

ERIC J. P. WAGNER

Personified Mountains  
in Ancient Canonical  
Narratives

*Orientalische Religionen  
in der Antike*

62

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**Mohr Siebeck**

Orientalische Religionen in der Antike  
Ägypten, Israel, Alter Orient

Oriental Religions in Antiquity  
Egypt, Israel, Ancient Near East

(ORA)

Herausgegeben von / Edited by

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Eric J. P. Wagner

# Personified Mountains in Ancient Canonical Narratives

Spatial and Mythic Studies of Mesopotamian, Greek, and  
Hebrew Bible Landscapes

Mohr Siebeck

ERIC J. P. WAGNER, born 1981; 2010 MDiv/MA (Theology); 2017 MPhil (Biblical Studies); 2021 PhD (Biblical Studies); 2010 Roman Catholic priest; parochial vicar in the diocese of Belleville, IL, USA; assistant professor of Old and New Testament at Aquinas Institute of Theology.  
orcid.org/0009-0002-4887-1211

ISBN 978-3-16-163805-3 / eISBN 978-3-16-163806-0  
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-163806-0

ISSN 1869-0513 / eISSN 2568-7492 (Orientalische Religionen in der Antike)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <https://dnb.dnb.de>.

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Printed on non-aging paper.

Mohr Siebeck GmbH & Co. KG, Wilhelmstraße 18, 72074 Tübingen, Germany  
[www.mohrsiebeck.com](http://www.mohrsiebeck.com), [info@mohrsiebeck.com](mailto:info@mohrsiebeck.com)

## Dedication

For Gary Hogan, C.R.† who fostered intellectual creativity and imagination to the end.  
Grateful for and indebted to your vision.

*The shadow of the mountains you see as men.*

צל ההרים אתה ראה כאנשים

(Judg 9:36)

For Robert “Bob” D. Miller II OFS† who fostered courageous curiosity and intellectual rigor. Honored to call you *Doktorvater* and mentor. May you join the multitude...

*And shout with joy on the heights of Zion.*

ורננו במרום-ציון

(Jer 31:12)



## Preface

This book is a revised and expanded version of my Ph.D. dissertation, which I defended in March 2021 at The Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C. under the direction of Robert “Bob” D. Miller II†. Here I analyze personified mountains in the *Epic of Gilgameš*, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and Genesis – 2 Kings. While I focus primarily on anthropomorphic mountains, I treat some bearing other human-like attributes and behaviors.

In as much as I examine personified (or embodied) mountains in ancient canonical narratives of Mesopotamia, Greece, and the Hebrew Bible, my research review suggests a two-part method rooted in spatial and mythic studies.

Conversant in spatial studies prior to this project, I considered exclusively applying space-critical analysis. Revelatory conversations with Bob, however, helped me realize that I did not want to (anachronistically) apply contemporary spatial categories to ancient texts. Instead, I wanted to identify and explore spatial categories characteristic of the ancient canonical narratives themselves. These spatial matters held my interest. So, I summarized critical-space studies in an excursus and focused on identifying fundamental spatial categories – topographic, architectonic, and corporeal spaces – that lie at the heart of the cultures that gave rise to the texts in question. Applying these categories to personified mountains in my chosen ancient canonical narratives generated varied results. Broadly speaking, I have found that, for the narratives examined here, the aforementioned spatial categories illuminate important features of compositional contexts and processes of development. As such, I affirm and expand Thomas Dozeman’s insight that spatially attuned analysis is an under-used tool in the work of determining how ancient narratives developed.<sup>1</sup>

Myth studies was new to me at the start of this project, and the field is vast. Here, Bob was an expert guide. Pointing me to recent work on myth, he showed me that myth can be defined as (non-narrative) assemblages of interconnected components.<sup>2</sup> From there I was off-and-running. For present purposes, I view myths as assemblages in two ways. First, as symbolic matrices comprised of motif and image integers. For me, motif

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas B. Dozeman, “Biblical Geography and Critical Spatial Studies,” in *Constructions of Space I: Theory, Geography, and Narrative*, ed. Jon L. Berquist and Claudia V. Camp, LHB/OTS 481 (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 87–108; idem., “The Historical Geography of the Pentateuch and Archaeological Perspectives,” in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al., FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 729–44.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent, robust discussion, see Christian Zgoll, “Myths as Polymorphous and Polystratic Erzählstoffe,” in *Mythische Sphärenwechsel: Methodisch neue Zugänge zu antiken Mythen in Orient und Okzident*, ed. Annette Zgoll and Christian Zgoll, MythoS 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 9–82.

integers correspond to actions (verbs) and image integers to characters, agents, or entities (nouns). Second, I discuss mythic assemblages as constellations of elements. Elements may be verbs, nouns, phrases, concepts, or images. The symbolic matrix model facilitates refined analysis of verbal and literary features. As such, it resembles exegesis. Constellation analysis permits discussing broad compositional or narrational features, which begets attention to cultural or contextual roles of a given myth. In my estimation, both models illuminate mythic entailments associated with personified mountains in canonical narratives from Mesopotamia, Greece, and Ancient Israel.

This project's geologic pace revealed a network of support, for which I am grateful. Bernhard "Ben" Asen†, Maribeth Howell, O.P., and Sean Martin, first saw and fostered my aptitude for (biblical) scholarship. Religious superiors Michael Danek C.R.†, Gene Szarek, C.R., and Steve Bartzyszyn, C.R. provided years of indefatigable support.

At The Catholic University of America, Bob Miller† was advisor extraordinaire. Surveying Mt. Baal Hazor with him exposed me to his contagious fondness for the hill country of the southern Levant. His clear thinking, sound research, and swift feedback improved this project and my abilities as a scholar. His premature death is a loss to the guild. David Bosworth and Chris Begg likewise exemplified research, teaching, and mentorship during my years of graduate work. Their swift, clear feedback also improved the work. Frank Gignac, S.J.†, William McCarthy, Ed Cook, Andrew Gross, and Andrew Litke provided the finest language training. Monica Blanchard granted access to CUA's ICOR/Semitics special collections. Isaac Alderman, Maria Barga, Katherine Brown, Lesley DiFrancisco, Andrew Montanaro, Antony Dahs Prakasam, S.A.C., Angela Rasmussen, Michael Seufert, and Eric Trinka embodied collegial support, guidance, and friendship. Many thanks! The Paulist Fathers and Fr. Scott Hahn graciously hosted me during years of coursework and exams.

Aquinas Institute of Theology provided a Junior Research Fellowship and an intellectual community in which to begin writing. The Trustees of the British Museum granted access to the Museum's cylinder seals. At the Pontifical College Josephinum, rectors Christopher Shreck and Steven Beseau, dean Perry Cahall, colleagues, staff, and students patiently endured and encouraged me. Fr. Marek Kasperczyk remained especially heartening. Dziękuję, bracie! Peter Veracka, Beverly Lane, and Michelle Brown assured access to countless resources. Many, many thanks!

