

ABSTRACT

In Heaven as It Is on Earth: The Development of the Interpreting Angel Motif in Biblical Literature of the Neo-Babylonian, Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods

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The motif of angelic interpretation of symbolic visions is a major feature of late prophetic and apocalyptic literature, yet the development of this literary motif has remained largely unexplored within biblical scholarship. This study fills this gap in scholarship by tracing the development of the interpreting angel motif from its first appearance in Ezek 40–48 through its maturation in Dan 7–8. Following the introductory chapter which reviews previous scholarship and lays out the goals of this study, each chapter focuses on the development of the interpreting angel motif in a different historical period. In each period, new developments of the motif appear, as angelic interpretation replaces prophecy as the primary means of divine revelation, accompanying the shift from prophetic literature to apocalyptic literature.

Each chapter also considers external influences on the development of the interpreting angel motif. These include the mirroring of political intermediaries in the empires of the ancient Near East and a divinatory religious context which emphasized the interpretation of signs and symbols to discern the plans of the gods. Each chapter begins with an overview of the historical context of the period and evidence for imperial

administration which relied on intermediaries acting on behalf of the king. Next follows analysis of the primary texts, beginning with a discussion of major historical-critical concerns and proceeding with a detailed analysis of the interpreting angel motif in these texts, noting especially continuities and discontinuities with earlier forms. Examination of extra-biblical parallels and the broader religious context of the period follows, and the chapter concludes with a brief summary of its findings.

The final chapter synthesizes the findings of the study and traces the development of the motif. It also notes the role of external influences (imperial administration and divination) on the development of the motif and offers an interpretation of the function of the motif. Finally, it offers areas for further research on the topic and related issues.

In Heaven as It Is on Earth: The Development of
the Interpreting Angel Motif in Biblical Literature of
the Neo-Babylonian, Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods

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To Kendra, my interpreting angel

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction to the Study

The interpretation of symbolic visions by angels is one of the major new literary motifs of the exilic and post-exilic periods. It emerges from prophetic soil, with precursors in Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24, but it takes on new life with the rise of apocalyptic literature in the sixth–second centuries B.C.E. Moreover, with a few possible exceptions, it appears to be a distinctly Jewish innovation, although the influence of Mesopotamian, Persian, and Greek beliefs, practices, and traditions is evident. The interpreting angel motif developed within a socio-political and religious matrix which also saw the transformation of the old Israelite religion of the monarchic period into the emerging Judaism of the Second Temple period. This new literary motif was but one part of a much larger religious shift which also included the demise of classical prophecy, the birth of apocalypticism, and the development of Jewish angelology in tandem with, or perhaps as a result of, the emergence of monotheism.¹

The goal of this study is to trace the development of the interpreting angel motif in biblical literature of the Neo-Babylonian, Persian, and early Hellenistic periods.² This

¹ As I will discuss below, one popular theory for the development of monotheism holds that the multi-tiered pantheon of early Israel collapsed into two tiers: the chief deity, now recognized as the only true God, and a host of subservient messenger deities (angels). This simple system does not appear to have lasted long, however, as by the end of the third century a vast angelic hierarchy had developed, once again expanding the “pantheon” into multiple levels.

² The primary texts containing angelic interpretation of visions upon which this study will focus include Ezek 40:1–37, 43–49; 41:1–43:6; 44:1–5; 46:19–47:12; Zech 1:7–2:9; 4:1–4:6a, 10b–14; 5:1–6:8; Dan 7:15–28; 8:15–27. In addition, I will give somewhat less attention to materials from the Enochic corpus which generally indicate developments between Zech 1–6 and Dan 7–8. The relevant Enochic

motif first begins to appear in Ezek 40–48³ and emerges more fully in Zech 1–6, where angelic mediation serves as the primary mode of divine revelation. Moving from prophetic literature into apocalyptic literature, angelic interpretation becomes a dominant motif which all but replaces direct divine revelation. Angelic interpretation of visions is widely regarded as one of the central motifs of apocalyptic literature, and therefore its development in the late prophetic and early apocalyptic texts under consideration in this study is of great importance not only for the study of Israelite and early Jewish religion, but also for the development of apocalyptic literature.⁴

passages include *1 En.* 18:14–19:2; 21:1–33:4; 72:1; 74:2; 75:3–4; 78:10; 79:2–81:10; 82:7–8. The interpreting angel motif also appears prominently in the Enochic *Book of Similitudes* (*1 En.* 40:2, 8–10; 43:3–4; 46:2–47:2; 52:3–9; 53:4–7; 54:4–10; 56:2–8; 60:5–6, 9–25; 61:2–13; 64:2; 71:3–17), but this portion of the Enochic corpus dates to the first century C.E. and therefore falls outside the chronological parameters of this study (see John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 178; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001], 7).

³ The identity of the figure in Ezek 8–11 is debated. Zimmerli points to similarities between the description of the divine figure in ch. 1 and chs. 8–11 in support of understanding the latter as a subsequent vision of the divine throne, although he concedes that references to cherubim in ch. 10 are late additions (*Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* [trans. Ronald E. Clements; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979], 231–32; also Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* [trans. Cosslett Quin; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970], 231–32; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 279–80; Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* [LHBOTS 482; London: T & T Clark, 2007], 97–98). In particular, the very close verbal parallels between 1:27–28 and 8:2–3, as well as the reference to Ezekiel’s vision in the valley in 8:4, indicate that the figure is the same in both visions. Therefore, the figure in Ezek 8–11 cannot be considered an interpreting angel, but rather an appearance of Yahweh in a human-like form (cf. Gen 18), although such depictions of Yahweh are quite rare in the Hebrew Bible (especially if the “one like a human being” [כְּבָר אִישׁ] in Dan 7:13 is an angelic figure). Nevertheless, Ezek 8–11 stands in continuity with later accounts of interpreting angels in apocalyptic literature in both its extended vision + question + interpretation form and with regard to specific features, such as the carrying of the visionary by his hair (cf. Bel 33–36) and his transportation over lengthy distances (cf. *1 En.* 14:8–25). Furthermore, the gradual transition from direct divine revelation of the sort described in Amos 7:1–9; Jer 1:11–19; 24:1–10 to angelic interpretation in Zech 1–6 begins in Ezek 8–11 and continues to develop in Ezek 40–48, and for this reason it is worthwhile to give some consideration to this material as well.

⁴ Regarding the importance of interpreting angels in apocalyptic literature, see D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200 B.C.–A.D. 100* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 242–43; Peter Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvorstellung* (SJ 8; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 10; Michael Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinischer Zeit* (TSAJ 34; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 114–29, 142–44; Donata Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur und ihre theologische Relevanz: Am Beispiel von*

The Interpreting Angel in Biblical and Extra-Biblical Literature: An Overview

The interpreting angel appears in only a handful of biblical texts, all of them exilic or post-exilic (Ezek 40–48; Zech 1–6; Dan 7–8).⁵ In these passages, a human prophet sees a vision which is highly symbolic and complex and which, in many cases, draws on elaborate mythological imagery. The nature of the vision is such that the prophet is incapable of understanding its meaning apart from its interpretation by a heavenly being. Such visions with interpretations are hardly restricted to these relatively late texts. Earlier prophetic books, such as the book of Amos, include symbolic visions whose meaning Yahweh explains to the prophet. In Amos 7:7–9, the prophet sees the “Lord” (יְהוָה) holding a plumb line in his hand. Yahweh then asks Amos what he sees, and following the prophet's answer, Yahweh proceeds to explain the vision of the plumb line as a symbol of the coming judgment on Israel. A similar vision and exchange involving a pun on the words קִיץ “summer fruit” and קֵץ “end” appears in Amos 8:1–3. This same pattern appears in Jer 1:11–19; 24, in which Yahweh grants the prophet a symbolic vision, asks him what he sees, and finally explains the meaning of the vision.

These examples of symbolic visions interpreted by a heavenly being differ from the motif of the interpreting angel in that it is Yahweh himself, rather than an

Ezekiel, Sacharja, Daniel und Erstem Henoch (Aachen: Shaker, 1998), 24, 255–57. Stefan Beyerle, on the other hand, sees two major forms of angelic revelation in apocalyptic: interpretation and instruction (“Angelic Revelation in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception* [eds. Friedrich V. Reiterer, et al.; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2007], 205–23). The latter is especially prominent in the Enochic *Book of Watchers* and in *Jubilees*.

⁵ Ezekiel 40–48 is often included as an example of the interpreting angel motif, though it differs from the other examples in that the prophet does not actually express bewilderment by the visions or ask the angel for explanations of their meanings. Nevertheless, these chapters anticipate later apocalyptic literature, namely the leading of a human visionary on a journey filled with elaborate visions which an angelic guide explains (see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 294–95).

intermediary divine being, who interprets the vision.⁶ Thus, not surprisingly, the transition from this mode of direct divine revelation to revelation through angelic intermediaries is often taken as a signal of the demise of classical prophecy, as God becomes increasingly transcendent and removed from the realm of humans.⁷

This transition is first seen in the sixth century, in the books of Ezekiel and Zechariah. A heavenly figure appears in Ezek 40–48 and leads Ezekiel on a tour of the eschatological temple. He is described here as a “man whose appearance was like bronze and who had a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand” (Ezek 40:3). Much of the vision is concerned with the measurements and workings of the future temple, and the prophet does not actually express confusion at his visions or request explanations from his heavenly guide. Nevertheless, the angel provides some commentary and interpretation of the visions, making these passages at least a precursor to the apocalyptic motif of the interpreting angel.⁸

⁶ Lester Grabbe has made much of the technical similarity of such mediations of divine revelation to human recipients by otherworldly beings in non-apocalyptic prophetic texts as an argument against the sharp distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic made by such scholars as O. Plöger (*Theocracy and Eschatology* [trans. S. Rudman; Richmond: John Knox, 1968]) and Paul D. Hanson (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975]), as well as the definition of the apocalyptic genre by Collins and the others (see Lester L. Grabbe, “Prophetic and Apocalyptic: Time for New Definitions—and New Thinking,” [in *Knowing the End From the Beginning* {eds. L. Grabbe and R. Haak; JSPSup 46; London: T & T Clark, 2003}], 107–33). His objections notwithstanding, the shift from direct revelation from Yahweh to a human prophet to mediation through angels does mark a significant disjuncture between classical prophecy and apocalyptic.

⁷ See, for example, Karin Schöpflin, “God's Interpreter: The Interpreting Angel in Post-Exilic Prophetic Visions of the Old Testament” (in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception* [eds. Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Niklas, and Karin Schöpflin; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007]), 189–203; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* [trans. J. A. Baker; OTL; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967], 2:200; H. Delkert, “Die Engelwesen in Sach 1,8–15,” *BN* 99 (1999): 20.

⁸ Schöpflin points out that the angel actually does not speak very much. Most of his interaction with Ezekiel takes the form of actions, such as taking measurements and directing the prophet's attention toward certain features. Schöpflin thus concludes that the figure in Ezek 40–48 “is not so much an interpreter then, but rather a guide” (“God's Interpreter,” 197). Nevertheless, as in the case of Ezek 8–11, the heavenly guide may be regarded as a precursor to the *angelus interpretis* proper, and later angelic

The first undisputed example of the interpreting angel motif appears in the night visions of Zech 1–6. Here an angel appears to the prophet and interprets his visions. In Zech 1:9 Zechariah asks “the angel who spoke with me” (הַמְּלַאֲךָ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי) about the identity of the four horses in his vision.⁹ The angel replies that he will show him what they are, and after this the “man standing among the myrtles” (הָאִישׁ הָעֹמֵד בֵּין־הַדְּדִים)—who is identified as the “angel of Yahweh” (מְלַאֲךָ יְהוָה) in v.11—answers the question: “These are the ones whom Yahweh has sent to go back and forth throughout the earth.” The interpreting angel thus not only mediates between Yahweh and the prophet, he also at times stands in a mediating position between the prophet and the elements of his vision. As Schöpflin points out:

The angel is not a part of the vision, but an observer like Zechariah, though an observer initiated into the secret visionary world. At the same time the interpreting angel seems to have the opportunity also to cross the line and to exert influence on or to enter the visualized sphere.¹⁰

The interpreting angel stands between the prophet and the vision and is able to interact with figures in both realms. But the same is also true of the prophet at times, as in Zech 2:5–6 [Eng. 2:1–2] Zechariah sees a “man” (אִישׁ) with a measuring line in his hand, and

interpreters also often act as guides on heavenly ascents (see Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5–7; Robert North, “Prophecy to Apocalyptic Via Zechariah” in *Congress Volume, Uppsala 1971* [VTSup 22; Leiden: Brill, 1972], 67).

⁹ It is possible that the horses also have angelic riders, as the man standing (!) among the myrtles is said to be riding on a red horse (1:8) (see K. Seybold, *Bilder zum Tempelbau. Die Visionen des Propheten Sacharja* (SBS 70; Stuttgart: KBW, 1974). This possibility would seem to be further underscored by the fact that “they” speak to the angel of Yahweh in v. 11. Schöpflin notes this, yet maintains, “As these horses are celestial ones they might as well be celestial beings able to speak” (“God’s Interpreter,” 192, n. 16). While the text does not explicitly state that the horses all have riders, and it is therefore theoretically possible that it is the horses which speak in v. 11, it seems much more likely that the horses should be understood to have angelic riders.

¹⁰ “God’s Interpreter,” 191.

he asks him where he is going. The figure, apparently able to hear the prophet, answers that he is going to measure Jerusalem. Thus, even the prophet is able to enter into and interact with the visionary world. The interpreting angel's primary function, then, is not to mediate between the human prophet and the visionary world, but to interpret visions which the prophet does not understand. Chapters 4–6 entail a series of symbolic visions of such items as a lampstand and bowl (4:2), two olive trees (4:3), a flying scroll (5:1), a basket with a woman inside (5:6–8), two women with wings (5:9), and four chariots with horses (6:1–3). Each vision follows the familiar pattern of the prophet being asked, “What do you see?” and the angel explaining the meaning of the vision (cf. Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24).

From Zech 1–6 onward, the interpreting angel becomes a persistent feature in Jewish apocalyptic literature. It appears throughout the Enochic corpus, beginning with Enoch's cosmic journey (*1 En.* 17–36), during which he engages in the vision + question and answer pattern familiar from Zechariah 1–6. All of *The Book of Luminaries* (*1 En.* 72–82) is composed of revelations from the angel Uriel, as he explains the workings of the universe to Enoch.¹¹ Interpreting angels also appear in Dan 7–8. In Dan 7:1–15, Daniel sees a vision of four beasts arising from the sea, and his vision perplexes him, so he asks one of the heavenly attendants in his vision to explain its meaning.¹² The angel

¹¹ *The Book of Luminaries*, along with the core traditions of *The Book of Watchers* (especially chs. 6–11), are generally held to be the oldest of the Enochic texts, with the oldest extant manuscript (4Q208) possibly dating to the late third century B.C.E. Nickelsburg sees *The Book of Luminaries* as the oldest of the Enochic works, with its roots in the Persian era, and he holds out the same possibility for *1 En.* 6–11 (*1 Enoch* 1, 7–10). Collins is more cautious, holding that “no section of *1 Enoch* as we have it can be dated prior to the Hellenistic age, although it undoubtedly draws on older traditions” (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 44).

¹² John Goldingay suggests that the figure in Dan 7:16 should be identified with the angel Gabriel, who appears in Dan 8:16 (*Daniel* [WBC 30; Dallas: Word, 1989], 173).

agrees and proceeds to interpret the vision as concerning the rise of four kingdoms on earth (Dan 7:16–27). Similarly, in Dan 8:15–26, the angel Gabriel interprets another vision involving animals symbolizing kingdoms (8:1–14).

In addition to these earliest examples of the interpreting angel motif, interpreting angels continue to appear in numerous Jewish and Christian apocalyptic works, including *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, the book of Revelation, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Apocalypse of Paul*.¹³

History of Scholarship

Israelite Angelology

Despite its prominence and importance in post-exilic literature, the development of the interpreting angel motif has received little attention from scholars and constitutes a gap in the scholarship on Israelite angelology. A few scholars, however, have attempted to discern the significance of the motif and its emergence at the beginning of the Persian period, in conjunction with the rise of apocalypticism.¹⁴

Walther Eichrodt points to the appearance of angelic intermediaries in the post-exilic period as evidence of “the ever-increasing emphasis on the divine

¹³ See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 20.

¹⁴ There is, of course, considerable disagreement as to when and in which texts the apocalyptic genre actually first appears. Many would consider *1 Enoch* (or, more precisely, the *Book of Watchers*) to be the oldest true apocalypse (Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 25–26; Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*). Others would place the origin of apocalyptic in the post-exilic prophetic books (Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*; Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*; Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*; Lester Grabbe, on the other hand, denies any significant disjuncture between “prophecy” and “apocalyptic” and points to visionary revelations in Amos and Jeremiah as being essentially the same as apocalyptic revelations (“Prophetic and Apocalyptic,” 107–33). In the two latter views, the appearance of the interpreting angel in Zech 1–6 and even its precursors in Ezek 8–11; 40–48 may be seen as early movements toward the apocalyptic form.

transcendence... which definitely involves an obscuring of the idea of God.”¹⁵ Similarly, Karin Schöpflin sees the interpreting angel as “indicative of a theological tendency to increase God's transcendent nature.”¹⁶ Unlike Eichrodt and other earlier scholars, however, Schöpflin does not conclude from this observation that Yahweh is necessarily absent from the world. Rather, angelic mediators become an extension of God's presence and evidence of his continuing involvement in the world.¹⁷

William Oesterly and Theodore Robinson attribute the use of divine intermediaries in Ezekiel to the prophet's “doctrine of divine transcendence,” while at the same time suggesting that Ezekiel develops ideas found in earlier biblical texts.¹⁸ They trace a development from the “spirit” in Ezekiel to the interpreting “angel” in Zech 1–6 and argue that whereas the former closely associated the intermediary with Yahweh, the latter “express[es] more pronouncedly the distinction, or separation, between God and

¹⁵ Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:200. A similar assessment is offered by Helmer Ringgren, who describes the increasing transcendence of God in post-exilic Judaism in terms of a preference for hypostases (e.g., דבר-יהוה, השם, רוח, שמים, etc.). However, Ringgren takes this development not as a sign of Yahweh's distance (and thus as an “obscuring of the idea of God”), but as way to express humanity's closeness to God while at the same time maintaining God's holiness (*Israelite Religion* [trans. David Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966], 308–09).

¹⁶ “God's Interpreter,” 201.

¹⁷ “God's Interpreter,” 201–02. Here Schöpflin's view of the interpreting angel comes close to Alexander Fischer's understanding of the “exodus angel,” which appears in several passages in Exodus (3:2; 14:19–20; 23:20–23; 32:34; 33:2). Fischer argues that these angelic appearances are part of a redactional layer which continues into Judg 2:1–5 and are intended to indicate Yahweh's real presence with the Israelites in the wilderness (“Moses and the Exodus-Angel” in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception* [eds. Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias Niklas, and Karin Schöpflin; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007], 79–93).

¹⁸ W. O. E. Oesterly and Theodore H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 250–51. Oesterly and Robinson point to the “spirit” mentioned in texts such as Judg 14:19; 1 Kgs 22:21; 2 Kgs 2:16, as possible sources for a concept which Ezekiel has modified in accordance with his unique thought.

His supernatural instrument.”¹⁹ They attribute this development to the influence of Old Iranian religious ideas which persisted in Persian Zoroastrianism.²⁰

A number of major studies of Israelite angelology either do not treat the interpreting angel at all or do so only briefly. Alexander Rofé examines the development of Israelite angelology from its early polytheistic roots, through the adaptation of belief in angels to monotheistic faith, and finally to the anti-angel programs of the Prophetic, Deuteronomic, Wisdom, and Priestly movements. Rofé ends his diachronic analysis of the development of Israelite angelology by noting briefly that angels, while virtually absent throughout most of the Prophets, make a comeback in late prophetic literature (e.g., Ezekiel and Zech 1–8), but he neither provides a detailed explanation for why this is the case nor traces the development of the interpreting angel motif specifically.²¹ Likewise, K. Merling Alomia’s extensive comparative study of lesser deities in the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible says very little about the interpreting angel, noting only the presence of angelic interpreters in Daniel and saying nothing of their

¹⁹ Zechariah’s use of the term “angel” (מלאך) emphasizes the distinction between the intermediary and Yahweh, in contrast to Ezekiel’s close identification and even blurring of the two. Oesterly and Robinson point to this distinction as “a further step in the teaching of the wide distance between God and man” (*Hebrew Religion*, 280).

²⁰ Oesterly and Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, 275; cf. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, 312. Unfortunately, they do not go into detail about these earlier Iranian ideas which they maintain influenced Jewish angelology via Zoroastrianism, nor do they explain in detail how Persian religion affected Judaism. This latter omission is particularly problematic in light of the fact that all of the parallels to Jewish angelology in Persian religious texts post-date the biblical texts and even most post-biblical apocalyptic texts (see M. Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990], 90–94). It is difficult to determine the genuine antiquity of most Zoroastrian traditions, since the earliest texts date from the tenth–ninth centuries C.E. in their present form. Boyce, however, maintains that many of these traditions are indeed quite old, and that some, especially the Gathic portions of the Avesta, go back to Old Iranian religion and perhaps even to Zoroaster himself. The teachings were transmitted orally until perhaps the fifth century C.E. (*Textual Sources*, 1).

²¹ Alexander Rofé, *The Belief in Angels in the Bible and in Early Israel* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Makor, 1979), esp. 330–42.

appearance in Zech 1–6.²² Michael Mach’s important study of pre-rabbinic angelology includes only two pages on the interpreting angel motif in extra-biblical texts only.²³ His treatment of the motif, like much of the rest of his study, does not concern itself with identifying the forces which contributed to the development of the motif.

William G. Heidt first provides a brief description of the various categories and terminology used to describe angels in the Old Testament, and then discusses a number of characteristics of angels in the Bible.²⁴ Although Heidt notes a few distinctive features of post-exilic angelology, such as interpreting angels in Zechariah and Daniel, he minimizes new development in the post-exilic period and rejects the view that angels were introduced in the post-exilic period to mediate between humans and an increasingly transcendent God.²⁵ Heidt devotes several pages to the “exegete” (interpreting) angel in Zech 1–6 and Dan 7–12, but he offers no explanation for the origin or significance of this motif.²⁶

In a study of Haggai and Zech 1–8, Janet Tollington suggests that the angelic “interpretation” of Jacob’s dream in Gen 31:10–13 may provide evidence of an early

²² K. Merling Alomia, “Lesser Gods of the Ancient Near East and Some Comparisons with Heavenly Beings in the Old Testament” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University/Seventh Day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1987), 477–78.

²³ *Entwicklungsstadien*, 142–44.

²⁴ William George Heidt, *Angelology of the Old Testament: A Study in Biblical Theology* (The Catholic University of America Studies in Sacred Theology Second Series 24; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949), esp. 59–62, 101–11. With regard to the interpreting angel in Zech 1–6, Heidt is content to note that Yahweh also communicates directly in these chapters. Therefore, according to Heidt, the presence of the interpreting angel cannot be taken as a sign of a more transcendent, distant deity (110–11).

²⁵ Heidt, *Angelology of the Old Testament*, 101–11.

²⁶ Indeed, of the use of angels to interpret visions, Heidt confesses “[w]hy such a method was used remains a mystery” (*Angelology of the Old Testament*, 59).

pattern which Zechariah revives.²⁷ Tollington's treatment of the interpreting angel motif is brief, however, and is restricted to Zech 1–6. Furthermore, she does not account for why such archaism would have arisen in the early Persian era and continued with such prominence throughout the Second Temple period and beyond.

