

Ritual and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East

Edited by
TZVI ABUSCH,
ALAN LENZI, and
JEFFREY STACKERT

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Mohr Siebeck

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184



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Preface

JEFFREY STACKERT

With this volume, David Wright's students and colleagues pay tribute to a scholar whose abundant, creative insight and forceful erudition are matched only by his warmth, congeniality, and good humor. Across his career, first at Brigham Young University and Middlebury College and then for three decades in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University, David conducted research on the Hebrew Bible and the wider ancient Near Eastern world and taught generations of students eager to benefit from his thoughtful treatments of history, culture, language, and literature.

The essays in this collection are inspired by David's scholarship, which has focused especially on issues of ritual, law, and religion in ancient Israel and Judah and in the wider ancient Near East. In treating these topics, David has insisted that a theoretically-informed, historically-situated comparative inquiry offers the best perspective on ancient Near Eastern thought, practice, and literary production. In his first monograph, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature*, David shed important light on the biblical rituals that, in their aim to counteract impurity, also clarified how ancient religious thinkers conceptualized purity and impurity as cultic realities. David's second book, *Ritual in Narrative: The Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat*, investigated the complex interrelationship of ritual practice and its literary depiction in Ugaritic myth. In so doing, it offered a model for evaluating imaginative renderings of religious practice – both how they contributed to, and what they meant for, plot formation and what effect they had on readers (whom David calls “observers”) who were drawn into the story world of the narratives themselves. David's third major study, *Inventing God's Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi*, is his most ambitious and provocative. In this book, David suggests that the Covenant Code in Exodus reflects direct knowledge of the Laws of Hammurabi, which according to his analysis functioned as a controlling template for its organization and a strong influence upon its individual laws. This volume also reconstructs the sociohistorical context for such Judean interaction with the Laws of Hammurabi and situates the Covenant Code literarily within pentateuchal narrative.

David's research informed his teaching in fundamental ways; indeed, both *Ritual in Narrative* and *Inventing God's Law* were developed in close relation

to his classroom work. One of the greatest gifts that David gave his students was the opportunity to witness, and even participate in, his scholarly projects as he was developing them. David regularly brought his research-in-progress into his courses, testing ideas on his students and asking us to respond both to his claims and undecided questions. In these interactions, David displayed a tireless capacity for seeking out evidence and for engaging carefully and critically with it. He also demonstrated an admirable independence of mind – a genuine creativity – together with a thorough, collegial interaction with the work of other scholars. But perhaps best of all, David exemplified an openness to new ideas and, with them, a willingness to change his mind. There were hardly better lessons for aspiring young scholars to learn.

As the foregoing suggests, David has always been generous in engaging the research of others and, in particular, that of his students. David's students can readily recall not only his pressing questions but his encouragement and commendation; they can also point to his regular citation of important arguments from newly completed dissertations at Brandeis. As these remarks made clear, David took his students' research very seriously; he was also quick to acknowledge how much he had learned from them. Such praise inspired David's students to achieve a high level of scholarship – and helped them all along the way to believe that they could.

In offering this volume to David, we, his students and colleagues, present it as a token of our gratitude for his teaching, his mentorship, and his friendship. It is the sort of gift that we imagine he will especially enjoy. For a consummate scholar like David, what could be more fitting than a collection of essays that exemplifies and extends his rich legacy?

Table of Contents

JEFFREY STACKERT Preface	V
ALAN LENZI Introduction	1
JEFFERY M. LEONARD Curses and the Composition of Deuteronomy	13
TINA M. SHERMAN Exodus 34 and the Strategic Use of Law in the Construction of National Identity	41
JASON M. H. GAINES On Moses's Foreskin: Narrative Repurposing of the Circumcision Ritual in the Priestly Source	61
JOEL S. BADEN The Decalogue in Deuteronomy and (then) in Exodus	77
TAMAR KAMIONKOWSKI The Concept of Desecration in Leviticus	91
MARC ZVI BRETTLER YHWH's Laws in Psalms	109
BRUCE WELLS Identifying the Form of Enslavement in Exodus 21:20–21	127
MADADH RICHEY Elisha and the Bears (2 Kings 2:23–25)	145
JEFFREY STACKERT Typicality and Verisimilitude in Neo-Assyrian and Judean Figural Representation	161

ADA TAGGAR COHEN	
The Status of Women in the Hittite Cult as Mirrored in Royal Ideology and Prescribed Rituals	175
ALAN LENZI	
Exploring Manners, Etiquettes, and Protocols with <i>Šuila</i> -Prayer Ištār 1	197
TZVI ABUSCH and EMILY BLANCHARD WEST	
‘Awful Silence, Deathly Stillness’: Fears and Anxieties among the Gods in Mesopotamian and Indic Literature	217
List of Contributors	233
Index of Ancient Sources	235
Index of Authors	249
Index of Subject	255

Introduction

ALAN LENZI

Ritual and law in the ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible form the thematic core of David P. Wright's scholarship.¹ The contributors to the present volume honor David in the following pages with studies in one or both of these cultural spheres. The studies are as topically and methodologically diverse as David's own work, and range, as is again true of David's, from large-scale interpretations to studies focused on a single word or phrase.

The first two contributions interpret a particular matter in a pentateuchal text to shed new light on a broader issue in the Bible or ancient Israel.

In his essay, Jeffery Leonard examines the compositional dating of various blocks of material in the book of Deuteronomy through the lens of the threatened curses to be visited upon a disobedient Israel – their presence or absence – and, when present, their level of certainty and severity of execution. Leonard's purpose in looking at this material is to caution against recent trends of reading Deuteronomy as an exilic or post-exilic document. He begins with an examination of the core legal material in Deut 12–26 and its Gerizim-Ebal covenantal frame (Deut 11 and 27). Neither contains “*explicit* threats of scattering, exile, or military defeat,” which Leonard suggests implies an initial compositional date for this material before Assyria's conquest and exile of Samaria in 722 BCE. In section two, Leonard finds an uncertain fate for Israel in Deut 4:45–11:28 and 28:1–46 (*sans* vv. 36–37). The potential for, but the uncertainty of, exile in this material suggests it arose in the decades after 722 BCE. Following Stackert's argument for the influence of Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty on Deut 28:20–44,² Leonard places the compositional date of both passages between 672 and 650 BCE. In the final two sections of his contribution, Leonard offers close readings of passages that presume the certainty of Israel's failure and punishment (28:36–37, 47–57, 58–68; 29:19b–26, 27; 31:16–22, 24–29; and 32:1–43) and, in section four, their future res-

¹ The point is clearly established via a perusal of the titles of his books: *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature*; *Ritual in Narrative: The Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat*; *Perspectives on Purity and Purification in the Bible* (edited with several others); and *Inventing God's Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi*. Witness also his much-anticipated commentary on Leviticus for the Hermeneia series.

² *Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch*, 94–99, 159–61.

toration after exile (4:23–31 and 30:1–10). Although five of these passages assume a national crisis (28:47–57; 29:19b–26, 27; 31:16–22, 24–29), Leonard does not find evidence to determine whether the crisis is related to the events of 722 BCE or 586 BCE. Only four passages certainly reflect the sixth century Judean exile (28:36–37, 4:23–31, 28:58–68, and 30:1–10). Given these findings, Leonard urges caution against reading the book as an exilic or later document.

In her contribution, Tina Sherman interprets Exod 34:10–27 as a product of a Persian period scribal legist who was attempting to define contemporary Israelite communal identity via a re-imagined original identity at Sinai. Sherman uses contemporary scholarship surrounding national identity formation as a heuristic to examine the identity Exod 34:10–27 constructs for Israel. She identifies five “common features attributed to nations and their members,” namely, “(1) a collective past; 2) a national territory and landmarks; 3) a common culture; 4) a ‘national character’; and 5) a shared present and future,” and undertakes a close reading of Exod 34:10–27 in light of each. According to Sherman, the key issue in Israel’s collective past in Exod 34:10–27 is the conquest and settlement of Canaan, not the exodus. The passage implies a national territory via YHWH’s driving out of the various Canaanite peoples, enumerated in v. 11, and the establishment of new landmarks as the Israelites clear out the old Canaanite cult places (v. 13). The territorial matter is underlined toward the end of the passage, where YHWH states, “I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders” (v. 24). In terms of a common culture, the passage imagines Israel as an agrarian community that demonstrates its relationship to the deity via three annual pilgrimage rituals, a weekly sabbath, and cultic practices that contrast with those of the people YHWH is driving out of the land. Israel’s national character, according to Exod 34:10–27, is rooted in their common land, their covenant with YHWH, and their distinctive Yahwistic cult, which is strongly contrasted with the inhabitants of the land who “lust after their gods” (v. 15). This distinctive phrase, which Sherman argues is a clue to the passage’s late composition, also emphasizes the prohibition against intermarriage with non-Israelites, who, lusting after their gods, would surely lead Israelites astray. Although Exod 34:10–27 does not describe Israel’s future explicitly, its ancient author’s imagined understanding of what YHWH commanded it to be at its founding implies a paradigm for future Israel, too. In fact, Sherman suggests that the passage’s *raison d’être* is a mythmaking strategy that provides an authoritative vision of Israel’s founding at Sinai that would shape its contested present in the Persian period, a time when “the interpretation of authoritative texts, especially legal texts, increasingly became the means by which the Judeans established the criteria for membership in the community.”

The next three essays demonstrate the benefits and pitfalls of reading penta-teuchal texts intertextually. Gaines and Baden understand particular penta-teuchal texts as the interpretive and editorial result of ancient scribes reading

earlier source material at their disposal. Kamionkowski does the same with regard to a particular phrase in Leviticus but also offers a corrective to the inappropriate modern intertextual interference of one corpus upon the proper understanding of another.

Joel Baden offers a diachronic perspective on the Decalogue from the perspective of the Neo-Documentary Hypothesis.³ After a close reading of Exodus 20, Baden concludes that this version of the Decalogue is a secondary insertion into E's narrative of the covenant at Sinai. As Baden reads E, the laws of the Covenant Code (Exod 20:21–23:33), not the Decalogue, comprise the basis of the covenant between Israel and its god, and thus the tablets mentioned at Sinai (Exod 24:12) should be understood to contain the Covenant Code and *not* the Decalogue. The golden calf incident in E (Exod 32) violates the Covenant Code's initial law, which requires the aniconic veneration of the deity (Exod 20:22–23). In D, the laws in Deut 12–26 are the basis of a covenant between Israel and its deity, which they enter into *not* at Horeb but rather on the plains of Moab just before their entry into the promised land. These central chapters in Deuteronomy take on the function of the Covenant Code in D's revision of E, which then raises the question for D of what precisely happened at Horeb. Baden argues that for D, "[t]he Decalogue constitutes the basis for the covenant at Horeb," into which the people enter before setting out into the wilderness for the promised land. D therefore has two covenants (to E's singular covenant), one at Horeb on the basis of the Decalogue and one on the plains of Moab on the basis of the laws in Deut 12–26. "D invented the Decalogue," Baden reasons, "to fill the narrative gap that it created itself in its revising of E." Moreover, for D, it is the Decalogue that is inscribed on the tablets Moses receives (as is clear in Deut 4:13, 9:10), and it is the Decalogue's prohibition against apostasy that the Israelites violate with the golden calf, not an improper, iconic cult. Although Moses also receives the laws of Deut 12–26 at Horeb, he only announces these to the people some forty years later on the plains of Moab at the time of the second covenant. What then of the Decalogue in Exodus? This version of the Decalogue, according to Baden, has its origins in the D source, as vocabulary strongly indicates. Its placement in the Exodus narrative at Sinai is a later attempt to harmonize the Exodus account at Sinai with Deuteronomy's account at Horeb, sometime "after the Pentateuch had already been assembled from its constituent source documents," as evidenced in its justification of the sabbath in the created order rather than in Israel's former enslavement (20:11).

Jason H. M. Gaines offers an interpretation of Moses's "uncircumcised lips" (Exod 6:12, 30) as a Priestly reinterpretation of two problematic elements (for P)

³ For which, see Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch* and more recently, Baden and Stackert, eds., *Pentateuch and Its Readers*; idem, *Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*; and Stackert, *Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch*.

in the non-priestly material about Moses in Exodus 3–4, namely, Moses’s lack of circumcision (Exod 4:24–26) and Moses’s heavy mouth and lips (Exod 4:10). In the non-priestly material, Moses is never circumcised, according to Gaines. In Exodus 4:24–26, when the Israelite deity becomes angry with Moses, Zipporah’s quick actions (circumcising one of their sons and touching the foreskin to Moses’s genitals) deceives the deity into thinking that she has circumcised Moses when in fact she has not. The implication of the enigmatic passage, according to Gaines, is that Moses was uncircumcised at the time and *remained so* during the liberating events that transpired in Egypt shortly thereafter. In P, we have no mention of Moses’s circumcision. Rather, as Gaines states, “it was simply a given” that Moses had already been circumcised, and any tradition to the contrary would need to be remedied in the priestly narrative, which P does in its description of Moses’s speech. Gaines reviews the various understandings of Moses’s protestation during his call narrative in the non-priestly material, namely, that he is “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue” (Exod 4:10). In Gaines’s view, “Moses makes two protestations” with these words: “I do not know what to say, and I am physically impaired.” The deity then responds in Exod 4:11–12 with a double assurance: “I made you physically impaired, and I will tell you what to say.” In P, only after his fellow Hebrews refused to listen to Moses (Exod 6:9) does Moses protest to the deity about his speech, claiming “I am foreskinned of lips” (Exod 6:12). This uncircumcision of the lips, in Gaines’s view, expands the metaphorical notion of uncircumcised body parts – typically the heart – to the point of opacity, which raises the question of its purpose. Gaines sees two reasons for it: Moses’s speech deficiency in P makes room for Aaron’s elevated role in the priestly narrative as Moses’s mouthpiece; and P’s precise formulation of the metaphor “recasts earlier traditions that Moses was uncircumcised of foreskin, a situation that the Priestly authors would have found either unlikely or untenable. . . . Unable to deny or expunge the historical memory of Moses’s uncircumcision, [the priestly authors] recast it from the literal (foreskinned of the penis) to the metaphorical (foreskinned of lips).” Thus, Moses’s uncircumcised lips is yet another example of a recognized propensity in P to smooth out problematic elements it found in earlier Israelite narratives.