At Mohr Siebeck, Tobias Stähler, Elena Müller, Makus Kirchner, Dominika Zgolik the editors of *ORA*, and the reviewers who graciously accepted my manuscript and patiently worked with me as it developed. My thanks to you all.

My parents, Ray and Carol Wagner, my siblings Carla Raasch, Casandra Porch, Lucas Wagner, and Stephanie Schermerhorn, along with their spouses and children have always assured me that I am loved, especially when I am half a world away. My thanks and love to you all!

As the dedication indicates, Gary Hogan, CR†, along with many other CRs, loom large in the background of this work. For all of your support, brothers, I thank you!

Eric J. P. Wagner, CR  
Autumn 2024  
Saint Louis, MO

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## List of Abbreviations

### Grammatical, Linguistic, and Historical Abbreviations

abl.	ablative (case)	MA	Middle Assyrian
acc.	accusative (case)	MB	Middle Babylonian
adj.	adjective, adjectival	mid.	middle (voice)
Akk.	Akkadian	ms/mss.	manuscript(s)
app.	apposition	NA	Neo-Assyrian
Arb.	Arabic	NB	Neo-Babylonian
BH	Biblical Hebrew	<i>niph.</i>	<i>Niphal</i> -stem
c.	common (gender), <i>circa</i>	nom.	nominative
CBH	Classical Biblical Hebrew	neut.	neuter
cl.	clause	Oakk.	Old Akkadian
coll.	collocation	OB	Old Babylonian
const.	construct (state)	Obj.	Object
D	D-/Doubling stem	oblq.	oblique (case)
dat.	dative	prep. phr.	prepositional phrase
DN	Divine Name	pass.	passive
EB	Early Bronze Age	perf.	perfect
Ebl.	Eblaite	phr.	phrase
f.	feminine	<i>pi.</i>	<i>Piel</i> -stem
G	G-stem/Grundstamm	pl.	plural
gen.	genitive case	PN	Personal Name, Proper Noun
Gk.	Greek	prep.	preposition(al)
Gr.	German	pres.	Present (tense)
Hbr.	Hebrew	pret.	preterite
Hom.	Homeric/Homer (only)	ptc.	participle
<i>hiph.</i>	<i>Hiphil</i> -stem	<i>pu.</i>	<i>Pual</i> -stem
<i>hith.</i>	<i>Hithpael</i> -stem	<i>qal</i>	<i>qal</i> -stem
<i>hoph.</i>	<i>Hophal</i> -stem	R <sub>1, 2, 3...etc.</sub>	Radical <sub>1, 2, 3...etc.</sub>
ind.	indicative (mood)	recon.	Reconstructed, reconstruc- tion
Ku.	Kurdish	SB	Standard Babylonian
LB	Late Bronze Age, Late Babylo- nian	sg.	singular
LBH	Late Biblical Hebrew	subj.	subject, subjective
loc.	locative (case)	suff.	suffix
m.	masculine	sup(.)	superlative, supplement

Š	Š-stem (causative stem)	untrans.	untranslated
TN	Toponym	vb.	Verb
Ug.	Ugaritic	vol(s).	volume(s)

## Ancient &amp; Critical Texts

<i>BHQ</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Quinta</i> [fascicles identified in notes]
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by Albrecht Alt et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997.
<i>II-BSGRT</i>	West, Martin L., ed. <i>Homerus. Ilias</i> . 2 vols. Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 1431, 1435. Munich: K. G. Saur, 1998, 2000.
<i>II-LCL</i>	Murray, Augustus T. and William F. Wyatt, ed. <i>Homer. Iliad</i> . 2 vols. 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. LCL 170–171. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
<i>II-OCT</i>	Allen, Thomas William and David B. Monro, ed. <i>Homeri Opera</i> . 2 vols. 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed. OCT 1–2. Oxford: Clarendon, 1920.
KA	Kuntillet ‘Ajrud
LXX	Septuagint
MB Boğ <sub>1</sub>	The first MB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> from Boğazköy
MB Boğ <sub>2</sub>	The second MB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> from Boğazköy
MB Emar <sub>2</sub>	The second MB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> from Emar
MB Megiddo	The MB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> from Megiddo
MB Priv <sub>1</sub>	The first MB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> in a private collection
MB Ug <sub>1</sub>	The first MB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> from Ugarit (Modern Rash Shamra)
MB Ug <sub>2</sub>	The second MB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> from Ugarit (Modern Rash Shamra)
MT	Masoretic Text
OB II	The OB manuscript of the so-called second tablet of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> in the University of Pennsylvania Museum (elsewhere called “Gilgamesh P”)
OB III	The OB manuscript of the so-called third tablet of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> in the Yale University Peabody Museum of Natural History
OB Gilgameš CUNES	The OB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> in the Jonathan and Jeanette Rosen Ancient Near Eastern Seminar at Cornell University
OB Harmal <sub>1</sub>	The first OB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> in the Harmal collection
OB Ishchali	The OB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> in the Ishchali collection
OB Schøyen <sub>2</sub>	The second major OB manuscript of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> in the Schøyen collection
OB Schøyen <sub>3</sub>	The third set of OB manuscripts (fragments) of the <i>Epic of Gilgameš</i> in the Schøyen collection

<i>Od</i> -BSGRT	West, M. L., ed. <i>Homerus. Odyssea</i> . Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana 2026. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017.
<i>Od</i> -LCL	Murray, Augustus T. and George E. Dimock, ed. <i>Homer. Odyssey</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. 2 vols. LCL 104–105. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
<i>Od</i> -OCT	Allen, Thomas William, ed. <i>Homeri Opera. Odysseae</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. 2 vols. Oxford Classical Texts 3–4. Oxford: Clarendon, 1922.
Rahlfs–Hanhart	Rahlfs, Alfred and Robert Hanhart. <i>Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes</i> . Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.
SamP	Samaritan Pentateuch
Syr.	Syriac, Peshitta
Targ.	Targum(s)
<i>UBC</i>	<i>Ugaritic Baal Cycle</i>
Vul.	Vulgate