Finally, Donata Dörfel includes a short excursus on the development of the interpreting angel motif from Ezek 40–48 through Daniel in her study of angelology in the early apocalyptic tradition.²⁸ Dörfel proposes that the phrase *בִּי הַמַּלְאָךְ הַדּוֹבֵר* in Zech 1–6 should be translated “the angel who spoke *through* me.”²⁹ Thus, the “angel” in Zech 1–6 is a form of the prophetic spirit.³⁰ The emergence of the interpreting angel as an autonomous intermediary does not occur until Dan 8.³¹ Dörfel's brief treatment of the development of the motif is essentially descriptive in nature and does not explain why this development takes place.³² Elsewhere, she includes another excursus on the impact

²⁷ *Tradition and Innovation*, 98–99. Tollington sees Zechariah's use of angelic mediators not as an indication of a remote God, but rather as a counter to the view that God's transcendence implied that he was distant from humanity. By reviving the pattern of the earliest period of Israelite religion (patriarchal), when Yahweh and his angels conversed with humans face to face, Zechariah emphasizes God's nearness and presence in the world (*Tradition and Innovation*, 99; cf. Schöpflin, "God's Interpreter," 201).

²⁸ Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 255–57.

²⁹ Dörfel points out that beginning in Zech 1:9 and continuing throughout Zechariah's night visions, the prophet addresses *בִּי הַמַּלְאָךְ הַדּוֹבֵר* as *אֲדֹנָי* “my lord.” She then asserts that in pre-exilic texts, the word *אֲדֹנָי*, when referring to a heavenly being, only describes Yahweh (*Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 94). However, in Gen 19:2, 18 the two angels are addressed as *אֲדֹנָי* by Lot, and although Dörfel cites Gen 18–19, she does not address this seeming contradiction to her claim.

³⁰ Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 94–95.

³¹ Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 256.

³² Dörfel does, however, make the important observation that the mediation of divine revelation through angels does not indicate that God had come to be viewed as remote and inaccessible during the Second Temple period, as has been so often charged, but rather that “[a]uch das dem Menschen zugänglich werden göttliche Wort erfährt im Blick auf seine Herkunft eine Relativierung” (*Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 256).

of political models upon the concept of the heavenly realm in the Second Temple period in general.³³ Here again, Dörfel's treatments are brief, and in this case they do not focus on the interpreting angel specifically.

As the above survey demonstrates, the development of the interpreting angel motif remains a largely unexplored subject within scholarship. Several major studies touch upon angelic interpretation briefly as an example of the increased transcendence of Yahweh in the post-exilic period. In addition several scholars posit significant foreign influence on the development of post-exilic angelology. A few recent studies attempt to go beyond these older views by attributing the emphasis on angelic mediation in post-exilic texts to archaism in the Persian period (Tollington) or by revisiting the notion of transcendence and attempting to understand interpreting angels as a sign of divine *immanence*, rather than divine *remoteness* (Dörfel, Schöpflin).

What is lacking even from the more recent studies is a sustained examination of the development of the interpreting angel motif in biblical and extra-biblical literature, the brief excursus by Dörfel notwithstanding. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing a detailed analysis of the development of the interpreting angel motif from the Neo-Babylonian period through the early Hellenistic period.

The Emergence of Apocalyptic Literature

Because the interpreting angel first appears in post-exilic prophetic literature—the same soil from which apocalyptic literature is often believed to have originated—and because of the centrality of the motif within the apocalyptic tradition, an overview of the

³³ For example, Dörfel notes the similarity of Yahweh's now mobile chariot throne (e.g., Ezek 1; 10) to the chariot throne of the Persian kings, who likewise travelled throughout their empire (*Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 268).

history of scholarship on the origins of apocalyptic literature may provide the broader background against which the development of the interpreting angel motif should be understood. In this study I will focus on the development of the interpreting angel motif, rather than the emergence of apocalyptic literature, but the trajectory within which I will trace the development of the motif is that of the birth of apocalypticism out of late Israelite prophecy, particularly Ezekiel and Zech 1–8.

The father of the study of apocalyptic literature in the twentieth century is without a doubt R. H. Charles. Charles decried the then widespread idea that the four centuries between Malachi and the dawn of Christianity were “silent years” in which all divine inspiration and revelation ceased. On the contrary, he argued that the intertestamental era was a time of tremendous religious development.³⁴ Charles connected apocalypticism with earlier prophecy and argued that apocalyptic literature’s use of pseudonymity arose from the suppression of prophetic revelation in favor of “the supremacy of the Law, which left no room for prophecy.”³⁵ The only task which remained for any future “prophets” was the interpretation of *past* prophecy. Therefore, pseudonymous apocalyptic literature provided a way around the obstacle of a closed canon, by attributing its revelations to figures from earlier times when prophecy had not yet ceased.

³⁴ R. H. Charles, *Religious Development Between the Old and the New Testaments* (Repr.; London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 14–15. Similarly, Charles denounces the notion that apocalyptic is ethically inferior to Old Testament prophecy. Rather, quite the opposite is the case, as Charles argues, “The ethical teaching...in apocalyptic is a vast advance on that of the Old Testament, and forms the indispensable link which in this respect connects the Old Testament with the New” (*Religious Development*, 32).

³⁵ *APOT*, viii. Of the cessation of prophecy in the Second Temple period, Charles writes, “When once this idea of an inspired Law—adequate, infallible, and valid for all time—had become an accepted dogma of Judaism, as it became in the post-Exilic period, there was no longer any room for independent representatives of God appearing before men, such as the pre-Exilic prophets” (viii). See also Charles, *Religious Development*, 8–9, 35–45.

For the first half of the twentieth century, most studies of apocalypticism viewed it as the product of foreign influence on Israelite prophetic thought. H. H. Rowley, for example, argued that apocalypticism arose to a significant degree due to the influence of Persian dualism upon Israelite prophecy.³⁶ Similarly, D. S. Russell identifies Persian religious thought as a primary source of the dualistic element in apocalyptic literature, as well as its determinism and angelology/demonology, although he also posits significant Babylonian and Greek influence as well.³⁷ Regardless of the specific source, for much of the early and mid-twentieth century apocalypticism was considered largely a synthesis of Israelite prophetism with foreign cosmologies, mythologies, and mantic practices.³⁸

The one major voice of dissent with regard to this view was that of Gerhard von Rad. Noting that the sole canonical apocalypse in the Hebrew Bible, the book of Daniel, portrays Daniel and his colleagues as *wise men*, von Rad argued that apocalypticism arose from the Wisdom tradition, rather than classical prophecy.³⁹ He also observed the determinism of apocalyptic literature, along with the tendency toward cosmological

³⁶ H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (3rd ed.; New York: Association, 1963), esp. 42–43.

³⁷ For Russell, Babylonian and Persian ideas were mediated to Second Temple Judaism by Hellenism, which he understands as “a syncretistic system which incorporated the beliefs and legends of older religions not only of the West but also of the East... a Greek-philosophized blend of Iranian esotericism with Chaldean astrology and determinism” (*The Method*, 18–19). Of special note with regard to the Babylonian element in apocalyptic is the not infrequent appearance of the “tablets of heaven” in apocalyptic literature, which recalls the “tablets of destiny” familiar from Mesopotamian mythology (see Helge Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and the Son of Man* [WMANT 61; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988], 239–42; Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* [TSAJ 107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 36–39).

³⁸ This view is typified especially by W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (3rd ed.; ed. H. Gressmann; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1926).

³⁹ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols; Peabody, MA: Prince, 2005), 2:301–15; trans. of *Theologie des alten Testaments* (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1957–60).

observation and speculation, the concern for the periodization of history in many of the apocalypses, all of which seemed to him to point toward a Wisdom background.⁴⁰

Von Rad's proposal initially found little acceptance, but there is now a greater awareness that apocalyptic literature does include a Wisdom element.⁴¹ The difficulty with von Rad's hypothesis lay in his lack of nuance regarding Wisdom literature. He treated all of Wisdom as a single, cohesive tradition, yet it was difficult for most to accept the notion that apocalyptic literature is more akin to Proverbs and Sirach than to Ezekiel and Zechariah.⁴² The Wisdom-Apocalyptic perspective received a boost, however, with Michael Stone's essay "Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature," in which he pointed out that several apocalyptic works dwell at length on the creation of various cosmological features which are also the subject of speculation in Wisdom texts (e.g., Job 38).⁴³ Most, however, have understood the type of Wisdom which relates to apocalyptic literature as *mantic* wisdom, particularly of a Babylonian type. Such apocalypses as *I*

⁴⁰ Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (trans. James D. Martin; Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), 263–83; trans. of *Weisheit in Israel* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener-Verlag, 1970). Von Rad further pointed out that certain Egyptian predictive texts which utilize the familiar *vaticinium ex eventu* form of apocalyptic derive from Egyptian Wisdom circles (*Wisdom in Israel*, 280).

⁴¹ The Wisdom element is particularly prominent in some of the later apocalypses, such as *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, both of which focus closely on questions of Theodicy. Theodicy may also stand in the background in the *Book of Watchers*, which is preoccupied with explaining the origin of evil through the myth of the fallen Watchers (see Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*).

⁴² As I demonstrate below, with regard to the motif of the interpreting angel—and indeed, angelology in general—the early apocalypses *1 Enoch* and Daniel stand in close continuity with Ezekiel and Zech 1–8.

⁴³ Michael Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature," in *Magnalia Dei, The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of G. Ernest Wright* (eds. G. Ernest Wright, et al.; Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 414–52. Stone was cautious, however, about following von Rad in concluding that Wisdom was the primary source of apocalyptic. He writes, "In short, what appears to be clear is that in the Wisdom literature which antedates the apocalypses we do not find anything which helps us directly to explain the more curious and less obvious objects of apocalyptic speculation. It seems most probable that part of this speculative concern of the apocalyptic lists derived from Wisdom sources, although the lines of connection may prove difficult to trace. It is impossible, however, to see the Wisdom tradition as the only source from which the interest in these subjects sprang" (438).

Enoch and Daniel show close affinity with Babylonian divination, the interpretation of dreams and omens, and *ex eventu* prophecy.⁴⁴

The discussion of apocalyptic origins in the last quarter of the twentieth century was dominated by the theses of Otto Plöger and Paul Hanson, as well as reactions against them. Plöger's 1959 work *Theokratie und Eschatologie* sought to reconstruct the social setting of the emergence of apocalypticism in the early post-exilic period.⁴⁵ According to Plöger the post-exilic community included two disparate social groups: a priestly-theocratic party and a visionary group consisting of the heirs of Second Isaiah. The former group, whose views are represented in the Priestly literature and the works of the Chronicler, could be characterized as having a "realized eschatology" focused on the temple cult, while the latter, whose views are represented in Isa 24–27, Zech 12–14, and

⁴⁴ See Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 21; John J. Collins, "The Court-Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *JBL* 94 (1975): 218–34; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (HSM 16; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), 67–88; H.-P. Müller, "Mantische Weisheit und Apokalyptik," in *Congress Volume: Uppsala 1971* (VTSup 22; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 268–93; James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (CBQMS 16; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 52–75; Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, 184–91, 236–423, 345–613; Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 23–39. The great similarity between apocalyptic revelation and Babylonian divination is especially relevant to the study of the interpreting angel motif. As a rule, Babylonian diviners interpreted dreams and omens based upon a body of received knowledge which ostensibly traced back to antediluvian times (see Alan Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods: Secret Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia and Biblical Israel* [SAAS 19; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2008], 67–134). While there may be a point of contact with the interpreting angel motif insofar as this body of received knowledge was originally mediated to humans through semi-divine beings (the *apkallū*), apocalyptic texts typically portray their visionaries as incapable of deciphering their visions without the help of an angel (Dan 7:15–27; 8:15–26; 12:8; Zech 1:9–17; 2:1–9; 4:1–6a, 10b–14; 5:1–6:8; see also Schöpflin, "God's Interpreter," 189). Collins further notes the shift from revelation through dreams in Dan 1–6 and revelation through visions in Dan 7–12, both of which require supernatural interpretation, and posits that whereas dreams were a common mode of revelation in Gentile (i.e., Mesopotamian) religions, visions are more typical of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible ("Court Tales in Daniel," 230).

⁴⁵ Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*.

Joel, continued to look forward to a cataclysmic divine intervention in the form of a final, cosmic judgment.⁴⁶

Paul Hanson's 1975 work *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* takes up Plöger's basic historical reconstruction of the social situation of the early post-exilic period as it relates to the emergence of apocalyptic and refines it by applying the social scientific relative deprivation theory of Max Weber, Karl Mannheim, and Ernst Troeltsch to the post-exilic community in Yehud. Combining Plöger's reconstruction of the social groups in Persian period Yehud with Cross's suggestion of a sixth century origin of the apocalyptic phenomenon via the recrudescence of early Canaanite myth, Hanson traced the development of apocalypticism from prophecy through an intermediary stage he labeled "proto-apocalyptic."⁴⁷ These proto-apocalyptic texts include "Third Isaiah" (Isa 56–66) and Zech 9–14, in which Hanson finds evidence of sectarian conflict and the alienation/marginalization of a once powerful group of Levites by the new Zadokite hierocracy, the re-mythologization of the divine warrior myth which had been historicized by the earlier prophets (e.g., Second Isaiah), and the projection of hopes for salvation into the eschatological future.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology*, 26–52; see also the helpful overview in Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 6–7. Plöger identifies these two groups as the predecessors of the Maccabees on the one hand and the Hasidim on the other.

⁴⁷ Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*. Cf. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 343–46; Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (trans. E. Fischoff; Boston: Beacon, 1963); Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (trans. L. Wirth and E. Shils; New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936); Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (trans. O. Wyon; 2 vols.; New York: Harper, 1960).

⁴⁸ According to Hanson, the "visionaries" among whom apocalyptic arose were the heirs of Second Isaiah, perhaps even the school which collected his oracles and which added to them (chs. 56–66) (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 32–46). Having once held power in the pre-exilic kingdom, they were displaced by the Zadokite group which controlled the temple cult during the post-exilic period and whose views were inspired to a significant degree by Ezekiel (especially chs. 40–48) and which are reflected in

Although the hypotheses of Plöger and Hanson have fallen out of vogue in recent years, nearly every treatment of apocalyptic origins since then defines itself in relation to their works. Hanson in particular has been heavily criticized for his application of deprivation theory to the post-exilic Jewish community and to apocalyptic literature. Stephen Cook points out that one flaw in the use of deprivation theory to explain the origin of Jewish apocalypticism is the assumption that millenarian groups which produce apocalyptic must be oppressed and marginalized in a physical sense.⁴⁹ On the contrary, the cognitive dissonance which gives rise to apocalyptic and millenarian thinking can arise amongst those who actually enjoy considerable wealth and prestige,⁵⁰ and in fact, the high level of literary artistry, interest in Wisdom concerns, and apparent familiarity with not only ancient Near Eastern but also Hellenistic mythology and literature suggests that the apocalyptic writers were actually highly educated, perhaps even scribes or court “wise men.”⁵¹

Further criticisms of Hanson include his characterization of apocalyptic language as “mythic” in contrast to “historical” prophecy,⁵² his identification of eschatology as the

the Priestly literature, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, as well as Haggai, and Zechariah 1–8, at least insofar as they supported the temple reconstruction (209–79).

⁴⁹ As Hanson puts it, “Modern sociologists like Mannheim and Weber have demonstrated convincingly that powerful officials ruling over the religious or political structures of a society do not dream apocalyptic visions of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order of things. Temple priests are not likely candidates for apocalyptic seers” (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 232).

⁵⁰ Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 15–16.

⁵¹ Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 177–92; see also Collins, “Court Tales in Daniel.”

⁵² See especially Grabbe, “Prophetic and Apocalyptic,” 111–18. Grabbe argues that, on the one hand, there is quite a bit of “myth” in classical prophecy, and on the other, apocalyptic groups believe their visions of cosmic judgment and theophany to be quite real, literal, and “historical” (e.g., evangelical expectations of the *parousia* of Christ and the final judgment).

central focus and primary identifying characteristic of apocalyptic literature,⁵³ and his contradistinction between apocalyptic sects and the Zadokite Priestly “hierocracy” of the Second Temple period, especially as it is expressed in Ezekiel and Zech 1–8.⁵⁴ On the contrary, it is precisely to the appearance of apocalyptic motifs—including notably the interpreting angel motif—in Ezekiel and Zech 1–8 that many point as the source of apocalyptic literature.⁵⁵

The Qumran texts have also entered into the discussion of apocalyptic origins in recent years. Two non-apocalyptic texts from Qumran, 4QMysteries (4Q299–301) and 4QInstruction (4Q415–18), link wisdom with eschatology in a manner reminiscent of

⁵³ Collins acknowledges that apocalyptic may not be equated with eschatology or even with apocalyptic eschatology, although he maintains that eschatology plays an “essential role” in apocalyptic literature (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 10–12). Others, however, identify non-eschatological concerns as the central components of apocalyptic. C. Rowland defines apocalyptic as “the direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity,” whether of an eschatological nature or otherwise (*The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 14). Similarly, E. P. Sanders defines apocalyptic as the synthesis of the themes of divine revelation and the miraculous reversal of fortunes for oppressed groups (“The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12–17, 1979* [ed. D. Hellholm; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983], 447–59). Paolo Sacchi, on the other hand, identifies the chief concern of the oldest apocalypse, the *Book of Watchers* (1 En. 1–36) as the origin of evil as the result of angelic rebellion and corruption of the earth. He then traces the development of this apocalyptic take on theodicy through the Enochic corpus, 2 *Ezra*, and 2 *Baruch* (Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*).

⁵⁴ Here see especially Cook (*Prophecy and Apocalypticism*), who traces the origins of apocalyptic to the central Priestly (Zadokite) groups which stand behind Ezek 38–39, Zech 1–8, and Joel 2–4, all of which he identifies as apocalyptic literature. See also Richard Bauckham, *The Jewish World Around the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 41–42.

⁵⁵ H. Gese, “Anfang und Ende der Apokalyptik, dargestellt am Sacharjabuch,” *ZTK* 70 (1973): 20–49; North, “Prophecy to apocalyptic, 47–71; Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*; E. J. C. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End: Zechariah, the Book of the Watchers, and Apocalyptic* (OTS 35; Leiden: Brill, 1996). Hanson recognized the similarity between many features of the “hierocratic” prophets Ezekiel and Zech 1–8—and here he mentions the interpreting angel specifically—and apocalyptic motifs, yet he attributed these to apocalyptic’s use of older literary forms (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 250–51). The problem with this explanation is that, while angelic messengers are indeed a genuinely old feature of Israelite religion, tracing all the way back to Bronze Age Canaanite religion, the specific motif of the angelic guide who interprets visions for a human visionary is not attested at all before the sixth century at the earliest, either in biblical or extra-biblical texts. It appears that the interpreting angel motif, although certainly drawing on earlier Israelite and foreign concepts, originated with apocalyptic (or more precisely, with proto-apocalyptic literature).

apocalyptic literature, such as *I Enoch*.⁵⁶ Didactic wisdom, comparable to Proverbs, dominates 4QInstruction, but the book begins by describing God’s ordering of the universe and his establishment of (eschatological) judgment for the wicked and salvation for the righteous.⁵⁷ Both texts exhort the reader to meditate on “the mystery of existence” (רז נהיה), which appears to refer to knowledge of all of time, past, present, and future, the order of the cosmos, and eschatological judgment.⁵⁸ This is revealed wisdom, similar to that which preoccupies much of *I Enoch* and other extracanonical apocalypses. In these apocalyptic texts, heavenly “mysteries” are revealed to human recipients by angels (usually interpreting angels), which may imply that apocalyptic literature in general, and the interpreting angel motif in particular, reflects a concern for the proper reception and transmission of heavenly wisdom. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, a chief function of the interpreting angel motif is to provide a legitimate alternative to prohibited forms of divination and ensure the divine source of both the vision and its interpretation by de-emphasizing the human role in revelation.

As the above survey of scholarship shows, the question of apocalyptic origins remains largely unanswered. There is general agreement that apocalyptic literature draws on older imagery, motifs, and traditions, especially mythology. There is also general

⁵⁶ See Michael A. Knibb, *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions* (SVTP 22; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 27–29.

⁵⁷ See John Strugnell and Daniel Harrington, “4QInstruction,” in *Qumran Cave 4.XXIV. Sapiential Texts, Part 2* (eds. John Strugnell, Daniel Harrington, and Torleif Elgvin; DJD 34; Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 8. See also Knibb, *Essays*, 27–28.

⁵⁸ Knibb, *Essays*, 28. Torleif Elgvin understands רז נהיה as “a comprehensive word for God’s mysterious plan for creation and history, his plan of man and for redemption of the elect,” and he traces this concept back to the figure of wisdom in Prov 8, Job 28, and Sir 24 (“The Mystery to Come: Early Essene Theology of Revelation,” in *Qumran between the Old and New Testaments* [eds. Frederick Cryer and Thomas L. Thompson; JSOTSup 290; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998], 113–50).

consensus that apocalypticism is at least related to prophecy, and most scholars now identify the emergence of apocalyptic motifs and eschatology in post-exilic prophecy (e.g., Ezekiel; Zech 1–8; Joel 2–4). Prophecy, however, is now recognized as only one source—though perhaps the most important source—of apocalyptic thought. Wisdom, especially of a mantic and cosmological type, appears to have contributed significantly to the apocalyptic tradition. In recent years the role of apocalyptic literature as interpretation of prophecy has attracted interest.⁵⁹ The nearly universally acknowledged pseudonymity of Jewish apocalyptic literature underscores the fact that, at least as the apocalyptic writers have presented it, these visions were not recent revelations to prophetic “heirs” but had been received in the distant past by such biblical figures as Adam, Enoch, and Moses.⁶⁰ Thus, whatever apocalyptic literature indicates regarding the mode(s) of divine revelation which were recognized in the post-exilic period, it is also indicative of what the apocalyptic writers believed to have been the mode(s) of revelation in operation during earlier periods of history.⁶¹

It is truly surprising that the development of Jewish angelology has not figured more prominently in the discussion of apocalyptic origins. It is, after all, in apocalyptic literature that angels with personal names first appear (*1 En.* 6:3–8; Dan 8:16), that a vast

⁵⁹ Bauckham writes, “In this [apocalyptic] tradition the transcendent eschatology of post-exilic prophecy was taken up and further developed in a conscious process of reinterpreting the prophets for the apocalyptists’ own age. The apocalyptists understood themselves not as prophets but as inspired interpreters of prophecy....The authority of the apocalyptists’ message is only derivative from that of the prophets” (*The Jewish World*, 53).

⁶⁰ See Bauckham, *The Jewish World*, 54–55.

⁶¹ In other words, the second century C.E. writer of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* may have portrayed Abraham as having received his revelations through an angelic mediator named Iael (10:3–17:21), but he would also have recognized that Abraham communed with Yahweh directly throughout the book of Genesis. It is therefore unlikely that the use of an interpreting angel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* indicates divine remoteness, as is often assumed for Second Temple Judaism (cf. Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:200; Oesterly and Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, 280).

hierarchy of angelic beings—both good and evil—appears (*I En.* 6:7–8; 8:1–4; 20; 40), and that the myth of the “fallen angels” is developed as an explanation for the origin of evil (*I En.* 6–11; 86–88). Angels, moreover, provide a point of contact between Jewish apocalypticism and earlier Israelite religion (at least as expressed in the Hebrew Bible). Continuity or discontinuity between apocalyptic literature and the various corpora of earlier biblical literature could provide valuable evidence with regard to the trajectories within Israelite religion which gave rise to apocalypticism. The interpreting angel motif is among the most prominent apocalyptic motifs, and its importance extends beyond angelology and into the very heart of apocalypticism—the break with earlier forms of divine revelation and the use of new modes of revelation. Therefore, in the following chapters I examine the appearance of interpreting angels in four bodies of Israelite/Jewish revelatory literature spanning the period of the transition from prophecy to apocalypticism (*Ezek* 40–48; *Zech* 1–6; *I Enoch* 17–36; 72–82; *Dan* 7–8) in order to trace the development of the interpreting angel motif, thus filling a gap not only in the study of Israelite angelology within the larger field of the study of Israelite religion, but also providing further evidence of the relationship between Israelite prophecy, wisdom, and apocalyptic literature.