Tamar Kamionkowski offers a new interpretation of the phrase **לחלל את השם**, “to desecrate the name,” as it is used in the Holiness Code, which should be understood as distinct from the use of the phrase in Ezekiel. Kamionkowski begins with a brief look at the Rabbinic phrase **חילול השם**, which designates a Jewish individual’s action in word or deed that might elicit contempt for the Jewish community and/or its deity among those outside the community. This meaning, Kamionkowski suggests, has its roots in Ezekiel’s usage of **לחלל השם**, especially as it occurs in Ezek 36:19–21, where the deity announces the return of the people from exile not for their own sake but because the destruction of the temple and the exile of the people have cast a poor light on the

divine reputation. In Kamionkowski's view this "reputational" understanding of *לחלל את השם* in Ezekiel has unduly influenced the scholarly interpretation of the same phrase as it is used in the Holiness Code, which, when viewed through the lens of the H's worldview, is unique in the Hebrew Bible and quite distinct from Ezekiel's usage. The root *חלל* occurs sixteen times in the ten chapters of the Holiness Code. In keeping with recent scholarship that H's notion of holiness is dynamic, Kamionkowski argues that when the object of *חלל* is a person (in the priestly family), a sanctified item, or the sanctuary, the verb designates "a real reduction in holiness status" of the verb's object. Turning to examine the attestations of the verb paired with the deity's *שם* as its object, Kamionkowski argues there is likewise a diminishment involved: the people's actions have a real impact on the deity's name, which "is not just about reputation, but it is that aspect of God with which the people could interact." This element in H's theology is a direct response to P, in Kamionkowski's view. "In a highly relational, dynamic theology, where holiness status can be increased or decreased, how can it be that only one partner, Israel, can shift? . . . H's relational theology implies two dynamic partners, each of whom can impact the other."

The next two contributions demonstrate how the proper translation of one particular Hebrew word has broad interpretive implications for the corpus in which the word occurs.

Marc Brettler pursues the deceptively simple question, "What was the law for the (various) psalmists?" After a survey of the thirty-six attestations of the word *תורה* in the Psalter, Brettler finds no definitive evidence to equate the word with the Pentateuch. Similarly unconvincing are the various scholarly attempts to connect legal expectations attested in some psalms to actual pentateuchal legal provisions. The literary and redactional issues surrounding the corpora involved as well as their dating and the extent to which they were available to the respective authors of the psalms are very difficult, highly contested matters among scholars. The required literary dependence of these psalms on one of the legal corpora in the Pentateuch simply cannot be established. Drawing analogously on ideas about the sources of morality in ancient Mesopotamia, Brettler suggests that the basis for thinking about the legal expectations in the Psalter is not in a written text; rather, he looks to a cultural ethos of sorts, rooted in conventional morality, even if also expressed in notions about the divine will, which some call "wisdom." Brettler understands this term, in line with recent scholarship, as a fuzzy concept related to the assumed moral order rather than a discrete textual genre.

The contribution by Bruce Wells arises in response to the English Standard Version (ESV) using "servant" as an alternate translation of *עבד* in Exodus 21 and Samuel Perry's accusation that the ESV's use of "servant" constitutes sanitizing language.⁴ In his essay, Wells examines Exod 21:20–21 in the context of the

⁴ Perry, "Whitewashing Evangelical Scripture."

various forms of ancient Near Eastern enslavement in order to discern whether the law refers to chattel-slavery or debt-slavery. He argues that the latter is the law's focus and that the meaning of the Hebrew term is likewise confined to the same semantic domain throughout the Covenant Code. After providing a translation and introduction to the text, Wells surveys four kinds of slavery in the ancient Near East: pledge, distrainee, debt, and chattel. The first two are related to the securing of a loan. The pledge is a person held as human collateral until the loan for which they are pledged is paid. The distrainee is a person seized due to a borrower's default on a loan and held – often in poor conditions – to motivate the defaulting borrower to make good on the loan quickly. A person became a debt-slave in one of three ways: when a person was held as a pledge and the borrower defaulted on the loan; when a person who had committed a crime could not pay the penalty levied against them; and when a person was sold to another in order to obtain food for themselves or their household (famine-slavery). A person became a chattel-slave via birth to a slave in their owner's household, via abandonment by parents in a public place and subsequent enslavement by a stranger, via kidnapping and subsequent trafficking to a foreign land, or via capture during a war. Unlike the other forms of enslavement, chattel-slavery permitted no provision for redemption and, in general, there was little regulation on what an owner could do with the enslaved person. Wells then returns to Exod 21:20–21. In contrast to David Wright, who argues the law has both chattel- and debt-slavery in view,⁵ Wells offers three reasons that the law treats only the latter. First, only a debt-slave would have a family member available to avenge their death at the hand of the slave-owner (see v. 20). Second, v. 21, which implies some leniency for an abusive owner, fits well within the parameters of what is permitted the owners of debt-slaves throughout the ancient Near East. And third, chattel-slaves are typically foreigners, and the biblical legal collections, as Wells notes, “generally take pains to note when a given provision is referring to non-Israelites instead of Israelites or when they are referring to both.” Since Exod 21:20–21 does not specify the slave as a foreigner, the law has Israelites in view, and thus only debt-slaves. Wells concludes his essay with broader reflections about the moral import of the verses vis-à-vis Perry's accusations against the ESV. In Wells's view, the debt-slavery interpretation of Exod 21:20–21 implies a significant moral problem in the law precisely for what it leaves unregulated: “Owners who beat their chattel-slaves to death faced no consequences beyond the loss of their slaves.”

The ensuing five essays, which increasingly move away from the Hebrew Bible, take a comparative and/or interdisciplinary approach. The first sheds light on a biblical text via ancient Near Eastern materials. The second utilizes art historical perspectives and biblical texts to shed light on Neo-Assyrian figural representation. The third, mainly concerned with women in the Hittite cult,

⁵ *Inventing God's Law*, 171–72.

compares and contrasts its results briefly with cultic elements of the Bible. The fourth utilizes interdisciplinary perspectives to shed new light on Akkadian prayers. And the fifth makes a large-scale comparison of Akkadian and Sanskrit mythological texts.

Continuing her work on the Elijah-Elisha narrative,⁶ Madadh Richey brings a comparative perspective to bear on 2 Kings 2:23–25, in which Elisha curses a group of boys who have mocked the prophet for his bald head, after which two female bears emerge from the forest to maul the boys. Richey considers the various ethical issues the passage raises for contemporary interpreters, who often view the punishment as disproportionate to the offense, especially so since it originated with presumably corrigible kids. For Richey, the ethical issues lie with the modern reader, not the ancient audience. Indeed, as she notes, the Bible sometimes even *prescribes* the execution of verbally abusive youth (see Exod 21:17; Lev 20:9; Deut 21:18–21). In light of this, she suggests the story “aims to encourage, via imagery that is contextually logical while also memorable, respect for the representative of YHWH.” In the rest of her contribution, Richey turns to examine the roles that the bears, Elisha, and their genders play in the narrative. She finds precedent in a covenant curse in Lev 26:22 for understanding the divine use of wild animals to bereave (שָׁבַר). Bears, moreover, are “paradigmatically associated with bereavement” in several other biblical texts. Thus, it seems 2 Kgs 2:23–25 is a “creative narrativization of a curse like that preserved in Leviticus.” Building on the idea that animals and deities were often closely associated in the ancient Near East, Richey cites a curse from a relatively new Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription in which a deity *becomes* a punishing lion, an animal often paired with a bear in biblical texts as equally terrorizing (see, e.g., 1 Sam 17:34–37 and Prov 28:15). Appealing to an Old Babylonian Mari incantation in which a ritual practitioner likens himself to a wolf and a lion, Richey suggests “it was evidently conceivable that magical practitioners could call on the powers of animal avatars in settling their claims.” Drawing these contextualizing ideas together, Richey understands the bears in 2 Kgs 2:23–25 as agents of YHWH, invoked by his representative Elisha, portrayed very much as a magical practitioner, to maul the young boys “as YHWH himself would” (see also Hos 13:8, Lam 3:10). Rather than being described as bereaved, the bears act as the agents of bereavement in this narrative. Moreover, Richey finds it ironic that the hairless Elisha would need two shaggy female bears to come to his aid, which, as she concludes, “introduces a gender contrast with the deconstructive potential to undermine Elisha’s putative masculinity. . . . The precise figuration of the gendered animal has the odd effect, therefore, of casting the man of god in a queer light.”

⁶ Richey, “Thunder of the Prophets”; Richey, “Child’s Sickbed in the Elijah and Elisha Narratives.”

Jeffrey Stackert's contribution reconsiders the scholarly consensus on the relationship between typicality and verisimilitude in Neo-Assyrian figural representations in visual art by way of Akkadian and Hebrew textual evidence. Modern art historians generally understand figural representations in ancient Near Eastern art to reflect standardized or idealized physical features rather than distinctive features of any individual. Likewise, their depicted accoutrement (e.g., clothing, headgear, etc.) are understood as conventional or symbolic rather than idiosyncratic. According to this consensus, figures conform to an idealized, typical visual profile (of, e.g., kingship) rather than one that is true to, or a verisimilitude of, the individual's actual appearance (e.g., of a particular king). Stackert amends this interpretive consensus in light of several texts in which Akkadian *bunnannû*, "appearance," and *šalmu*, "image," are used in "descriptions of precise physical resemblance." In the anti-witchcraft ritual series *Maqlû* the patient worries that those practicing witchcraft against him have fabricated a ritual figurine that copies his facial features (I 96). In a later passage the victim identifies the witch as the one who made an image of his appearance and then states that he himself has in turn made an image of the witch to use in ritually countering her (VII 55–59, 63–66). As Stackert reads these lines, "the threefold repetition of the examination-production sequence undertaken by both witch and victim . . . emphasizes the precise resemblances envisioned between the images and their subjects." In another example, the outcome of an Akkadian physiognomic omen is based on the determination of an infant's verisimilitude to either his mother or his father, which clearly shows an understanding of family resemblance in ancient Mesopotamia. Stackert turns next to Gen 1:26–27 and Gen 5:1–3, both belonging to the Priestly source, to explore typicality and verisimilitude in biblical Hebrew descriptions of images. In a very nice example of how biblical studies can come to the assistance of Assyriology,⁷ Stackert uses the biblical material, which he dates to the Neo-Assyrian period, as supporting evidence for the claims made on the basis of the Akkadian texts. About the two texts in Genesis Stackert writes: "The first concerns rulership, and the image associated with it is a typical likeness. The second imagines familial relations, in which case the likeness is one of precise physical resemblance." Drawing together the two lines of textual evidence for genuine verisimilitude in figural representations, Stackert returns to Neo-Assyrian visual art to consider the question of family resemblance in depictions of related kings. The textual record provides good warrant, in Stackert's view, to interpret similarities in figural representation of related persons as reflecting not just typicality but a genuine attempt at verisimilitude, that is, as depicting true family resemblance between individuals, even though typicality was the dominant tendency. What's more, Stackert thinks it quite likely that the ancients

⁷ For a volume full of such examples, see the forthcoming *Jehu's Tribute: Contributions of Biblical Studies to Assyriology*.

would have interpreted the similarities between images as family resemblance, too, even if they'd never seen the two kings, since dynastic rule was the norm and family resemblance would have been expected. Thus, we must see both typicality and verisimilitude in such cases, as he writes: "Put plainly, for (biologically-related) Assyrian rulers, to look *like each other* was to look *like kings*." Setting his conclusions within the broader theorization of portraiture, which displays "a dynamic interplay" between accuracy (verisimilitude) and stylization (typicality) of the person sitting as subject, Stackert concludes "that portraiture was already a substantially realized (if unnamed) genre of ancient Near Eastern visuality. Stylized typicality and precise physical resemblance each played a constitutive role in royal visual representation; they even worked together to code the figures depicted as kings."

Ada Taggar Cohen's contribution provides an overview of the roles women played in various Hittite cultic rituals through the lens of the household and how these roles reflect a cisgender Hittite worldview. Taggar Cohen begins with a brief overview of women in Hittite society broadly conceived via several Hittite laws (CTH 291–292). Although women are sometimes punished equally to men for infractions, women are mostly treated as weaker/inferior to men, and their sexual activities and marital relations are closely regulated. Unsurprisingly, the Hittite world was a patriarchal world. Turning to focus on the Hittite cult, Taggar Cohen notes that our sources are biased toward the royal household and elite members of society, including those involved in various cultic institutions. In iconographic representations of the cult, there is a clear distinction between male and female figures (both deities and humans) and their respective clothing and associated accoutrement, all of which supports a simple binary conflation of biological sex and gender roles: males with a masculine gender and females with a feminine gender. The Hittite understanding of divinity, according to Taggar Cohen, is basically based on the notion of the human household. Thus, the divine couple at the head of the pantheon give the land as an inheritance to the Hittite king who exercises rule over it. Although sometimes it is only the Storm-god of Hatti who entrusts the land to the king, in a prayer of Ḫattušili III (CTH 383) it is the Sun-goddess of Arinna alone who hands over the land to him. Taggar Cohen then turns to survey a variety of ritual texts involving the female functionaries designated ^{MUNUS}AMA.DINGIR-LIM and NIN.DINGIR. The former priestess, according to Taggar Cohen, "served in temples around the Hittite kingdom, and therefore could be a priestess in a small town or village and could also have served in a large temple in the capital. At the same time, this title was an official one for a female member of the royal family, specifically the queen herself, serving in the cult." The latter were members of the royal family, who "clothed themselves in the deity's vestments, when engaging in worship of the gods," which "symbolically brings the royal family (father-mother-son-daughter) into the family of the gods. It physically mirrors them with the gods." In sections

five and six, Taggar Cohen briefly compares elements from the Hittite materials with the Hebrew Bible and reflects on useful elements in a contemporary theory of “gender ritualization” set out by Jennifer Johnson.⁸ In conclusion, Taggar Cohen argues that “the Hittites had an essentialized understanding of the biological differences of sex, and that gender was decided by its performative aspect, creating a clear difference between male and female.” Importantly, even though both genders are involved in maintaining the world (both divine and human) in the Hittite sources, women, priestesses, and goddesses primarily serve this maintenance via their traditional roles in the household, that is, as wife, mother, and primary nurturer.