## Scholarly Sources

AARSR	American Academy of Religion Studies in Religion Series
AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AB	Anchor [Yale] Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
<i>AHw</i>	Soden, Wolfram von, ed. <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> . 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1959–1981.
AIL	Ancient Israel and its Literature
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>ALCBH</i>	Tawil, Hayim ben Yosef. <i>An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew: Etymological-Semantic and Idiomatic Equivalents with Supplement on Biblical Aramaic</i> . Jersey City: TAV, 2009.
<i>ANE Today</i>	<i>The Ancient Near East Today</i>
ANETS	Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentary
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
<i>Aramazd</i>	<i>Aramazd: Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
AS	Assyriological Studies
ASOR	American School of Overseas (Oriental) Research
<i>ASD</i>	Cohen, Mark E. <i>An Annotated Sumerian Dictionary</i> . University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2023.
<i>AuOr</i>	<i>Aula Orientalis</i>
AuOrSup	<i>Aula Orientalis</i> Supplement
BaAr	Babylonische Archive
BCB	Bibliotheca Classica Batava
BCBO	Biblioteca de Ciencias Bíblicas y Orientales
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium

BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BibSem	The Biblical Seminar
BPC	Biblical Performance Criticism
BTS	Biblical Tools and Studies
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Edited by Martha T. Roth et al. 21 vols. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–2006.
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CGD	<i>Classic Greek Dictionary: In Two Parts: Greek-English and English-Greek</i> , Compiled by George Ricker Berry, Gorgias Historical Dictionaries 23. Piscataway: Gorgias, 2010.
CC	Continental Commentary
CDA <sub>2</sub>	Black, Jeremy, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate, eds. <i>A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. SANTAG 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000).
CDL	Cuneiform Digital Library
CDLJ	<i>Cuneiform Digital Library Journal</i>
CEO	Colección: Estudios Orientales
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
ClAnt	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
CIQ	<i>The Classical Quarterly</i>
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
ConHALOT	Holladay, William L. ed., <i>A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
COS	<i>Context of Scriptures</i>
CSHB	Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
CW	<i>Classical World</i>
DCH	Clines, David J. A. ed., <i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> . 8 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2011.
DNP	<i>Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike</i>
DRS	Cohen, David et al. eds. <i>Dictionnaire des racines sémitiques: ou attestées dans les langues sémitiques</i> . Fascicles 1–10. Paris/La Haye: Mouton; Leuven: Peeters, 1970–2012.
DULAT	Olmo Lete, Gregorio del and Joaquín Sanmartín. <i>A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition</i> . 2 vols. 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed. HdO 112. Edited by W. G. E. Watson. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
Dunbar	Dunbar, Henry and Benedetto Marzullo. <i>A Complete Concordance to the Odyssey of Homer</i> . Revised and Enlarged ed. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962.
EANEC	<i>Explorations in Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations</i>
EHLL	Khan, Geoffrey, <i>Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics</i> . 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

<i>ePSD</i> <sub>2</sub>	<i>Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. <a href="http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/epsd2/">http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/epsd2/</a> . Launched 2018.
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
GBAO	Göttinger Beiträge zum alten Orient
<i>Gk–HbrIndex</i>	Muraoka, Takamitsu <i>A Greek–Hebrew/Aramaic Two-way Index to the Septuagint</i> . Leuven: Peters, 2010.
<i>GIOS</i>	Sanmartín, Joaquín. <i>A Glossary of Old Syrian</i> . Vol. I: ? – 𐤀. LANE 8/1. University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2019.
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
GSANE	Gorgias Studies in the Ancient Near East
<i>gTHAT</i>	Schwarzenbach, Armin. <i>Die geographische Terminologie im Hebräischen des Alten Testaments</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1954.
<i>GTTOT</i>	Simons, Jan J. <i>The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament: A Concise Commentary in XXXII Chapters</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1959.
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HACL	History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant
<i>HALOT</i>	Kohler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner et al. <i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
<i>HPPN</i>	Cunliffe, Richard John. “Homeric Proper and Place Names” in <i>LHD</i> (2012), 451–92.
<i>HS</i>	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JANER</i>	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religion</i>
JBS	Jerusalem Biblical Studies
<i>JCS</i>	<i>The Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JCSSup	<i>The Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i> Supplement Series
<i>JHebS</i>	Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
<i>JHS</i>	Journal of Hellenic Studies
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>The Journal of Religion</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSRC	Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	Journal of Theological Studies
KASKAL	KASKAL, <i>Rivista di storia, ambienti e culture del Vicino Oriente Antico</i>
KgaW	Kulturgeschichte der antiken Welt

<i>KHAT</i>	Lisowsky, Gerhard. <i>Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament</i> . Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LAPO	Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient
LCL	The Loeb Classical Library
<i>LCM</i>	<i>Liverpool Classical Monthly</i>
LEH	Lust, Johan, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, eds. <i>Greek–English Lexicon of the Septuagint</i> . 3 <sup>rd</sup> corrected ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2015.
LfgrE	Beier-Brügger, Michael (ed). <i>Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos</i> . 18. Lieferung (ὄργη – πᾶς). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000.
LHB/OTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
<i>LHD</i>	Cunliffe, Richard John. <i>Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect</i> . Edited by H. Dee James. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012.
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek–English Lexicon</i> . With a revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
<i>LSAWS</i>	<i>Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic</i>
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
MGS	Montanari, Franco. <i>The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek</i> . Edited by Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
<i>MH</i>	<i>Museum Helveticum</i>
MnSup	<i>Mnemosyne</i> Supplement
MRTS	Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies
<i>MZL</i>	Borger, Rykle. <i>Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon</i> . AOAT 305. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010.
<i>NABU</i>	<i>Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires</i>
NATCP	The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project
NCB	New Century Bible
NCBC	The New Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>NewCon</i>	Evan-Shoshan, Abraham. <i>A New Concordance of the Bible: Thesaurus of the Language of the Bible – Hebrew and Aramaic Roots, Words, Proper Names, Phrases and Synonyms</i> [Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1983.
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDB</i>	New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology &amp; Exegesis</i>
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>OJA</i>	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
<i>OtSt</i>	Oudtestamentische studiën
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>PJ</i>	<i>Palästinajahrbuch</i>

Prend.	Prendergast, Guy Lushington and Benedetto Marzullo. <i>A complete Concordance to the Iliad of Homer</i> . Revised and Enlarged ed. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1983.
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
<i>RE</i>	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
<i>RMN</i>	<i>Retrospective Methods Network Newsletter</i>
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SANTAG	Santag. Arbeiten und Untersuchungen zur Keilschriftkunde
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
<i>SIFC</i>	<i>Studi italiani di filologia classica</i>
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SOTSMS	Society for the Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
StPohl	Studia Pohl (Series Maior)
SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TUAT</i>	<i>Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
UBL	Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher für Wissenschaft
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
VWGTh	Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WAWS	Writings from the Ancient World Series
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie</i>
<i>ZABR</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