Methodology, Definitions, and Structure

Methodology

In this study, I seek to trace the development of the interpreting angel motif in its early stages, during the period from the sixth–second centuries B.C.E. This process entails the detailed historical and literary exegesis of the relevant biblical and extra-

biblical texts in which interpreting angels appear, including treatments of standard historical-critical issues for each primary text under consideration. This analysis of the texts in which the interpreting angel motif appears is conducted throughout in consultation with relevant extra-biblical evidence pertaining to the socio-political⁶² and religious context of exilic and post-exilic Israelite/Jewish religion.⁶³

Because the interpreting angel motif did not develop in a historical, cultural, and religious vacuum, it is necessary to include relevant historical/socio-political and comparative religious data in a study of the motif's development. This is all the more important in light of the fact that recent treatments of the pantheon of pre-exilic Israelite religion see a divine hierarchy patterned after social institutions and structures.⁶⁴ I begin my analysis of each of the three major historical periods covered by this study (Neo-Babylonian, Persian, Early Hellenistic) with a brief examination of the historical and socio-political background of the primary texts under consideration. The reasons for doing so are three-fold. First, the interpreting angel appears in biblical literature

⁶² Here I primarily depend upon secondary scholarship and reconstructions of the history of the Second Temple period, most notably Lester Grabbe's excellent multi-volume study of the history and religion of the Second Temple period (Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Volume 1: Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah* [LSTS47; London: T & T Clark, 2004]; Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Volume 2: The Coming of the Greeks: The Early Hellenistic Period [335–175 B.C.E.]* [LSTS 68; London: T & T Clark, 2008]). I do, however, deal with especially important primary texts directly as well.

⁶³ Comparative texts include especially the "Verse Account of Nabonidus" (trans. Peter Machinist and Hayim Tadmor, "Heavenly Wisdom," in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Essays in Honor of William W. Hallo* [eds. Mark E. Cohen, et al.; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993], 146); texts relating to the Mesopotamian *apkallū* (e.g., a Neo-Assyrian text from the *Bīt Mēseri* series [Erica Reiner, "The Etiological Myth of Seven Sages," *Or* 30 {1961}: 1–11; the Seleucid era "Uruk Sage List" [see Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 106–09]; Berossus' *Babyloniaca* [see S. M. Burnstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus* {SANE 1/5; Malibu: Undena, 1978}, 13–14, 21); the Zoroastrian texts *Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5; *Arda Viraf* 7:1–9; and the Hellenistic writings of Xenophon (*Symposium*, 4.48) and Plato (*Symposium*, 202e–03a).

⁶⁴ See Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994).

immediately following the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and the demise of the Davidic monarchy as political rulers in Jerusalem and develops throughout the post-exilic period, in which Judah continued to live under foreign imperial rule, rather than native/local rule. One must ask, then, whether the experience of the loss of the local monarchy and its replacement with imperial administration through appointed governors contributed to the development of a preference for mediated revelation in revelatory literature, of which angelic interpretation is one of the primary examples.⁶⁵ Second, in his study of the Syro-Palestinian pantheon, Lowell K. Handy suggests that the West Semitic pantheon (including that of ancient Israel) was patterned after the political bureaucracy of West Semitic society.⁶⁶ Assuming that Handy's proposal is correct, a major change in the socio-political structure in the life of the ancient Jewish community, such as its absorption into a vast imperial society with a "distant" king who ruled through intermediary bureaucrats could have led to a change in the Jewish conception of the heavenly hierarchy.

My analysis of the primary biblical/pseudepigraphical texts is followed by a discussion of the religious environments in which they were written through an examination of contemporary comparative religious data. This comparative material includes both "canonical"/mythological texts and cultic texts, as well as any pertinent archaeological evidence for religious practices. The purpose of including comparative

⁶⁵ In their commentary on Zech 1–8, Carol and Eric Meyers briefly suggest that the appearance of an interpreting angel in Zech 1–6 is a reflex of the increased importance of messengers and bureaucratic intermediaries in the Persian Empire, of which Yehud was a part (Carol Meyers and Eric Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Commentary and Introduction* [AB 25B; Garden City: Doubleday, 1987], lviii–lix).

⁶⁶ Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*. Similarly, Mark S. Smith sees the Israelite pantheon as following the structure of the household (בית אב) (Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*). For a fuller discussion of the models of Handy and Smith, see below.

religious evidence is to provide a context for the development of angelic mediation and interpretation of revelation. Just as pre-exilic Israelite religion did not develop apart from its context within the religions of the ancient Near East, so also exilic/post-exilic Judaism was influenced by the religious environments of the Neo-Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic periods.⁶⁷ For both of these discussions, I utilize both primary sources (textual and archaeological) and secondary scholarship, with secondary scholarship leading the discussion due to practical considerations of space and scope.

The methodology employed in this study is historical and contextual⁶⁸ in nature. It assumes and builds upon the major treatments of the evolution of Israelite conceptions of the divine realm, especially those which treat the development of Israelite/Jewish angelology. Chief among these are the studies conducted by Mark S. Smith, Lowell K. Handy, and Lester L. Grabbe. Primarily on the basis of the Ugaritic texts, Smith and Handy have each (independently) reconstructed a four-tiered ancient Israelite pantheon in which angelic beings form the lowest tier of divinity, the messenger gods.⁶⁹ While Smith and Handy provide a helpful template for understanding the historic relationship between angels and Yahweh and their position within the ancient Israelite pantheon, Grabbe's works on Jewish religion in the Second Temple period lay the foundation for my own

⁶⁷ On the importance of studying Israelite religion within its ancient Near Eastern religious, historical, and cultural context, see Hallo's introductory essay in the first volume of *COS* ("Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Their Relevance for Biblical Exegesis," *COS*, 1:xxiii–xxviii). Here Hallo compares and contrasts the "contextual" method, which appreciates both continuities and discontinuities between biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature, with the popular "comparative" method of the nineteenth–twentieth centuries, which often descended into "parallelomania."

⁶⁸ See Hallo, "Ancient Near Eastern Texts," xxiii–xxviii.

⁶⁹ Although their four-tiered pantheons are virtually identical, Smith patterns his after the four-tiered household structure (בית אב) of ancient Israel (Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, esp. 41–66), whereas Handy posits a celestial bureaucracy after the pattern of the ancient Syro-Palestinian political bureaucracy, especially as evidenced at Ugarit (Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*).

examination of this aspect of post-exilic religious belief, as reflected in the literature of the period.⁷⁰ While his agenda is much more expansive than that of this study, Grabbe's approach closely corresponds to the one employed here, insofar as he takes into account the socio-historical background and the surrounding religious environment of Second Temple Judaism.⁷¹

In order to analyze the functions of interpreting angels in the relevant texts, I draw upon the studies of messengers in the ancient Near East conducted by Samuel A. Meier⁷² and, to a lesser extent, John T. Greene.⁷³ Greene provides an analysis of the different roles of messengers, their positions within society, and the typical modes/formulae used in their delivery of messages. He also examines a sampling of literature from across the ancient Near East (Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, Ugaritic, and Canaanite), as well as the Hebrew Bible, over a considerable span of time (c. 3000–30 B.C.E.).⁷⁴ Greene

⁷⁰ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*; Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 2*; Grabbe, *Judaic Religion*.

⁷¹ Also helpful in this regard are Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*; Gösta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); Ziony Zevitt, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001); Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament, Volume 1: History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (2nd ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* (2 vols.; London: SCM, 1974).

⁷² Samuel A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World* (HSM 45; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988).

⁷³ John T. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East* (BJS 169; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

⁷⁴ Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 7–76. As noted by Meier, however, Greene's survey of texts is far less extensive than he claims. Only four examples are adduced for the third millennium, none from prior to 2200 B.C.E., and *none* from later than the sixth century B.C.E., thus seriously calling into question his assertion that "the understanding of what a messenger was and did... was everywhere the same," all the way down to the first century (see Samuel A. Meier, "Review of *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East*, by John T. Greene," *JAOS* 110.4 [1990]: 752–53). Greene relies entirely upon English translations of the ancient Near Eastern texts. Moreover, the translations he cites are generally quite old (usually more than 50 years old). Thus, while his presentation of the ancient Near Eastern data is a helpful guide, it is necessary to consult original language sources and more recent translations.

concludes that messengers in the ancient Near East served as extensions of the authority of the one who sent them, to the point of virtually “allowing that person to be in two places at once.”⁷⁵ While Greene’s work has been sharply criticized for a number of shortcomings and deficiencies,⁷⁶ his description of the close identification of the messenger with the sender is consistent with the portrayal of messengers, both human and divine, in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature.

A second, less convincing aspect of Greene’s study is his attempt to determine whether or not Israelite prophets were regarded as “messengers.” While acknowledging that at least in the post-exilic period prophets were understood as messengers (cf. Hag 1:13; 2 Chron 36:15–16), Greene finds insufficient evidence for concluding that Israelite prophets were considered messengers during the pre-exilic period.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, Greene’s logic is not always clear, as, for example, when he concludes with regard to the prophets’ carrying-forward of Moses’ role as mediator between Yahweh and Israel,

The prophets (according to tradition) continued to maintain this relationship by interceding for Israel before Yahweh, after a portion of the spirit of Moses was divided among seventy elders of Israel—who, upon receipt of this spirit, began to prophesy (Num 11:24ff). As intercessor within the cult, the prophet carried petitions before Yahweh from Israel, as well as mandates from Yahweh before Israel. This was generally accomplished by the oracle. Thus, the suspected role of the prophet as messenger would only have been a part-time role—if at all!⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 7.

⁷⁶ See especially Meier’s review of Greene in *JAOS* 110.4 (1990): 752–53.

⁷⁷ Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 231–66. Cf. Rofé, who argues that the general absence of divine מלאכים from the prophetic literature was due to the fact that the *prophets* were regarded as Yahweh’s true messengers (*The Belief in Angels*, 89–119).

⁷⁸ Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 233. It is not at all clear how this conclusion follows from Greene’s observations.

Whereas Greene's study surveys texts in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the function(s) of messengers in ancient Near Eastern society,⁷⁹ Meier focuses on the different stages in the delivery of the message by the messenger. While he also considers a wide array of biblical and comparative evidence, Meier's goal is less to define what constituted a "messenger" in the ancient Near East than to describe the behavior of a messenger performing their primary function. Thus, Meier follows the activity through five stages: (1) Preparation/Commissioning, (2) Traveling, (3) Arrival, (4) Presentation, and (5) Post-Delivery.⁸⁰ Meier's study is particularly relevant due to the fact that he treats both human and divine messengers (though only very briefly), whereas Greene more or less restricts his study to human messengers.⁸¹

An important feature of messenger activity in the ancient Near East, according to Meier and Greene, is the use of basic messenger/message formulae to indicate the delivery of a message. While these formulae varied slightly depending on the historical period and the culture, consistent features include the identification of the recipient, the

⁷⁹ Greene identifies five major types/functions of ancient Near Eastern messengers: (1) ambassador, (2) emissary-courier, (3) harbinger, (4) envoy, and (5) herald (*The Role of the Messenger*, xvi–xvii).

⁸⁰ Greene also identifies a number of components of the "chain of communication" in the ancient Near East. These include (1) Authorization, (2) Stratification, (3) Mnemonization, (4) Sectionalization, (5) Legitimation/Authentication, (6) Rejection, (7) Identification, and (8) Specialization/Diversification (*The Role of the Messenger*, xviii–xix). Greene's categories, however, are not necessarily stages in the act of delivering a message, but also include general characteristics of messengers and possible responses to them.

⁸¹ See especially Meier, *The Messenger*, 119–29. Green, on the other hand, states from the outset that his work "studies the messenger as a link in the chain of human communication, and focuses on the human messenger link of the communication chain of the ANE—although sometimes literary figures such as deities or birds are employed in the literature being examined to show the human messenger's influence on contemporaneous literature" (*The Role of the Messenger*, 3). Thus, Greene does include a few examples of divine messengers in his examination of ancient Near Eastern texts, but these are included primarily to aid in defining the nature and functions of messengers. His aim is solely to describe human messengers.

identification of the sender, instruction to “say/speak” the message, and the content of the message which was to be delivered orally, usually verbatim and often from memory.⁸²

In addition to such exegetical and historical concerns, I also give attention throughout to the development of the interpreting angel motif in conjunction with the larger phenomenon of the rise of apocalyptic literature and how the former relates to the latter.⁸³ My goal is to trace the development of the interpreting angel motif within a trajectory connecting late prophetic literature (Ezek 40–48; Zech 1–6) with early apocalyptic literature (*1 Enoch*; Dan 7–8). In order to accomplish this goal, my analysis of the primary texts will focus on the level of identification/differentiation between the angelic interpreter and its sender (Yahweh), the apparent role of Yahweh in the process of revelation, the different activities of the angelic interpreter in the process of revelation, the actions of the human visionary, and the continuities/discontinuities between the significant elements in these passages and other biblical and non-biblical texts.

⁸² Greene examines letters from Mari, Babylonia, Assyria, Hatti, Ugarit, Palestine, and Egypt, and finds a high level of consistency in the standard formulae used by messengers (Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 45–76). See also Meier, *The Messenger*, 191–201.

⁸³ Of particular significance on this point is the way in which interpreting angels highlight the increasingly cryptic nature of divine revelation. Hanson’s influential hypothesis on the prophetic origins of apocalyptic, while largely outdated in terms of its characterization of apocalyptic in terms of conflict between powerful hierocrats and disenfranchised visionaries, remains informative insofar as Hanson points to discernable shifts in late prophetic texts which anticipate apocalyptic (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic*). The most important of these shifts, as it relates to this study, is the return to mythological symbolism of God’s activities vis a vis the world. Similarly, Stephen L. Cook, following Gunkel, associates apocalyptic with the eschatologization of traditional mythology (“Mythological Discourse in Ezekiel and Daniel and the Rise of Apocalypticism in Israel” in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic, and Their Relationships* [eds. Lester L. Grabbe and James H. Charlesworth; JSPSup 46; London: T & T Clark, 2003], 85–106; cf. Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*). Also important to this study is Bauckham’s definition of apocalyptic as interpretation of prophecy, since the chief “interpreters” in these texts are the *interpreting* angels (see Bauckham, *The Jewish World*, 54–55).

Definitions

Angel. Generally speaking, “angels” are messengers. They are chiefly associated with the Hebrew term מלאך, which may refer to either human or divine messengers, although in the majority of instances in the Hebrew Bible it refers to human messengers.⁸⁴ Grammatically, מלאך is a classic example of a *mem*-prefixed noun of the *maqṭal* pattern—which usually signifies an object or person through which an action is carried out—based on the Semitic root *LʿK* “to send a messenger with a message.”⁸⁵

The challenge of defining “angel” is complicated by the fact that there are numerous examples of מלאכים which engage in official tasks other than carrying messages.⁸⁶ This observation extends to both human and divine “messengers,” who engage in such actions as guarding (1 Sam 19:11), saving (Gen 19:1–22) and killing (2 Kings 19:35). As Greene notes, however, messengers commonly engaged in tasks which went well beyond the delivery of messages.⁸⁷ Their primary function was the extension

⁸⁴ Samuel A. Meier, “Angel I” *DDD*, 46. However, the distribution of divine versus human messengers is not even across the Hebrew Bible. The majority of מלאכים in Genesis and Exodus, for example, are divine, while the majority in the Deuteronomistic History are human.

⁸⁵ J.-L. Cunchillos, “La’ika, mal’āk et M°lā’käh en sémitique nord-occidental,” *RSF* 10 (1982): 153–60. While the verb *lʿk* is not attested in Hebrew, it does appear in Ugaritic texts with this meaning in reference to both divine (*KTU* 1.2.1.11) and human (*KTU* 2.33.36) messengers, who are likewise denoted by the noun *mlak*. The noun *mlʿk* in reference to a messenger appears twice in the eighth century B.C.E. Aramaic Sefire inscriptions (*KAI* 224.8), and four times in Judean Aramaic inscriptions (see *DNWSI* 2:629). A מלאך appears in a third century BCE Phoenician inscription from Maʿšūb as a “messenger of *mlk* ʿstrʿ” (*KAI* 19.2–3). There is also one debatable instance of Akkadian *mālaku* as “messenger” in an Old Babylonian text (*CT* XXIX, 21.19). This one possible Akkadian *mālaku* notwithstanding, West Semitic *mlʿk* generally falls into the same semantic domain as the Akkadian *mār šipri* (Sumerian *SUKKAL*; *KIN.GI4.A*), which could likewise apply to both human and divine messengers (Meier, *The Messenger*, 1–12; Meier, “Angel I,” 46).

⁸⁶ Cunchillos, “La’ika,” 153

⁸⁷ Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 134; see also Meier, *The Messenger*, 3–4.

of the authority and presence of the one who sent them, and this extension of authority could include various deeds, in addition to the oral delivery of a message. He cites as examples the sending of messengers to find the contraband booty from Jericho in the tent of Achan (Josh 7:22–23), the sending of messengers by Joab to seize Abner so that he could murder him (2 Sam 3:26), Hezekiah’s sending of a messenger to deliver tribute and do obeisance before Sennacherib,⁸⁸ Sheshonq I’s sending of a statue of Osiris with his messenger to erect it in Abydos,⁸⁹ and Re’s sending of Hathor to destroy humanity.⁹⁰ One could also perhaps add Abraham’s sending of his “servant” (עבד) to find and bring back a wife for Isaac (Gen 24), since Greene shows that עבד could also be used to describe messengers.⁹¹

Further clouding the matter is the translation of Hebrew מלאך as Greek ἄγγελος in the LXX and other Jewish and Christian texts. The semantic domain of ἄγγελος is roughly the same as that of מלאך, but the LXX uses ἄγγελος to translate a number of other terms for divine beings in the Hebrew Bible which in all likelihood were not originally understood as “angels” but as gods or protective spirits. Thus in several instances the LXX translates ἄγγελος for Hebrew בני אלהים (lit: “sons of God”; Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1), which is a well-attested epithet for the assembly of the gods in Ugaritic

⁸⁸ COS 2.119B :303.

⁸⁹ Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 30–31.

⁹⁰ One could question Greene’s identification of Hathor as a messenger here, since he does so solely on the basis of the use of the word “sent” to describe Re’s actions toward her (Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 38–39).

⁹¹ Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 122.

texts. It does not refer specifically to divine messengers or even to lesser/subservient deities *per se*, but actually designates the group of deities who exercised authority on heaven and earth and had the power to grant kingship of the gods. Similarly, the divine guardians/protective spirits known as כְּרוּבִים and שְׂרָפִים in the Hebrew Bible eventually came to be understood as classes of angels in Jewish and Christian traditions, and although they belong to the same “class” of low-level divine beings as the divine מְלַאכִים, they originally were a distinct type of divine being from messenger deities.⁹² Following the models for the ancient Israelite pantheon put forth by Smith and Handy and the analyses of the roles of messengers in the ancient Near East provided by Greene and Meier, for the purpose of this study I will define “angel” as including any lower-level divine being which acts as an intermediary between two or more parties or acts as a servant or emissary of a high god (e.g., Yahweh) in some other fashion.⁹³ In truth, the line between minor god and angel is often blurred, especially when the word מְלַאךְ or ἄγγελος is applied to a being which does not act in any sort of intermediary fashion.⁹⁴

⁹² See E. Theodore Mullen, *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (HSM 24; Chico, CA.: Scholars, 1980), 118–19; 175–86.

⁹³ Greene points out that messengers were not necessarily of low social status, but could include very high ranking bureaucrats (*The Role of the Messenger*, 41). The same is true in mythological texts, where one occasionally finds major deities acting as messengers for other gods or goddesses, as Anu does in *Enuma Elish* II.95–105 (trans. Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* [3rd ed.; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2006], 449). Likewise, Rofé argues that some major Canaanite deities function as angels in the Hebrew Bible, such as Resheph as an angel of pestilence in Hab 3:5; Deut 32:24 (*The Belief in Angels*, 1:128–54). Nevertheless, within the post-exilic texts under consideration here, monotheism or something very close to it seems to be presumed, and all of the divine beings other than Yahweh belong to a lower level of divinity. This is true as well of the named angels/archangels which appear in *I Enoch* and Dan 7–12, which, although often occupying the highest levels of the angelic hierarchy, are still far inferior to Yahweh and are defined by their service to Yahweh.

⁹⁴ One thinks especially of the portrayal of angels as priests in the heavenly temple at Qumran in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (4Q403) (see Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* [Atlanta: Scholars, 1985]).

But for the purpose of studying the interpreting angel motif, a restriction of the term to divine intermediaries is appropriate.

Interpreting angel. Because there has been so little scholarly writing on the interpreting angel motif, the resources available for constructing a working definition are not nearly as plentiful as for angels in general. The term “interpreting angel,” or as it is often called, *angelus interpres*, is somewhat misleading, for although these angels are chiefly defined by their role as interpreters of visions, they often engage in non-interpretive actions as well. The most common of these other roles is that of guide. Martha Himmelfarb has written the definitive works on the motif of the guided tour of hell and of heaven in apocalyptic literature.⁹⁵ Although her focus is on the cosmology indicated in the descriptions of hell, heaven, and the cosmos in apocalyptic literature, she traces the motif of the angel guided tour back to Ezek 40–48, which is also where I seek the origins of the interpreting angel motif.⁹⁶

The defining characteristic of the interpreting angel is that of providing further explication of unclear, confusing, or overwhelming revelations, usually visions, to a human recipient. Thus, Heidt prefers to use the term “exegete angel,” in order to underscore the role of the angel in uncovering the true meanings of symbolic

⁹⁵ Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁹⁶ In Ezek 40–48 the interpreting angel motif and the angel guided tour motif are really one and the same. One could speak of the angel guided tour as a sub-motif of the interpreting angel motif, since such tours generally involve the interpretation of various sights by the angelic guide, while there are instances of angelic interpretation which do not involve guided tours (e.g., Zech 1:8–2:5; 3:1–4:7; 5:5–6:8; Dan 7:16–27; 8:15–26).

revelations.⁹⁷ Thus, for the purpose of this study, I will define “interpreting angel” as any angelic being which interprets, explains, elaborates, or further clarifies a vision or dream for a human recipient. Often this interpretation/explanation occurs in the form of a vision + question and answer dialogue between the angel and the human, but it need not necessarily take this form.

Structure

This study consists of five chapters. *Chapter One* is the present introduction, consisting of an overview of the interpreting angel motif and the textual evidence for it, the history of scholarship on the interpreting angel, a review of the history of scholarship on the origins of apocalyptic literature, a statement of the goals of this study, methodology, and definitions. *Chapter Two* consists of detailed analysis of Neo-Babylonian period biblical prophetic texts containing or closely relating to the interpreting angel motif,⁹⁸ in dialog with comparative texts and against the background of the socio-political history of the Neo-Babylonian period. *Chapter Three* does the same for biblical texts of the Persian period,⁹⁹ in which the transition from prophetic to apocalyptic literature appears to have begun. *Chapter Four* treats early Hellenistic period biblical¹⁰⁰ and pseudepigraphical¹⁰¹ texts in which interpreting angels appear. *Chapter*

⁹⁷ See Heidt, *Angelology of the Old Testament*, 59–62.

⁹⁸ Specifically, Ezek 40:1–37, 43–49; 41:1–43:6; 44:1–4; 46:19–47:12.

