) to that of the possessing spirit and to instances of spirit possession more generally. Consequently, it may turn out that our projects have more in common than I am at this point prepared to admit and that, really, we have both been working at untying the same knot—but simply from different ends.

Third, I have introduced a framework for understanding the developing concepts of evil in Second Temple Jewish Literature that is informed by mythological texts but not based in them. Rather, I have rooted my discussion of evil in the vibrant conversations currently ongoing in biblical scholarship surrounding notions of the self. As originally conceived, this was, in fact, one of the more significant contributions I sought to make in this project. While I believe that I

⁶⁸ This is as much a product of our posture disciplinarily as anything else. Levison writes from the perspective of late Second Temple Judaism and the New Testament and unapologetically allows early Jewish sources written in Greek to determine how he reads the spirits texts of earlier biblical literature. In contrast, I have endeavored to write as much as possible about these issues from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible, intentionally seeking out places where early Jewish ideas about spirits may have differed from early Christian pneumatology. Consequently, I have concentrated the bulk of my attention on sources written in Hebrew and Aramaic.

have largely accomplished this task, having now reached the conclusion, I wonder if it has turned out to be one of the least interesting aspects of this project.

The more time I have spent in this literature, the more I have become convinced that dealing with “evil” in the modern sense of the word is a secondary concern in many of the spirit phenomena texts in biblical literature—even those that explicitly discuss demons, exorcism, and eschatological conflict. It is not that the problem of evil is not a concern of these texts—of course it is. Rather, it is that notions of evil and its activity in the world are so thoroughly integrated into other religious and communal concerns that to focus on evil only (primarily as an intellectual problem and not also as one of religious practice and self-understanding) is to miss the forest for the trees. As Richard J. Bernstein has observed,

When theologians and philosophers of religion speak about ‘the problem of evil,’ they typically mean something quite specific—the problem of how to reconcile the appearance of evil with a belief in a God who is omniscient, omnipotent, and beneficent. Even this discourse has become specialized and professionalized, and remote from the lived experiences of ordinary people. ... The main issue of the so-called problem of evil is not really the characterization of evil and its varieties. It is rather the problem of how to reconcile evil (however it is described) with religious beliefs and convictions.”⁶⁹

Bernstein’s pragmatic approach to framing the problem of evil as one that is pressing in a different way for those who believe and practice religion recalls for us the anthropological dimension of this very theological issue.

Most of the Second Temple Jewish texts surveyed in this chapter are not struggling to identify where evil exists or how it might be defined. They are rather wrestling with the undeniable truth that they are surrounded by evil, even within themselves, and that its influence is obvious. Thus, they ask: “Do existing religious practices and beliefs adequately address this reality?” “Can these resources be strengthened or transformed in order to ameliorate the problem

⁶⁹ Richard J. Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Maldon, MA: Polity Press, 2002), 2.

more effectively?” “Are those who do not follow our community’s prescriptions for dealing with evil our enemy or our mission field?” Such were the kinds of therapeutic concerns that motivated many early Jewish and Christian literary engagements with the problem and origin of evil.

As I have striven to demonstrate in this project, the rich heritage of spirit phenomena in biblical literature was a significant conceptual and textual resource that outfitted these discussions—as were the associated spiritual practices that accompanied them. Contemporary Jewish and Christian communities that struggle with the problem of evil today make use of many of the same texts and practices—though not always in the same ways or forms. They use these resources to *manage* evil since by now it should be clear that it is a problem that will never be *solved*. Further, these spirit phenomena are intertwined with the cycles of birth and death, communal identity formation, and the engendering of hope in the midst of adversity that animate so much of human religiosity. In these efforts, Jews and Christians for millennia have found allies in God’s spirit, the human spirit, holy spirits, the communal spirit, the Holy Spirit and many other pneumatological entities and powers. Some of us write books about these phenomena in order to better understand them. Others of us experience them daily without any concern for explaining or proving their existence (a number of people do both). It is likely no one will know who has the clearer portrait on their nature until God sets all the spirits to right in the end.

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