### 1. Approaching Personified Mountains in Ancient Canonical Narratives

Mountainous landscapes of the eastern Mediterranean make for consistent muses in foundational literature from ancient Israel and the broader eastern Mediterranean region. Like highlands throughout the world, eastern Mediterranean mountains are “places of great cultural importance.”<sup>1</sup> Iconic landscapes like Ararat, Moriah, Sinai, and Zion hold together key portions of the Hebrew Bible. Similarly, Mts. Hor and Nebo (the final resting places of Aaron and Moses respectively), as well as the hill countries of Gilead and Seir (the respective origins of Israel and Judah/Edom) prove iconic. And while mountains from Israel’s cultural heritage routinely stir historical geographers to (attempt to) locate them on maps, these literary peaks often fail to map (well) onto the region’s landscape.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the meaning of Hebrew Bible mountains reaches beyond their cartographic sense into the symbolic, much like mountains (and distinctive landscapes) in other parts of the world.<sup>3</sup> Yet, that (symbolic) meaning varies from

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<sup>1</sup> Martin F. Price, *Mountains: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Historical geographers have long-tried to locate mountains of the Hebrew Bible on modern maps. For Ararat, compare Theodor Nöldeke, *Untersuchungen zur Kritik des Alten Testaments* (Kiel: Schwerts’sche, 1869), 145–55; and more recently, Wolfgang Zwickel, Renate Egger-Wenzel, and Michael Ernst, eds., *Herders Neuer Bibelatlas* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2013), 74–77.

Many mountains and mountainous regions in Genesis – 2 Kings remain inadequately identified. Significant examples include Mt. Sinai, the hill of Rephidim (Exod 17:1, 8–16), Ashdot ha-Pisgah (e.g., Jos 13:20) Gibeah (esp. Judg 19–20, 1 Sam 13–14), Hor, and Baal-Hazor (2 Sam 13:23, Neh 11:7). For discussions and studies of the foregoing examples, see respectively J. Philip Hyatt, *Commentary on Exodus*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1971), 203–07; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 307, 314; Carol Meyers, *Exodus*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 133; Jan J. Simons, *Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament: A Concise Commentary in 32 Chapters* [hereafter *GTTOT*] (Leiden: Brill, 1959), §197; Patrick M. Arnold, *Gibeah: The Search for a Biblical City*, JSOTSup 79 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990); Israel Finkelstein, “Tell el-Ful Revisited: The Assyrian and Hellenistic Periods (with a New Identification),” *PEQ* 143 (2011): 106–18; Horton Harris, “Albright’s Identification of Gibeah with Tell el-Ful,” *PEQ* 146 (2014): 17–30; Burton MacDonald, “*East of Jordan*”: *Territories and Sites of the Hebrew Scriptures*, ASOR Books 6 (Boston: ASOR, 2000), 69–70; Robert D. Miller II, “Taybeh, Baal-Hazor, and a Failed Hunt for Baal: Archaeological Survey of Tell Asur,” *Antiquo Oriente* 16 (2018): 201–38.

<sup>3</sup> Price, *Mountains*, 10–12. Also informative are the essays in Andrzej Pelisiak, Mark Nowak, and Ciprian Astaloş, eds., *People in the Mountains: Current Approaches to the Archaeology of Mountainous Landscapes* (Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2018); esp. Paweł Valde-Nowak, “The

mountain to mountain and text to text. One scholar calls this a geography genre problem.<sup>4</sup> The problem prompts analysis aimed at unpacking the cosmic, religious, and/or theological symbolism of Hebrew Bible mountains.<sup>5</sup> All have been productive avenues of inquiry.

While studies of mountains in the Bible and other ancient literature are ample, analysis of personified mountains in this literature remains largely untreated, even though ancient Israelite scribes frequently portray elevated topography anthropomorphically. Mountains in the Hebrew Bible have “heads” (e.g., Gen 8:5), “shoulders” (e.g., Josh 15:8), “sides” (e.g., 2 Sam 13:34, 16:13), and other body parts. Moreover, sometimes these mountains are further personified. Sinai, for example, shakes along with the Israelites (Exod 19:16, 18) and other biblical mountains enjoy personified existential status (e.g., 1 Kgs 20:23, 28). Not surprisingly then, late biblical literature, Second Temple texts, and rabbinic literature expand on the practice of personifying mountains.<sup>6</sup> Similar portrayals of mountains also appear in literary corpora from elsewhere in the ancient world (more below). Consequently, when it comes to anthropomorphic mountains in the Hebrew Bible, readers can justifiably conclude that such portrayals are more than figures of speech or attempts to fill gaps in Biblical Hebrew (BH hereafter) vocabulary

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Mountainous Landscape as a Viable Alternative for the Neolithic,” 7–13. See also, essays in Darrelyn Gunzburg and Bernadette Brady, eds., *Space, Place and Religious Landscapes: Living Mountains*, Bloomsbury Studies in Material Religion (London: Bloomsbury, 2021); and Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology 1* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), esp. 89–99, 184–94.

<sup>4</sup> Dozeman, “Biblical Geography and Critical Spatial Studies,” 87–108; idem., “Historical Geography of the Pentateuch,” 729–44.

<sup>5</sup> Select studies from the last century include (in chronological order): William F. Albright, “The Names Shaddai and Abram,” *JBL* 54 (1935): 173–204; Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 [1959 org.]), 72–112; Manfred Weippert, “Erwägungen zur Etymologie des Gottesnamens ‘Ēl Šaddaj,” *ZDMG* 111 (1961): 42–62; Richard J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*, HSM 4 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972); Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), esp. 27–28, 36–39, 52–60, 147–94; Robert L. Cohn, *The Shape of Sacred Space: Four Biblical Studies*, AARSR 23 (Chico: Scholars, 1981); Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (New York: Harper One, 1985); Thomas B. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain*, SBLMS 37 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989); L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus*, BTS 15 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012); idem., *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? – A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, NSBT 37 (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015); Robert D. Miller II, *The Dragon, the Mountain, and the Nations: An Old Testament Myth, Its Origins, and Its Afterlives*, EANEC 6 (University Park: Eisenbrauns, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Second Temple apocalyptic literature portrayed personified mountains as adversaries while early rabbinic literature expanded anthropomorphism into full-blown personification by rendering mountains of the Hebrew Bible locked in contests over which should be the place of God’s revelation. For examples and discussion, see Peter Juhás, *Berg als Widersacher: Studien zu einem Bergmotiv in der jüdischen Apokalypik*, Mundus Orientis 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 17–163; Willem F. Smelik, *The Targum of Judges, OtSt 36* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 413–30; Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 3, *Moses in the Wilderness*, trans. Paul Radin (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 82–85.

(catachresis).<sup>7</sup> They are significant. This personifying of mountains operates at a meaningful anthropological level in which mythic spatial categories overlap.<sup>8</sup> The logic of the overlap is characteristic of thinking associated with myth in which parts of the human body equate with parts of the world.<sup>9</sup> I call this explanation of the meaning and function of personified mountains in the Hebrew Bible the “mythic thinking” hypothesis.