⁹⁹ Zech 1:7–2:9; 3:1–4:6a, 10b–14; 5:1–6:8.

¹⁰⁰ Dan 7:15–27; 8:15–26.

¹⁰¹ These include various passages from *I Enoch* 17–36; 72–82. Due to the pervasiveness of angelic interpretation throughout the Enochic texts, treatment of this material will be of a more general nature than with the biblical material. The Enochic material generally attests to the development which took place between the time of Zech 1–6 and that of Dan 7–8, and therefore it is important for shedding light on this important period of development.

Five concludes the study by summarizing its findings and presenting a reconstruction of the development of the interpreting angel motif.

CHAPTER TWO

A Mysterious Man: The Interpreting Angel in Neo-Babylonian Period Biblical Literature

Introduction

The interpreting angel motif appears for the first time in the biblical literature of the Neo-Babylonian period (605–539 B.C.E.). In Ezek 40–48, a mysterious “man” (אִישׁ) guides the prophet through a tour of a future temple in Jerusalem. The text describes this man in terms reminiscent of the supernatural beings described in Ezek 1:26–28 and Ezek 8:2–3, specifically as one “whose appearance was like the appearance of copper” (Ezek 40:3a; cf. Ezek 1:26–28; 8:2). But whereas the figures in Ezek 1 and Ezek 8 are closely identified with Yahweh as hypostases (יְד אֲדֹנֵי יְהוָה, Ezek 8:1) or visible manifestations of the divine presence/glory (מְרֵאָה דְמוּת כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה, Ezek 1:28), the guide in Ezek 40–48 is clearly distinguished from Yahweh (Ezek 43:6–7).¹

The actions of the guide in Ezek 40–48 also correspond closely to typical behavior of interpreting angels in later texts, such as Zech 2:1–5; *I En.* 17–36; 61; 72–82;

¹ The “man” in Ezek 8:1–4 does not say anything to the prophet, and the speeches in 8:5–18 are given in the first person from Yahweh’s perspective, thus suggesting either that the “man” is Yahweh (as in 1:26–28) or that he merely transports Ezekiel, while Yahweh speaks to him directly. Moreover, v. 1 states that “the hand of the Lord YHWH fell upon me,” and in v. 3 the “man” stretches out his hand and seizes the prophet by the hair, thus suggesting that he (or his hand) is the יְד אֲדֹנֵי יְהוָה. See also G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), 89–90; Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel* (FOTL 19; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 51; Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (LHBOTS 482; London: T & T Clark, 2007), 97–98; Nancy R. Bowen, *Ezekiel* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 45; James Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel* (LHBOTS 447; London: T & T Clark, 108–11; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapter 1–24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 279; Horace D. Hummel, *Ezekiel 1–20* (Concordia Commentary; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 246. But cf. Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (trans. Ronald E. Clements; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979), 236; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 200.

Rev 21:9–22:7. These actions include most notably guiding the visionary through a tour of a cosmic or eschatological scene, taking measurements of various features of the scene, explaining the significance of various features, and answering the questions of the visionary.² On the other hand, whereas angelic mediation (including interpretation) is the dominant form of revelation in apocalyptic literature—and also one late prophetic book, Zech 1–8—it comprises only a small portion of the Book of Ezekiel. Even within Ezek 40–48, which many scholars regard as a late addition to the book, angelic activity and revelation comprise less than half of the text (40:3–37, 43–49; 41:1–43:5; 44:1–4; 46:19–47:12).³ Large portions of Ezek 40–48 consist of revelations ostensibly received directly from Yahweh (Ezek 43:6–27; 44:2–3, 5–31; 45:1–46:18; 47:13–48:35).⁴ The guide, while clearly an otherworldly being, is never explicitly identified as an angel (מלאך), but rather as a “man” (איש).⁵

² Within discussions of apocalyptic literature, this motif of an angel guided tour (usually of heaven, hell, or the cosmos) is closely associated with the apocalyptic subgenre of the “otherworldly journey” (Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 6–7). In her two ground-breaking studies of the tour motif in apocalyptic literature, Martha Himmelfarb traces the motif back to the Book of Ezekiel, especially chs. 40–48 (Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*; Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*). There is significant overlap between the angel guided tour motif and the interpreting angel motif, and angelic interpretation is a typical element of these guided tours. Nevertheless, the interpreting angel motif is not restricted to tour literature and appears frequently in other types of literature (e.g., Dan 7–8).

³ On a late dating of Ezek 40–48, see John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 373; E. Vogt, *Untersuchungen zum Buch Ezechiel* (AniBi 95; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 127–75; Schöpflin, “God’s Interpreter,” 198. For the contrary view, see Lawrence Boadt, “Ezekiel, Book of,” *ABD* 2:720; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 70; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25–48* (trans. Walther Zimmerli; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 327–28; Hals, *Ezekiel*, 286–89.

⁴ These prophetic oracles differ from traditional, classical prophecy by being given in prose rather than poetry, but prose oracles are characteristic of the Book of Ezekiel as a whole (see Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 6–8; cf. Gustav Hölscher, *Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch, eine literarkritische Untersuchung* [BZAW 39; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1924]).

⁵ One should not overstate the significance of this fact, since the Hebrew Bible often uses other terms—including אֱלֹהִים/אֱלֹהִים—to refer to angelic beings (e.g., Gen 18:2; 32:24; Josh 5:13; Judg 13:12–13).

This chapter will examine the angelic guide/interpreter in Ezek 40–48 by analyzing his activities in the texts in which he appears. These include Ezek 40:1–37, 43–49; 41:1–43:6; 44:1–4; 46:19–47:12. Prior to examining these texts, however, I will briefly explore the historical background of Ezek 40–48 in the Neo-Babylonian period (605–539 B.C.E.). My focus here will be on the evidence for Neo-Babylonian imperial administration and the use of bureaucratic intermediaries, especially as it would have impacted the Jewish communities in Babylonia and in Palestine. Following this discussion of historical background, I will analyze the interpreting angel in the relevant texts from Ezek 40–48, beginning with a discussion of major historical-critical issues for these texts. I will then focus on the appearances and activities of the interpreting angel in these texts, with special attention to describing the nature of the revelation mediated by the angel, the various activities and modes of communication used by the angel, the relationship between the angel and God, and the role of God in the revelation. Throughout, I will note continuities and discontinuities between these texts and both earlier and later biblical and pseudepigraphical texts. Following my analysis of the texts from Ezek 40–48, I will examine parallels from Mesopotamian literature, with a focus on texts and traditions which were in use during the Neo-Babylonian period which provide evidence for religious practices during the Neo-Babylonian period which parallel or are relevant to the development of the interpreting angel motif. The chapter will then conclude with a brief summary of its findings.

The word מלאך never describes the interpreting “angels” in Dan 7–8, which are also called “men” (e.g., Dan 8:15).

Historical Background: Neo-Babylonian Imperial Administration

The Neo-Babylonian period began, historically speaking, with the accession of Nabopolassar to the Babylonian throne in 626 B.C.E., although the Neo-Babylonian Empire did not form until Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish in 605, thus establishing Babylonian hegemony across most of the Near East.⁶ Although the Neo-Babylonian Empire lasted a mere seventy years—far less time than either the Neo-Assyrian Empire which preceded it or the Persian Empire which succeeded it—the experience of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of a considerable portion of the kingdom of Judah into the “Babylonian Exile” was a key turning point in the narrative of ancient Israel and a formative event in the development of Judaism.⁷ For centuries afterward, Babylon and her kings—especially Nebuchadnezzar II, the destroyer of the temple—remained a symbol of both the instrument of Yahweh's judgment and, at the same time, the arch-enemy of Yahweh and his people (Hab 1–2; Jer 50–51; Isa 47; Ps 137; Dan 2:31–45; 4; 4 Ezra 15:34–16:17; 2 Bar. 11–12; 67; Rev 17–18).

While the Neo-Babylonian period is among the best-attested periods in Mesopotamian history in terms of the total number of extant texts, the basic outlines and structures of Neo-Babylonian imperial administrative policy and practice remain a

⁶ For an overview of the Neo-Babylonian period, see Marc Van de Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000–323 BC* (2nd ed.; BHAW; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 276–85; D. J. Wiseman, “Babylonia 605–539 B.C.,” in *CAH²*, 3:229–51.

⁷ Jacob Neusner identifies the Babylonian destruction/exile as the first of the transforming experiences of the Jewish community, by which Judaism evolved from the religion of ancient Israel (*Transformations in Ancient Judaism* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004]).

subject of intense debate.⁸ As in so many other areas of biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies, there exist a “maximalist” camp and a “minimalist” camp, as well as a host of moderate opinions. On the one hand, scholars such as Barstad, Sack, and Carter argue that the material evidence supports the identification of a distinct Neo-Babylonian period outside of Mesopotamia (i.e., in Syria-Palestine), as well as the existence of an extensive Neo-Babylonian administrative system across the lands conquered by Babylon during the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E.⁹ On the other hand, until recently most

⁸ More than 10,000 cuneiform tablets from the Neo-Babylonian period have been published so far, and these represent only a small portion of the total number of extant texts. Most of these texts are economic or local administrative texts relating to private business and legal affairs, such as contracts, sales of property, marriage and divorce contracts, deeds of inheritance, etc. (M. A. Dandamaev, “Neo-Babylonian Society and Economy,” in *CAH²*, 3:252). As such, they tell us quite a bit of daily life in sixth century Babylonia, but very little about imperial administration outside Babylonia. This dearth of evidence leads Van de Mieroop (and many others) to conclude that “we have virtually no idea about how the [Neo-Babylonian] empire was administered” (*A History*, 277).

⁹ Barstad argues that in Judah, there was considerable continuity from the seventh through the sixth centuries, which suggests that the Neo-Babylonian Empire did not simply lay waste to Judah, deport the majority of its population, and leave the land desolate and unproductive, but rather invested in the exploitation of the land and its resources. This endeavor would have required, of course, a considerable population still living in the land, as well as Babylonian administrators and garrisons in the region (Hans M. Barstad, “After the ‘Myth of the Empty Land,’” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* [eds. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 3–20; see also Hans M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the “Exilic” Period* [SOFS 28; Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996]). Similarly, Sack argues that the Neo-Babylonians perpetuated Neo-Assyrian imperial ideology and administrative policies, including the administrative framework established throughout the western provinces in the eighth–seventh centuries (Ronald H. Sack, “Nebuchadnezzar II and the Old Testament: History versus Ideology,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* [eds. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 221–33, esp. 226–27). Similarly, Zorn marshals impressive archaeological evidence from Tell en-Naşbeh—biblical Mizpah, which was the seat of the Neo-Babylonian administration following the destruction of Jerusalem according to Jer 40–41, although he is more cautious and limited in his assumptions regarding the rest of the former kingdom of Judah. Several very large public buildings, including some conforming to typical Mesopotamian styles, ostraca containing several Babylonian names, the famous MŞH stamped jar handles, and various other artifacts point toward the presence of Babylonian officials at Mizpah and confirm its status as provincial capital (Jeffrey R. Zorn, “Tell en-Naşbeh and the Problem of the Material Culture of the Sixth Century.” In *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* [eds. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 413–47). Drawing of the results of both excavations of key sites and surface surveys, Carter concludes that the archaeological evidence (especially the surveys) “appear to challenge the notion that the territory of the former kingdom of Judah lay in near complete devastation after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem” (Charles Carter, “Ideology and Archaeology in the Neo-Babylonian Period: Excavating Text and Tell,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* [eds. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 306).

scholars accepted the biblical description of Neo-Babylonian period Judah as a devastated, mostly depopulated land, and while there is now a much greater awareness that the majority of Judahites did not go into “exile” and continued to live in the land of Judah, some, such as Vanderhooft and Stern, still regard the biblical portrait of the period as fairly accurate.¹⁰

The difficulty in reconstructing the imperial administration of the Neo-Babylonian Empire lies in the fact that, as Vanderhooft has pointed out, the Neo-Babylonian rulers were much more concerned about conditions in Babylonia than in conquered territories. Thus, we simply do not find much in the way of textual evidence for Neo-Babylonian administration outside of Mesopotamia.¹¹ One important piece of

¹⁰ In his revised dissertation, Vanderhooft argues that Neo-Babylonian imperial policy departed radically from Neo-Assyrian policy. Whereas the Neo-Assyrians maintained an elaborate administrative system across their empire and exercised considerable control over provincial territories, the Neo-Babylonians (with the exception of Nabonidus, who did adopt some Neo-Assyrian policies) were largely unconcerned with administering and exploiting distant lands, but rather focused on the heartland of Babylonia. Any Neo-Babylonian administration in the Levant was minimal and designed only to prevent Egyptian expansion into the region (David S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* [HSMM 59; Atlanta: Scholars, 1999], 9–114). In contrast to Vanderhooft’s rather extreme interpretation, Stern allows for differences between Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian imperialism (i.e., the Babylonians *were* more concerned with the heartland and *did* neglect peripheral areas), while at the same time recognizing the evidence for a very real Neo-Babylonian administrative apparatus, albeit a limited one in comparison with the Neo-Assyrian and Persian systems, in the Levant and elsewhere. Most notably, he notes a population shift from Judah, which was almost entirely devastated by the Babylonian invasion and lay in ruins for most of the sixth century, to Benjamin, which suffered very little destruction and may actually have prospered during the Neo-Babylonian period. In particular, whereas Vanderhooft is dismissive of the biblical and archaeological evidence pointing toward Mizpah (Tell en-Naşbeh) as a provincial capital/administrative center during the Neo-Babylonian period, Stern accepts the identification of Mizpah as the capital of a Neo-Babylonian province in Judah (Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Volume II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732–332 B.C.E.)* [ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2001], 303–50; see also Oded Lipschits, “Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* [eds. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 323–76).

¹¹ Vanderhooft points to Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions, which rarely document relations with foreign peoples. When they do so, it is usually in relation to their contributions or conscription for royal building projects in the cities of Babylonia (Vanderhooft, *Babylon in the Latter Prophets*, 9–11). The major exception is the Babylonian Chronicle (not technically a royal inscription), but it is of limited value since it breaks off after 594 B.C.E. (Wiseman, “Babylonia,” 230).

evidence is Nebuchadnezzar's Etemenanki inscription, which speaks explicitly of Nebuchadnezzar's rule over vast lands and many peoples, as well as his conscription of non-Babylonians for construction projects:

The widespread peoples which Marduk, my lord, entrusted to me, whose shepherdship the hero Šamaš gave me, the totality of all the inhabited world, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, distant realms, the peoples of the widespread inhabited regions, kings of distant mountains and faraway islands in the Upper and Lower Sea, whose lead ropes Marduk, my lord, in order to pull his chariot pole, entrusted into my hands, I called up... for the building of Etemenanki I imposed forced labor on them.¹²

This inscription shows that Nebuchadnezzar employed imperial rhetoric in commemorating his construction activity in Babylonia, in which he claimed to have received divine authority to rule over the entire world. It also mentions that he conscripted foreign labor and tribute from “kings of distant mountains and faraway islands” for his building activity. The text then continues by listing the specific regions which contributed to the building, including most notably *šarrāni ša Eber-Nā[ri] pīḫatā[tim] ša māt Ḫattim ištu tiāmtim elītim adi tiāmtim šaplītim* “the kings of Eber-Nāri, the provincial governors of Ḫatti, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea.”¹³ Elsewhere in the inscription, mention is made of *šakkanakkātim māt Ḫattim nēberti Puratti ana erib šamši* “the military governors of the land of Ḫatti, on the far side of the Euphrates toward the west.”¹⁴

Another important textual source for Neo-Babylonian imperial administration is the Istanbul Prism Fragment of Nebuchadnezzar. Like the Etemenanki inscription, the

¹² Etemenanki Inscription (WVDOG 59: 44–45); see Vanderhooft, *Latter Prophets*, 36–37.

¹³ Etemenanki Inscription (WVDOG 59:46); see Vanderhooft, *Latter Prophets*, 38.

¹⁴ Etemenanki Inscription (WVDOG 59:46); see Vanderhooft, *Latter Prophets*, 91.

Istanbul Prism describes the conscription of subjected peoples as corvée labor for building projects.¹⁵ It also follows with a list of officials, grouped according to geographical region and arranged hierarchically. The first officials to appear are the *mašennū*, high-ranking officials who most likely served in Babylon itself. Next, the *rabûti ša māt Akkadim* (“nobles of the land of Akkad”) are listed and identified by name. The third office listed is an unknown office called ¹⁴É.MAŠ, of which there appear to be multiple lists (for different regions?). Next comes a list of “city officers” (*qēpī alāni*), for whom the associated city names are no longer extant due to a break in the tablet. The final list is that of Levantine vassal-kings (LUGAL.MEŠ).¹⁶ Unger understands the entire Istanbul Prism Fragment (not just the lists at the end) as a “Hof- und Staatskalender” which names the state administrative officials which Nebuchadnezzar appointed in the imperial provinces.¹⁷ But as Vanderhooft points out, this is overstating the case, since most of the text appears to have been a normal building inscription, to which a list of officials has been appended.¹⁸ In either case, this text, like the Etemenanki inscription, supplies valuable evidence for the existence of a well-developed Neo-Babylonian imperial administration across much of the Near East at the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E.

Perhaps significantly, the lists in both the Istanbul Prism and the Etemenanki are arranged geographically in a progression from the heartland of the old Sumerian

¹⁵ Istanbul Prism Fragment, iii 23–34 (E. A. Unger, *Babylon: Die Heilige Stadt nach der Beschreibung der Babylonier* [2nd ed.; ed., R. Borger; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970], 284).

¹⁶ See Vanderhooft, *Latter Prophets*, 95.

¹⁷ Unger, *Babylon*, 35–37.

¹⁸ Vanderhooft, *Latter Prophets*, 93.

civilization (southern Babylonia, including Ur, Uruk, Larsa, Eridu, etc.) to land of Akkad (central Babylonia, including Agade, Larak, Dēr, etc.) and Assyria, and finally to the regions of Eber Nāri and Ḫatti (the Upper Euphrates and Levant).¹⁹ This arrangement may support the opinions of Vanderhooft, Stern, and others, that Neo-Babylonian imperialism was inwardly focused and primarily concerned with Babylonia, tending to neglect peripheral areas.²⁰

There is limited textual evidence for the presence of Babylonian garrisons in Syria. A text from Nabopolassar's sixteenth year mentions that after his defeat of Aššur-uballit II, he installed a garrison (*šūlūtu*) at Harran.²¹ Another states that in his nineteenth year, Nabopolassar installed a garrison (*šūlūtu*) at the city of Kimuḫu on the Upper Euphrates.²² Additionally, a Neo-Babylonian administrative text from the latter years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign mentions the presence of a military unit at Tyre (*Šurru*), as well as the installation of a *šandabakku*-official at the site.²³ Josephus seems to describe the appointment of vassal kings and/or governors at Tyre following Nebuchadnezzar's thirteen-year siege of the city (*Ag. Ap.* 1.21), which may correspond to the events

¹⁹ Vanderhooft, *Latter Prophets*, 95–96.

²⁰ See Vanderhooft, "Babylonian Strategies," 247; Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 303; Van de Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East*, 277; John W. Betlyan, "Neo-Babylonian Military Operations Other than War in Judah and Jerusalem," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (eds. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 269; Ahlström, *History*, 794–801.

²¹ B.M. 21901, rev. line 68 (D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings [626–559 B.C.] in the British Museum* [London: British Museum, 1956], 62).

²² B.M. 22047, rev. line 15 (Wiseman, *Chronicles*, 64). Vanderhooft cites both this text and the previous one as evidence of limited permanent Neo-Babylonian military presence in conquered territories, which he maintains were "obviously small outposts designed to maintain a formal presence in the city and did not represent field forces" (David Vanderhooft, "Babylonian Strategies of Imperial Control in the West: Royal Practice and Rhetoric," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* [eds. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 244).

²³ See F. Johannès, "Trois textes de Šurru à l'époque néo-babylonienne," *RA* 81 (1987) : 147–48.

described in this text.²⁴ On the other hand, a number of scholars have argued that the *Šurru* referred to in this text is not the Phoenician city, but rather a colony near Uruk where deportees from Phoenician Tyre may have been settled.²⁵ Similarly, a text from Nebuchadnezzar's fortieth year (564 B.C.E.) mentions a "governor of Kidiš" (^{lu}EN.NAM šá ^{um}ki-di-iš), which some have taken as referring to the Syrian city of Qadesh, but which may actually refer to a settlement of deported Syrians in Mesopotamia.²⁶

The Hebrew Bible may supply information concerning Neo-Babylonian administration outside of Babylonia. Second Kings 24:1–2 states concerning Jehoiakim, king of Judah:

In his days Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years. Then in the fourth year he turned and rebelled against him. So YHWH sent against him bands of Chaldeans and bands of Aramaeans and bands of Moabites and bands of Ammonites. He sent them against Judah to destroy it according to the word of YHWH which he spoke by the hand of his servants, the prophets.

Thus, during the reign of Jehoiakim Judah became a Neo-Babylonian vassal state. As such, the native king was allowed to retain local power, provided he paid tribute. But the great distance between Babylon and the small states of the Levant and the incitement of

²⁴ Stern accepts Josephus' account as evidence of Neo-Babylonian officials at Tyre, analogous to the appointment of Zedekiah as vassal king and later Gedaliah as governor in Judah (*Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 306).

²⁵ Vanderhoof, "Babylonian Strategies," 246; cf. F. Johannès, "La localization de *Šurru* à l'époque néo-babylonienne," *Sem* 32 (1982) : 39–40 ; Johannès, "Trois textes," 149. As Vanderhoof points out, many settlements in the region during the Neo-Babylonian period were named after the place of origin of the foreign deportees who were settled there ("Neo-Babylonian Strategies," 246; cf. I. Eph'al, "The Western Minorities in Babylonia in the 6th–5th Centuries B.C.," *Or* 47 [1978]: 74–90; F. Johannès and A. Lemaire, "Trois tablettes cuneiformes à onomastique oust-sémitique," *Transeu* 17 [1999]: 17–34).

²⁶ Those identifying this Kidiš with Syrian Qadesh include D. J. Wiseman (*Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* [Schweich Lectures, 1983; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985], 28; Wiseman, "Babylonia," 235) and Ran Zadok (*Geographical Names According to New- and Late-Babylonian Texts* [Répertoire géographique des textes cuneiforms 8; Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des vorderen Orients B7; Weisbaden: Reichert, 1985], 255).

Egypt, which had its own aspirations of regaining its foothold in western Asia, often proved too great a temptation for western vassal kings, and Nebuchadnezzar was forced to launch military campaigns nearly every year in order to maintain his hold on the region.²⁷ Surveys and excavations of sites across the Levant reveal widespread destruction in many locations, including Phoenicia, Dor, Philistia, and Judah. Massive destruction levels, most likely corresponding to the Neo-Babylonian military campaigns of 604–03 B.C.E., have been uncovered at Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Tell el-Ḥesi.²⁸ Jehoiakim was fortunate enough to die before the Babylonians arrived at Jerusalem to inflict punishment for his part in the rebellion, but in 597 B.C.E. his son, Jehoiachin, along with much of the royal family, the royal officials, the temple treasures, and the professional class of the country, were exiled to Babylon (2 Kgs 24:10–16). In his place, Nebuchadnezzar installed Mattaniah (Zedekiah), Jehoiachin’s uncle, as a puppet king in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:17).

The Neo-Babylonians’ reliance on native rulers as vassal kings indicates that their preference was to leave local administrations in place and simply collect tribute from loyal vassals.²⁹ Likewise, when dealing with rebellious states, the Neo-Babylonians may at times have enlisted the military services of vassal kingdoms. Mercenary service on behalf of Babylon may be the explanation for the “bands” of Aramaeans, Moabites, and

²⁷ Betlyan, “Military Operations,” 264–65.