Alan Lenzi brings together ancient Mesopotamian social conventions and contemporary scholarship on proxemics and the pragmatics of politeness to explore the way in which Akkadian prayers reflect various ancient Mesopotamian social manners, etiquettes, and protocols. Using the Akkadian *šuilā*-prayer Istar 1 as a representative example, Lenzi first analyzes the prayer’s macro-structure in terms of Annette Zgoll’s reconstruction of a social convention she calls an “audience.”⁹ In this culturally-scripted social interaction, a person of inferior social status (a subordinate) takes a concern or need to a social superior (an authority) to request that person’s help. Zgoll’s audience model is an abstraction, based on a variety of texts, including many *šuilā*-prayers; Lenzi offers a concrete application of the model to demonstrate its fruitfulness in the interpretation of one particular prayer. Lenzi also draws on proxemics and politeness theory to shed new light on several of the ten elements in Zgoll’s model. “The subordinate’s gesture of greeting” (hand-raising) and “the subordinate’s utterance of a spoken greeting” (praise) work in tandem, ritually speaking, to move the supplicant (subordinate) from a perceived public distance, where the deity (authority) is out of reach, into a more proximate, social distance, in which the supplicant may importune the deity. The supplicant’s opening praise is not flattery, in Lenzi’s view; rather, it is a form of positive politeness, socially requisite if the subordinate wishes the authority to grant an audience. The final two elements in an audience, “the subordinate’s expression of gratitude” (concluding praise) and “the subordinate’s departing gesture,” return the subordinate to the public sphere and thus remove the subordinate from the transactional realm of the audience. Lenzi also interprets several micro-features of the prayer via the same methodological perspectives. The use of imperatives and jussives throughout the petitionary section of the prayer, which is typical of Akkadian prayers, “is not so much a matter of urgency but a reflection of the power dynamic in the hierarchical relationship between the ones involved in the audience.” The supplicant’s request for the deity to “look upon me in earnest and accept my prayers” affirms

⁸ “Gender Ritualization: The Customization of ‘Doing Gender.’”

⁹ “Audienz – Ein Modell zum Verständnis mesopotamischer Handerhebungsrituale.”

Index of Sources

<i>Genesis</i>		2:23	68n33
1	167n20	3-4	4, 61-73
1:1-2:4	87	3:11	66
1:26	167, 169	4	71
1:26-27	8, 166-168	4:1-9	69
1:27	167-168	4:10	4, 61, 66, 68, 68n30
1:28	72	4:11-12	4, 69
3:16-19	72	4:13-16	69
5:1	168n23	4:20	62
5:1-3	8, 166, 166n25	4:22	62
5:3	166n13, 168-169	4:24	62
5:28-29	168n24	4:24-26	4, 61, 64-65
6:19	168n22	4:25-26	63
7:9	168n22	6	71
7:16	168n22	6:2-8	71
8:21	105	6:2-12	61-73
9:12-17	168n26	6:3	66
16:1-2	72	6:9	4, 71
16:3	72	6:12	3-4, 61, 71-72
16:4-14	72	6:14-27	71n39
16:15-16	72	6:30	3, 61, 71n39
17	61-62, 65, 65n19	7:7	68, 68n33
17:1-9	65	7:10	169n26
17:10	65	11	113
17:10-11a	65	12:13	169n26
17:11	65, 169n26	12:44	63
17:12	63	13:3	86n29
17:12-13	65	13:12-13	42
17:13	65	13:14	86n29
21:3-4	65	15	70
21:8-12	72	17:12	68
27-28	63	18:2-4	68
34	65	18:24	87n37
34:14-17	63n11	18:26	87n37
48:10	68	19:5	81
		19:9	79-81
<i>Exodus</i>		19:16	81
2:10	67	19:19	81
2:12	129n8	20	3, 77-88, 116
2:15	67	20-23	128
2:16-21	63n11	20:2	48, 86

20:2-4	83, 86	23:20-33	20
20:3	86	23:24	43n10, 51n41
20:4	86	23:25	86n33
20:5-12	17	23:29-30	55n54
20:7	116	23:32-33	51n41
20:10	142n63	24:3-8	78
20:11	3, 87-88, 88n41, 88n42	24:4	79, 83
20:18	80-81	24:7	79
20:18-20	78	24:7-8	79
20:19	79-81	24:12	3, 82
20:20	79, 82	24:12-15	78
20:21-23:33	3, 44, 78	24:18	83
20:22	82n14	31:17	88, 88n41, 169n26
20:22-23	3, 84	32	3, 42, 43n14, 44n15
20:23-23:19	109	32-34	44
21	5	32:1-6	83
21-23	79	32:4	84
21:2	127, 127n4, 139n53	32:5	43, 44, 84
21:2-11	51n40, 135n36, 139n53, 141n61	32:6	43
21:5	127	32:8	43
21:6	127	32:9-14	87n37
21:7	127	32:12	94
21:8	139n53	33-34	44n15
21:17	7, 148	34	41-57
21:18-19	102n49	34:10	48n32
21:20	6, 127-142	34:10-27	2, 41-57
21:20-21	5-6, 127-142	34:11	2, 47-49
21:21	6, 127-142	34:11-16	42-43, 44n15, 50
21:22	102n49	34:11-17	42n8
21:26	127	34:11-26	42n8, 50
21:26-27	135n36, 140, 141n61	34:12	51
21:27	127	34:12-16	44
21:32	127, 135n36, 140, 141n61	34:13	2, 48
21:37	133	34:15	2, 43
22:1	133	34:15-16	44n15, 51-52, 52n44
22:20-26	49n36	34:16	43n11, 50n39
23	42n7	34:17	42, 50
23:9	49n36	34:18	44n18, 48, 48n31
23:12	44, 49	34:18-24	49
23:12-19	42	34:18-26	42
23:13	86n30	34:19	43
23:14-19	44	34:19-20	42, 50
23:15	48, 48n31	34:21	43, 44, 44n18, 49-50
23:16	43	34:22	43, 44n18
23:19	86n33	34:23-24	49
		34:24	2, 42n8, 49
		34:25	43n13
		34:25-26	50

Leviticus

1-16	91
3:1	168n22
3:6	168n22
7:37	112
10	103
10:3	100n43
10:10	92
10:14	190n55
12	168n22
12:3	63
15	168n22
17-26	91-105, 91n1
17:7	52
18:20	95
18:21	101n45
18:24	55n54
18:25	55n54, 95
18:28	55n54
19:8	99
19:29	98
20:2-5	101n45
20:3	95, 100n42, 101
20:5-6	52
20:9	7, 148
20:23	55n54
21:2-4	95
21:4	98
21:6	99
21:7	98
21:9	98
21:12	98
21:14	98
21:16-24	167n20
21:23	99
22:2	99-100, 100n42
22:9	99
22:32	100, 100n42
23	41n4, 43, 44, 56
23:3	41n4
23:14	41n4
23:15-16	43
23:17	41n4
23:21	41n4
23:31	41n4
24	102-103, 103n59
24:11	102-103
24:16	102-103

25:37	116
25:39-55	139n53
26	149-150
26:22	7, 149, 151, 155
26:41	71

Numbers

12:8	73, 86n31
14:15-16	94
15:39	52
18	190
20:13	100n43
21:33-35	87n37
28-29	43-44

Deuteronomy

1-3	15
1:1-4:40	36
1:9-18	87n37
1:31	169
3:1-3	87n37
4	32n51
4:1-22	36n55
4:1-40	28n36, 31, 33n52, 36n55
4:3	53
4:6	34
4:7	34
4:8	34
4:8-10	114
4:9-14	34n53
4:11	34
4:11-15	34
4:12	86n31
4:13	3, 85
4:15	34
4:15-16	86n31
4:15-20	34n53
4:16	31, 86n31
4:19	36n55
4:20	34
4:23	33, 86n31
4:23-24	34
4:23-25	31-32
4:23-31	2, 22, 28n39, 31-32, 32n49, 32-36, 34n53, 36n55
4:25	31, 32, 33, 86n31
4:25-26	34

4:25-28	31-32, 32n49	7	43n11, 52n44
4:25-31	28, 31n48	7:1-5	43
4:26	33, 35	7:3	43, 43n11
4:26-28	32	7:3-4	51n41
4:27	33, 35	7:4	18
4:27-28	34	7:5	43, 43n10
4:28	35-36	7:8	86n29
4:29	33	7:12-15	18
4:29-30	34	7:16	51n41
4:29-31	32, 32n49	7:22	55n54
4:30	31, 33, 36	8:1	18
4:31	31, 33, 34, 35	8:5	169
4:32	34	8:14	86n29
4:32-33	34n53	8:19	53n45
4:32-40	34, 36n55	8:19-20	18, 28n40
4:33	34	9:6-8	18
4:34	34, 34n53	9:10	3, 85
4:35-36	34n53	9:26-29	87n37
4:37-38	34n53	9:28	94
4:41	25n29	10:16	71
4:45-11:28	1, 17-19	11	1, 36
5	77-88, 116	11:8-9	18
5-11	17-19	11:13-15	18
5:2	85	11:16-17	18
5:4	80, 85	11:20	86n32
5:6	48, 86n29	11:21-25	18
5:8	86n31	11:26-28	18
5:11	116	11:28	53n45
5:13-14	44	11:29-32	17
5:13-15	49n36	11:29-27:26	17
5:14	87, 142n63	12-26	1, 3, 14-36, 78, 85
5:15	87	12:3	43n10
5:23-27	78	12:12	86n32
5:24-25	80	12:17-18	86n32
5:25	85	12:21	86n32
5:29	18, 18n13, 78	12:28	16
5:30	18	13	14, 20, 21n21
5:31	78	13:5	53
5:33	18	13:6	86n29
6	18	13:11	86n29
6:1	18	13:13	53n45
6:2-3	18	13:18	16
6:9	86n32	14:1	169
6:10-14	18	14:21	86n32
6:12	86n29	14:22	16
6:14	53n45	14:27-29	86n32
6:18	18	14:29	16
6:24	18	15:9	16

15:10	16	24:13	16
15:15	16, 87n39	24:14	86n32
15:22	86n32	24:15	16
16	43n13	24:18	16, 87n39
16:3	16	24:19	16
16:9	43	24:22	16, 87n39
16:11	86n32	25:1–3	102n49
16:12	16, 87n39	25:3	16
16:14	86n32	25:11–12	102n49
16:15	16	25:15	16
16:16	49n35	25:16	16
16:19	16	26:12	86n32
16:20	16	26:16–19	114
16:22	16	26:19	94
17:1	16	27	1, 36
17:7	17	27:1–26	17
17:8	86n32	27:14–26	17
17:12	17	28	14, 19–21, 19n14, 21n21, 35, 149
17:20	16	28–31	21–31
18:12	16	28:1	35
18:18	28	28:1–2	19, 22, 35
19:10	17	28:1–14	19, 20
19:13	16, 17	28:1–46	1, 17, 19–21, 22n22
19:19–20	17	28:2	35
20:18	16	28:3–6	19
21:8–9	17	28:4	35
21:13	16	28:7–13	19
21:18–21	7, 148	28:11	35
21:21	17	28:14	53n45
21:23	17	28:15	19, 35
22:5	16	28:15–46	19
22:6–7	16	28:16–19	19
22:7	16	28:18	35
22:8	17	28:20–22	21n21
22:20	17	28:20–44	1, 20, 21n21, 21n21
22:21–22	17	28:20–46	19
22:21–23	17	28:21	35
23:7–9	17	28:23–24	21n21
23:12	17	28:25a–c	21n21
23:14–15	16	28:26	21n21, 149
23:15	17	28:27–35	21n21
23:16–17	142n63	28:32	19, 22n22
23:19	16	28:36	21n21, 22n22
23:21	17	28:36–37	1–2, 19n15, 21–23, 21n21, 22n22, 28, 31n48, 36
24:1–4	28	28:38–40	21n21
24:4	16		
24:6	16		
24:7	17		

28:41	21n21, 22n22	30:6	33, 71n42
28:42	21n21	30:8	33
28:43	19	30:9	33, 35
28:43-44	21n21	30:10	24, 33, 35
28:45	35	30:11-20	34
28:45-46	19, 22	30:14	34
28:47-57	1-2, 19, 21-23, 36	30:15-20	28, 31n48
28:48	23n23	31	24, 26n31, 30
28:49	22, 35	31:1-8	27n33
28:50	22	31:9	24, 29-30, 30n45
28:51	22, 35	31:10-13	29
28:52-57	22	31:9-13	26, 29-30, 30n44
28:53	35	31:12	86n32
28:57	86n32	31:13	29
28:58	24	31:14-15	26, 26n33
28:58-68	1-2, 19, 21-23, 35-36	31:14-23	26n33
28:61	24, 35	31:16	52, 52n44
28:62	35-36	31:16-22	1-2, 26-29, 26n33, 27n34, 28n39, 30-31, 30n44, 30n46, 31n48, 36
28:63	22, 35		
28:63-68	28, 31n48		
28:64	22, 35-36	31:16-17	27
28:65	22	31:17	28
28:69	23, 79	31:18	27, 28
29	23-24, 35	31:19	26
29-30	23	31:19-21	27
29:1-8	23	31:21	28
29:9	23	31:22	26, 30
29:14	23	31:23	26, 26n33, 29
29:15-19a	23, 35	31:24	24, 29-30, 30n45
29:19	24	31:24-29	1-2, 26, 27n34, 29-31, 31n48, 36
29:19b-20	23		
29:19b-26	1-2, 23-24, 35-36	31:24-27	30n44
29:19b-27	24	31:24-30	29
29:20	24	31:25-26	29
29:21-27	23n25, 23n26, 28, 31n48	31:26	24, 29
29:26	23-24	31:27	29
29:27	1-2, 23-24, 35-36	31:28	31
29:28	23, 24n27, 35	31:28-30	27, 30n44
30	32n51	31:29	29, 31
30-33	70	31:30	26, 30n45
30:1	33, 35	32	27-31
30:1-2	35	32:1	31
30:1-10	2, 22, 28, 28n39, 31, 31n48, 32-36, 32n49	32:1-3	24
		32:1-25	28n39
30:2	33, 35	32:1-43	1, 24-26, 27n34, 28n36, 36
30:3	33, 35		
30:4	33, 35	32:4-6	24
30:5	33, 35	32:5	31