Such body-based logic has become an object of study in cognitive linguistics, which confirms that human beings tend to think using metaphors and analogies, especially ones associated with familiar spatial arrangements like the human body.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, cognitive linguistics explores the functions and structures of such cognition.<sup>11</sup> Results

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<sup>7</sup> Linguistic gap-filling characterized as catachresis occurs when a language does not have a dedicated word for a given concept (e.g., spaces like peaks, ridges, or slopes) and users employ a word from another domain (e.g., the human body) to express the concept (thus e.g., the “head” of the mountain). In such cases little meaning transfers from the source domain (e.g., only the relative spatial relationships of the human body). Still, such expressions convey personification, for which see Andrea Weiss, “Figures of Speech: Biblical Hebrew,” in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. Geoffrey Khan, Shmuel Bolozky, Steven Fassberg, Gary A. Rendsburg, Aaron D. Rubin, Ora R. Schwarzwald, and Tama Zewi (2013), [http://dx.doi.org.proxycu.wrlc.org/10.1163/2212-4241\\_ehll\\_EHLL\\_COM\\_00000894](http://dx.doi.org.proxycu.wrlc.org/10.1163/2212-4241_ehll_EHLL_COM_00000894) (accessed summer, 2024); Satoshi Nishimura, “Personification: Its Functions and Boundaries,” *Papers on Language and Literature* 50 (2014): 90–107, esp. 95–99.

<sup>8</sup> I identify and discuss topographic, corporeal, and architectonic spaces below. For the moment, see Nicolas Wyatt, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East*, BibSem 85 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic 2001), 35–36; and Bernd Janowski, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments: Grundfragen – Kontexte – Themenfelder* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 318–323.

<sup>9</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2, *Mythical Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 83–104, esp. 92. For the connection between the Hebrew Bible’s personified mountains and Cassirer, see Shemaryahu Talmon, “הַר *har*; גִּבְעָה *gibh’āh*,” in *TDOT*, ed. G. J. Botterweck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 3:427–47, here 432.

<sup>10</sup> The voluminous literature on metaphors and analogies in cognition, especially those based on spatial relationships associated with the human body, came from the watershed study of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). For a more recent resource on the topic see the essays in Raymond W. Gibbs (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Studies like that of Lakoff and Johnson gave rise to cognitive linguistics.

<sup>11</sup> Cognitive linguistics tends to regard human cognition as an embodied process in which metaphors and analogies are structured by underlying image schemes – directly meaningful, pre-conceptual, on-line *gestalts*, tied to perception of real-world phenomena such as force exertion (i.e., gravity) or spatial relationships (i.e., near-far). Image schemes associated with ‘basic’ or ‘typical’ spatial relationships of familiar objects like the human body or landscapes. And these spatial domains often produce structures for metaphors and analogies. In this way, a cognitive linguist may maintain that metaphors structuring the “mythic thinking” hypothesis are, in effect, the focus of this study. For more, see Eleanor Rosch et al., “Basic Objects in Natural Categories,” *Cognitive Psychology* 8 (1976): 382–439; George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), esp. 269–303; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic, 1999), esp. 45–59, 74–93, 495–512, and sources 585–595; Beate Hampe and Joseph E. Grady, eds., *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*, *Cognitive Linguistics Research* 29 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 1–110, 137–63, 199–282, 313–42; Zachary Estes, Michelle Verges, and Lawrence W. Barsalou,

of that research are now clear: as embodied thinkers, human beings (ancient and modern) readily rely on metaphors and analogies that employ the human body to understand complex or unfamiliar spatial environments like mountains.<sup>12</sup> And we do the same with various artifacts (i.e., non-human, inanimate objects).<sup>13</sup> We personify them. But this endeavor does not simplify them thereby garnering more immediacy, familiarity, or control.<sup>14</sup> If anything, anthropomorphizing a mountainous landscape introduces counterintuitive concepts, which raises questions about our expectations and requires more attention rather than less (more below).<sup>15</sup> Yet, while anthropomorphizing landscapes results in more cognitive complexity, it helps us negotiate these entities by making them more

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“Head Up, Foot Down: Object Words Orient Attention to the Objects’ Typical Location,” *Psychological Science* 19 (2008): 93–97; and Carolin Dudschig et al., “From Top to Bottom: Spatial Shifts of Attention Caused by linguistic Stimuli,” *Cognitive Processing* 13 (2012): 151–54.

Embodied cognition is not without its challenges and criticisms, especially when it comes to its ability to explain how abstract concepts (e.g., power) might be ‘grounded’ in the mind through perception. On these challenges and criticisms, as well as attempts to negotiate them or to formulate alternate proposals, see L. W. Barsalou, “Perceptual Symbol Systems,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 22 (1999): 577–660; idem., “Abstraction in Perceptual Symbol Systems,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 358 (2003): 1177–87; Brian P. Meier and Michael D. Robinson, “Why the Sunny Side Is Up: Associations between Affect and Vertical Position,” *Psychological Science* 15 (2004): 243–47; Thomas W. Schubert, “Your Highness: Vertical Positions as Perceptual Symbols of Power,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 89 (2005): 1–21; Brian P. Meier and Michael D. Robinson, “Does ‘Feeling Down’ Mean Seeing Down? Depressive Symptoms and Vertical Selective Attention,” *Journal of Research in Personality* 40 (2006): 451–61; Brian P. Meier, Martin Sellbom, Dustin B. Wygant, “Failing to Take the Moral High Ground: Psychopathy and the Vertical Representation of Morality,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 43 (2007): 757–67; L. W. Barsalou, “Cognitive and Neural Contributions to Understanding the Conceptual System,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 17 (2008): 91–95; idem., “Grounded Cognition,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 59 (2008): 617–45; Steven Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature* (London: Penguin, 2008), 235–78; Martin H. Fischer and Rolf A. Zwaan, “Embodied Language: A Review of the Role of the Motor System in Language Comprehension,” *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 61 (2008): 825–50; Sabine C. Koch, Stefanie Glawe, and Daniel V. Holt, “Up and Down, Front and Back: Movement and Meaning in the Vertical and Sagittal Axis,” *Social Psychology* 42 (2011): 214–24; Andrea Pavan and Giosuè Baggio, “Linguistic Representations of Motion Do Not Depend on the Visual Motion System,” *Psychological Science* 24 (2013): 181–88; Stephanie C. Goochew, Bethany McGaw, and Evan Kidd, “Why is the Sunny Side always Up?” *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 21 (2014): 1287–93; Maryam Kouchaki, Francesca Gion, and Ata Jami, “The Burden of Guilt: Heavy Backpacks, Light Snacks, and Enhanced Morality,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 143 (2014): 414–24.