²⁸ For a survey of the major sites, see Stern, *Archaeology*, 312–31.

²⁹ Vanderhoof, “Babylonian Strategies,” 242–44.

Ammonites who attacked Judah prior to the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 597 B.C.E. (2 Kgs 24:2).³⁰

A particularly important site with regard to Neo-Babylonian imperial administration in Judah is Tell en-Naşbeh (biblical Mizpah). According to Jer 40:5–6, Nebuchadnezzar appointed (הפקיד) Gedaliah son of Ahikam over the cities of Judah, and the Benjaminite city of Mizpah served as the seat of his administration.³¹ The text goes on to state that “the king of Babylon appointed (הפקיד) Gedaliah son of Ahikam over the land, and...he appointed (הפקיד) to him men, women, and children from the poor of the land, whom he had not taken into exile in Babylon” (Jer 40:7). Second Kings 25:22–23 describes the same situation, also affirming that Nebuchadnezzar appointed (ויפקד)

³⁰ Stern notes the relative lack of destruction in much of Transjordan (especially in Ammon) and suggests that “Moabite, Ammonite, and perhaps also Edomite battalions served under the Babylonian king and helped him to suppress the rebellion of Jehoiakim” (*Archaeology*, 327–31).

³¹ Although the use of the verb הפקיד is often taken to indicate that Gedaliah was appointed as governor, Vanderhooft contends that the text does not specify Gedaliah’s office (“Babylonian Strategies,” 244). Other instances of the verb being used to describe the appointment of a person to a position of authority include Gen 39:4 (Joseph over Potiphar’s house), Num 1:50 (Levites over the tabernacle), 1 Sam 29:4 (David over the Philistine city of Ziklag, cf. 1 Sam 27:6), 1 Kgs 11:28; 2 Chron 34:10, 12 (Jeroboam over the corvée labor of Ephraim), and 2 Kgs 22:9 (workers in the temple). The nominal form פקיד refers to the high priest (Jer 20:1), officers of the king and the high priest (2 Chron 24:11), the overseer of the Levites who ministered in the temple (Neh 11:22), an officer of Abimelech, who also ruled over Shechem on his behalf (Judg 9:28, 30), overseers appointed over Egypt by Pharaoh to collect taxes (Gen 41:34), officers in the temple who punish unruly prophets (Jer 29:26), overseers appointed by Hezekiah to assist with the collection of gifts to the temple (2 Chron 31:13), agents commissioned by the Persian king to seek out prospective queens (Esth 2:3), and an overseer of the Benjaminites who lived in the province of Judah. The verb, thus, conveys the idea of appointing a subordinate to exercise authority on behalf of a superior. The Akkadian cognate *paqādu*, likewise, may mean “to appoint a person to an office,” and “to put a person in charge” (*CAD* 12:120–24), including referring specifically to the appointment of governors (cf. Sydney Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts* [London: Methuen, 1924], pl. 13 iii 20). The noun *paqdu* may refer to overseers, deputies, and officers appointed over property, institutions, and political entities (*CAD* 12:136). Thus, while it is not certain precisely what title Gedaliah bore or what his specific duties were, it appears that he exercised authority over the remaining population living in the land of Judah on behalf of Nebuchadnezzar as an officer within a Babylonian administrative system, however limited it may have been.

Gedaliah over the remaining population of Judah and that Gedaliah ruled from Mizpah. Thus, Gedaliah appears to have functioned as governor (or some other type of administrative official) over Judah, which continued to be occupied by the lower classes of the kingdom of Judah who were not deported to Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 25:12), on behalf of Nebuchadnezzar.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Mizpah succeeded Jerusalem as the main urban and administrative center in Judah during the Neo-Babylonian period and even into the early Persian period.³² In contrast to the general decline throughout much of Judah (at least the southern portions), at Mizpah there is evidence of significant building. Excavators have uncovered in Stratum 2, which correlates with the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, a very large “courtyard-style building in the Mesopotamian tradition” (Building 74.01) which is 2.5 times larger than any building from the preceding Stratum 3 (tenth–early sixth centuries).³³ The most likely function for such a large building would have been as the seat of power for a regional administrative system. A number of large 3- and 4-room houses, which may have housed elites who served in the Babylonian

³² Distinguishing between the Neo-Babylonian period and the Persian period in the archaeological record of the Levant is notoriously difficult, as there was no general destruction of sites and most settlements continued into the Persian period (see, for example, Zorn, “Tell en-Naşbeh,” 416–17). Moreover, the Persian Empire, especially in Mesopotamia and the Levant, absorbed and perpetuated Mesopotamian culture, literature, and styles to a very high degree, making almost impossible to determine whether an artifact comes from the early or mid-sixth century or the late sixth century or fifth century without some other contextual evidence (see Stern, *Archaeology*, 308). Nevertheless, the fact that Mizpah (Tell en-Naşbeh) continued to be such an important site into the Persian period, even after the restoration of Jerusalem, suggests that its importance as a major center in the region extended back into the Neo-Babylonian period. Furthermore, as Zorn notes, pottery evidence from Tell en-Naşbeh points toward the early sixth century for the beginning of Stratum 2, which contains a mix of ceramic styles spanning the sixth–fifth centuries (“Tell en-Naşbeh,” 428–29).

³³ Zorn, “Tell en-Naşbeh,” 423; Betlyan, “Military Operations,” 272; Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 134–35. Zorn also notes that to the southwest of Building 74.01 lies a “confusing mass of architecture” which may have been a single very large building (“Tell en-Naşbeh,” 426–27).

administration at Mizpah, have also been found in Stratum 2.³⁴ Zorn observes that “the buildings of Stratum 2 were universally larger, less crowded, and of better construction than those of Stratum 3.”³⁵ The best explanation for such signs of economic boom at Mizpah following the Babylonian conquest of Judah is that it became the seat of local government.

Further evidence points toward the identification of Tell en-Naşbeh/Mizpah as the capital of a Neo-Babylonian province of Judah. An ostrakon containing part of a Mesopotamian name (מרסרצור = *mar-šarri-ušur*), as well as a bronze circlet inscribed with Neo-Babylonian style cuneiform, have been discovered in Stratum 2.³⁶ Also, fragments of three Mesopotamian style coffins have been found on the tell, which is unusual for Judean sites due to the biblical prohibition of corpses, but which is common in Mesopotamia, where burial underneath houses was practiced.³⁷ Taken together, this evidence suggests strong Babylonian influence at Mizpah and either the presence of Babylonian officials or Judean elites imitating Babylonian styles.

A final piece of evidence from Tell en-Naşbeh is the large number of *MSH* stamped jar handles found at the site and, to a lesser extent, throughout the surrounding area of Benjamin. Of 43 such handles found to date, 30 come from Tell en-Naşbeh, The rest are distributed across an area which corresponds roughly to the tribal area of

³⁴ Carter, “Ideology and Archaeology,” 309; Zorn, “Tell en-Naşbeh,” 424–27.

³⁵ Zorn, “Tell en-Naşbeh,” 429.

³⁶ Zorn argues that the name *mar-šarri-ušur* most likely belonged to a Babylonian official at Mizpah, since it includes elements typical of Babylonian governmental officials (“Tell en-Naşbeh,” 436–37). On the cuneiform script on the circlet, see Zorn, “Tell en-Naşbeh,” 434; Stern, *Archaeology*, 322.

³⁷ Zorn, “Tell en-Naşbeh,” 433; Stern, *Archaeology*, 341.

Benjamin in the Iron II period. Those handles which may be dated on the basis of stratigraphic context date to the sixth century.³⁸ Stern suggests that these jars may have been designated for the purpose of tax collection or wine production, and the fact that the vast majority come from Mizpah strongly suggests that this site was the center of local government and/or economy.³⁹ Their distribution also supports the notion that, while the Babylonians decimated Judah and generally left it in ruins, Benjamin was spared from widespread destruction and continued to exist as the new core of a Babylonian province in the region.⁴⁰

In summary, a combination of biblical, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence indicates that the Neo-Babylonians established a limited imperial administration across the ancient Near East in the late seventh–sixth centuries. This administrative system differed from both the Neo-Assyrian system which preceded it and the Persian system which followed it by focusing on the Mesopotamian heartland to the neglect of peripheral areas (like Judah). Rather than reconstructing conquered territories, the Neo-Babylonians often left conquered lands in a state of desolation and did not settle new inhabitants in the region to replace deported peoples. Little is known about the nature of the Neo-Babylonian imperial administration, although it is clear from a few Babylonian texts (e.g., the Etemenanki inscription, the Babylonian Chronicle, etc.) that a hierarchy of

³⁸ Zorn, “Tell en-Naşbeh,” 437–38; Stern, *Archaeology*, 335–36.

³⁹ Stern, *Archaeology*, 336.

⁴⁰ Zorn, “Tell en-Naşbeh,” 438. Stern further speculates that Benjamin may have served as a safe-haven for Judean refugees during and after the Babylonian siege, much as Judah and Jerusalem did during the Assyrian siege of Samaria (*Archaeology*, 322). Surveys of Benjamin and Judah support this thesis, as they reveal that during the sixth–fifth centuries, 75% of the total population of Judah/Yehud lived in Benjamin and the northern Judean hills, while even after the return of exiles and reconstruction the temple and walls of Jerusalem, only about 10% lived in Jerusalem and its environs (see Lipschits, “Demographic Changes,” 323–66).

governors, vassal kings, and other officials did exist, both in Babylonia and in peripheral areas of the empire. With regard to Judah specifically, biblical texts mention that following the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam as a governor (or some other administrative official) over the remaining inhabitants of Judah and that Mizpah was the seat of Gedaliah's government (Jer 40:5–7; 2 Kgs 25:22–23). Archaeological evidence from Tell en-Naşbeh (Mizpah) generally supports the biblical description of Mizpah as the capital of a Neo-Babylonian province and the presence of either Babylonian officials or Jewish officials in the Babylonian administration, although it is difficult to distinguish between what is Neo-Babylonian and what is Persian at the site. Archaeological evidence also indicates that following the destruction of Jerusalem, the demographic weight of the region shifted northward to the area of Benjamin and remained thus well into the Persian period. This demographic shift is best explained by the status of Mizpah as a provincial capital during the Neo-Babylonian period.

The relevance of these developments in the socio-political situation of Judah and the exiled Judahite elites during the Neo-Babylonian period is that the replacement of a relatively small local monarchy with a vast imperial administration may have shaped biblical perceptions of the heavenly realm. The Hebrew Bible patterns the divine realm after actual socio-political structures and institutions familiar to the biblical writers.⁴¹

⁴¹ Thus, Handy argues that the Israelite pantheon consisted of four tiers of deities in a bureaucratic, hierarchical structure patterned after Syro-Palestinian society (*Among the Host of Heaven*). Similarly, Smith discerns four levels of divinity in ancient Israel, corresponding to four levels in the Israelite patriarchal institution (בית אב) (*The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*). For both Handy and Smith, changes in the socio-political world of ancient Israel could incite changes in Israelite conceptions of the divine realm. Handy points to the breakdown of the harmonious operation of the celestial bureaucracy in the Second Temple period via the development of traditions of heavenly rebellion and demonology (Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 166–67), while Smith associates the development of monotheism with the development of a centralized Israelite monarchy and then the rise of an imperial universalism, which also

The end of the Davidic monarchy and Judah's absorption into a vast international system with one king ruling over the entire "world" no doubt influenced biblical ideas about Yahweh as the heavenly king. As Smith puts it:

The rise of the Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian empires issued in a serious religious reflection on Yahweh's power over the nations. The loss of identity as a nation changed Israel's understanding of the national god. Looming empires made the model of a national god obsolete. Moreover, the rise of supra-national empires suggested the model of the supra-national god.⁴²

Consonant with the new perception of Yahweh as divine Sovereign over the entire world is the increased role of divine intermediaries (angels) as extensions of Yahweh's authority and presence on earth. Slightly later, in the early Persian period, Zechariah envisions Yahweh as employing the services of angelic horsemen on reconnaissance missions and the mysterious "eyes of Yahweh" which range throughout the earth.⁴³ These developments had begun already in the Neo-Babylonian period, as I will show in the analysis of Ezek 40–48 below.

The Interpreting Angel Motif in Ezek 40–48

Scholarship on the Book of Ezekiel

Let us turn our attention now to the interpreting angel in Ezek 40–48, for which the Neo-Babylonian period forms the historical background. The composition and dating

produced "one god" theologies in Mesopotamian religion during the first millennium B.C.E. (Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 157–66; see also Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 149–80).

⁴² Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 165.

⁴³ Oppenheim reads the "eyes of Yahweh" in Zech 4:10b as a reflex of the description of the networks of spies, informants, etc. of ancient Near Eastern kings (especially the Persian emperors) as the "eyes of the king" (A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Eyes of the Lord," *JAOS* 88 (1968): 173–80).

of the Book of Ezekiel as a whole, and chs. 40–48 in particular, have been a subject of considerable debate within the history of scholarship. The book’s own internal dating places its oracles between 593–70 B.C.E., via a series of fifteen date notices which appear throughout the book.⁴⁴ Modern scholarship, however, has generally viewed the present book as the product of a lengthy period of composition, editing, and redaction, perhaps by an Ezekielian “school” which collected and supplemented the prophet’s oracles.⁴⁵

Although a number of earlier scholars emphasized the unity of the book and the probability that most, if not all, of the material derived from and may even have been written by Ezekiel, Hölscher took a very different view, arguing that only about 1/7 (144 out of 1,235 lines) came from the prophet himself, while the majority came from a fifth century Zadokite redactor.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ These notices give dates according to the duration of the exile. The earliest date given is the fifth year of the exile (593/2, Ezek 1:2), and the latest is the twenty-seventh year (571/0, Ezek 29:17).

⁴⁵ A few scholars, however, have considered the book’s unity of thought and style sufficient to suppose that the prophet himself may have written all or the vast majority of it (Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 17–23; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 18–22; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 7–16; Stephen Tuell, *Ezekiel* [NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009], 1–2). Also falling into this camp, though generally on non-critical grounds, is Hummel, whose detailed and thorough commentary is hampered by its overt and extreme conservatism, which leads to questionable methodological assumptions and an evaluation of scholarship based, so it would seem, primarily upon how “confessional” its approach and conclusions are (see, for example, Hummel, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 1–7, 20–27).

⁴⁶ Gustav Hölscher, *Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch* (BZAW 39; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1924); cf. Rudolf Smend, *Der Prophet Ezechiel* (Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament 8; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1880), xxi; Hermann Gunkel, “Die Israelitische Literatur,” in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart* (ed. P. Hinneberg; Berlin: Teubner, 1906), 90; G. B. Gray, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1913), 198. Following Hölscher, the trend was toward a late date for the basic shape of the book, which was seen as the product of a long process of editing and redaction. Torrey argued that the book was a third century redaction of a pseudepigraphal work purporting to have been written in Jerusalem in the seventh century in opposition to the cultic policies of Manasseh, but which had been altered to fit a sixth century setting in Babylonia by a later editor (C. C. Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy* [YOSR 18; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930]). Torrey claimed to find references to Persia and to Alexander the Great in the prophecy of Gog and Magog (chs. 38–39), as well as a number of Aramaisms pointing to a late date. On the other hand, some argued that the core of the book actually did originate in the seventh century and was later altered to fit the sixth century (e.g., J. Smith, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* [London: SPCK, 1941]).

Following World War II, a number of scholars argued for a Neo-Babylonian setting for Ezekiel, roughly in line with the book's own internal dating system.⁴⁷ Although most scholars were increasingly willing to allow for a Neo-Babylonian dating of most of the book, many continued to date chs. 38–39 and 40–48 to the post-exilic period. The visions of Ezek 38–39 have much in common with Persian and Hellenistic period proto-apocalyptic and apocalyptic descriptions of divine judgment against the enemies of Israel and Israel's God, while the language of Ezek 40–48 is strikingly similar to that of Priestly literature in the Pentateuch.⁴⁸ Moreover, the elevation of the Zadokites as the sole legitimate priests and especially the sharp contrast between “the descendants of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me” (Ezek 44:15 NRSV) and “the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray” (Ezek 44:10 NRSV), now demoted to mere attendants in the sanctuary, may point toward struggles for control of the temple in the early post-exilic period.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Although he noted the basic stylistic and thematic unity which had led earlier scholars to suggest that the prophet may have written the entire book, Fohrer allowed for significant redaction and expansion by later hands (G. Fohrer, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel* [Berlin: Töpelmann, 1952]; see also C. G. Howie, *The Date and Composition of Ezekiel* [SBLMS 4; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1950]).

⁴⁸ See Boadt, “Ezekiel,” 715.

⁴⁹ See Collins, *Introduction*, 355, 373–74. Note also the negative attitude toward foreigners and possibly even Israelites whose pedigree was impure or suspect (e.g., Ezek 44:9), which may express similar concerns to those found in Ezra 9–10; Neh 13; Mal 2:10–12. But recognizing late elements in Ezek 40–48, such as the elevation of the Zadokites and the denigration of foreigners, need not indicate that the entirety of these chapters is late. Hals regards the references to the Zadokites in 40:44–46 and 44:15–16 as later additions to an early core of chs. 40–48 (*Ezekiel*, 301). Likewise, Zimmerli argues for an early core text with later additions and expansions (*Ezekiel 1*, 62). Among these late expansion is the elevation of the Zadokites over the Levites in ch. 44. According to Zimmerli, the sharp distinction between the Levites and the Zadokites in Ezek 44:6–31 “[has] no basis in the preaching of the prophet Ezekiel as this is heard in chapters 1–39 or in the basic stratum of chapters 40ff. . . . Thus in 44:6–31 we find an expression of the post-exilic period” (*Ezekiel 2*, 463).

Walther Zimmerli's magisterial commentary on the Book of Ezekiel did much to establish as the dominant view the idea of an early core text (*Grundtext*) originating with the actual words of the prophet, which then underwent a long period of development, expansion, and editing (*Nachinterpretation*) by the "school" of Ezekiel's disciples, who remained basically faithful to Ezekiel's thought and style.⁵⁰ Zimmerli extends this idea of an early *Grundtext* even to Ezek 40–48, although he argues that these chapters originally circulated independently from Ezek 1–39 and were combined to form the book as we have it only in the final stage of its redaction.⁵¹

Since Zimmerli, research on the composition of the Book of Ezekiel has become polarized. On the one hand, the legacy of Zimmerli and other traditional historical critics lives on. Some have returned to the perspective of Hölscher that there is little in the book which stems from the sixth century prophet Ezekiel.⁵² Others have followed the basic conclusions of Zimmerli in seeing much in the Book of Ezekiel which derives from the

⁵⁰ See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 68–74.

⁵¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 74. Josephus records that Ezekiel wrote two books (*Ant.* 10.5.1), and while most scholars believe Josephus divided Ezek 1–24 (the "Book of Judgment") from Ezek 25–48 (the "Book of Consolation"), it is also possible that he preserves a memory of chs. 40–48 as an independent book. Another possibility is that he refers to a pseudepigraphal book attributed to Ezekiel, such as the Greek *Apocryphon of Ezekiel* (see Collins, *Introduction*, 354).

⁵² For example, Garscha offers an intricate reconstruction of the redactional history of the book which attributes only 30 verses to Ezekiel himself. The rest, Garscha assigns to later redactors, with the basic shape of the book being achieved in the mid-fifth century. In particular, Garscha regards Priestly themes and language as foreign to prophetic thought, and as a result, he attributes these portions of the book to later strata (J. Garscha, *Studien zum Ezechielbuch: Eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung von Ez 1–39* [Europäische Hochschulschriften 23; Bern: Lang, 1974]). Garscha's claims regarding the Priestly-prophetic dichotomy are particularly significant, since Ezek 40–48 contains a large amount of "Priestly" material. Why this should be the case, however, is not clear, since Priestly themes and concerns appear in other prophetic texts (e.g., Isa 6:1–7; Hag 1:2–15; 2:11–19; Zech 14:20–21; Mal 1:6–14; 2:4–12; 3:2b–4, 8–12). While the Priestly layers in the Pentateuch are nearly universally regarded as post-exilic, the Priestly worldview which they express and even distinctly Priestly language certainly have antecedents in monarchic Israel. That a prophet could come from priestly stock is a well-known fact (cf. Jer 1:1–2), and there is no reason to doubt that a Zadokite priest-turned-prophet in exile could have expressed Priestly themes and concerns and even used characteristically Priestly language, especially if the prophet wrote down his prophecies himself

prophet and generally recognizing his influence in the shaping of even the later additions.⁵³

In recent years there has been a shift toward holistic/synchronic studies of the Book of Ezekiel. This approach has grown to a large degree out of frustration over the inability of historical-critical methods to arrive at a consensus and the over-confident reconstructions of some more radical critical scholars (e.g., Hölscher, Garscha). Those adopting this approach include Greenberg,⁵⁴ Niditch,⁵⁵ Hummel,⁵⁶ and to a large extent Block,⁵⁷ Joyce⁵⁸ and Tuell.⁵⁹ Most of these scholars do not reject the basic idea put forth by Zimmerli and others, that the Book of Ezekiel is the product of a long history of redaction and expansion. They have simply grown doubtful of the ability of traditional

⁵³ Hals's form-critical study assumes much the same perspective as Fohrer and Howie in dating the basic shape of the book entirely within the Neo-Babylonian period, based on the fact that there is no mention of the events of 539–38 B.C.E. as the seeming fulfillment of Ezekiel's message of restoration in chs. 25–48 (Hals, *Ezekiel*, 5–6).

⁵⁴ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983); Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997).

⁵⁵ Susan Niditch, "Ezekiel 40–48 in Visionary Context," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 208–24.

⁵⁶ Hummel, *Ezekiel 1–20*; Hummel, *Ezekiel 21–48*.

⁵⁷ Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*; Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*. Block's two-volume commentary generally treats the book as a literary unity and reads it holistically, but at the same time it is very concerned with questions of historical background and draws heavily on comparative ancient Near Eastern texts and archaeological data to aid in interpretation. Although Block's early dating of the entire book is no doubt informed by his confessional/evangelical theological commitments, he takes seriously the findings of historical-critical work and handles historical questions responsibly.

⁵⁸ Joyce, *Ezekiel*. Similarly to Block, Joyce blends both diachronic and synchronic methodologies in the service of a theological exegesis of the Book of Ezekiel.

⁵⁹ Tuell, *Ezekiel*.

historical-critical methodologies to reconstruct a detailed diachronic profile of the book with the high degree of precision that many have claimed.⁶⁰

For the purpose of this study, I accept the basic view of Zimmerli that the Book of Ezekiel contains an early core which derives from the preaching of the historical prophet, which has undergone significant redaction and expansion by a prophetic “school” in the tradition of Ezekiel. The series of date notices throughout the book make little sense if they are arbitrary creations of later scribes. Freedy and Redford have correlated the date notices in the oracles against foreign nations (chs. 25–32) with known crises in the ancient Near East, suggesting that the dates are genuine and mark the occasions which sparked the oracles.⁶¹ Although the chronological arrangement of the date notices, with one exception, may reflect a redactional arrangement of the oracles, there is no reason to assume that the dates must then be artificial, especially if the prophet wrote down his prophecies and began the process of arranging them into a book form, as many have suggested.⁶² Neither is there any reason to doubt that the range of dates provided by the notices (593–571 B.C.E.) does not reflect the actual period during which the core materials of the book originated. At the same time, however, the transformation of prophetic oracles into prophetic books by the disciples of the Israelite prophets at a later time is well-established. It is one thing to speak of an early date for the raw materials contained in the Book of Ezekiel; it is quite another to attribute the final form of the book as a whole to the prophet himself. We are on much firmer ground if we allow for continued

⁶⁰ See Joyce’s description of the shift toward holistic approaches in recent decades (*Ezekiel*, 14–16).