32:7–14	24	<i>I Kings</i>	
32:15–18	24	8:4	26
32:15–21	25	8:46–51	32
32:16	31	9:6–9	28, 31n48
32:16–17	25	9:21	128n5
32:19	31	11:5	53
32:19–25	24–25	11:7	101n45
32:20	31	14:8	53n46
32:21	25, 31	17	157n40
32:26	24	17–19	157n38
32:27	31	17–2 Kings 10	157n38
32:26–30	25	17–2 Kings 13	156
32:26–31	24	17:7–24	157n38
32:26–43	28n39	18:1	25n29
32:28–33	25	18:21	53n46
32:29	31	21	157n38
32:30	25	22:24	129n8
32:32–43	24		
32:34–43	25	<i>II Kings</i>	
34	36	1	157n38
		1:8	156
<i>Joshua</i>		2:1–18	157, 157n38
5:2	64, 65n18	2:19–22	157
5:7	64n13	2:19–25	157n40
16:10	128n5	2:19–2 Kings 13	157n38
18:1	26	2:23	145–157
19:51	26	2:23–25	7, 145–157
24:17	86n29	2:24	145–157
		2:25	145–157
<i>Judges</i>		4:1–37	157n38
2:12	53	6:24–33	23
2:17	52n42	11	190
3:24	63n8	12:10	102
8:27	52n42	14:6	114
8:33	52n42	17:4	21
6:8	86n29	17:5	23
14:3	66	17:15	53
		17:25	150
<i>I Samuel</i>		18	25
2:22	26	18:2	102n52
17:26	66	18:9–10	23
17:34–37	7, 152	18–19	19
17:36	66	21:8–15	28, 31n48
18:26–28	66	23:3	53n46
		23:10	101n45
<i>II Samuel</i>		25:6–7	22
3:14	66		
17:8	149, 155		

<i>Isaiah</i>		24:8–10	32
6:2	63n8	28:14	23n23
6:6–7	67	29:11–14	32
6:10	71	29:16–19	32
10:5–15	32	29:30–31	32
10:20–25	32	32:20	94
11:10–16	32	32:33	101n45
14:1	41n2	34:13	86n29
14:24–25	32	50:5	41n2
23:17	54n48		
28:10	70	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
32:4b	69	2:8–3:3	67
33:8	149	3:5	68n30
33:19	67	6:9	52n42
36:6	102n52	16	51
56	54n51	16:26	54n48
56:2	54n51	16:28	54n48
56:4	54n51	16:34	52n42
56:6	54n51	20:16	53
57:9	101n45	20:30	52n42
58:13–14	54n51	20:39–40	100n42
59:11	149, 155	23	51
62:2	102	23:3	54n48
63:12	94	23:19	54n48
66:23–24	54n51	23:30	52n42
		36	93–94
<i>Jeremiah</i>		36:19–21	4, 93–94
1:6	67	36:20–22	100n42
1:9	28	39:7	100n42
2–4	28	42:13	100n42
2:2	53n46	43:7–8	100n42
2:7	28	44:7	71
2:8	28	44:9	71
2:11–13	28		
2:23	53	<i>Hosea</i>	
2:25	28	1–3	51
2:28	28	1:2	52n42
3:1	28	2:7	53
3:6–10	51	2:15	53
4:4	71n42	3:1	86n30
6:10	71	4:2	88
7:6	53	5:8–15	22
9:13	53	7:10–16	22
9:25	71n42	8:13–17	22
11:16–17	43n8	10:5–10	22
13:11	94	10:13–15	22
24	41n1	11:5–7	22
24:4–7	32	13:1–15	22

13:8	7, 149, 153, 155	19	119
14:1	22	19:8	113n30, 113n31
		24:4	115
<i>Amos</i>		25:2	118n52
2:4	53	26	110n7
2:7	100n42, 104	26:1	118
2:13–16	23	27:11	118n52
3:11–15	23	27:12	115
3:14	146n6	33:5	118
4:2–3	23	34:15	118
4:4	146n6	37:31	113n30
4:6–13	23	40:9	113n30
5:1–3	23	41:5	110n7
5:5–6	146n6	50	116
5:16–20	23	50:18–19	116
5:19	152	55:4	110n7
5:27	23	62:10	115
6:1	102	62:11	115
6:7–11	23	73:27	52
6:14	23	78	117
7:9	23	78:1	113n30
7:16–17	23	78:5	113n30
8:1–3	23	78:10	113n30
8:11–14	23	81	116
9:1–8a	23	81:9	115
		81:9–11	116
<i>Micah</i>		81:10	115
6:4	86n29	86:11	118
		89:31	113n30
<i>Habakkuk</i>		90	70
3:14	102n52	94:6	115
		94:12	113n30, 113n31
<i>Haggai</i>		105	117
1:6	102n52	105:24	113n31
		105:45	113n30
<i>Zechariah</i>		106:6	118
2:15	41n2	107:38	149
		111:10	118
<i>Malachi</i>		119	110–113, 119
2:10–11	41n3	119:33	118n52
		119:102	118n52
<i>Psalms</i>		119:113–120	112
112–113		134:1	129n9
1:2	113n30, 114	135:1–2	129n9
10:7	115	147:15	114
15	116	147:19–20	114
15:5	115–116		
17:15	86n31		

<i>Proverbs</i>		9–10	41n3
17:12	149, 155	9:1	56
22:1	94		
28:15	7, 149, 152, 155	<i>Nehemiah</i>	
		8	113
<i>Job</i>		9:10	94
4:16	86n31	9:14	54n51
40:24	102n52	10:29	41n2
40:24–26	103	10:31	54n51
40:26	102n52	10:33	54n51
		12:44	129n9
<i>Lamentations</i>		13:15–22	54n51
3:10	7, 153	13:23–31	41n3
		<i>I Chronicles</i>	
<i>Daniel</i>		5:25	52
7	152	6:17–18	129n9
7:4	152		
7:5	152	<i>II Chronicles</i>	
9:15	94	28:25	86n30
<i>Ezra</i>			
6:21	41n2		

Deuterocanonical Literature

<i>I Maccabees</i>		<i>Ben Sira</i>	
1:15	62, 66n22	1:1–10	119
1:60–61	66n22	16:24–17:14	119
		24:23–24	119

New Testament

<i>Mark</i>	
7:32–35	69n35

Dead Sea Scrolls

4QJosh ^a	65n18
4Q213a	98n32

Rabbinic Literature

<i>Mishnah</i>		<i>Tosefta</i>	
Menahot		Bava Kamma	
110a	112, 113n27	10	93
Avot		<i>Midrashim and Minor Tractates</i>	
4:9	113	Sifra Kedoshim, Parasha	
<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>		10:8	101n46
Sanhedrin		Other Rabbinic Literature	
43b	23n27	<i>Exodus Rabbah</i>	
56a	102n53	1:31	67
Yoma			
86a	93		

Quran

Q Ta Ha	
20:26–29	69n34

Ancient Greek Sources

Hesiod		Philo	
Theog. 468–79	229n28	Mos. 2:162	84n22

Ancient Near Eastern Sources

AbB		<i>Cambyses</i>	
6 80	140n55	334	135n32
BM 118805/RIMA 2 A.0.101.17		CTH 291–292	
	163	17	176
<i>BWL</i>		24	176
259	140n58	31–33	176
<i>CAD</i>		158	177
N/2	131n18	189–198	177
Š/3	132n20	246	190
		261.I	185–186, 185n36
		264	184–185
		381	181

383	180	19.25	181
383.1 (TX 2015-08-28, Trde 2017-12-09)		19.26	181
	180n25	20.88	183
384	189n51	29.1	180, 189
414.1	(INTR 2017-01-12)	38.1	178n18, 185
	180n23, 189		
427	188n48	Laws of Hammurab/pi	
456.1	(INTR 2015-12-21)	114	132n19
	182, 182n29	115	132n20, 136, 136n41
647	183	115–116	132, 136
738	187, 187n47	116	132, 136, 136n41, 139
		117	134, 138
Emar 6		208	136
83	133n22	280	150n56
205	133n22	282	151n62
217	133n22		
		Maqlû	
IboT 1.30		I.96	164
2–5	180	VII.55–99	164
		VII 63–66	164
K 105 + Sm 688	165, 169		
		RA	
KAI		36,3	153–154, 153n30
222	149n16		
		RS 24.245 (KTU ¹⁻³ 1.101)	
Karatepe A/3	151n20		152n25
		Sefire IA:31	149n16
Kbo			
6.4i	176n6	TCL	
21.90	187–188	17 74	139n51
KUB		UET	
2.3	183	5 9	139n51
15.34	189		

Indic Literature

<i>Agni Purāṇa</i>		<i>Mahābhārata</i>	
2.1–2	225	3.105.2–5	228
		5.10.5–9	226
<i>Brahmā Purāṇa</i>		<i>Mārkaṇḍeya Devīmāhātmya</i>	
178.12–15	227	79.1–6	227
<i>Linga Purāṇa</i>		<i>Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa</i>	
106.4–7	226	82.1–6	227n23

Matsya Purāṇa

132.2-7 224

Samudra Manthana

224, 225n13

Śiva Rudra

2.4.17.17-28 227

2.5.43.21-22 223

2.5.43.23-25 223

2.5.43.41 224

Śiva Śatarudra

2.4.11-13 226

Tripuravadha (The Destruction
of the Triple Cities)

224

Viṣṇu Purāṇa

1.9.26-33 225

Index of Authors

- Abusch, (I.) Tzvi 164n9, 165, 165n10,
218n3, 229n29
- Ackerman, Susan 190n55
- Adler, Yonatan 109n3
- Albertz, Rainer 44n16, 81n12
- Ambos, Claus 199n8, 204n32
- Amorim, Nilton Dutra 94–96, 94n13,
96n19, 96n21
- Anderson, Benedict 45, 45n19, 45n20,
45n21, 46n22
- Annus, Amar 220n6
- Arnaud, Daniel 133n22
- Bachmann, Martin 178n16
- Baden, Joel S. 27n33, 78n4, 80n9,
117n44
- Bahrani, Zainab 163n8, 165n11
- Baker, Coleman A. 56n55
- Barmash, Pamela 109n4, 110n10, 128n4,
132n21
- Barton, John 117, 117n45, 122, 122n88,
122n89, 122n90, 122n91, 122n92,
122n93, 122n94, 122n95, 122n96,
122n97, 122n98, 123n99
- Bax, Marcel 209n50
- Beard, Brady A. 146n4, 151n20, 152n26
- Becking, Bob 56n57
- Beckman, Gary 179n20, 180n25, 189,
189n49, 189n50, 189n51, 189n53
- Beer, Georg 87n40
- Ben Zvi, Ehud 42n5, 117n50
- Bergen, Wesley J. 147n11
- Berlejung, Angelika 118, 118n55,
118n56, 118n57, 119, 119n58,
119n59, 119n60
- Berman, Joshua A. 20n18, 20n19
- Bernat, David A. 62n1, 71n41, 73n46
- Berquist, Jon L. 47, 47n26
- Bertola, Ermenegildo 96, 96n20, 104
- Bibb, Bryan D. 97–98, 97n29
- Bieder, Robert E. 146n4
- Bilgin, Tayfun 181n27
- Bird, Phyllis A. 166n15, 166n16, 167n19
- Blank, Sheldon H. 94, 94n11, 94n12
- Bledsoe, Seth A. 109n3
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph 65n19, 77n2, 84n28
- Block, Daniel I. 116n43
- Blum, Erhard 27n33, 79n6, 82n17, 86n34
- Böck, Barbara 165n12
- Bodner, Keith 146n5
- Boling, Robert G. 64n13
- Boston, James R. 24n28
- Brenner, Athalya 41n4
- Brett, Marc G. 41n3, 47, 47n27, 47n28
- Brettler, Marc Z. 32n51, 33n52, 66n20,
110n5, 115n37, 117n46, 117n51
- Brightman, Edgar Sheffield 81n12
- Brown, Penelope 207–208, 207n44,
208n47, 208n48, 211, 211n56
- Brown, William P. 110, 110n9, 111n14
- Bryce, Trevor R. 176
- Budin, Stephanie Lynn 175–176, 177n10
- Buitenens, J.A.B. van 223–228
- Bunnens, Guy 151n19, 151n21, 152n22
- Burnett, Joel S. 147n10, 156n37, 157n39
- Burt, Sean 111n18, 112n24
- Calvignac, Sébastien 146n4
- Cammarosano, Michele 179n18, 184n33
- Caplice, R.I. 165n10
- Cardellini, Innocenzo 135n36, 137n43
- Carpenter, Joseph Estlin 27n33, 82n15,
82n18
- Carr, David M. 42n8, 44n15
- Case, Megan L. 138n48
- Chavel, Simeon 82n14, 84n26, 84n28,
86n35, 212n61
- Childs, Brevard S. 43n9, 44n15, 44n16,
48n32, 77n2
- Chirichigno, Gregory C. 127n4, 135n35,
138n45
- Cifarelli, Megan 177n10

- Clements, Ronald E. 77n2
 Cogan, Mordechai 148n13
 Cohen, Yoram 184n33
 Collins, Billie Jean 175, 175n3, 188n48
 Craigie, Peter C. 20n18
 Cranz, Isabel 154n31
 Crenshaw, James L. 120, 120n70
 Cross, Frank Moore 22n22, 27n35
 Culbertson, Laura 131n14
 Cunningham, Graham 153n30
- Dalley, Stephanie 217n1
 Dandama(y)ev, Muhammad 131n14,
 135n32, 135n33, 141n62
 DeGrado, Jessie 154n32
 De Cillia, Rudolf 46n23, 47n25,
 55n53
 De Martino, Stefano 181n27
 De Moor, Johannes C. 167n19
 De Wette, W.M.L. 14
 Deignan, Alice 52n43
 Del Olmo Lete, Gregorio 152n24
 Dell, Katherine J. 120, 120n72,
 120n74, 120n75
 Diebner, Bernd J. 146n5
 Dietrich, Manfred 152n24
 Dillon, Sheila 175n2
 Dimmitt, Cornelia 223–227
 Dohmen, Christoph 84n28
 Dossin, Georges 139n51
 Driver, Samuel R.A. 26n31, 26n33,
 27n33, 77n2, 84n25
 Dupont-Sommer, André 149n16
 Durham, John 81n14
- Edelman, Diana V. 42n5, 48n30
 Eerdmans, Bernardus D. 43n8
 Eichinger, Wolfgang 146n4, 151n20
 Ellens, Deborah L. 138n48
- Fabry, Heinz-Josef 110n12
 Feldman, Marian H. 162n3
 Fischer, Georg 127n4
 Fitzmyer, Joseph A. 149n16
 Földi, Zsombor 198n6
 Forti, Tova 120n78
 Foster, Benjamin R. 220n6
 Frankena, Rintje 140n55
- Frechette, Christopher 202n27, 204–205,
 205n35, 205n36
 Freedman, David Noel 111–113, 111n19,
 111n20, 112n21, 112n22, 112n25
 Frevel, Christian 55n52, 56n56
 Fried, Lisbeth S. 113n29
 Friedman, Richard Elliot 22n22, 27–28,
 27n35, 28n40, 30n44, 30n45, 31n48
 Friedmann, Jonathan L. 70, 70n37
 Frisch, Alexandria 152n27
 Frymer-Kensky, Tikva 133n24
 Fuscagni, F. 182n29, 182n30
- Gaines, Jason M.H. 62n2, 65n19, 71n39,
 72n44
 Ganzel, Tova 92n6, 93n10, 94–95, 94n10,
 95n17, 95n18, 99, 99n38
 García López, Félix 110n12, 111, 111n15,
 111n16, 111n17
 Garcia-Ventura, Agnès 177n10
 Gardner, A.E. 152n27
 Garr, W. Randall 167n19
 Gaspas, Salvatore 161n2
 Gehman, H.S. 147n9
 Gerstenberger, Erhard S. 102n54, 120,
 120n73
 Gesundheit, Shimon 42n7, 42n8, 43,
 43n12, 43n13, 44n15, 44n17, 44n18,
 142n63
 Gilan, Amir 180n24
 Gillepsie, Susan D. 180n22
 Gilmour, Rachele 147n11, 148n12,
 156n37, 157n40
 Ginsburg, H. Louis 43n9, 43n10
 Goldingay, John 113n31, 114n34, 115
 Görke, Susan 180n23
 Gottwald, Norman K. 77n2
 Grant, Jamie A. 116, 116n41
 Graupner, Axel 80n10
 Gray, John 84n25, 114n35, 147n9
 Graybill, Rhiannon 156n35, 156n36
 Greenberg, Moshe 79n7, 134n31
 Greengus, Samuel 128n4, 129n7, 136n40,
 140, 140n60
 Greenstein, Edward L. 25n29
 Groddek, Detlev 183n32
 Guibernau, Montserrat 46n22
 Guichard, Michaël 153n30