Due to ongoing debates in cognitive linguistics and embodied cognition, I eschew a full-blown cognitive linguistic approach in favor of a mythic approach, but my analysis remains ‘colored’ by work in this area and, more broadly, the social sciences.

<sup>12</sup> The tendency to portray unfamiliar mountains anthropomorphically or personify them in other ways can be seen in contemporary travel literature recounting visits to mountains, for which see Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind* (New York: Pantheon, 2003), esp. 14–21.

<sup>13</sup> On artifacts as non-human, inanimate objects, see Pascal Boyer, “What Makes Anthropomorphism Natural: Intuitive Ontology and Cultural Representations,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2 (1996): 83–97, here 89.

<sup>14</sup> Boyer, “What Makes Anthropomorphism Natural,” 88–89.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 92–95.

*relatable*. To anthropomorphize mountains is to problem-solve in a fundamentally human way, namely using cognitive social support mechanisms and pro-social behavior.<sup>16</sup> As a cognitive endeavor, numerous factors impact the process of anthropomorphizing something, such as mental states (e.g., loneliness), patterns and capacities for cognitive processing (e.g., neurotypical vs. neuro-atypical), and ideology (e.g., environmental advocacy).<sup>17</sup> Moreover, body-based mapping is culturally conditioned.

While personifying mountains may be a very human endeavor, not all ancient cultures portrayed personified mountains, even when they occupied comparable environments. For example, both Mesopotamian and Egyptian cultures occupied primarily riverine plains, but only (Sumerian-speaking) inhabitants of Mesopotamia developed robust mythic portrayals of personified mountains (e.g., Azag in *Lugal-e* and opponents of Inanna), which endured and influenced later (Akkadian) myths and literature.<sup>18</sup> So,

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<sup>16</sup> Justin L. Barrett and Emily Reed Burdett, “The Cognitive Science of Religion,” *The Psychologist* 24 (2011): 252–55, here 254–55.

<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Epley et al., “Creating Social Connection through Inferential Reproduction: Loneliness and Perceived Agency in Gadgets, Gods, and Greyhounds,” *Psychological Science* 19 (2008): 114–20; Gray Atherton and Liam Cross, “Seeing More than Human: Autism and Anthropomorphic Theory of Mind,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018): 1–18; Rebekah C. White and Anna Remington, “Object Personification in Autism: This Paper Will Be Very Sad If You Don’t Read It,” *Autism* 23 (2018): 1042–45; Heather M. Hill, “The Psychology of Cows? A Case of Over-interpretation and Personification – Commentary on Marino and Allen (2017) ‘The Psychology of Cows,’” *Animal Behavior and Cognition* 4 (2017): 506–11.

<sup>18</sup> For studies of the personified mountains of Mesopotamia, see Karen Polinger Foster, “Volcanic Landscapes in LUGAL-E,” in *Landscapes, Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East, Papers Presented to the XLIV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Venezia, 7–11 July 1997*, ed. L. Milano et al., History of the Ancient Near East / Monographs III–3 (Padua: Sargon srl, 2000), 23–39; Fumi Karahashi, “Fighting the Mountain: Some Observations on the Sumerian Myths of Inanna and Ninurta,” *JNES* 63 (2004): 111–18; Laura Feldt, “Religion, Nature, and Ambiguous Space in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mountain Wilderness in Old Babylonian Religious Narratives,” *Numen* 63 (2016): 347–82, esp. 360–66; Jeremiah Peterson, “‘Towards the Mountain Range that Gave Birth to Me ...’: A Reconstructed *širgida* Song of Ninurta from Old Babylonia Nippur (Ninurta J/L),” *JNES* 81 (2022): 317–33.

On the study of *Lugal-e* and the oldest Akkadian manuscripts dating to the OB period, see Benjamin Foster, “Diorite and Limestone: A Sumerian Perspective,” in *He Has Opened Nisaba’s House of Learning*, ed. Leonhard Sasmannshausen, CM 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 51–56 here 51. See also J. J. van Dijk, *LUGAL UD ME-LÁM-bi NIR-ĜÁL: Le récit épique et didactique des travaux de Ninurta, du déluge et de la nouvelle création* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), esp. 1:1–9; Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...: Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 233–72, esp. 233; Stefano Seminara, *La versione accadica del LUGAL-E: La tecnica babilonese della traduzione del Sumerico e le suo ‘regole’*, *Materiali per il vocabolario sumerico* 8 (Rome: Sapienza University Press, 2001), esp. 23–41; and Sam Mirelman, “A New Manuscript of *LUGAL-E*, Tablet IV,” *Iraq* 79 (2017): 155–162, esp. 155 n.5.

In Egypt, a possible example of a “mythic” personified mountain (the ‘sand bank’ [ꜥ] of Apophis) remains a subject of debate, for which compare Ludwig D. Morenz, “Apophis: On the Origin, Name, and Nature of an Ancient Egyptian Anti-God,” *JNES* 63 (2004): 201–205; Miller, *Dragon-Mountain-Nations*, 52–54, esp. 53; and Leila Salem, “Intertextualidad en los textos del antiguo Egipto: un análisis de los ‘bancos de arena,’” *Historia y Sociedad* 33 (2017): 135–66.

the phenomenon became an established mode of expression in Mesopotamia while in Egypt it remained circumspect – likely a reflection of local geography.<sup>19</sup>

Still, ancient literature attests to the fact that ancient cultures often chose to portray mountainous landscapes (as well as other complex spatial settings) anthropomorphically and to personify them in additional ways. Accordingly, some scholars have appealed to variations of the “mythic thinking” hypothesis as possible means of explaining and interpreting the meaning and function of anthropomorphic mountains in the Hebrew Bible and other ancient literature.<sup>20</sup> Such analysis of anthropomorphically personified

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<sup>19</sup> Exemplary here is the deity Ha, protector of the remote northwest Nile Delta regions. Ha was depicted in personified form with three hills or mountains above him and often with weaponry (a knife or a bow). Thus, Ha iconography connected mountains with remote territory and potential threat. For discussions see Eric M. Trinka, *Cultures of Mobility, Migration, and Religion in Ancient Israel and Its World*, Routledge Studies in the Biblical World (London: Routledge, 2022), 165; Valeria Turriziani, “Beyond Politics: Religion and Symbolism at the Borders of Egypt,” in *Power and Identity at the Margins of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Sara Mohr and Shane M. Thompson (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2023), 111–30, here 119.