⁶¹ K. Freedy and D. B. Redford, “The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian, and Egyptian Sources,” *JAOS* 90 (1970): 462–85.

⁶² Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 18; Hals, *Ezekiel*, 5–6; Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 20–22.

redaction and editing well beyond the range of the book's date notices.⁶³ Yet the raw material of the Book of Ezekiel—the prophet's oracles and vision reports—could easily have originated within the early sixth century, as there are no clear references to persons or events from later times. Even references to such “post-exilic” concerns as the rebuilt temple, reinstated priesthood, and reestablished monarchy are sufficiently vague and different from the realities of the post-exilic period to understand them as genuine anticipations of restoration, rather than reflections of an in-progress program of restoration.

Dating and Composition of Ezek 40–48

Since it is primarily Ezek 40–48 which is of interest here, a brief discussion of the dating and composition of these chapters, specifically, is in order. Beginning with Hölscher's late dating of nearly all of the Book of Ezekiel, redactional studies have sought to distinguish between material which is original to the prophet and that which was added later.⁶⁴ While the influence of Zimmerli and others has increased confidence regarding much of the book, chs. 40–48 remain a hotbed of controversy.

⁶³ One may compare here the evidence regarding the formation of the Book of Jeremiah. The canonization of two radically different editions of Jeremiah illustrates beautifully the extent to which prophetic *books* are products of scribal traditions (see Emanuel Tov, “The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in Light of Its Textual History,” in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* [ed. Jeffrey H. Tigay, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985], 211–37).

⁶⁴ Hölscher regards poetry as the only mode of expression for the historical Ezekiel, and as a result he automatically excludes all prose in Ezekiel as later material. Most importantly, Hölscher does not identify any original material after ch. 32. All of Ezek 40–48, along with the majority of chs. 1–39, he considers a fifth century pseudepigraph composed by Zadokites, and it was constantly updated and reworked over a long period of time (Hölscher, *Hezekiel*, 190). Torrey, like Hölscher, dismisses all of Ezek 40–48 (along with the rest of the book) as a Hellenistic pseudepigraph. The Temple Vision of chs. 40–48 is particularly key for Torrey's assessment of the book as a whole, as he regards it highly improbable that an early sixth century prophet carried away to Babylonia would have dedicated so much of his prophecy to detailed descriptions and exact measurements of a future temple, whereas a third century priest would have had considerable interest in a program to restore the pitiful temple of Zerubbabel to its intended form (Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel*, 100). In addition, Torrey argues for an anti-Samaritan reworking of this

A turning point in studies of the composition/redaction of Ezek 40–48 came with Gese’s *Traditionsgeschichte* of these chapters. Gese identifies three strata of expansion/addition to the prophet’s original vision. The first stratum is the *nasi-Schicht*, which consists of material concerning the נשיא “prince” (Ezek 44:1–3; 45:21–25; 46:1–10, 12).⁶⁵ Gese notes that the designation of the people living in the land of Judah as עם הארץ “the people of the land” also occurs in the description of the חטאת offerings of the נשיא and of the עם הארץ.⁶⁶ Thus, he concludes that the *nasi-Schicht* reflects the same setting as Lev 4. The next expansion identified by Gese is the *Šadoqidenschicht* (Ezek 44:6–31; 45:13–15), which consists of material concerning the elevation of the Zadokites over the rest of the Levites. This material surrounds the *nasi-Schicht*, with which it is redactionally linked through the identification of priestly offerings with taxes paid to the נשיא (Ezek 44:16–17), although the two strata were originally unrelated.⁶⁷ Finally, the *Landverteilungspläne* (“land distribution”) in Ezek 48:1–29 comprises a third stratum, which post-dates the *nasi-Schicht* but shows no awareness of (and therefore likely antedates) the *Šadoqidenschicht*.⁶⁸ Significantly, Gese regards the vision of the return of

Hellenistic Pseudo-Ezekiel for the purpose of supporting the myth of the exile in order to disenfranchise the Samaritans (102–06). A very different position is taken by Eichrodt, who judges Ezek 40–48 to be a hodgepodge of independent visions and traditions which have been collected together over time by several different hands without achieving any true unity (Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 530–31).

⁶⁵ Gese, *Ezechiel*, 110.

⁶⁶ Gese, *Ezechiel*, 110–11.

⁶⁷ Gese, *Ezechiel*, 111–12.

⁶⁸ Gese regards the *Landverteilungspläne* as “eine spätere Erweiterung und Ergänzung der *nasi-Schicht*” (“a later expansion and supplement of the *nasi-Schicht*”) (*Ezechiel*, 113).

the glory of Yahweh in Ezek 43:1–11—including the interpreting angel in 43:1–6—as “konstitutiv für die *nasi*-Schicht,” and therefore an authentic vision stemming from the prophet.⁶⁹

Zimmerli largely follows Gese in dating large portions of Ezek 40–48 to the exilic period. Focusing especially on material which may properly be viewed as “visionary” in nature (i.e., reflective of an actually visionary experience), he understood Ezek 40:1–37, 47–49; 41:1–4 to be the “core” of Ezek 40–48, that is, the original words of the prophet (*Grundtext*) which served as the basis of later expansion (*Nachinterpretation*).⁷⁰ To this was first added the measurements of 41:5–15a; 42:15–20. Next, 43:1–11 was added as the counterpart to Ezek 8–11. The glory which departed in chs. 8–11 now returns in 43:1–11, suggesting that these verses originated after the joining of Ezek 40–48 with Ezek 1–39, which they presuppose. Yet even 41:5–15a; 42:15–20; 43:1–11 Zimmerli dates still to the exilic period and even admits may have come from Ezekiel himself.⁷¹ Citing Fohrer’s inclusion of Ezek 43:1–9; 44:1–3; 47:1–12, Zimmerli notes that like 43:1–11, these texts are closely connected with the core of Ezekiel’s vision in 40:1–37, 47–49; 41:1–4, and he offers a similar understanding of their relationship to the core materials.⁷² Here, as well, even “later” materials are likely still quite early (i.e., exilic),

⁶⁹ Gese, *Ezechiel*, 110.

⁷⁰ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 547.

⁷¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 548. Zimmerli points out that Ezek 29:17–21, which the text dates to 571 B.C.E. (two years *after* the date given in 40:1), anticipates restoration following the defeat of Egypt. This possibility would presumably require that Ezekiel was personally involved in the early redaction of the book. This understanding seems to lie behind Zimmerli’s statement that in all three of these textual layers, “the intention is to describe a single coherent vision” (548).

⁷² Zimmerli notes that here too, there is much which befits a genuine visionary experience (cf. Fohrer, *Ezechiel*, 36–37), and he further points out that “Ezekiel’s acquaintance with Isaianic preaching as well as with the paradise tradition” in these texts could very plausibly be dated to the Babylonian exile (*Ezekiel 2*, 549).

and there is nothing which demands a late (i.e., post-exilic) date. The majority of even the additions to the core of Ezek 40–48 Zimmerli views as anticipating a return from exile in the near future, for which it offers a plan of restoration, in a manner not too dissimilar to that of Second Isaiah, and therefore late-exilic, rather than post-exilic.⁷³

Vogt departs from the reconstructions of Gese and Zimmerli by dating most of Ezek 40–48 to the post-exilic period. Vogt, like Zimmerli, sees in Ezek 40–48 the expansion of the core visions, primarily contained within chs. 40–43, over a long period of time.⁷⁴ These expansions include descriptions of a Zadokite priesthood, a נשיא with limited political power, and a restored city of Jerusalem and division of tribal territories. However, he does not regard the vast majority of the descriptions of the vision of Ezek 40–48 as genuine reports of an actual ecstatic experience by the prophet, but rather a “*schriftstellerische Einkleidung*” (“literary disguise”).⁷⁵ The original core of these chapters consists only of Ezek 40:1–2; 43:4–5, 6a, 7a; 47:1–2b, 6a, 8–9, 12a. Thus, the Priestly-Zadokite authorities behind the program of restoration in the early Persian period

⁷³ Zimmerli dates the core of Ezek 40–48 to 573 B.C.E., in accordance with the date notice in 40:1, and the secondary expansions in 41:5–15a; 42:15–20; 44:1–2; 47:1–12 only slightly later. The materials concerning the נשיא in 44:3 ; 45:21–46 :12 are likewise exilic, as they show no awareness of the activities of Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel. Even the tribal allotments in 48:1–29 do not include signs of the conflicts and harsh realities which confronted the returning exiles in the post-exilic period, nor significant tension between competing priestly and Levitical groups, suggesting that this material is also exilic. Even the conflict between the Zadokites and Levites in ch. 44, according to Zimmerli, should be dated to the very end of the exilic period, rather than the post-exilic period, since it does not mention the high priest, who emerges prominently in Haggai and Zechariah 1–8. Indeed, there is relatively little in Ezek 40–48 which Zimmerli dates to the post-exilic period (see *Ezekiel* 2, 552–53).

⁷⁴ Vogt remarks concerning the heterogeneous nature of Ezek 40–48, “Offenbar ist der Grundbestand durch längere und kürzere Zusätze verschiedenen Ursprungs allmählich erweitert worden” (*Ezechiel*, 127).

⁷⁵ Vogt, *Ezechiel*, 129.

have used the guise of a vision by the early sixth century prophet Ezekiel to support their efforts and policies, which are reflected in the vision reports.⁷⁶

Several factors suggest that Ezek 40–48 is exilic rather than post-exilic. First, the date notices throughout the rest of the Book of Ezekiel have been shown to be historically reliable, and there is no reason to suspect that the notice in Ezek 40:1 is artificial.⁷⁷ Even Vogt attributes Ezek 40:1–2 to the prophet Ezekiel, although he regards the description of the vision which follows as later material. Yet it makes little sense for a date notice and brief description of the prophet’s transport to Jerusalem to appear with no further description of his vision (cf. Ezek 8–11). Second, there are numerous stylistic features of the visions in Ezek 40–48 which correlate with those in Ezek 1–39, especially chs. 1 and 8–11. The description of the fiery “man” in Ezek 40:3 matches closely the figures in Ezek 1:26–28; 8:2. Likewise, the action of the “spirit” (רוח) lifting up the prophet in Ezek 43:5 recalls Ezek 2:2; 8:3; 11:1. It is possible that these features in Ezek 40–48 are imitations of Ezekiel’s style or reflective of the hand of the “school” of Ezekiel at work in chs. 1; 8–11; and 40–48, but it is at least as likely that the similarities indicate that Ezek 40–48 contains original material which derives from the prophet. Third, the temple described in the visions of Ezek 40–48 does not match the temple constructed under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel in the early post-exilic period. Rather, it is an idealized, eschatological temple patterned after the wilderness tabernacle and Solomon’s temple, similar to the idealized temple described in some of the sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls.⁷⁸ Its

⁷⁶ See Vogt, *Ezekiel*, 132–75.

⁷⁷ On the accuracy of the date notices, see Freedy and Redford, “Dates in Ezekiel,” 462–85.

⁷⁸ For example, see 4Q554; 4Q554a; 5Q15; 11Q18; 11Q19; 11Q20. Also see Boadt, “Ezekiel,” 720.

vision of the future temple aligns better with apocalyptic eschatology than with an actual political program of restoration. The major exceptions would be the “law of the temple” in Ezek 43:12–27, the pro-Zadokite/anti-Levite/anti-foreigner material in Ezek 44:9–31, the regulations concerning the אֲשֵׁרָא in 44:1–3; 45:7–46:18, and perhaps the designation of land for the priests and Levites in 45:1–6.⁷⁹ Yet even this material, though it bears the impression of a program for a restoration, seems to belong to a restoration which is either imminent or only recently underway.⁸⁰ Finally, the visionary motif in Ezek 40–48 shows relatively little development from that of Ezek 1–3 and Ezek 8–11. The common features in these chapters far outweigh the divergences. All involve highly descriptive accounts of ecstatic visions of supernatural beings who communicate with the prophet. All involve the transportation of the prophet by the “spirit” lifting him up (Ezek 2:2; 3:12; 8:3; 11:1; 43:5). The most significant difference in the vision motif is that in Ezek 40–48, the “man” appears to be more independent and distinct from Yahweh, whereas in Ezek 1 and Ezek 8–11, he is closely identified with Yahweh and seems to be a hypostasis of the divine presence. Yet this development should not be over-stressed, since in all three contexts there is a high level of ambiguity concerning the identity of the figure and his relation to Yahweh, and even in Ezek 40–48, the manner in which the “man” addresses Ezekiel is identical to the way Yahweh speaks to him in earlier chapters. In short, the

⁷⁹ For a detailed discussion and analysis of the Ezek 40–48, which dates the corpus in its final form and specifically these features of the regulation of the temple to the early Persian period, see Stephen Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48* (HSM 49; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992). In particular, Tuell argues that in its final form, Ezek 40–48 describes the “religious polity of the Judean Restoration” which is “built on an authentic vision of Ezekiel, chosen by our editors as the perfect statement of their society’s foundation and end: right worship in the right Temple” (14).

⁸⁰ One may compare the expectancy of much of Ezek 40–48 with that of Isa 40–55 (cf. Ezek 43:1–5; Isa 52:8).

perspective on divine revelation through visionary media is highly consistent from Ezek 1; 8–11 to Ezek 40–48.

Ezek 40:1–37, 43–49; 41:1–43:6

Ezekiel 40–48 begins with the final date notice of the book, which dates the vision to the tenth day of the fourteenth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, which also correlates to the twenty-fifth year of exile, yielding a date of April 28, 573 B.C.E. Apparently Ezekiel, a priest, was among the elites deported in 597 B.C.E., along with King Jehoiachin. On the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem, the prophet undergoes an ecstatic experience, in which the “hand of Yahweh” comes upon him, catches him up, and carries him to the land of Israel “in divine visions” (במראות אלהים).⁸¹ Susan Niditch examines Ezek 40–48 as a vision in comparison with the Buddhist mandala, a visible representation of an ecstatic experience in which the visionary ascends to the sacred realm, receives revelations, and participates in ritual activities in heavenly temples.⁸² According to Niditch, Ezekiel 40–48 stands at the beginning of a long tradition of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic and mystical fascination with the details of

⁸¹ The mention of the יד-יהוה “the hand of Yahweh” recalls Ezek 8:1–3, in which “the hand of the Lord Yahweh” (יד אדני יהוה) also falls upon the prophet, as well as the hand of the “man” which carries the prophet by his hair to Jerusalem.

⁸² Susan Niditch, “Ezekiel 40–48 in a Visionary Context,” *CBQ* 48 (1986): 208–24. The construction of a mandala as a visible representation of the divine realm both mimics and aids in the ecstatic transport of the visionary to the “real” mandala, which is the sacred realm itself. While most mandalas are miniature, similar to West Semitic model shrines, life-sized mandalas have been discovered. Most significantly, Tantric literature includes lengthy, detailed instructions for the building of mandalas. These descriptions are similar to the detailed description of the temple in Ezek 40–48, and Niditch concludes that the mandalas demonstrate that Ezek 40–48 need not be understood as either a genuine vision or a reflection of an actual temple construction, but that it may be both (212–16).

sacred space on earth as a replica of sacred space in the heavenly realm.⁸³ Building on Levinson's work, she understands this concern for the construction of sacred space as a form of cosmogony, "the ordering of a universe, the defining and differentiating of the stuff of an essential reality."⁸⁴

The description of an ecstatic experience as מראות אלהים appears only here and in Ezek 1:1 and 8:3.⁸⁵ This denotation is better understood as "divine visions" than as "visions of God," as a literal translation would offer.⁸⁶ In the Book of Ezekiel, אלהים connotes "divinity," rather than functioning as the typical designation for the God of Israel, who is usually יהוה or אדני יהוה.⁸⁷ Also, in Ezek 8–11 and 40–48 the main focus of

⁸³ This tradition includes Ezek 40–48; the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q400–407; 11Q17), the Qumran New Jerusalem texts (1Q32; 2Q24; 4Q232; 5Q365a; 4Q554; 4Q554a; 4Q555; 5Q15; 11Q18); Rev 20–21; *b. Hag* 14b; and the Jewish *hekalot* literature (see Niditch, "Ezekiel 40–48," 214). Himmelfarb posits a similar trajectory linking the tour motif in Ezek 40–48 with later Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature (*Tours of Heaven*, 72–74). Although the temple does not appear in *1 Enoch*, Himmelfarb argues that the book projects the imagery of temple/priesthood onto the cosmos, so that heaven is portrayed as a temple (20–25). Also, *1 Enoch* and Ezek 40–48 are linked through their common use of Garden of Eden imagery (72–74). On the development of the concept of a cosmic temple in Second Temple Judaism, see James R. Davila, "The Macrocosmic Temple, Scriptural Exegesis, and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice," *DSD* 9 (2002): 1–19.

⁸⁴ Niditch, "Ezekiel 40–48," 216; cf. Levenson, *Theology*, 25–36. Together with Ezek 38–39, Ezek 40–48 completes the ancient Near Eastern pattern of victory-enthronement, in which the divine warrior defeats the powers of chaos, creates order/cosmos, and constructs and indwells a sanctuary (cf. *Enuma Elish*). This adoption of the victory-enthronement pattern informs Niditch's understanding of the basic originality of most of Ezek 40–48, as well as the compositional unity of the Book of Ezekiel.

⁸⁵ In Ezek 8:3, the phrase is identical to that in Ezek 40:2 (במראות אלהים). This is one of many very close similarities between Ezek 40–48 and Ezek 8–11.

⁸⁶ See Joel S. Burnett, *A Reassessment of Biblical Elohim* (SBLDS 183; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 58. Oddly, Zimmerli translates this phrase "divine visions" in Ezek 1:1; 8:3, but "visions of God" in 40:2 (*Ezekiel 1*, 81, 216; *Ezekiel 2*, 331; cf. Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 5).

⁸⁷ Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 84–85; also Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, 41, 168. On the other hand, Ezekiel consistently avoids describing foreign gods or idols as אלהים, reserving the term for designations of Yahweh alone (see John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000], 35–42). Yet Ezekiel's strategy in this regard is precisely the denial of divinity to idols or foreign gods.

the vision is not God but other subjects.⁸⁸ Thus, the phrase here indicates the nature of Ezekiel's vision, i.e., it is of divine origin and supernatural in nature.

The phrase יד־יהוה (“hand of Yahweh”) appears numerous times in the Book of Ezekiel and is one of the literary features which links chs. 40–48 with chs. 1–39. Eichrodt regards this reference to the יד־יהוה as the prophet's loss of self-control as he was “overpowered by a divinely caused ecstasy.”⁸⁹ Dörfel echoes Eichrodt's assessment and notes that the linking of the יד־יהוה and במראות אלהים, suggests the importation of the motif from Ezek 8:1–3.⁹⁰ On the other hand, Kasher reads this phrase as an expression of Ezekiel's anthropomorphic view of Yahweh, as well as the prophet's intimate relationship with the deity.⁹¹ Considering that the “hand” in Ezek 8:3 is capable of “stretching out” (וישלח) and “grabbing” (ויקחני) the prophet by the hair (בציצת ראשי), it seems that the phrase expresses more than visionary ecstasy or a trance state. Rather, it is a semi-autonomous manifestation of Yahweh's divine presence, i.e., a hypostasis.⁹² Furthermore, in Ezek 8:3 the “hand” appears to belong to the “man” (איש) and also to be closely identified with the “spirit” (רוח) which lifts up the prophet (cf. Ezek 2:2; 3:12;

⁸⁸ In Ezek 8–11, the focus is on the atrocities committed in Jerusalem (8:6–18; 11:1–4) and the destruction of the city (9:1–11; 11:5–13). Attention to the appearance of Yahweh himself appears only in 10:1–5, in the context of the departure of the glory of Yahweh from Jerusalem (10:6–22; 11:22–25). Likewise, in Ezek 40–48 Yahweh appears visibly only in 43:1–5, as the glory returns to the temple.

⁸⁹ Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 541.

⁹⁰ Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 77.

⁹¹ Rimmon Kasher, “Anthropomorphism, Holiness, and Cult: A New Look at Ezekiel 40–48,” *ZAW* 110 (1998): 202–03.

⁹² Cf. Eichrodt's discussion of the “face” (פנים) of Yahweh (*Theology*, 2:35–39).

11:1; 43:5). This close association may indicate that the “man” and the “spirit” are also emanations or hypostases of Yahweh, as has often been suggested of the “angel of Yahweh” (מלאך יהוה) in various passages in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Exod 3:2; Judg 6:11–24).⁹³

The identification of one seemingly distinct, autonomous divine figure with another, higher-ranking deity is a well-known feature of ancient Near Eastern religions. In the first millennium Mesopotamian religion, some chief gods such as Marduk or Ninurta, achieved such supremacy and transcendence that some texts speak of all other deities as aspects or hypostases of the one god. Mark Smith refers to this view as “summodeism” and notes that sometimes other deities are identified with individual body parts of the chief warrior deity.⁹⁴ A good example is the following hymn to Ninurta:

O lord, your face is Shamash, your locks [Nisaba],
Your eyes, O lord, are Enlil and [Ninlil],
Your eyeballs are Gula and Belet-il[i],
Your eyelids, O lord, are the twins, Sin [and Shamash],
Your eyebrows are the corona of the sun that [],
Your mouth’s shape, O lord, is the evening star,
Anu and Antu are your lips, your speech [is Nusku(?)]
Your discoursing tongue (?) is Pabilsag, who [] on high,
The roof of your mouth, O lord,
 is the circumference of heaven and earth, abode of [],
Your teeth are the Seven, who slay evildoers,
Your cheeks, O lord, are the rising of bri[l]liant stars,
Your ears are Ea and Damkina, sages of wisdom [],
Your head is Adad, who [makes] heaven and earth
 [resound] like a smithy,
Your brow is Shala, beloved [sp]ouse
 who contents [Adad’s heart],

⁹³ For example, Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:23–29; Heidt, *Angelology*, 69–95.

⁹⁴ Smith, *God in Translation*, 149–80.

Your neck is Marduk, judge of heaven [and netherworld],
the deluge [].⁹⁵

Read against this background, the “man” in Ezek 8:2–3, as well as perhaps in Ezek 40:3, may, in fact, *be* the יד־יהוה—a hypostasis of the divine presence of Yahweh.⁹⁶ This fact that in Ezek 8:6, the first-person speech is clearly from the perspective of Yahweh (“to drive me away from *my* sanctuary”) may bolster this reading.⁹⁷ In Ezek 40–48, however, the identification between the “man” and Yahweh/the “hand of Yahweh” is not as clear, and in 43:6f there is a clear distinction between the speech of the guide and that of Yahweh.⁹⁸ Yet the appearance of the יד־יהוה in Ezek 40:1, as well as the reminiscence of the figure(s) in Ezek 1:26–28 and Ezek 8:2–3 (and thereby Yahweh

⁹⁵ “Syncretic Hymn to Ninurta,” lines 10–23 (Foster, *Before the Muses*, 713); see also Smith, *God in Translation*, 173.

⁹⁶ But see Willy Rautenberg, “Zur Zukunftsthora des Hesekiel,” *ZAW* 33 (1913): 92–93.

⁹⁷ Zimmerli contends that the only function of the figure in Ezek 8:2 is the transportation of the prophet to Jerusalem, while it is Yahweh himself who leads him into the temple and communicates with him (*Ezekiel* 2, 348).