- Guitar, Barry 70n38
- Hackett, Jo Ann 97, 97n27, 97n28
- Halbe, Jörn 54n47
- Hall, Edward 206, 206n41
- Hallo, William W. 220n6, 221n7, 221n8
- Halpern, Baruch 168n21
- Hänni, Catherine 146n4
- Haran, Menahem 84n25, 84n26
- Harford-Battersby, George 27n33, 82n15, 82n18
- Hartley, John E. 92n3
- Haugh, Michael 207n43, 207n44, 208n45, 211n56, 211n57, 211n58
- Hawkins, J. David 151n19, 151n21, 152, 152n22
- Heller, Roy L. 148n14, 156n37
- Hibbard, J. Todd 28n38
- Hill, Anne 205n39
- Hillers, Delbert R. 19n14
- Hirvonen, Joonas 153n29
- Hodge, Gerald P. 170n30
- Hoffner, Harry A. Jr. 176n4, 176n5, 176n6
- Hoftijzer, Jean 149n16
- Holladay, William L. 28n38
- Holloway, Steven W. 161n3, 163n8
- Hossfeld, Frank-Lothar 84n28, 113n31, 114n34
- Houtman, Cornelius 83n19, 135n37
- Howe, Laurence J. 166n13
- Huehnergard, John 97, 97n27, 97n28
- Hughes, Sandrine 146n4
- Hundley, Michael 72n44
- Hurowitz, Victor Avigdor 118n57
- Hutton, Rodney R. 103, 103n56
- Irwin, Brian P. 146n5, 150n18
- Jackson, Bernard S. 117n49, 121, 121n83, 121n84, 121n85, 121n86, 127n4, 135n36, 137n44, 138n45
- Jacobs, Sandra 132n21
- Jacobsen, Thorkild 218n3
- Jacobson, Diane 120n73, 120n76
- James, Sharon L. 175n2
- Janssen, Jac J. 62n3
- Janssen, Rosalind M. 62n3
- Japhet, Sara 113n29
- Jarrard, Eric X. 152n27
- Jenks, Alan W. 17n12
- Jiménez, Enrique 198n6, 198n7
- Johnson, Jennifer A. 191–192, 191n57
- Johnstone, William 41n4
- Jongeling, Karel 149n16
- Jonker, Louis C. 42n5
- Joosten, Jan 92n4, 96, 98, 99n36
- Joyce, Rosmary A. 180n22
- Kádár, Dániel Z. 205n36, 207n43, 207n44, 208n45, 209n50, 211n56, 211n57, 211n58
- Kaiser, Walter 94n13
- Kalimi, Isaac 62, 62n5, 62n6
- Kaminsky, Joel S. 114n36
- Kamionkowski, Tamar 92n7, 99n39, 103n59
- Kamlah, Jens 154n32
- Keesling, Catherine M. 171n31
- Kellerman, Galina 189n53
- Kelly, Adrian 11n10
- King, Philip J. 63n12
- Kissling, Paul J. 156n37
- Klawans, Jonathan 95n16, 101n46
- Kline, Meredeith G. 20n18
- Knapp, Dietrich 32n51
- Knohl, Israel 95–96, 95n16
- Köckert, Matthias 88n43
- Koehler, Ludwig 167n17, 167n20
- Kratz, Reinhard 80n8
- Kraus, Fritz Rudolf 139n51, 165n12
- Kraus, Hans-Joachim 111n15, 113n31
- Krebernik, Manfred 153n30
- Kuenen, Abraham 79n6
- Kugel, James 63n9, 67n25, 67n27, 67n28
- Kulp, Joshua 113n28
- Kwon, JiSeong J. 109n3
- Kynes, Will 120n77, 120n79
- Lambert, Wilfred G. 217n1
- Legaspi, Michael C. 120n77, 121n80
- Leith, Mary Joan Winn 56n57
- Lenzi, Alan 120n79, 205n36, 205n38, 207n42, 212n62, 214n67
- Leonard, Jeffrey M. 117, 117n47

- Leuchter, Mark 27–29, 28n36, 28n37,
29n42
 Levenson, Jon D. 23n24, 24n27, 26n31,
27n34, 30n44, 31, 31n47, 32n50, 32n51,
33n52, 36n55, 111n13, 112, 112n24
 Levin, Christoph 77n2
 Levine, Baruch 97, 97n26, 100n40
 Levinson, Bernard M. 14, 14n5, 14n6,
20n19, 43n8, 43n11, 43n13, 51n40
 Levinson, Stephen C. 207–208, 207n44,
208n47, 208n48, 211, 211n56
 Lewis, Sarah 166n13
 Lewis, Theodore J. 103, 103n57, 103n58
 Liebhart, Karin 46n23, 47n25, 55n53
 Lipschits, Oded 42n5
 Livesey, Nina E. 62n4
 Livingston, Dennis 102n53
 Lohfink, Norbert 23n24, 32n51, 33n52
 Loretz, Oswald 152n24
 Lundbom, Jack R. 22n22

 Macdonald, John 67n24
 Machinist, Peter 218n2
 Magdalene, F. Rachel 110n11, 115–116,
115n38, 115n39, 130n11
 Markl, Dominik 128n4
 Masterson, Mark 177, 177n11, 177n12
 Mathias, Steffan 180n22
 Maul, Stefan 204n30
 Maxwell, Alexander 45n19
 Mayer, Walter 20n16
 Mayer, Werner 198n3, 206n40
 Mays, James Luther 110n8
 Mazor, Lea 64n17
 McKenzie, Steven L. 157n38
 McMahon, Gregory 185n36, 186n41
 McNeile, A. H. 84n24
 Melville, Sarah C. 175n2
 Mendelsohn, Isaac 141n62
 Mendenhall, George E. 20n18, 77, 77n1
 Mertens-Wagschal, Avigail 153n29,
153n30
 Metcalf, Christopher 11n10
 Meyers, Carol 50n39, 77n2
 Milgrom, Jacob 55n54, 94–96, 94n11,
95n15, 96n23, 98, 98n31, 98n33, 98n34,
98n35, 101, 101n47, 101n48, 104,
104n60
 Miller, Jared L. 184n34, 185n36
 Miller, Patrick D. 115–116, 117n44
 Millet Albà, Adelina 177n10
 Montgomery, James A. 147n9
 Moran, William L. 14n7, 220n6, 221n7,
221n8
 Morgenstern, Julian 42n7, 50n37, 50n38
 Mouton, Alice 180n24
 Mowinckel, Sigmund 77n2, 121n87
 Müller, Reinhard 154n32

 Nahkola, Aulikki 153n28
 Najman, Hindy 14n6
 Nasuti, Harry P. 57n58
 Nelson, Richard D. 26n31, 28n39, 30n45,
64n15, 64n17, 65n18, 114n36
 Neumann, Hans 130n12, 130n13,
141n62, 154n32
 Nicholson, Ernest W. 17n12, 43n14
 Niditch, Susan 156n34, 156n37
 Nigosian, Solomon A. 25n30
 Nihan, Christophe 41n2, 41n3, 55n51,
65n19
 Noth, Martin 27n33, 27n35, 77n2, 99n37

 O’Connell Davidson, Julia 131n14
 Oelsner, Joachim 131n16, 133n22
 Olyan, Saul M. 62n1
 Ornan, Tallay 161n1
 Orthmann, Winfried 151n20
 Oshima, Takayoshi M. 119, 119n62,
119n63, 119n64, 119n65, 119n67,
119n68, 120n69
 Ottervanger, Baruch 202n26
 Otto, Eckart 14n5, 14n6, 15n10, 65n19,
127n4
 Otto, Susanne 157n38

 Pakkala, Juha 14n9
 Pardee, Dennis 152n24
 Parker, Bradley J. 169n28
 Parker, Julie Faith 148n12, 155n33,
156n37
 Pastoureau, Michel 146n4, 152, 152n25,
156n34
 Patrick, Dale 109n4
 Peled, Ilan 177n10
 Perdue, Leo G. 120, 120n71

- Perlitt, Lothar 43n14, 84n28
 Perry, Samuel L. 127–129, 127n2, 127n3,
 127n4, 128n5
 Pfeiffer, Robert H. 43n8, 84n28
 Piccin, Michela 212n59
 Pietsch, Michael 154n31
 Polk, Nicholas O. 14n7, 21n21
 Pongratz-Leisten, Beate 169n28
 Pringle, Jaqueline Marie 177, 177n9
 Propp, William H. C. 49n33, 50n37,
 50n38, 66, 66n21, 72n43, 83n21, 87n36,
 130n9, 136n41, 139n53
 Puhvel, Jaan 176n7, 177n8

 Rabinowitz, Nancy Sorkin 177, 177n11,
 177n12
 Radner, Karen 131n17, 169n28
 Rainey, Anson F. 25n29
 Rapaport, Izaak 94n13
 Reid, John Nicholas 138n46, 138n49
 Rieken, E. 180n25, 189n51
 Reiner, Erica 119n65, 119n66
 Reissigl, Martin 46n23, 47n25, 55n53
 Reiterer, Friedrich V. 94n13
 Reynolds, Frances 217n1
 Reynolds, Kent Aaron 111n17
 Richey, Madadh 153n29, 154n31, 154n32,
 157n38
 Richmond, Stephen 166n13
 Richter, Gisela M.A. 171n31
 Rimbach, James A. 149n16
 Robertson, David A. 25n30
 Robson, James 177, 177n11, 177n12
 Rofé, Alexander 23, 23n24, 23n25, 23n27
 Rom-Shiloni, Dalit 41n1, 46n24, 54,
 54n49, 54n50, 55n51, 81n14
 Römer, Thomas 15n10, 27n35
 Roth, Martha T. 136n41
 Rothenbusch, Rolf 135n36

 Sallaberger, Walther 208n48
 Salo, Reettakaisa Sofia 154n32
 Sanders, Paul 25n30, 28, 28n39, 29n41
 Sanmartín, Joaquín 152n24
 Sarna, Nahum M. 49n34, 83n20
 Sasson, Jack M. 62n3, 64–65, 64n14
 Sauerwein, Ruth 146, 146n7, 148n13
 Saur, Markus 121, 121n82

 Schäfer, Rolf 154n32
 Schaper, Joachim 41n2, 56n57
 Schellenberg, Annette 166n15, 167n17,
 168n23
 Schipper, Jeremy 163n8, 168n20, 169n27
 Schloen, David 180n22
 Schmid, Konrad 42, 42n6, 55n51, 109n3
 Schmidl, Martina 208n48
 Schmitt, Hans-Christoph 146, 146n6
 Schmitt, Rüdiger 146–147, 147n8, 154n31
 Schüle, Andreas 171n31
 Schwartz, Baruch 91n1, 95–96, 95n16,
 96n24, 97n25, 100n41, 101n44, 101n45,
 109n1
 Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Ludger 129-
 130n9, 135n36, 141n61
 Seeher, Jürgen 178n16
 Shaver, Judson Rayford 117n50
 Sheckman, Sarah 190, 190n54
 Shell, Marc 68n32, 70n36
 Sherman, Tina M. 43n8
 Singer, Itamar 181n26
 Sirri, Özenir 178n16
 Smend, Rudolf 72n44
 Smith, Anthony D. 45n19
 Smith, Mark S. 167n18
 Smith, Morton 119n61
 Sneed, Mark R. 120n77
 Soggin, J. Alberto 84n28
 Sokoloff, Michael 149n16
 Solvang, Elena K.A. 177n10
 Sommer, Benjamin D. 82n16, 114n32,
 167n17, 167n20
 Sparks, Kent 116n41
 Speiser, Ephraim A. 168n24
 Stackert, Jeffrey 14–15, 14n5, 14n6, 14n8,
 20, 20n17, 20n19, 20n20, 29, 29n43,
 79n5, 88n41, 162n4, 166n15, 168n20,
 169n26, 169n27
 Stade, Bernhard 147n9
 Stager, Lawrence E. 63n12
 Starcky, Jean 149n16
 Steinsaltz, Adin 113n27
 Stergiakouli, Evie 166n13
 Sternberg, Adina 93n9
 Steymans, Hans Ulrich 14n7, 21n21
 Stipp, Hermann-Josef 157n38
 Stol, Marten 140n59, 175n2, 179n21