In general, references to mountains (personified or otherwise) in ancient Egyptian literature tended to signal liminal or foreign landscapes characteristic of the desert highlands east and west of the Nile. For discussions, see the “Toponymic Databank” in Julien Charles Cooper, *Toponymy on the Periphery: Placenames of the Eastern Desert, Red Sea, and South Sinai in Egyptian Documents from the Early Dynastic until the End of the New Kingdom*, Probleme der Ägyptologie 39 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 113–312, esp. 113–15; John Coleman Darnell, *Egypt and the Desert*, Cambridge Elements Ancient Egypt in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 1, 40–63; Avraham Faust, “An Imperial Encounter: The Egyptian Empire in Canaan, Highland Ethnogenesis, and the Transformation of History,” in *Power and Identity at the Margins of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Sara Mohr and Shane M. Thompson (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2023) 14–41, here 30–31; and Colin D. Reader, *A Gift of Geology: Ancient Egyptian Landscapes and Monuments* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2022), 75–92, 109–27. Interestingly, in Cooper’s analysis of ancient Egyptian references to mountains a new proposal has emerged for identifying the historical Mt. Sinai based on Egyptian sources, for which see Julien Cooper, “The Earliest Mention of the Placename Sinai: The Journeys of Khety,” *The Ancient Near East Today* 11.2 (2023). <https://www.asor.org/anetoday/2023/02/sinai-journeys-khety>.

<sup>20</sup> For examples of those who have appealed to the “mythic thinking” hypothesis to explain personified mountains in the Hebrew Bible, see Armin Schwarzenbach, *Die geographische Terminologie im Hebräischen des Alten Testament* [hereafter *gTHAT*] (Leiden: Brill, 1954), 50–51, esp. 51 n.1; Talmon, “הַר *har*; גִּבְעָה *gibh’āh*,” 427–47, esp. 432, 436–42; Martin J. Selman, “הַר 2215,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1051–55, esp. 1052; W. Boyd Barrick, *BMH as Body Language: A Lexical and Iconographical Study of the Word BMH When Not a Reference to Cultic Phenomena in Biblical and Post-Biblical Hebrew*, LHB/OTS 477 (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 35–95.

Multiple scholars claim that (personified) mountains of the Hebrew Bible, and those of Syria-Palastine generally, were manifestations of mythic thinking in general. Examples include: Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 98–181; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, esp. 13–194; P. Calmeyer, “Wandernde Berggötter,” in *Languages and Cultures in Contact: At the Crossroads of Civilizations in the Syro-Mesopotamian Realm*, ed. K. van Lerberghe and G. Voet, OLA 96 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 1–32; Izaak J. de Hulster, “A God of the Mountains? An Iconographic Perspective on the Aramean Argument in 1 Kings 20:23,” in *Image, Text, Exegesis: Iconographic Interpretation and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Izaak J. de Hulster and Joel M. LeMon, LHB/OTS 588 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 226–50; Miller, *Dragon–Mountain–Nations*, 145–226, 236–53, 280–94, esp. 198–99, 225–26, 281–86.

mountains across ancient literature shows how such representation techniques were employed in various ways and to different effects across ancient cultures. This mythic mode of representation is the primary focus of this study.

The vast array of Hebrew Bible and other ancient literature necessitates focusing this study on specific corpora. My analysis attends to ancient canonical narratives from Israel, Mesopotamia, and Greece. My rationale for this focus is elaborated fully in the next chapter but, for present purposes, I note here two key points. First, ancient canonical narratives from the eastern Mediterranean were highly influential in their broader cultures. Thus, analysis of these corpora stands to indicate not only mythic ways of thinking among scribal elites, but among members of the broader culture from which this literature emerged. Second, attending to canonical narratives from these regions focuses on literary corpora in which personified mountains have received limited (if any) dedicated treatment in the scholarship. This point may seem to contradict the preceding paragraph and raise surprise considering the literature on mountains in ancient myths.<sup>21</sup> However, most studies of mountains in ancient literature either do not focus on personified mountains or they include examples from ancient poetry or both. As a result, no clear, focused account has been given of the meaning and function of personified mountains in ancient canonical *narratives*. Thus, analysis that clarifies the meanings and functions of personified mountains in foundational/canonical narratives from ancient Israel (i.e., Genesis – 2 Kings), Mesopotamia (i.e., the *Epic of Gilgamesh*), and Greece (the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) stands to provide new insights.

Thus, I arrive at the focus of my study. In what follows, I apply the hypothesis that ancient canonical narratives, like Genesis – 2 Kings, personify mountains using a (tacit) cross-cultural system of “mythic space” and employ those personified mountains in culturally specific “mythic grammars” (symbolic matrices and mythic constellations) to produce culturally distinct meanings and functions. Consequently, personified mountains in canonical narratives from ancient Mesopotamia (the *Epic of Gilgamesh*), Greece (the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), and Israel (Genesis – 2 Kings) exhibit common identifying traits (body parts), but distinctive meanings and functions across the narratives in which they appear. I demonstrate these claims by applying my “mythic thinking” hypothesis

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<sup>21</sup> The vast literature on mountains in ancient myths cannot be summarized. Classic and illuminating treatments include: Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, trans. Philip Mairet (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991 [French original 1952]), 41–44; idem., *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History*, 2005 edition, trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series 46 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005 [French original 1954]), 12–17; idem., *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Orlando: Harcourt, 1959 [French original 1957]), 20–65, esp. 36–42; Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: Penguin Compass, 1991 [original 1959]), 148, 238–39, 359, 438; idem., *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* (New York: Penguin Compass, 1991 [original 1964]) 57; Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 1–97; Tamra Andrews, “Mountains,” in *Legends of the Earth, Sea, and Sky: An Encyclopedia of Nature Myths* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1998), 153–54; Elizabeth Wayland Barber and Paul T. Barber, *When They Severed Earth from Sky: How the Human Mind Shapes Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 218–30; E. J. Michael Witzel, *The Origins of the World’s Mythologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 137–38; Peterson, ““Towards the Mountain Range that Gave Birth to Me...””: 317–333.

as a hermeneutical lens with which to read anthropomorphically personified mountains in these corpora.

## 2. Project Goals, Findings, and Outline

In light of the preceding discussion, I can now indicate the goal of the present study, anticipate its main conclusions, and outline its basic structure. My aim in this study is to explain how anthropomorphically personified mountains in foundational, canonical narratives from ancient Israel (Genesis – 2 Kings), Mesopotamia (*Epic of Gilgameš*), and Greece (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*) manifest mythic thinking. As I undertake this work, I unpack the meaning and function of these mountains both within their cultural/cognitive environments as well as their broader narrative contexts. To achieve my aims I apply the hypothesis that the aforementioned ancient narratives personify mountains using a (tacit) cross-cultural system of “mythic space” and, at the same time, employ culturally distinctive “mythic grammars.” As such, my project refines prior research that proposed explaining personified mountains in ancient literature as manifestations of “mythic thinking.”