⁹⁸ W. Rautenberg argues that the “man” in Ezek 40–48 is not to be identified with Yahweh at all, but rather is an angel, whose sole task is to guide the prophet and take measurements of the temple. He points out that the “man” in Ezek 40–48 always speaks of Yahweh in third person, never in first person. This contrasts with the first person speech in Ezek 43:7–27, as well as in Ezek 8:5–18. Thus, even in Ezek 8, according to Rautenberg, it is Yahweh himself who leads the prophet through the temple and speaks to him in first person (W. Rautenberg, “Zur Zukunftsthora des Hesekiel,” *ZAW* 33 [1913]: 92–93, 98). Nevertheless, I contend that an understanding of the “man,” at least in Ezek 8, as a hypostasis of Yahweh along the lines of Mesopotamian “summodeism” satisfactorily explains the first person speech. But in Ezek 40–48, there is sufficient differentiation between the “man” and Yahweh (e.g., 43:6) to support the identification of the “man” as an independent being, i.e., an angel. Yet even here, the angel appears to function as an extension of the presence of Yahweh, through his association with the יד־יהוה in 40:1–3 and the echoes of Ezek 1:26–28 and 8:2 in the description of his appearance. This understanding is similar to the view put forth by Dörfel, who allows that Yahweh may indeed stand behind the figure in Ezek 40:3, but maintains that the “man” himself is a “mediating figure” (*Mittlergestalt*) (Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 78).

himself, at least indirectly) in the description of the “man’s” appearance, underscore Yahweh’s imminent presence throughout Ezek 40–42.⁹⁹

The most important feature of Ezek 40 for the purpose of this study is the sudden appearance of the “man” (איש) in v. 3. He is described as having the “appearance of copper” (כמראה נחשת), emphasizing his supernatural, heavenly origin and nature. This description recalls the “man”¹⁰⁰ in Ezek 8:2, whose “appearance from his waist down was fire and from his waist up was like the appearance of brightness, like the gleam of shining amber” (ממראה מתניו ולמטה אש וממתניו ולמעלה כמראה־זהר כעין החשמלה). He is also similar to the figure in Ezek 1:26–28, whose appearance is “similar to the appearance of a human being” (דמות כמראה אדם), and who likewise “had an appearance like the gleam of shining amber, like the appearance of fire enclosing him all around, and his appearance from the waist down...like the appearance of fire” (כעין חשמל כמראה־אש בית־לה סביב) (ולמעלה וממראה מתניו ולמטה ... כמראה־אש ממראה מתניו). Yet the figure in Ezek 40–48 is much more directly involved in the process of revelation than those in chs. 1–2 and 8–11. In Ezek 1:28b, the prophet hears “a voice speaking” (קול מדבר), but the text is unclear

⁹⁹ Beginning in ch. 43, Yahweh’s presence is more obvious, as the “glory” (כבוד) returns and indwells the temple.

¹⁰⁰ The MT reads אש “fire,” while LXX ἀνθρώπος suggests איש “man.” Zimmerli follows Geiger in understanding the MT as reflecting the unwillingness of Jewish scribes to describe Yahweh as having the appearance of a “man” (*Ezekiel 1*, 216). The divine figure in 1:26, however, is described as דמות כמראה אדם “a form like the appearance of a human being.” The close verbal and conceptual similarity of these two descriptions indicates that 8:2 likewise describes Yahweh as having the appearance of a man (see Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 277, n. 16). It is possible that the reading here has been influenced by the appearance of אש three words later, where it describes the appearance of the figure’s lower half.

whether the voice is that of the human figure or whether it is a *bat qol*, a voice from heaven (cf. Gen 22:11–18; Deut 4:12; 1 Kgs 19:13; Dan 4:31–32).¹⁰¹ In Ezek 8:3–4, the “man” stretches out “the form of a hand” (תבנית יד), presumably identified with the “hand of Yahweh” which falls upon the prophet in v. 1, and grasps Ezekiel by the hair, and the spirit carries him “in divine visions” (במראות אלהים) to Jerusalem.¹⁰² In v. 4, the glory of the God of Israel appears, “like the vision which I saw in the valley” (cf. Ezek 1), and the speech which follows is delivered in first person from the perspective of Yahweh. The figure of the “man” recedes into the background and reappears only as he leads the prophet from one scene to the next (e.g., 8:7, 14, 16), and then again as he gives the order for the slaughter of Jerusalem to begin (9:1).¹⁰³

The dazzling appearance of the “man” conforms, in part, to a common motif in ancient Near Eastern dream reports. In several of these dream texts, divine beings interact with and at times mediate information to the dreamer. They are often described as luminous, beautiful, and often of gigantic stature.¹⁰⁴ For example, in the Neo-Assyrian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh recounts the following dream to Enkidu:

¹⁰¹ Since the throne on which the human figure sits is located “above the dome over their heads,” it could well be that the voice is both that of the human figure and at the same time a *bat qol*. Note also that in Gen 22:11–18, the voice is that of the מלאך יהוה “the angel of Yahweh.”

¹⁰² The motif of a prophet being carried through the air by his hair also appears in Bel 36, in which an angel carries Habakkuk to Babylon by his hair to take food to Daniel.

¹⁰³ As stated above, the “man” in Ezek 8–11 is best understood as a hypostasis of Yahweh’s divine presence, which would explain the perspective of the speech in this passage. Throughout Ezek 8–11, as well as Ezek 1–2, visions of Yahweh’s visible form are narrated in extremely circumlocutory fashion and in a number of seemingly distinct forms, including human figures, the “hand” of Yahweh, the “glory” (כבוד) of Yahweh, and the “spirit” (see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 89–90).

¹⁰⁴ See A. Leo Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of the Assyrian Dream Book* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 46/3; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956; repr. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2008), 189; Frances Flannery-

In my dream, dear friend, the mountain [collapsed (?)]
 It threw me over, seized my feet []
 The sheen became stronger, a man (1-*en* LÚ.KA[L])
 []
 His beauty exceeded any beauty in the country []
 From under the mountain, he pulled me out and []
 Gave me water to drink, my heart bec[ame quiet]
 He set [my] feet (again) on the ground.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, in the Akkadian poem *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* the following dream reports appear:

*There was a singular man, extraordinary in fo[rm],
 Magnificent in physique, clothed in new gar[ment]s.
 Because I was just waking up, his outline la[cke]d form,
 He was clad in radiance, clothed in a[w]e.*

...
 In the dream that I saw at ni[ght],
*There was a sin[gul]ar young woman, [her appear]ance was beautiful,
 Cl[oth]ed like a human, but eq[ual] to a god.
 A queen of peoples ...¹⁰⁶*

The “man” in Ezek 40:3 is similar in appearance to the divine beings in these dream reports (i.e., shining appearance, etc.), but he is not described as being of abnormally large size. Furthermore, unlike the “night visions” of Zech 1–6 and Dan 7–12, there is no indication in the text that Ezek 40–48 is a dream.

The “man” in Ezek 40–48 is more of a guide and interpreter than the figure in Ezek 8–11. He holds in his hand a “linen cord” (פתיל־פשתים) and a “measuring reed” (קנה המדה). Like the linen-clad “man” with a “writing case” (קסת הספר) at his side in Ezek 9:2, the instrument in his hand indicates his primary function in this text, which is

Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* (JSJSup 90; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 21.

¹⁰⁵ *KUB IV* 48:13–19 (trans. Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 248).

¹⁰⁶ III.9–13, 30–33 (Amar Annus and Alan Lenzi, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi: The Standard Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer: Introduction, Cuneiform Text, and Transliteration with a Translation and Glossary* [SAACT 7; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2010], 38).

taking measurements of the temple.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the guide's first words to Ezekiel include instructions both to hear and to see, but the emphasis is on what the guide will show the prophet, rather than what he will speak to him.¹⁰⁸ The vast majority of chs. 40–42 is taken up with measurements and descriptions of the temple which the “man” shows to the prophet. He measures each feature with the measuring reed, then moves on to the next feature, beginning with the wall surrounding the outer court and moving inward through the gates to the inner courts and the nave, and finally into the sanctuary itself (Ezek 40:5–42:14). He then leads Ezekiel back out of the sanctuary through the eastern entrance and measures the perimeter of the outer court before leading him to the eastern gate of the temple complex (Ezek 42:16–43:1).

The motif of the guided tour is prominent in apocalyptic literature, most notably in *1 En.* 17–36; 60–61; 71–82; *3 Baruch*; the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*; *T. Ab.* 10–16; and *2 Enoch*.¹⁰⁹ It typically involves an angel leading the visionary along a journey through the heavens or the earth, pointing out various features, and explaining them.¹¹⁰ Often the

¹⁰⁷ Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 515. Cf. the “measuring line” (חבל מדה) used by the interpreting angel to measure the city of Jerusalem in Zech 2:5 (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 348).

¹⁰⁸ The “man” instructs the prophet, “see with your eyes and hear with your ears and pay attention to all which I am about to show you, because you were brought here that I might show you. Report everything which you see to the house of Israel.” Thus, the guide emphasizes the visionary nature of Ezekiel’s revelation tell him to report what he sees. Other prophetic texts likewise emphasize the sense of sight in divine revelation. The Book of Isaiah identifies itself as “The vision (חזון) of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw (חזה) concerning Judah and Jerusalem” (1:1). Amos 1:1 begins, “The words of Amos... which he saw concerning Israel.” Likewise, Mic 1:1 states, “The word of YHWH which came to Micah or Moresheth... which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.” The heading of the Book of Obadiah identifies it as a “vision” (חזון) (1:1), as does the Book of Nahum (1:1). Habakkuk opens with the words, “The oracle (משא) which Habakkuk the prophet saw (חזה)” (1:1). Thus, Ezek 40–48 stands in a long prophetic tradition in emphasizing the visionary character of divine revelation.

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion of the history and development of the tour motif, see Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*.

¹¹⁰ Thus, in *1 En.* 17–36, Enoch embarks on an angel-guided tour of the cosmos, and along the way his angelic guides explain to him the judgment of the fallen Watchers, the abodes of the dead and their

visionary will ask questions, to which the angel will respond by offering explanations (e.g., *I En.* 21:4–6; *T. Lev.* 2:6–5:7), although sometimes the angel will offer an explanation without prompting (e.g., *I En.* 18:14–19:2). Susan Niditch traces this vision + question and answer motif to the symbolic visions of Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3.¹¹¹ Here the prophet sees two visions, the first being “the Lord” (אֲדֹנָי)¹¹² standing beside a wall with a plumb line (אֲנָךְ) in his hand. Yahweh then asks him, “Amos, what do you see?” (מִה־אֵתָהּ), and Amos responds, “A plumb line” (Amos 7:8a). “The Lord” (אֲדֹנָי) then offers the following explanation of the vision: “I am now setting a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I will never again pass by it” (הֲנִי שָׁם אֲנָךְ בְּקֶרֶב עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־אֹסִיף) (Amos 7:8b). In the second vision, Yahweh shows the prophet a “basket of summer fruit” (בְּלוֹב קִיץ) (Amos 8:1). Again, Yahweh asks, “Amos, what do you see?” and Amos replies, “A basket of summer fruit” (בְּלוֹב קִיץ). Yahweh then responds, “The end has come to my people Israel” (בֹּא הַקֵּץ אֶל־עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (Amos 8:2b).

future judgment, the luminaries of heaven, the mountain of God, the Tree of Life, the Tree of Wisdom (i.e., the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), and the ranks of the angels of heaven.

¹¹¹ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 21–71. According to Niditch, the first stage of the “symbolic vision motif,” as evidenced in Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24, is characterized by the use of wordplays or some other direct relationship between what is seen and its meaning. In this respect, the motif bears resemblance to ancient Near Eastern divinatory techniques, especially dream interpretation (Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 9–10, 29–34). See also Susan Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion*, 26.

¹¹² The MT lacks any explicit identification of this “Lord” with Yahweh, and Rahlfs’ edition of the LXX reads ἀνὴρ “a man,” while BHS indicates that several LXX mss suggest יהוה. It should be noted that elsewhere Amos does use אֲדֹנָי in conjunction with יהוה (e.g., Amos 7:1; 8:1).

Amos 7:7–9, in particular, shares with Ezek 40–48 the feature of a measuring device. In Amos 7:7–9, the figure in the vision holds a “plumb line” (אֵנָךְ) in his hand, while in Ezek 40:3, the “man” holds a “measuring reed” (קִנְיָה הַמִּדָּה).¹¹³ A number of scholars have noted that the “man” in Ezek 40–48 acts primarily as a guide and as a surveyor,¹¹⁴ and nearly all of Ezek 40–43 is taken up with the measurements of the temple complex. Measuring is a common element in apocalyptic visions, and it is typically the work of an angel (Zech 2:2; *1 En.* 61; Rev 21:15–21; cf. Rev 11:1–2).

While the pattern of vision + question and answer in Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3 is similar in many respects to later examples of the tour/interpreting angel motif, there are some key differences. In Amos 7–8, it is Yahweh who shows the prophet visions and then interprets them, rather than an angel. Also, the question and answer feature is the reverse of what one typically finds in apocalyptic tours. Yahweh asks the questions, and the prophet answers.¹¹⁵ While not stated explicitly, it is the prophet’s seeming inability to understand the deeper significance of the symbolic visions which prompts Yahweh’s “interpretations” of the visions.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Cf. Rautenberg, “Zukunftsthora,” 93.

¹¹⁴ E.g., Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 348; Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC 29; Dallas: Word, 1990), 299; Bowen, *Ezekiel*, 241; Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 514–15.

¹¹⁵ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 9–11.

¹¹⁶ The inability of the visionary to understand his visions is also prominent in the interpreting angel motif as it appears in apocalyptic literature. In Dan 7:15–16, Daniel is deeply disturbed by his visions and approaches a heavenly attendant (presumably an angel) and asks him to explain the “interpretation” (פֶּשֶׁר) of his vision. In the following chapter, Daniel tries to understand his vision but is unable, and as a result the angel Gabriel is commissioned to “help this son to understand the vision” (הִבֵּן לְהֵלֹךְ אֶת־הַמְּרָאָה) (Dan 8:16). Even after the angel’s interpretation, Daniel confesses that he still does not understand it (Dan 8:27).

The “man” in Ezek 40–48 actually speaks very little, and when he does offer explanations or interpretations, he does so without any prompting by the prophet (40:45–46; 41:4, 22; 42:13–14; 44:2–3, 5; 46:20, 24; 47:6). In fact, there is no real indication throughout the vision that Ezekiel does not understand what he sees, and he asks no questions at all. There is only one question asked throughout the entirety of Ezek 40–48, and it appears in 47:6, where the “man” asks the prophet, “Have you seen, O Son of Man?” (הֲרֵאִיתָ בֶּן־אָדָם). Interestingly, Ezekiel does not respond to the guide’s question. For this reason, some have argued against identifying the “man” in Ezek 40–48 as an example of an interpreting angel.¹¹⁷ However, angelic interpretation without the question and answer element is also common in later apocalyptic literature (e.g., *I En.* 18:14–19:2), as is angelic revelation which is not explicitly verbal in nature.¹¹⁸ Throughout apocalyptic literature, interpreting angels perform many tasks which go beyond verbal interpretation of visions, and angelic interpretation is not limited to verbal explanation. What links these instances together under the heading of the “interpreting angel motif” is the angel’s central role in the mediation and understanding of the vision.

Ezekiel’s tour of the temple complex culminates with the dramatic return of the “glory” (כְּבוֹד) of Yahweh to the temple in Ezek 43:1–6. Zimmerli views the return of the כְּבוֹד as the “definitive statement of the transportation vision of chapters 40ff,” and as the

¹¹⁷ Schöpflin, “God’s Interpreter,” 197.

¹¹⁸ In the Enochic *Book of Luminaries*, Uriel shows Enoch the workings of the heavens without speaking to him. As in Ezek 40–48, the visual nature of the angel’s revelation is stressed, and Enoch describes his vision in detail without framing it as an angelic “interpretation,” although it is clear that these are mysteries which the angel has mediated to him (“Such is the appearance and the picture of the luminaries which Uriel the archangel, who is their leader, *showed* unto me” [*I En.* 79:6b, emphasis mine]).

counterpart to the departure of the כבוד in Ezek 8–11.¹¹⁹ As such, he argues that these verses cannot be separated from the temple measurements in chs. 40–42. Similarly, Fohrer includes Ezek 43:1–9 in the original core vision of the prophet Ezekiel.¹²⁰ All of the vision up to this point, including the measurements of the temple complex, anticipates the indwelling of the temple by Yahweh. Accompanying the return of the כבוד are stereotypical phenomena associated with theophany, including “a sound like the sound of many waters” (קול כקול מים רבים) and the illumination of the land with light (Ezek 43:2; cf. Exod 19:16–19; Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4–5; Ps 29:3–8; Hab 3:3–4, 10; Ezek 1:24).¹²¹ The sight becomes too much for Ezekiel, and he falls on his face (cf. Ezek 1:28) as the כבוד enters the temple through the eastern gate (Ezek 43:3–4). The Spirit (רוח) then picks up the prophet and carries him into the inner court, while the כבוד continues to fill the whole temple (cf. Isa 6:1). Again, the action of the רוח in reviving, lifting up, and transporting the prophet carries forward a motif which appears several times in the Book of Ezekiel (cf. Ezek 2:2; 3:12; 8:3; 11:1).

A pivotal moment occurs in v. 6, as Ezekiel hears a voice speaking to him from the temple.

ואשמע מדבר אלי מהבית ואיש היה אמד אצלי

¹¹⁹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 548. Allen argues that while Ezek 43:1–5 may have originally been the climax of the temple vision, in its present form it introduces the promise of the restoration of worship in chs. 43–46 (*Ezekiel 20–48*, 256).

¹²⁰ Fohrer, *Ezechiel*, 37.

¹²¹ H. Schmid argues that the Sinai theophany stands in the background of the description in Ezek 43:2 (“Jahwe und die Kultrationen von Jerusalem,” *ZAW* 67 [1955]: 191). Cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 413.

Then I heard someone speaking to me from the temple, while the man was standing next to me.

Up to this point, the only person who has spoken throughout the vision is the “man” who leads the prophet, and only occasionally. Yet the notice in v. 6b that the “man” was standing next to the prophet while the voice spoke out of the temple indicates that it is not the “man” who speaks, but rather Yahweh. Thus, we see here a clear distinction between Yahweh and the “man,” whom we may now reasonably identify as an angel, which does not occur in either Ezek 1:26–28 or Ezek 8–11.¹²² Even before Yahweh begins to speak in 43:6, the guide recedes into the background. After leading the prophet to the eastern gate, he disappears from the scene as the *רוח* carries Ezekiel into the inner court, and there is no indication that he follows. The statement in Ezek 43:6b that the “man” was standing beside Ezekiel serves as the only indication of his continued presence as the focus now shifts to the *כבוד* of Yahweh and the voice speaking out of the temple.¹²³

The juxtaposition of the angelic guide and Yahweh in Ezek 43:6 and Yahweh’s direct communication with the prophet in 43:7–27 have important implications for the view of divine transcendence and mediated revelation (i.e., through angels) in the Book of Ezekiel. Whereas the increasing role of angels in the Second Temple period has often

¹²² Cf. Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 463; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 414–15; Allen, *Ezekiel*, 256; Hummel, *Ezekiel*, 1236; Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 580.

¹²³ Zimmerli observes, “The withdrawal of the man is doubtless to be explained on the basis that in view of the presence of Yahweh in his *כבוד* (“glory”) there is no further place for any further guiding activity. When the sun rises the stars grow pale. When the king enters and begins to speak the courtiers fall back” (*Ezekiel 2*, 415). Similarly, Allen notes that “Hitherto the angelic guide has explained significant features of what the prophet saw. Now in a conscious differentiation his voice is superseded by what is recognized from its source as a greater one” (*Ezekiel*, 256).

The mention of the “man” standing beside Ezekiel may also relate to a common motif in ancient Near Eastern dream reports. Oppenheim points out that in dream reports divine mediators often “stand” near the dreamer, usually at their head (*Interpretation of Dreams*, 189).

been understood as a sign of the remoteness of God and even an “obscuring of the idea of God,”¹²⁴ Yahweh’s unmediated presence remains alongside angelic mediation in Ezek 40–48, in the form of hypostases (ידייהוה, רוח, כבוד) and also in direct divine communication with the prophet.¹²⁵

Ezek 44:1–5

Following Yahweh’s direct communication with the prophet in Ezek 43:7–27, the angelic guide reappears in Ezek 44:1–4. The opening verse describes the leading of the prophet back toward the eastern gate using the same stereotypical guidance formula used throughout Ezek 40–48, though text does not explicitly state that the “man” is the one who leads the prophet.¹²⁶

וישב אתי דרך שער המקדש החיצון הפנה קדים והוא סגור

Then he brought me back toward the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces east, and it was closed.

According to the MT, Yahweh again speaks to Ezekiel in vv. 2–3, but most scholars prefer to read יהוה here as an editorial gloss and understand the angelic guide as the

¹²⁴ Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:200.

¹²⁵ A possible objection which one could raise is to argue that the direct divine speech of Ezek 43:7–27 belongs to a different redactional stratum than the angelic guide. Zimmerli does posit that Ezek 43:1–11 was added after 41:5–15a and 42:15–20, but even so, 43:1–11 includes both the angelic guide and Yahweh’s unmediated communication. Moreover, his redactional chronology has nothing to do with the use of different modes of revelation (direct divine revelation vs. angelic mediation), and in fact, he, along with most other scholars, regards the angelic guidance pattern as a feature of the earliest strata (see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 547–53).

¹²⁶ Zimmerli notes that while the text does not name the subject, it is best understood to be the “man” who has functioned as Ezekiel’s guide throughout the vision (*Ezekiel 2*, 440).

original speaker.¹²⁷ On the one hand, the MT reading has the support of nearly all ancient versions, and in Ezek 43:5, it is the יהוה (of Yahweh?) rather than the angelic guide who leads the prophet into the inner court, which may suggest that it is also Yahweh who leads him back to the gate in 44:1 and speaks in 44:2. However, the third person references to Yahweh in these verses, favor emending the text.¹²⁸

The guide informs Ezekiel that the gate must remain shut due to Yahweh's entrance through it to indwell the temple. Then follows an enigmatic statement regarding the exclusive right of the נשיא ("prince") to sit in the gate and eat bread before Yahweh.¹²⁹ In v. 4 the angelic guide leads the prophet out through the north gate and around to the front of the temple, where he again sees that the כבוד-יהוה has filled the temple. As in Ezek 43:3, Ezekiel falls on his face before the splendor of Yahweh's glory. The close similarity of this scene to that of Ezek 43:1–5 has led some to regard 44:4–5 as

¹²⁷ The MT inserts יהוה as the subject here (as well as in v. 5), but this reading is suspicious for a number of reasons. While most of the ancient versions support the MT reading, one LXX ms (LXX²³⁹) lacks the divine name. The word order here is unusual (ויאמר אלי יהוה). In similar passages in Ezek 9:4; 23:36, the order is the expected ויאמר יהוה אלי, while the irregular word order appears only here and in 44:5. Also, the passage consistently speaks of Yahweh in the third person until v. 6, at which point (following the stereotypical oracular formula כה אמר יהוה) it switches to first person. While the third person references do not necessarily demand that Yahweh be the subject, they are unusual, and the abrupt switch in v. 6, plus the unusual word order, suggests that יהוה is a gloss (Gese, *Verfassungsentwurf*, 50–51; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 437; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 559, n. a; but cf. Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 613, n. 1). Hummel offers a middle position by retaining יהוה while allowing that Yahweh may be speaking *through* the guide. The unusual word order is significant, for it underscores the distance between Yahweh and his people which demands that the message's origin be stated explicitly ("He—Yahweh—said to me"), and the explicit identification of Yahweh as the God of Israel, which also occurs only here in the Book of Ezekiel, may emphasize this separation as well (Hummel, *Ezekiel 21–48*, 1265). Hummel's reading is possible, but it is rather speculative.