- Stone, Ken 146n5
 Strassmaier, J. N. 135n32
 Strawn, Brent 151n20, 152n23
 Strubel, Armand 145n1
 Süel, Aygül 177n8
 Suter, Claudia E. 178n17
 Svärd, Saana 177n10
 Sweeney, Marvin 147n9
- Tadmor, Hayim 148n13
 Taggar-Cohen, Ada 176n4, 177n14,
 180n24, 181n25, 181n26, 182n28,
 182n30, 183n31, 183n32, 184n33,
 184n34, 184n35, 185n37, 185n38,
 186n42, 187n43, 187n45, 187n46,
 189n52, 189n53, 190n56
 Taracha, Piotr 183n31
 Thiessen, Matthew 24n28, 25n30, 30n46
 Thureau-Dangin, François 153n30
 Thomason, Alison 161n2
 Tigay, Jeffrey H. 68, 68n29, 68n30, 68n31,
 71, 71n40, 168n25
 Tov, Emanuel 64, 64n16, 64n17, 112n26
 Toynebee, Jocelyn M. C. 171n31
 Turfa, Jean MacIntosh 175–176
- Uehlinger, Christoph 166n14
 Ulrich, Eugene 65n18
- Van Seters, John 82n14, 87n40, 127n4
 Van den Hout, Theo P. J. 177n13,
 187n44
 Van der Toorn, Karel 116, 116n42, 118,
 118n53, 118n54, 119
 Van der Woude, Adam S. 94n13, 94n14
 Van Loon, Maurits N. 178n15, 179n19
 Vanstiphout, H. 119
 Von Rad, Gerhard 27n33, 30n46
- Wasserman, Nathan 153n30
 Watson, James 205n39
 Weeden, Mark 177n8
 Weinfeld, Moshe 14n7, 17n12, 21n21,
 26n32, 27n34, 32n51, 34n54, 77n2,
 83n20, 84n27
 Weingreen, Jacob 102–103, 103n55
 Wellhausen, Julius 14
 Wells, Bruce 109n4, 110n11, 115–116,
 115n38, 115n39, 128n5, 131n15,
 131n16, 133n22
 Wenham, Gordon J. 92n3
 West, Emily Blanchard 229n29
 West, Shearer 171, 171n33
 Westbrook, Raymond 109n4, 131n15,
 131n18, 133n23, 133n25, 133n26,
 134n27, 134n28, 135n34, 136n41,
 138n47, 138n49, 140, 140n54, 140n57,
 141n62
 Westermann, Claus 168n24
 White, Marsha C. 157n38
 Winter, Irene J. 161–172, 161n3, 163n5,
 163n6, 163n7, 163n8, 170n29, 171n32,
 171n34
 Wiseman, Donald J. 14n7
 Wisnom, Selena 218n2
 Witte, Markus 154n32
 Wittstruck, Thorne 149n16
 Wodak, Ruth 46n23, 47n25, 55n53
 Wolff, Hans Walter 32n49
 Wright, Charlotte Ann 202n25, 210n55
 Wright, David P. V–VI, 1, 6, 13–14, 14n1,
 14n2, 14n3, 14n4, 14, 41, 77, 91n2, 96,
 96n22, 109n2, 121, 127n1, 128–129,
 128n6, 130n9, 135–138, 136n38,
 136n39, 136n40, 137n42, 141n61, 145,
 148n15, 161, 175, 197, 210n55, 217
 Wright, G. Ernest 24n28
 Wunsch, Cornelia 130n11, 131n16,
 133n22, 135n33
 Würthwein, Ernst 147n9
 Wyatt, Nicolas 62n3
- Zaccagnini, Carlo 134n29
 Zenger, Erich 113n31, 114n34
 Zevit, Ziony 115n39, 166n40
 Zgoll, Annette 197–198, 198n3, 198n4,
 199n9, 200n10, 201n22, 202–204,
 202n25, 202n27, 202n28, 203n29,
 204n30, 204n31, 204n33, 204n34,
 205n37, 208n46, 209, 209n51, 209n52,
 209n53, 210n54, 212n60, 212n63, 213,
 213n64, 213n65, 213n66
 Zhurov, Alexei 166n13
 Zimmerli, Walther 68n30
 Ziolkowski, Eric J. 145n3, 146n5
 Zomer, Elyze 153n30

Index of Subjects

- Aaron 68–69, 72–73, 73n46, 84, 86,
100
Abarbanel 80n10
Abram 62, 65
Abraham 61, 65–66, 73
Acrostic 112
Adam 168
Adultery 51, 95
Agrarian Society (*See also*: Farming;
Harvesting) 49–50, 50n37
Ahaz 13n4
Ahaziah 156
Altar (*See also*: Pillars; Sacred Posts) 43,
48, 99
Ancient Near Eastern Deities/Deity
Groupings
– Anšar 219
– Anu 199, 201, 218–222, 219n5
– Anunnaki 201, 219
– Apsu 201–202, 218
– Arinna 180–181, 181n25, 189n51
– Ba’lu 150
– Dagan 221–222
– Damkina 218
– Ea 201, 218–221, 219n5
– Enlil 201, 220–222
– Ħebat 179
– Igigi 201, 219, 221
– Ištar 150, 197–214
– Kaka 219
– Kataḥḥa 183
– Kišar 219
– Laḥmu 219
– Laḥamu 219
– Marduk 218–220
– Nerik 180, 180n25
– Ninurta 218, 220–222
– Sharur 221
– Tarḥunza 151
– Telipinu 181, 183, 189, 189n50
– Teššub 150, 179
– Tiamat 218–220
– Zippalanda 180, 180–181n25
Ancient Near Eastern Excavation Sites
– Alaça Huyük 178n15
– Alishar 179
– Eflatun Pinar 178n15, 178n16
– Fraktin 178n15
– Ħattuša 182
– Hüseindede 178n15
– Inandik 178n15
– Išḥašḥuriya 179n18
– Kültepe 179
– Tell Ahmar 151
– Tell Ħalaf 151n20
– Tepe 178n15
– Yazilikaya 178–179, 178n15, 178n16
Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations
– Amorites 48–49
– Anatolia 140n59, 179n19
– Assyria 19, 22n22, 23, 23n23, 25, 32, 52
– Canaan(ites) 15, 42–44, 43n10, 43n11,
48–49, 54–55, 55n54, 62, 65, 78, 128n5
– Elamites 140
– Harappan Civilizations 229
– Hittites 20, 20n19, 48–49, 175–192,
179n20, 181n26, 181n27
– Hivites 48–49
– Hurrian 153n30, 189n51
– Jebusites 48–49
– Kizzuwatna 181
– Medianites 63n11
– Nimrud 163n5
– Perizzites 48–49
– Philistines 66
– Tiliura 179n18
– Ugarit 154n32
Ancient Near Eastern Law
– Assyrian 13n4
– Hammurabi 13, 121, 130–142, 132n21
– Hittite 134n30, 176–177, 176n6
– Mesopotamian 51n40, 118–122

- Middle Assyrian 139n50
- Ancient Near Eastern Texts
 - Anzu, Epic of 217–230
 - Assyrian Royal Annals 20
 - Creation Narratives 103, 220
 - *Ludlul* II 4–5 212
 - *Maqlû* 164–165, 164n9
 - Tomb Relief of Ankhmahor (Egyptian) 62n3
 - Enūma Eliš 217–230
 - Esarhaddon Succession Treaty (EST) 14, 14n7, 20–21, 21n21
 - Flood Mythology 152n24, 220
 - Išḫiul-loyalty oath of Telipinu 181
 - *Ištar 1* 197–214
 - *Ištar 2* 212–214
 - Late Babylonian Letters 208n48
 - *Namburbi* 165n10
 - Neo-Assyrian Petition Letters 212n59
 - Old Babylonian Letters 139n51, 140, 208n48
 - Old Babylonian Incantation *RA* 36,3 153
 - *Poor Man of Nippur, The* 202n26, 211n57
 - Prayer of Ḫattušili III 180
 - *Šuila* Prayers 197–214
 - Shurpu 119
 - Soldier's Oath 188n48
 - Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (VTE) (See also: Esarhaddon Succession Treaty) 14n7
 - Wisdom Tradition 118
- Angels 63, 68
- Anger (See also: Wrath)
 - Divine 16, 18, 24, 28, 61, 63, 71, 201, 212–213, 227
 - Human 190
- Aniconic Veneration
- Animals 43–44, 49–50, 55n54, 96, 146, 146n5, 148–156, 151n20, 152n27, 153n29, 167, 168, 168n22, 168n25, 176n4
 - Calf 189n50
 - Cattle 149
 - Lamb 189n50
 - Sheep 189n50
 - Wolf 154, 188
- Annihilation 52, 149, 227
- Antiochus 66n22
- Anxiety, Divine (See also: Fear, Divine) 217–230, 218n2, 222n9, 222n10, 229n28
- Apis Bull 84n22
- Apocrypha 68
- Apostasy 24, 44, 51–53, 83–86, 94
- Arameans 23
- Archimedean Point 14
- Ark of the Covenant 26, 29
- Arnuwanda 181
- Art History 171–172, 202, 202n26, 202n27, 203n29
- Ashurbanipal 199
- Assurnasirpal II 163, 163n5, 169–170
- Athaliah 190
- Atonement (See also: Festivals: Day of Atonement; Yom Kippur) 93
- Attack (See also: Violence) 19, 25, 102, 149, 153–154, 226n19
- Audience Model 197–213
- Authority (See also: Hierarchy; Subordinate)
 - As Audience/Social Superior (See also: Audience Model) 202–214, 202n28, 211n57, 212n61
 - Institutional 84, 131–134, 138, 138n45, 180, 181, 226n19
 - Textual 55–57, 109n4, 110, 118
- Avihu 103
- Baal-Peor 53
- Babylonia 25, 41, 140
- Babylonian Conquest (See Conquest)
- Babylonian Talmud 1129
- Baldness 145n1, 146–148, 147n9, 156–157
- Basalt 151
- Battle 68, 219–221, 225–227
- Bears 145–157, 145n1, 149n16, 151n20, 152n24, 152n27, 155n33, 156n4
 - *Ursus arctos syriacus* (Syrian Brown Bear) 146n4
- Ben-Hadad 23
- Bereavement (See also: Mourning) 149–150, 155–157, 155n33
- Bethel 84, 145–146, 146n6, 155
- Bit Rimki* 199, 204

- Bit Salā'Mê* 199, 199n8, 204
 Blame 118
 Blemish 62, 99, 167-168n20
 Blessing 15-21, 35-36, 62, 65, 72, 180
 Blind (*See also*: Disability Studies; Sight)
 16, 69, 188
 Blood 63-64, 63n9, 69, 79, 101
 Bloodguilt (*See also*: Guilt; Offerings,
 Guilt) 17
 Blotting Out 103
 Bone Harvesting 226n17
 Borrowing (Literary) 13, 218n2, 222n10,
 230
 Bow (and Arrow) 151n20, 154, 178,
 179n18, 188
 Bowing Down 51n41, 83, 183, 204, 207,
 209, 224, 226
 Bribes (*See also*: Pledge) 16, 115
 Bride 190
 Bridegroom of Blood 61, 63, 73, 73n45
 Bronze Age, Late 154n32
 Bull 84n22, 150, 151
 Burning Bush 70

 Cannibalism 22
 Canon 80, 110n6, 111, 156-157
 Captives (*See also*: Prisoners) 19, 135,
 138, 220
 Catholicism (*See also*: Christianity;
 Protestantism) 96
 Celestial Musicians 228n24
 Chiastic Structure 21n21, 34, 34n54, 69
 Children (*See also*: Offspring; Progeny)
 19, 32, 63, 66n22, 101, 101n45, 134-135,
 145-147, 147n11, 148n14, 153, 155,
 162, 176, 179, 188-190
 Christianity (*See also*: Protestantism;
 Catholicism) 62n4, 96, 148, 210
 Circumcision (*See also*: Foreskin; Gen-
 itals; Moses, Body of; Puberty Rite) 4,
 61-76, 62n1, 62n3, 63n10, 63n11,
 64n13, 66n20, 66n22, 71n41
 Citizenship 129, 135, 140
 Cleaning (Cleansing) 48, 52n43, 97, 101,
 187
 Collective Punishment (*See also*: Pun-
 ishment) 45, 185

 Commandments 18, 65, 71, 78, 82, 82n18,
 96, 98, 100, 104, 109n4, 113
 Compilation (*See also*: Pentateuch)
 42-45, 42n8, 51-52, 57, 87n38, 111,
 115, 117, 117n48
 Conception 218
 Conquest 15, 18, 46-47, 54
 Covenant 23-24, 23n24, 28, 30n46, 34,
 41-44, 44n15, 47, 50-51, 55-57, 61-62,
 65-66, 73, 77-85, 83n20, 96-97, 117,
 149-150
 Covenant Code/Collection, The 13-14,
 13n4, 17, 20, 42-44, 43n10, 43n13,
 48-50, 50n37, 51n40, 55n54, 78-88,
 79n6, 82n14, 83n19, 83n20, 86n33, 109,
 118, 121, 127-142, 139n53
 Creation 72, 87-88, 105, 112-114, 119,
 166n15, 168, 168n20
 Crime 102n53, 110, 119, 134, 134n28
 Cult Centralization 49
 Cuneiform 14n7, 132n21, 176, 198
 Curse(s) 1, 7, 13-40, 19n14, 21n21,
 102-103, 102n53, 146-155, 149n16,
 225, 225n13

 Dan (Land and Tribe) 84, 102
 Dancing 184, 188, 218
 David (Character of) 66, 152
 Deaf (*See also*: Disability Studies) 69,
 69n35, 188
 Death (*See also*: Moses, Death of)
 22n22, 30, 63, 72, 93, 103, 129, 130n9,
 132, 132n20, 136-137, 138n48, 141, 146
 Debt (*See* Slavery, Debt-Slavery)
 Debt-Cancellation 138
 Decalogue, The 3, 17, 42, 48, 77-90,
 77n2, 77n3, 79n6, 81n13, 81n14, 82n17,
 82n18, 83n19, 83n20, 84n27, 86n34,
 86n35, 87n40, 88n42, 88n43, 114-116,
 116n43, 116-117n44
 Defilement (*See also*: Desecration; Im-
 purity) 94-95, 98, 101, 101n46, 104
 Demon(s) 153n29, 223-228, 225n13,
 226n16, 226n21, 228n25
 Deportation 22n22, 28, 31n48, 32n50
 Desecration (of the Name) (*See also*:
 Hillul Hashem) 91-105, 92n5, 101n44,
 101n45