Some of the key claims and results of this study run as follows. First, the “mythic thinking” hypothesis should be understood as a system of thinking characteristic of typical cognitive processes and based on an intuitive system of mythic space that was (tacitly) shared across ancient cultures and employed to meaningfully represent mountains as anthropomorphic, personified figures. To conceive of the “mythic thinking” hypothesis in this way permits identifying anthropomorphically personified mountains based on their appearance, i.e., their corporeality, or as I will call it, their corporeal space. At the same time, I will also show that the personified mountains in the aforementioned narratives can and do exhibit distinctive, culturally specific traits, which can also be explained as manifestations of “mythic thinking,” albeit of a different kind. “Mythic grammars” specific to the literature and culture of each region – Mesopotamia, Greece, Israel – help communicate distinct meanings and functions for the mountains they personify. These “grammars,” I show, are comprised of symbolic matrices and mythic constellations. Ultimately, I show that personified mountains in ancient foundational narratives from ancient Mesopotamia (the *Epic of Gilgameš*), Greece (the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), and Israel (Genesis – 2 Kings) exhibit common identifying traits (body parts), but distinctive meanings and functions in the narratives in which they appear. And this claim arises by applying my “mythic thinking” hypothesis as a hermeneutical lens with which to read these corpora’s anthropomorphically personified mountains.

By way of outline, my argument unfolds in three basic parts. Chapter two identifies and discuss the nature, approach, and method of my argument and indicates the literary corpora that constitute my primary objects of study. In that chapter I show that my argument is abductive in nature because it attempts to explain a phenomenon with a hypothesis. At the same time, because I apply the “mythic thinking” hypothesis to multiple ancient narratives (the *Epic of Gilgameš*, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Genesis – 2 Kings), my approach is comparative. This approach strengthens the hypothesis’ explanatory power

by increasing and diversifying the objects of analysis and support obtained. Methodologically, I apply a set of principles attuned to spatiality and myth criticism. The principles of my method, which I identify in chapter two, I then apply in identical analytical procedures in the second part of this study which consists three chapters treating the *Epic of Gilgameš*, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and Genesis – 2 Kings respectively.

In chapter three, I begin by introducing and contextualizing the *Epic of Gilgameš*. I then identify and analyze its key terms for “mountain” (*huršānu*, *šadū*, *Māšu*, *Nimuš* [*Nišir*]) in order to isolate examples that are anthropomorphically personified. With these examples identified, I analyze them using the symbolic matrix and mythic constellation models of myth to show how these personified mountains are weak opponents for Gilgameš to defeat in battle until, at the end of his life, he can no longer engage the one mountain that could give him his heart’s desire – immortality.

In chapter four, I introduce and contextualize the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and then identify and analyze one of its key terms for “mountain” (*ὄρος*) in order to ascertain which mountains could be considered anthropomorphically personified. After I identify those mountains, I show that in the Homeric epic corpus, such mountains are viable contestants against whom other characters could just as easily lose a battle as win. As a result, they can be regarded as allies or enemies.

The format of chapter five follows the two prior chapters. Genesis – 2 Kings is introduced and contextualized. I then identify and analyze its key terms for “mountain” (*הר*, *גבעה*) to again establish examples that are anthropomorphically personified. After that, I again appeal to two models of myth (symbolic matrix and mythic constellation) to analyze and indicate how the anthropomorphically personified mountains in Genesis – 2 Kings play various roles and serve various functions throughout the narrative. As with personified mountains in the other canonical narratives, I show that some of the personified mountains in Genesis – 2 Kings are contestants in battle and function as either adversaries or allies. But I also show that some of these mountains have little to do with contests and instead serve as obedient collaborators of God or compassionate companions of Israel.

Finally, in chapter six, I summarize my findings, indicate the nature of their contribution, and note potential directions for future research. In that summary, I show that it is not only possible to think of personified mountains in Genesis – 2 Kings and other ancient canonical narratives as manifestations of mythic thinking, but that doing so is a productive and meaningful mode of attending to and interpreting how these literary corpora portray the mountainous landscape of the eastern Mediterranean.

## Chapter 2

# The Argument's Nature, Shape, and Objects

Applying a hypothesis means negotiating and advancing an abductive argument. The nature of such arguments can generate misunderstanding, which leads to undue critique or outright rejection. Accordingly, I briefly discuss the nature of such arguments here to situate this project in its proper logical context. My hope is that the aim of this project – knowledge discovery – can be fittingly received. At the same time, the scope of the hypothesis reaches beyond the Hebrew Bible. That makes this study comparative in its approach, which I discuss before I articulate the method of my study, which I consider to be both spatial and myth-critical. The final portion of this chapter identifies the literary objects I have chosen to analyze and explains my rationale for their selection. A summary section reviews claims and notes procedures to be applied in later chapters.

### 1. The Nature of the Argument: Abductive

To apply a hypothesis is to rely on an abductive argument. Such arguments employ reasoning characteristic of common sense arguments, scientific discovery, and legal adjudication, and more recently abduction has aided the development of artificial intelligence.<sup>1</sup> Such reasoning also characterizes Talmudic arguments.<sup>2</sup> While patterns of abductive reasoning vary, such reasoning is, by nature, explanatory and falsifiable.<sup>3</sup> It explains discrete pieces of evidence provisionally or plausibly, often in light of alternate explanations.<sup>4</sup> By selecting or producing hypotheses based on available evidence, abductive arguments infer to the best explanation and must be changed or abandoned if subsequent, contradictory evidence falsifies them.<sup>5</sup> Such epistemic change or revision typifies abductive reasoning.<sup>6</sup> Summarizing the nature of abductive arguments, Walton explains:

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Walton, *Abductive Reasoning*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005), 1–31; Atocha Aliseda, *Abductive Reasoning: Logical Investigations into Discovery and Explanation*, Synthese Library 330 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 29–30, 37–43.

<sup>2</sup> Ronen Reichman, *Abduktives Denken und talmudische Argumentation: Eine rechtstheoretische Annäherung an eine zentrale Interpretationsfigur im babylonischen Talmud*, TSAJ 113 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), esp. 28–31, 36–38, 66–104.

<sup>3</sup> G. Schurz, “Patterns of Abduction,” *Synthese* 164 (2008): 201–34; Aliseda, *Abductive Reasoning*, 28–31, 135–51.

<sup>4</sup> Walton, *Abductive Reasoning*, 31; Aliseda, *Abductive Reasoning*, 34–37.

<sup>5</sup> Walton, *Abductive Reasoning*, 31; Aliseda, *Abductive Reasoning*, 33–34.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 179–201.

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