- Destruction 20, 22–23, 43, 43n10, 83,
 83n20, 93, 149, 155, 219, 224, 228
 Deuteronomistic History and Literature
 (DtrH; Dtr¹; Dtr²) 22n22, 26–28,
 27n35, 30n44, 52n42, 53
 Diaspora 46
 Dinah 63n11, 65
 Directness 211
 Disability Studies (*See also*: Moses: Body
 of) 61–73
 Disease 19
 Disobedience 15–18, 45, 54n48
 Disrespect 148, 156
 Diviners 175
 Divorce 176
 Doorkeeper 221
 Drinking 190, 220

 Ears (*See also*: Hearing) 68, 71, 141n62,
 178
 Eating 48n31, 51, 63, 67, 190, 220
 Economy 49, 50n37, 115, 127, 139, 177
 Education
 Egypt(ians) 16, 22n23, 34, 48–49, 48n31,
 48n32, 61–68, 62n3, 67n23, 67n26,
 77–78, 84, 84n22, 87, 94, 102–103, 122,
 163n7, 166n15, 178
 Eliezer 63n9
 Elijah 145–157
 Elisha 145–157
 Elijah-Elisha Narrative 145–157
 Emotions 70, 155, 179n20, 191, 208, 211,
 217–230
 Enemy 19, 22, 23n23, 25, 103, 110, 110n7,
 153n29, 223n12
 English Standard Version (ESV) (*See also*:
 Translation) 127–128, 128n5, 141
 Enslavement (*See* Slavery)
 Entertainers 184n33
 Epispasm (*See also*: Circumcision; Fore-
 skin; Moses: Body of) 62
 Epithets 205, 205n38, 207
 Esau 72
 Ethics 102, 118, 121–123, 147
 Etymology 67
 Euphrates 151
 Exile, The Theme of 15–18, 21–22, 21n21,
 22n22, 24–28, 31–36, 32n50, 41n1, 52
 Exile, The Babylonian 15, 21–22, 22n22,
 28n40, 31–36, 41n1, 46, 54, 62, 66n20,
 93–94
 Exilic Period, Composition, and Lit-
 erature 14, 15n10, 22, 22n22, 24, 27,
 27n35, 28, 28n36, 28n39, 28n40, 30n44,
 31–33, 31n48, 32n50, 36, 36n55, 51–52,
 52n42, 62
 Exodus, The 34n53, 47–48, 48n30, 49n36,
 51n40, 68n33, 86–87, 86n34, 87n40,
 88n42, 109
 Exorcism 204, 209, 211
 Eyes (*See also*: Sight) 16, 31, 68, 213
 Ezekiel the Tragedian 67n28

 Facial Features (*See also*: Physical
 Characteristics; Physiognomy)
 163–172, 163n5, 206
 Face (of the Deity) 212–213, 212n61
 Failure 15, 17–19, 21–36
 False Accusations 115, 129n9
 Family Resemblance (*See also*: Likeness)
 161–172
 Famine (*See also*: Slavery, Famine) 6,
 18–19, 134
 Farming (*See also*: Agrarian; Harvesting)
 50, 72
 Favor 18, 180, 189n51, 197, 201–202,
 201n22, 205, 209, 212–213
 (*See also*: Anxiety)
 – Divine 217–230, 229n28
 – Of Animals 152, 154, 188
 – Of God 18, 29, 71, 78–79, 82, 118, 139
 Female (*See also*: Gender Studies; Sex,
 Biological; Women) 87, 166–168,
 168n22, 218, 27
 – Garb 226n19
 – Deity 179n18, 179n20, 181
 – Slaves 129, 145–157
 – Status 175–179, 176n6, 182–192
 – Voices 110n5
 Fertility
 – Human 184
 – Land 19
 Festivals 49n33, 55n51, 56, 84, 120n75,
 177–178, 182–187, 182n30, 187n47, 190
 – Calendar 42–44, 43n13, 50
 – Day of Atonement 41n4

- Harvest 43
- Pilgrimage 2, 49
- Unleavened Bread 41n4, 43n13, 44n18, 48, 48n31
- Weeks 41n4, 43, 44n18

- Finger of God, The 82, 85
- Fire 34, 34n53, 80, 85, 176n4, 225
- Firstborn 42–43, 50, 62, 64, 201
- Fish 72, 166, 168
- Flood, The 105, 168n26
- Foreign Land, Persons, and Gods (*See also*: Stranger; Idolatry; Worship of “Other” Deities) 44n16, 46, 54n48, 64, 67, 84, 115, 133, 135, 139n53, 140, 152
- Foreskin (*See also*: Circumcision; Genitals; Moses, Body of, Puberty Rite) 61–76

- Gabriel 68
- Garment 16, 179, 184, 188
- Gatekeeper 203–204
- Gegenfrage* 209
- Gender Studies (*See also*: Masculinity; Queer Theory) 155–156, 156n35, 175–192
- Genealogy 71n39, 168–169
- Genitals (*See also*: Circumcision; Foreskin; Moses, Body of) 63, 73
- Genre 120–121, 120n79, 123, 162, 171, 205
- Gentile 62, 93
- Geography 146, 146n6, 151n20, 154, 156
- Gershom 62
- Gerizim-Ebal 17, 36
- Ghost 205, 205n38
- Glory (כבוד) (*See also*: Presence, Divine) 94, 101–104
- Goddess 178–192, 179n18, 180n25, 184n33, 187n44, 187n47, 189n51, 197–214, 206n40, 221, 226–227
- Gods of Wood and Stone 32, 35–36
- Gold 68, 178, 179n18, 224
- Golden Calf Episode, The 3, 42–44, 44n15, 78, 83–85, 84n22, 87n37, 94
- Governors 185–186, 185n36, 191
- Greek Literary Characters
 - Ephialtes 229n28
 - Otos 229n28
 - Rhea 229n28
 - Titanomachy 229n28
 - Typhoeus 229n28
 - Zeus 229, 229n28
- Greeting Gestures (*See also*: Bowing Down; Hand-Raising, Kneeling) 203–205
- Greeting Gift 203, 213
- Groaning 149
- Gudea of Lagash 170
- Guilty Verdict 134

- Hair 135n34, 139n50, 155–156, 161, 178
- Ḥamiyata 151
- Hand-Raising 204–207
- Hapax 200n10
- Hapsburg Family (*See also*: Family Resemblances) 170–171
- Harmonization 43–44, 43n13, 57, 61, 68n30
- Harvesting (*See also*: Agrarian; Farming) 19, 44, 44n18, 50, 177
- Ḥattušili III 189n51
- Healing 69–70
- Hearing (*See also*: Ear) 26, 29–30, 34, 68, 71, 78–82, 82n14, 82n16, 85–87, 102, 201–202, 205, 205n40, 209, 212–213, 218–219, 222–223, 226
- Heart 32, 71–72, 84, 189, 201–202
- Heaven(s) 31–32, 34–35, 72, 82n14, 84, 87, 180, 201–202, 204, 220, 227
- Ḥenti 181
- Hezateuch 27
- Hezekiah 13n4
- Hierarchy (*See also*: Authority; Subordinate) 152, 186, 197, 211–212, 217
- Hieroglyphics 151
- Hillul Hashem* (*See also*: Desecration) 100n41
- Historiography 47
- Holiness 91–105, 190
- Holiness Code/Collection/Legislation (*See also*: Holiness; Source Criticism: H) 41n3, 55n54, 65n19, 91–105, 91n1, 148
- Homicide (*See also*: Killing; Murder) 132n21, 176n4

- Honorifics 205, 207, 207n43
Horeb 78–79, 81, 85–86
Horn 81, 184
Hoshea, King of Israel 21–22, 22n22
Hymn 24n28, 30n46, 202, 212, 212n60, 220
- Ibn Ezra 67n23
Iconography
– Ancient Near Eastern, General 150, 152n24
– Hittite 178–179, 178n15
– Medieval 148
– Mesopotamian 151n20
Identity Formation (*See also*: Nationhood) 41–57, 42–43n8, 47n28, 48n29, 54n51, 57n58, 77, 88, 103, 151, 180
Identity Theory 45–47, 47n28
Idolatry (*See also*: Foreign Lands, Peoples, and Gods; Worship of “Other” Deities) 17, 21, 31–32, 34, 42–43, 44n16, 50, 51n41, 52, 83, 93
Impurity 43, 91, 92, 95–99, 95n16, 102, 104, 175
Incantations 63, 119, 153, 153n30, 164–165, 165n10, 199, 201–202, 206n40, 210, 218
Indic Literary Characters
– Ādityas 224
– Asuras 225
– Brahmā 223–228, 225n13, 225n15, 226n19, 227n22
– Dadhīci 226, 226n17
– Daitya 223, 225–226
– Dānavas 224
– Dārūka 226
– Durgā 226
– Durvāsas 225
– Gandharvas 227–228
– Gaṇeśa 227
– Hara 227
– Hari 227
– Hiraṇyakaśipu 223, 223n12
– Hiraṇyapetra 223
– Indra 223, 223n11, 225–227, 225n13, 226n16
– Kaṇḍu 227
– Lakṣmi 223
– Mahisha 226–227
– Maruts 224
– Nārada 227
– Narasiṃha 223
– Prajāpati 227
– Rākṣasas 228
– Sādhyas 224
– Sāgaras 228
– Siddhas 227
– Śiva 224, 226–227, 226n19, 226n20
– Sunda 229n28
– Tvaṣṭar 226, 226n18
– Ūma 226, 226n20
– Upasunda 229n28
– Upendra 223
– Vasus 224, 226
– Vaiśvānara 223
– Vidyādharas 227
– Viṣṇu 223–227, 225n13, 226n19
– Vṛtra 225–226
Innocence 17, 110, 110n7
Interpersonal Communication 197–214
Intimacy (with a deity) 102 205–207
Iron Age 20, 151–152, 154
Isaac 72
Imagery (*See also*: Ancient Near Eastern Literature, Languages, and Art) 51, 146n4, 148–154, 152n24
Intermarriage (*See also*: Marriage) 2, 41–44, 41n3, 50, 51n41, 53, 55–56, 55n52, 63
- Jacob 63, 63n11, 68, 72, 114
Jealousy 34
Jehoahaz 22n22
Jehoiachin 22n22
Jehu 157n38
Jeroboam 29n42, 84
Jerusalem 15, 19, 22–23, 25, 29, 36, 84, 93, 112–113, 190, 190n55
Jesus 69n35
Jewish Interpretation and Tradition 67n27, 111, 113, 168n25
Jews (*See also*: Judeans) 54, 66n22, 93
Joseph (Character of) 121
Josiah 14, 22n22, 27, 29
Josiah’s Reform 14, 27, 27n35
Joshua (Character of) 26, 64, 64n13

- Judeans (*See also*: Jews) 28, 46, 54, 56
 Judah (*See also*: Yehud) 13, 14, 19–22,
 20n16, 22n22, 27, 32, 41, 41n1, 46, 51,
 141, 152, 155, 166, 166n14
 Judaism (*See also*: Jews; Jewish Inter-
 pretation and Tradition; Judeans) 62,
 62n4, 117, 210
 Judean Monarchy 15, 22, 25, 27n35
 Judges 87n37, 109n4
 Juvenile Offender 146, 148
- Kidnapping 135, 140, 176n4
 Killing (*See also*: Homicide; Murder) 62–
 63, 63n10, 67, 103, 129, 132, 135–136,
 140, 141n62, 148–149, 176, 176n6, 218,
 221, 223, 223n12, 226, 226n16
 Kingship 152, 163, 169, 181
 Kissing 183, 220
 Kneeling 204, 207, 209
 Kummani 189n51
- Lawazantiya 189n51
Leitwörter 157n40
 Leprosy 69
 Leviathan 103
 Levites 26, 29, 30n45, 190
 Lightning 181
 Likeness (*See also*: Family Resemblance)
 161–172, 166n13
 Lion 150–154, 151n20, 224
 Lips 61, 68, 70–73, 154
 Literary Criticism 42
 Literary Structure 202, 202n25
 Liturgy 24n28, 25n30, 116, 213
 Loan (*See also*: Money Lending) 130n10,
 131–133, 135n34
 Lusting 51–53
- Maccabean Historian 66n22
 Magic 69, 147, 153–154, 154n32, 164
 Manasseh 13n4, 20, 29
 Manuscripts
 – Leningrad B19^A (L) 112n26
 Marriage (*See also*: Intermarriage) 63,
 63n11, 67n24, 68, 170, 176n4, 177,
 189n51, 192
 – Consanguineous 170
 Masuwari 151
- Masculinity (*See also*: Gender Studies;
 Queer Theory) 145–157
 Masoretic Tradition (MT) 25, 48n31,
 64–65, 110, 115, 168n24
 Mekhilta de R. Yishmael 80n13
 Mercy 141, 201, 210–212, 225–226
 Michal 66
 Midwife 189, 189n51
 Miriam 70
 Moab 23, 23n24, 36, 78–79
 Mocking 93, 145–147, 145n1, 156
 Molech 95, 101, 101n45, 101n46
 Money Lending (*See also*: Loans) 115–
 116, 131–133, 131n15, 136, 138–139
 Morality 95n16, 96, 104, 109n4, 119–122,
 142, 155, 203, 205n36
 Moses
 – Authorship, Authority, and Torah Of,
 24, 26–27, 29–30, 30n45, 111, 114
 – Character Of (*See also*: Suzerain),
 83n20, 94, 102, 105
 – Birth of, 67n26
 – Body of (*See also*: Circumcision; Fore-
 skin; Genitals; Puberty Rite), 61–73,
 63n10
 – Death of, 63
 – Education of, 67
 – Family and Marriage of, 63, 63n9,
 63n11, 68
 – Name, 67
 – Orations (*See also*: Song of Moses;
 Stutter), 15, 18, 24–26, 29, 31–36,
 34n53, 66–73, 69n34, 70n36, 71n39,
 81n13, 82n14, 87n37, 111n13
 – Prophet, 28, 80–81
 – Revelation, 30n44, 61, 78–88
 Mother (*See also*: Women) 16, 66n22,
 102, 155, 165, 179–182, 181n25, 187,
 189, 189n50, 192, 221
 Mount Carmel 145
 Mouth 26, 30n46, 61, 66–73, 80, 115,
 149n16, 183, 201n20, 224
 Mourning (*See also*: Bereavement) 98
 Murder (*See also*: Homicide; Killing)
 63–64, 66, 129n9
 Mute (*See also*: Disability Studies) 69
 Muwatalli II 181

- Mythology 42, 46, 55, 63, 65, 103, 184,
 189, 189n50, 217–230
 – Indic/Hindu/Sanskrit 217–230, 218n2
 – Greek 229, 229n28
- Nadav 103
- Nationalism 45n19
- Nationhood (*See Also*: Identity For-
 mation; Sovereignty) 45–57, 113
- Neo-Babylonian Period 133n22
- Neo-Documentary Hypothesis 3, 77
- Newborn 165
- Nile, The 69
- Northern Kingdom 19
- Oaths 101n44
 – False 17, 115–116
 – Loyalty 181, 184, 188, 188n48
- Offerings (*See also*: Sacrifice) 187n44,
 204, 207
 – Burnt 112–113
 – Consecration 112
 – Guilt 112–113, 138n48
 – Food/Meal 99, 112–113, 183
 – Passover 63
 – Peace 112
 – Sin 112–113
 – Well-being 99, 101
- Offspring (*See also*: Children; Progeny)
 65, 98, 128n5, 149, 151, 189, 201
- Og 87n37
- Omens 165, 169
- Omride 146, 157n38
- Oppression 23n23, 49n36, 213, 223–224
- Orality 26n30, 121
- Orphan 115
- Orthography 149n16, 208n49
- Passover (*See also*: Festivals) 43n13, 63
- Patriarchy
- Pentologue 116
- Pentateuch 26, 52, 66, 70, 73, 77, 86–88,
 87n37, 91, 94–95, 110–115, 111n13,
 115n39, 117n50, 118–119, 121, 123,
 148–149, 166, 169
- Perennialism 45n19
- Persian Period 41, 41n2, 47, 54–56
- Pharaoh 63, 65–67, 71–73
 – Daughter of 67
 – Ramses 67n27
- Physical Characteristics (*See also*: Facial
 Features; Physiognomy) 161–172
 – Deformities 167n20
 – Perfection 62
- Physiognomy (*See also*: Facial Features;
 Physical Characteristics) 161–172
- Piercing 102–103
- Pilgrimage 49
- Pillars (*See also*: Altar; Sacred Posts) 43,
 43n10, 48
- Plagues 64, 169n26
- Planting 44, 44n18, 225
- Pledge (*See also*: Bribes; Slavery, Possess-
 ory Pledge) 16
- Poetry 25n30, 70, 152
- Politeness 207–214, 207n44, 208n47,
 208n48, 209n50, 211n57, 211n58
- Post-exilic Period, Composition, and
 Literature 14, 36, 41–42, 41n4, 43n8,
 44n16, 46–47, 52, 52n42, 55–56, 120n75
- Pragmatics 197–214
- Prayer 109n4, 113, 119, 180–181, 189,
 197–214, 198n2, 199n8, 199n9, 202n25,
 203n29, 205n38, 206n40, 210n55,
 212n59
- Petitionary 209–210, 212–213, 212n60
- Pre-Exilic Period, Composition, and Lit-
 erature 25, 25n30, 27n35, 28–29, 52n42
- Pregnancy 134
- Presence, Authoritative/Divine 27n33,
 80, 99, 101–104, 101n46, 180n25,
 203–204, 204n31, 212, 219
- Presentation Scenes 202n26, 202n27
- Priests 72, 95, 98–99, 102, 181–187,
 181n26, 185n38, 187n44, 189n51,
 190–191, 209
- Priestess 175–192, 189n51
- Prince 181, 183, 187–189
- Princess 187–189, 189n51
- Prisoner (*See also*: Captives) 21
- Profane (*See also*: Impurity) 91, 92n5,
 94–98, 98n32, 100, 101n46
- Progeny (*See also*: Offspring; Children)
 32, 168, 179, 188
- Promised Land, The 45, 48, 48n32, 50, 78
- Prostitution 184n33

- Protestantism (*See also*: Catholicism; Christianity) 77, 96
 Proto-Semitic 97n27
 Proxemics 197–214
 Psalmist 109–118, 116n43, 116n44, 123
 Psalter 110n5, 110n8, 113–117, 120–121
 Puberty Rite (*See also*: Circumcision; Foreskin; Genitals; Moses, Body of) 63
 Puduḥepa 189
 Punishment 7, 17, 21, 24–25, 28, 31–32, 45, 93, 102, 118–119, 132, 134n28, 135n34, 135n36, 136–137, 139, 141–142, 141n62, 146–148, 176, 185
 Puranic Narratives 222–223, 225
- Qubbah 151
 Queen 180–181, 181n27, 186, 186n42, 187–191, 189n50, 189n51
 Queer Theory (*See also*: Gender Studies) 145–157
 Qumran 112
- Rabbi Jonathan 112
 Rabbinic Period 112
 Rabbis/Rabbinicism 61–62, 63n9, 67n27, 68, 92–93, 93n9, 111n13, 112–113
 Raiding (*See also*: Robbery) 19
 Ramban 80n11, 84n23
 Rashbam 68, 84n23, 102n53
 Rashi 68, 81n13, 100
 Rebekah 72
 Rebellion 25, 29
 Reish Lakish 112
 Relational Theology 100–104
 Relational Distance 197–214
 Rest (*See also*: Sabbath) 44, 44n18, 49, 87, 142n63, 218, 220, 228
 Rhetoricity 47, 54, 154, 165, 171–172, 203, 207–208, 211, 213
 Redaction Criticism 42–45
 Repentance 25, 28n39, 31–32, 34, 93
 Reputation, Divine 25, 92–94, 101, 104
 Revelation 27n33, 111–112, 118–119
 Righteous 16, 34, 118–119
 Robbery (*See also*: Raiding) 115
 Rod (*See also*: Staff) 69, 129
- Royal Appearance (*See also*: Physiognomy; Physical Characteristics) 161–172, 178
- Sabbath (*See also*: Seventh Day) 17, 41n4, 42–44, 44n18, 49–50, 49n36, 53–54, 54n51, 56, 87–88, 96, 142n63
 Sacred Posts (*See also*: Altar; Pillars) 43, 48
 Sacred Rocks 185n36
 Sacred Space (*See also*: Temple; Sanctuary; Tent of Meeting) 96
 Sacrifice 50–51, 54, 55n51, 95–96, 99, 101, 112–113, 175, 185, 190
 Sages 225n13
 Salvation 111, 220, 226
 Samaria 13n4, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 32, 36, 145
 Sanctuary (*See also*: Temple; Tent of Meeting) 49n35, 55n51, 96, 98–102, 101n46, 190n55
 Sanskrit 222–230
 Saqqara 62n3
 Sargon II 169
 Saul 29n42
 Savior 223–224
Schadenzauber 147
 Scribalism 51, 86n34, 139n51, 198
 Scroll 29, 30n45, 67, 79
 Second Isaiah 48n32
 Second Temple Period and Literature 47, 62, 66n22, 91, 93, 117
 Secret Knowledge 23, 222
 Seers 223, 225–227, 225n15, 226n17
 Sennacherib 13n4, 19–20, 20n16
 Septuagint (LXX) 64–65, 65n18, 110
 Serpent (*See also*: Snake) 226n16
 Servant (*See also*: Enslavement; Slavery) 127–128, 136, 136n41
 Seth 168
 Seventh Day/Year (*See also*: Sabbath) 17, 49–50, 87
 Sex, Biological 167–168, 168n22, 175n3, 177, 179, 192
 Shalmaneser III 163, 169–170
 Shaving (*See also*: Tonsure) 148
 Shechem 63n11, 65
 Shekels 139n51, 176n6

- Shepherding 119
 Shiloh 29n42
 Shrines 84, 178n18, 185, 185n36, 220
 Siege Warfare 22–23
 Sight (*See also: Eyes*) 46, 69, 81, 85, 201, 205, 212–213
 Silver 84, 129–130, 134, 136n40, 176n6, 179n18
 Sin 23, 28n39, 79, 84, 93, 99, 101, 110, 112–113, 117–120, 185
 Sinai 27n33, 42, 44, 47, 57, 77, 92, 111n13, 113n31, 119
 Singing 70, 184, 188
 Sirach 122
Sitz im Leben 122
 Slavery (*See also: Servant; Enslavement*)
 – Chattel-Slavery 127–142, 128n5, 131n14, 135n34, 138n45, 139n53, 140n59, 141n61, 141n62
 – Debt-Slavery 127–142, 127n4, 128n5, 129n9, 130n9, 133n22, 134n28, 135n34, 135n36, 136n40, 136n41, 138n48, 138n49, 139n50, 139n53, 141n61, 141n62
 – Distrainee 130–133, 132n19, 132n20, 136, 136n41, 139
 – Famine 134
 – Possessory Pledge 128n5, 130, 131–133, 131n15, 131n16, 138, 139n50
 – Slave-Hairstyle 135n34, 139n50
 – Slave-Mark 135n34
 Snake (*See also: Serpent*) 69
 Social Behavior 197–214
 Sociolinguistics 208
 – French 208
 – German 208
 – Japanese 207n43
 Solomon 29n42
 Song of Moses 24–29, 25n30, 28n36, 30n46, 31, 36
 Sorcery 121n87, 154n31, 164
 Source Criticism 67n26
 – E (Elohist) 27n33, 62n7, 66, 67n26, 72, 78–88, 79n6, 83n20, 86n33, 86n35
 – H (*See also: Holiness; Holiness Code/Collection/Legislation*)
 – 52, 87n38, 91–92, 91n1, 91n2, 95–105, 101n44, 116
 – J (Yahwist) 42, 62, 67, 72, 77, 104, 117
 – JE 26–27n33, 73n46, 117
 – Non-P 61–62, 62n7, 66–68, 67n24, 71–73, 73n45
 – P (Priestly; P^a) 42–43, 44n18, 55n51, 61–73, 62n2, 65n19, 66n20, 77, 87–88, 87n38, 87n40, 88n42, 91–105, 91n2, 95n16, 100n43, 109, 113n29, 113n31, 114, 114n36, 148, 166, 166n15, 167n20, 168n22, 169, 169n26, 169n27, 175
 – D (Deuteronomist) (*See also: Deuteronomistic History and Literature*) 3, 14, 27n33, 29n42, 78–79, 82, 84–88, 86n31, 86n35, 87n37, 87n38, 88n43, 114
 Sovereignty (*See also: Nationhood*) 25, 45–46, 46n22, 109n4, 202, 226
 Spies 94
 Springs 185n36
 Starvation 22
 Storm Gods (*See also: Ancient Near Eastern Deities*) 150–151, 179–183, 181n25, 182n30, 186, 189
 Staff (*See also: Rod*) 68n32, 129, 178, 184, 187
 Strangers (*See also: Foreign Land, Persons, and Gods*) 19, 49, 207
 Stutter (*See also: Moses, Body of*) 61, 66–73, 70n36
 Šubartu 140n59
 Subordinate (*See also: Authority; Hierarchy*) 147, 202–214, 202n28, 212n61
 Sun Goddesses (*See also: Ancient Near Eastern Deities*) 180–181, 180n25, 189, 189n51, 189n53
 Šuppiliuma I 181
 Supplication (*See also: Prayer*) 164, 196–214, 213n65
 Suzerain 83, 83n20, 229n28
 Sword 178
 Tablets, The 78, 82–85, 82n17, 82n18, 83n19, 83n20
 Tablet-Smashing 83n20, 84–85, 84n27
 Tablets of Destiny 220–222
 Talmudic Era 111n13

- Teaching 26, 30n46, 72, 78, 82, 99,
101n45, 101n46, 111, 113, 114, 118
- Temple, The (*See also* Sacred Space;
Sanctuary; Tent of Meeting) 55n51, 56,
84, 93, 93n10, 99, 103–104
- Temples (General) 116, 118, 130, 175,
177–178, 178n18, 182–187, 184n33,
184n35, 185n36, 185n38, 190–192,
190n55, 204n31
- Tent of Meeting (*See also* Sacred Space;
Sanctuary; Temple) 26, 27n33
- Testing 68, 220
- Textual Dependence 13, 86, 88n41, 115,
116n40
- Theft 93, 133–134, 176n4
- Tiglath-Pileser III 169
- Theophoric Names 189n51
- Third Isaiah 41n2, 54n51
- Thunder and Lightning 80–81, 85
- Trickery 63, 72
- Trope 149–150, 154, 229–230
- Trumpet 80
- Tonsure (*See also*: Shaving) 147–148
- Torah 16, 26, 27n34, 29–30, 30n46, 41,
57, 62, 96, 110–119, 110n8, 113n29,
112n31, 117n48, 190
- Translation 21n21, 64, 79n7, 100, 100n40,
127–142, 128n5, 132n20, 136n41,
180n25
- Vassal Treaty (*See also*: Ancient Near
Eastern Texts) 14n7, 83
- Vedic Texts (Vedas) 222, 225n14, 226n16,
226n18
- Veil 99
- Venus 204, 209
- Violence 146–147, 150, 152, 155–156
- Visual Culture 161–172
– Greek 171n31
– Roman 171n31
- Wages 16, 176–177, 176n4
- War 135, 223n12, 224–225
- Warrior God 103, 201, 218–219
- Water 67, 69, 188, 218, 220
- Wealth 94, 113, 202
- Wickedness 110n7, 118, 152
- Widow 115
- Wiederaufnahme* 71n39
- Wife 51, 62, 98, 128n5, 130, 139n51, 151,
177–178, 185n38, 188, 190, 190n55,
192, 218, 224, 226n20, 228
- Wilderness, The 15, 64, 64n13, 78–79,
85–88, 92
- Wisdom of Solomon 122
- Wisdom Tradition 24n28, 29n42, 67,
109n4, 110, 115–123, 120n75, 120-
121n79, 121n81
- Witchcraft 8, 153n29, 164–165, 165n10
- Writing 13n4, 26, 29–30, 30n45, 120
- Womb 35, 43, 201
- Women (*See also*: Female; Gender
Studies; Sex, Biological) 66n22, 175n2,
226
– Israelite 50n39
– Non-Israelite 50n39
– Forbidden 98
– Slaves 129, 138, 138n49
– Hittite 175–192, 175n3, 179n20
- Worship of “Other” Deities (*See also*:
Idolatry; Foreign Land, Peoples, and
Gods) 51n41, 52–54, 53n44, 83–84, 95,
101, 101n46, 115
- Wrath (*See also*: Anger)
– Divine 18, 24–25, 32, 63n9, 227
– Human 148
- Yahwism 42, 53–54, 56
- Yehud (*See also*: Judah; Persian Period)
46, 54–56
- Yehoiada 102
- Yom Kippur (*See also*: Atonement;
Festivals: Day of Atonement) 93
- Zedekiah 22, 22n22
- Zipporah 62–64, 63n9, 63n11
- Zones of Interaction 206–210