¹²⁸ As may be seen in the clear shift to first person in Ezek 43:7–27, there is a clear distinction in Ezek 40–48 between Yahweh and the angelic guide in the perspectives of speeches.

¹²⁹ For discussions of the apparent limiting of access to the gate to the נשיא see Driver, "Ezekiel," 308–09; Hummel, *Ezekiel 21–48*, 1267–68.

a later addition which abbreviates the former and employs it as an introduction to the listing of the “ordinances of the temple and all its instructions” (לכל־חוקות בית־יהוה) (ולכל־תרתו (Ezek 44:5)).¹³⁰ Block, however, cautions against the labeling of Ezek 44:4–31 as secondary on the grounds that the giving of ordinances for the new temple coheres with “Ezekiels neo-Mosaic status” in Ezek 40–48.¹³¹ Thus, Ezek 40:1–43:11 corresponds to the construction of the wilderness sanctuary in Exod 25–40, while the regulations in Ezek 43:12–46:18 correspond to the cultic and legal regulations of Leviticus and Num 1:1–30:16. To complete this picture, Block reads the division of the land in Ezek 47–48 as the counterpart to Num 34–35.¹³² If Ezek 40–48 draws not only upon Priestly themes/language, but upon Priestly texts in their canonical form, the dating of Ezek 40–48 would need to be pushed well into the Persian period, when the Pentateuch had achieved its basic shape. One may, however, regard the broad paralleling of Exod 25–Num 35 in Ezek 40–48 as indicative of early Priestly Mosaic traditions, rather than direct

¹³⁰ For example, Zimmerli regards Ezek 44:4–5 as “later editorial expansion” for the statutes which follow, which he also considers an addition to an original “fixed complex” consisting of Ezek 40:1–44:3. He credits this expansion to the “school” of Ezekiel (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 445). Hals also considers Ezek 44:4–5 as the beginning of a new literary unit, and he points to the dependence upon and development of themes from chs. 40–43 in the following ordinances as evidence of the high level of continuity of style and thought between Ezekiel and his school (*Ezekiel*, 314–15). Allen also reads Ezek 44:4–5 as an introduction to 46:6–18 (or perhaps 46:6–24), which links chs. 40–43 with chs. 44–46, although he actually regards chs. 43–46 as a single literary unit (*Ezekiel* 20–48, 251). Following Gese, he understands Ezek 43:1–44:5 as an extended introduction, with 44:1–3 and 44:4–5 functioning as two smaller, parallel introductions which echo earlier material and look forward to later material (cf. Gese, *Verfassungsentwurf*, 6–8).

¹³¹ Block, *Ezekiel* 25–48, 616–17.

¹³² Block, *Ezekiel* 25–48, 617. Although Block cites Hals in support of his reading, Hals does not regard Ezek 44:4–5 as original material, but as “presumably editorial” (*Ezekiel*, 314). Furthermore, he concludes that there is a basic unity of thought “[f]or the mind of the prophet as well as the minds of the disciples involved in the elaboration of all of chs. 40–48” (Hals, *Ezekiel*, 315).

dependence on the Priestly texts as we now have them.¹³³ There are no quotes or direct verbal parallels of Priestly legal/cultic material, and the laws and ordinances in Ezek 44–46 differ considerably from those in the Priestly Pentateuchal texts.

The mentioning of the נשיא in Ezek 44:3 may indicate the addition of later material to original visionary material (cf. Gese’s *nasi-Schicht*).¹³⁴ Ezek 43:1–2 conforms closely to the guidance motif in Ezek 40:1–43:6, but v. 3 seems to be a side note which qualifies the assertion of v. 2 that “[the gate] should not be opened, nor should a man enter through it.” The tension between v.2 and v. 3 regarding human access to the eastern gate may suggest that v. 3 was added to vv. 1–2 as a clarification.¹³⁵ The guidance motif then resumes in v. 4, as Ezekiel is led through the north gate to the front of the temple, and in v. 5 the guide again speaks to the prophet.

ויאמר אלי [יהוה] בן־אדם שים לבך וראה בעיניך ובאזניך שמע את כל־אשר אני
מדבר אתך לכל־חקות בית־יהוה ולכל־תורתו ושמת לבך למבוא [י] הבית בכל מוצאי
המקדש

Then he¹³⁶ said to me, “Son of man, pay attention and see with your eyes and with your ears hear all that I am saying to you concerning all the

¹³³ Thus, Eichrodt argues for a late dating of most of chs. 44–46 on the basis of its similarity to the Priestly Code in Exodus–Numbers. Unlike Block, however, he does not consider Ezek 40–48 (or even Ezek 44–46) to be dependent upon the Priestly Code, but rather to be an independent code reflecting the same underlying legal system (Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 562–64). Menahem Haran, likewise, sees the legal material in Ezek 40–48 as being based upon the “priestly legal-cultic heritage” and clearly distinct from the “prophetic imagination” of Ezekiel, although he argues that both the visionary materials and the legal materials as they appear in the book are the work of a single hand (that of the historical prophet Ezekiel) and anticipatory of, rather than dependent upon, the Priestly writings of the Pentateuch (“The Law Code of Ezekiel XL–XLVIII and its Relation to the Priestly School,” *HUCA* 50 [1979]: 46–53).

¹³⁴ See Gese, *Ezechiel*, 110.

¹³⁵ Rautenberg, “Zukunftsthora,” 102; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, 439.

¹³⁶ See n. 127 above.

ordinances of the temple of YHWH and all its instructions. Pay attention to the entrances¹³⁷ of the temple and all the exits of the sanctuary.”

As an introduction to the ordinances in Ezek 44:6–46:18, Ezek 44:5 frames the discourse regarding the ordinances as the words of the angelic guide (כל-אשר אני מדבר אתך), while the first person speech and classical oracular form in 44:6–46:18 indicates that it is Yahweh who speaks.¹³⁸ One may explain this inconsistency as the result of an editor’s utilization of the guidance motif as a way to link Ezek 44:6–46:18 with Ezek 40–43. This same apparent inconsistency likely led to the eventual insertion of Yahweh as subject in 44:2, 5.

What is significant in these verses, as far as the present study is concerned, is the shift in the angelic guide’s stated duties from “showing” (מראה) in 40:4 to “saying” (מדבר) in 44:5. This shift indicates the increasing importance of angelic *interpretation of*

¹³⁷ With Syr and Targ I read a plural למבואי in place of the MT’s singular למבוא. This emendation brings this passage into agreement with 43:11, and it may be explained either through the loss of the final ם or through metathesis in an original למבאי, with the ם then being miscopied as a ן (למבואי → למביאי → למבואי) (cf. BHS; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 443; Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 618, n. 26).

¹³⁸ Finitis contrasts prophetic oracles with vision reports as two different modes of divine revelation in prophetic literature. During the exilic and early post-exilic period these two modes overlapped, so that both were utilized by prophets (e.g., Haggai prefers oracles, whereas Proto-Zechariah prefers visions), and although they may appear alongside each other in a single text (e.g., Zech 4:1–14), they reflect distinct textual units (Zech 4:1–6a, 10b–14; 4:6b–10a) (Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 139–47). Furthermore, while angels do sometimes speak for Yahweh in first person in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Gen 22:11–18; Exod 3:2), Ezek 40–48 is generally consistent in distinguishing between the words of the angelic guide and the words of Yahweh. Furthermore, in many instances the blurring of the distinction between Yahweh and his angel may indicate that the מלאך-יהוה was understood as a hypostasis of Yahweh, but this does not seem to be the case in Ezek 40–48 (Ezek 43:6). One may also compare the shift from third person speech *about* the words of Yahweh to first person speech set in the *mouth* of Yahweh with the use of the first person in 11Q19–20, in contrast to the third person perspective in Exodus–Deuteronomy. Martínez points out that 11Q19–20 presents itself as the divinely revealed—at therefore authoritative—interpretation of the Torah (Forentino García Martínez, “The *Temple Scroll* and the *New Jerusalem*,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years* [eds. Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1999], 2:439). Likewise, the use of first person perspective in Ezek 44:6–46:18 may serve the purpose of bolstering the authority of the ordinances as the very words of Yahweh, whether spoken directly by Yahweh or related verbatim by the angelic guide.

visions, in addition to showing and guiding.¹³⁹ Eichrodt, who understands all of Ezek 44:4–31 as the words of the angelic guide, offers the opinion that:

the angelic guide of ch. 40–42 evidently takes on a new role which did not originally belong to him, that of serving as intermediary for laws applying to the temple area... now the Lord who spoke directly to his prophet retires behind the divinely-sent interpreter of his command; his transcendence is thus perceptibly heightened.¹⁴⁰

One may question Eichrodt's equation of increased divine transcendence through the use of an intermediary with an increasingly distant God. The redactors who appropriated the angelic guidance motif in vv. 4–5 as a way to connect the ordinances, which are framed as a prophetic oracle, with the preceding material were comfortable with allowing Yahweh's words to be placed in the mouth of the angel in first person. The angelic guide would thus act as a messenger, in much the same way that prophets were sometimes understood as messengers of Yahweh (Hag 1:13).¹⁴¹

Like many prophetic oracles, Ezek 44:6–46:18 conforms closely to ancient Near Eastern letter formulae. Akkadian letters typically begin with the introduction *ana PN¹ qibīma umma PN²* ("To PN¹ speak, thus [says] PN²"),¹⁴² while Ugaritic letters begin *IPN¹ rgm thm PN²* ("To PN¹ say, message of PN²") in letters sent from an inferior to a superior and *thm PN¹ IPN² rgm* ("Message of PN¹: Say to PN²") in letters sent from a superior to

¹³⁹ Hals notes that Ezek 44:4–46:18 shifts the focus from the vision to "supplementary ordinances dealing with what was seen" (*Ezekiel*, 314).

¹⁴⁰ Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 560; cf. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 260. Blenkinsopp compares the transition from vision to ordinances with the pattern in the Priestly Sinai revelation in which Moses receives in a vision and then relates in the form of spoken instructions the regulations for the sanctuary (*Ezekiel*, 217).

¹⁴¹ With regard to angelic use of first person speech when delivering messages from Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible, Cho suggests that "the 'first person' speech of the divine messengers can be understood as a delivering technique. The messenger of Yahweh can be perceived as the agent deity charged by the sender, as attested in the Ugaritic texts" (Cho, *Lesser Deities*, 190).

¹⁴² Meier, *The Messenger*, 191–92; Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 48–53.

an inferior.¹⁴³ Following the introductory formula, the message of the sender appears, written (and presumably delivered) in first person. Meier argues that although the introductory formulae of the letters suggest that they were read aloud by the messenger (or perhaps the scribe of the recipient), the epistolary evidence emphasizes written communication, rather than oral communication.¹⁴⁴ Yet literary texts, both in Akkadian and in Ugaritic, as well as the Hebrew Bible, emphasize the orality of messages.¹⁴⁵ At the very least, the introductory letter formulae seem to have adopted a stereotypical format which implies or perhaps mimics oral delivery of messages. As in many other prophetic oracles in the Hebrew Bible, the use of the stereotypical message/messenger format in Ezek 44:6 [“Say to the rebellious one, to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord YHWH’”]) emphasizes that the source/sender of the message is Yahweh. Yahweh has not, in fact, “retire[d] behind the

¹⁴³ Meier, *The Messenger*, 193; Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 57–59.

¹⁴⁴ Meier, *The Messenger*, 58–60. Nevertheless, Meier does later admit a certain oral dimension to letters by allowing that it was customary for letters to be read aloud by the scribe of the recipient. But he maintains that “Nowhere did we find literacy as a prerequisite to function as a messenger, and no messenger is ever known to read a tablet in our data” (194). Yet the epistolary evidence must be read in tandem with the literary evidence, which does often indicate that messengers delivered their messages orally. Meier also notes several instances in which scribes function as messengers (21).

¹⁴⁵ Meier presents ten examples of the commissioning of messengers in Akkadian literary texts and notes that in every instance, the oral nature of the message is emphasized (*The Messenger*, 48). Likewise, all Ugaritic literary evidence indicates oral delivery of messages. The Ugaritic evidence is particularly relevant, since even these examples of oral delivery of messages still follow the stereotypical message formula found in Ugaritic letters (see Meier, *The Messenger*, 45–46). For example, in the Kirta epic, Pabil sends messengers to Kirta with the following instructions: [...id]k pn[m.al.ttn] ‘m.[krt.msw]n wr[gm.lkrt.]t‘ thm[.pbl mlk] (“[Now,] set your fac[e toward Kirta in the cam]p and s[ay to Kirta] the Noble, ‘Message [of King Pabil]’”)(*KTU* 1.14 V 29–33). Similarly, in 2 Kgs 19:6, Isaiah sends the servants of Hezekiah back to the king, saying יהוה אמר יהוה כה תאמרן אדניכם כה אמר יהוה (“Thus you shall say to your master, ‘Thus says YHWH...’”). A rather unique case is the Sumerian myth *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, which describes the invention of writing by Enmerkar as being the solution to his messenger’s inability to remember his long messages (see Meier, *The Messenger*, 52–53). Here the basically oral nature of the messages encounters the pragmatic need for written letters: some messages are simply too long /complex to remember, and the desire for the delivery of an accurate message necessitates written communication.

divinely-sent interpreter of his command,” but he is present in the very words placed in the mouth of the angel. Nevertheless, as noted above, Ezek 44:4–5 appears to be a redactional addition which attempts to link the oracle/ordinances of 44:6–46:18 with the preceding material by framing it as the words of the angelic guide. The ultimate failure of this attempt is made apparent by the later insertion of Yahweh as the speaker in 44:2, 5.

Ezek 46:19–47:12

The final block of text in which the angelic guide appears is Ezek 46:19–47:12. Following the ordinances in 44:6–46:18, the guided tour resumes in much the same manner as in chs. 40–42. In Ezek 46:19–24 the object is the temple kitchens where the priests boil and bake the guilt and sin offerings. Although the dimensions of the kitchens are given, there is no mention of the guide measuring them. Zimmerli detects a shift from measuring in Ezek 42:1–14, which is where one would expect to find this material, to interpreting and instructing in 46:19–24, and he concludes that “the whole complex of vv. 19–24, represent a supplement to 42:1–14...it emerged only at a not considerable lapse of time after 42:1–14.”¹⁴⁶ This increased emphasis on the words, rather than the actions, of the angelic guide is consistent with the shift from “showing” to “speaking” in Ezek 44:5, which I take to be a redactional link between chs. 40–43 and 44:6–46:18. Zimmerli also notes that vv. 19–20 and 21–24 both describe the places in which temple officials boil sacrificial offerings, with the former specifying that the priests prepare the offerings in the inner court, while the latter speaks of kitchens in the outer court where

¹⁴⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 500.

the “ministers of the temple” (משרתי הבית) boil the sacrifices. This division, he suggests, may correspond to the division between the Zadokite priests and the Levites who serve as “ministers of the temple” (משרתי הבית) in Ezek 45:1–8.¹⁴⁷ Thus, along with Ezek 44:5, Ezek 46:18–24 shows development within the interpreting angel motif, with an increase in the role of speaking among the duties of the angelic guide/interpreter.

In Ezek 47:1–12, the angelic guide leads the prophet back to the entrance of the temple, where he notices a stream of water flowing out from under the threshold of the temple, toward the east. As in chs. 40–42, the “man” resumes his primary duty as a surveyor, and the text once again calls attention to the measuring reed in his hand (Ezek 47:3; cf. Ezek 40:3), although here it is a קו rather than a קנה המדה.¹⁴⁸ As he leads the prophet out through the gate, they enter the stream flowing out of the temple, and he measures the distance they travel in increments of one thousand cubits (47:3–5). The water increases in depth the further they travel, until it becomes a river which Ezekiel can no longer ford (47:5). Unlike much of the earlier description of the temple complex, the scene here is far removed from any actual correspondence to the restored temple of the

¹⁴⁷ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 500; cf. Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 514; Hals, *Ezekiel*, 336. Block, likewise, acknowledges the presupposition of the distinction between priests and Levites found in Ezek 45:1–8, yet he maintains that the deletion of 46:19–24 as a late addition leaves 47:1 awkwardly attached to 46:18 (*Ezekiel 25–48*, 682–83). Yet I would contend that Ezek 47:1–12 is part of the original vision of Ezek 40–48, while 44:6–46:18 is redactionally inserted material (though not necessarily of late date), with 44:3–5 (and perhaps 44:1–2 as well) as a redactional link. Therefore 47:1 would originally have followed 43:11 (or perhaps 44:1–2), in which Yahweh instructs Ezekiel to describe the temple and its measurements to Israel, including “its exits and its entrances.” Thus, the immediate procession of the prophet, led by the angelic guide, back to the entrance of the temple in 47:1 would be completely natural.

¹⁴⁸ Zimmerli points to numerous links with chs. 40–42, including the guide’s repeated action of measuring (וימד), the juxtaposition of measurements and “explanatory statements,” and the mention of the measuring reed in his hand, although the term used here (קו) is different from that in Ezek 40:3 (*Ezekiel 2*, 509, 512). See also Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 277.

post-exilic period and clearly belongs to the realm of vision. Allen remarks that “the tone of the narrative is much more apocalyptic than any of the other visionary accounts in chaps. 40–48.”¹⁴⁹ Zimmerli notes that the concern for boundaries and the gradation of different levels of sanctity which is of supreme concern in chs. 44–46 is completely absent.¹⁵⁰ Rather, the stream which originates from beneath the temple flows out freely.

At this point the angelic guide asks Ezekiel, “Have you seen, O Son of Man?” (הֲרֵאִיתָ בְּנֵי־אָדָם) (Ezek 47:6). This is the first time the guide, or anyone for that matter, has asked the prophet a question throughout the entire tour. But such questions are typical in passages in which a divine being interprets a symbolic vision for a human visionary (e.g., Ezek 8:12, 15, 17; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Jer 1:11, 13; Zech 4:2; 5:2).¹⁵¹ The question both looks back to the visions which Ezekiel has already seen and anticipates the climax of the revelation, which will take place in the angel’s interpretation of the significance of the river in vv. 8–12.¹⁵² Here we find the most extensive angelic interpretation in all of Ezek 40–48, as the angel describes to the prophet how the river flows through the eastern territory, down into the Arabah, and ultimately into the Dead Sea, whose waters are purified (נִרְפָּאוּ, lit: “healed”) by it (Ezek 47:8). The river transforms the Dead Sea into a

¹⁴⁹ Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 277; cf. Hals, *Ezekiel*, 338.

¹⁵⁰ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 509.

¹⁵¹ Niditch observes a formal pattern in symbolic vision accounts in prophetic (and apocalyptic) literature, a key component of which is the revealing deity’s (or angel’s) questioning of the seer regarding what he has seen. She correlates this vision + question and answer pattern with ancient Near Eastern divinatory practices, especially dream interpretation (Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 10, 29–34).

¹⁵² Hals observes, “[In chs. 40–43] the measurements presented constituted the description, and occasionally explanations about the purpose were added. Here the series of measurements serves only to lead up to the conclusion offered with the final measurement: vis., a mighty river starts here” (*Ezekiel*, 338).

thriving paradise where animals and fish live, except for the swamps and marshes, which are left as sources of salt (47:9–11). Thus, the river, and by extension, the temple in which Yahweh’s presence dwells, from which the river flows, brings life to the land.

It may be significant that the angelic guide in Ezek 40–48 takes on the greatest level of responsibility as an interpreter in the vision of the river and tree of life in Ezek 47:1–12. In the parallel in Rev 22:1–2, an interpreting angel also guides the apocalypticist through the New Jerusalem and explains various features.¹⁵³ Likewise, in *1 En.* 24–28, interpreting angels show Enoch the mountain of God, from which also flow several streams, and they also indicate that in the eschaton the tree of life will be transplanted there (*1 En.* 25:5). Ezekiel 40–48 marks the genesis of the angel guided tour, with occasional interpretation of certain features, which figures prominently in later apocalyptic literature.

Neo-Babylonian Religious Background

Having analyzed the emergence of the interpreting angel motif in Ezek 40–48, it is now worthwhile to ask whether the motif shows evidence of influence from the religious practices and textual traditions of ancient Israel’s broader historical and cultural context in the ancient Near East. It has sometimes been asserted that there are no

¹⁵³ The parallels between Rev 21:9–22:7 and Ezek 40–48 are quite impressive, including the angel’s transporting of the apocalypticist to a “high mountain” (ὄρος μέγα) (Rev 21:10), showing him the city of Jerusalem (21:10–21), taking measurements of the city and its gates and walls with a “measuring rod” (μέτρον κάλαμον) (21:15), and the mentioning of that the “glory of God” (δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ) is in the city (21:23) (see Roloff, *Revelation*, 241). These points of contact make the explicit statement that the apocalypticist “saw no temple in the city” all the more significant, for here there is a clear departure from what seems to have been the apocalypticist’s major source for his description of Jerusalem (Ezek 40–48). Beasley-Murray also notes the connections between Rev 22:1–2, Gen 2, and Ezek 47, and he observes that in Rev 22 the threshold of the temple is transformed into the throne of God as the source of the river of life, in keeping with the declaration in Rev 21:22 that there is no temple in the city, because God and the Lamb are the temple (G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* [NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 330). One must also allow for the possible influence of such other examples of the continuing tradition as the Qumran New Jerusalem texts (e.g., 5Q15, 11Q18, etc.).

parallels to the interpreting angel motif in ancient Near Eastern literature.¹⁵⁴ While it is true that no exact parallels appear in known comparative texts which antedate or are contemporary with the earliest examples of the motif in the Hebrew Bible (Ezek 40–48; Zech 1–6), certain features of Mesopotamian religious belief and practice provide a background against which the development of the interpreting angel motif may be understood. These include especially practices relating to the interpretation of dreams and visions by divine beings in a handful of literary/mythological texts, as well as some ritual texts, letters, and royal inscriptions.

In the following survey of comparative religious data, I have attempted to limit the comparative evidence as much as possible to the Neo-Babylonian period. Certainly texts which derive from the immediate historical context of Ezek 40–48 merit greater weight when discussing possible influences. At the same time, the paucity of evidence and the accidents of preservation and discovery necessitate the consideration of earlier materials as well, when there is good reason to believe that they express concepts, beliefs, and practices which continued into the Neo-Babylonian period.

Assyrian and Babylonian kings often claimed to have received special revelations of divine knowledge from deities, but in no instance are these revelations mediated via angelic interpretation. They do, however, highlight the close relationship between Mesopotamian kings and access to divine knowledge. In one royal inscription Aššurbanipal claimed to have received “wise teachings” (*iḥzī nēmeqi*) from Marduk and Nabu, with the result that he became the greatest of the scholars (*ummânū*), and he also claimed to have studied inscriptions from before the Flood and to have learned the art of

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 94.

divination and the “secrets of heaven and earth” from Šamaš and Adad.¹⁵⁵ In another account, he tells of a *šabrû*-priest to whom Ishtar spoke in a “night vision” (*tabrīt mūsi*) in which the goddess gave Aššurbanipal military advice, which the priest then delivered to him.¹⁵⁶ Closer to the symbolic visions of Ezek 40–48 is one version of a dream report concerning Aššurbanipal:

In these days, a man (1-*en* LÚ.KAL) went to bed in the middle of the night and had a dream as follows: Upon the pedestal (*kigallu*) of (the image of) Sin was written (here a variant adds: the god Nabu, the scribe of the world, (in) his divine function was standing there and reading again and again the inscription of the pedestal of Sin): “Upon those who plot evil against Aššurbanipal, king of Assyria, and resort to (actual) hostilities, I shall bestow miserable death, I shall put an end to their lives through the quick iron dagger (of war), conflagration, hunger (and) pestilence (literally: the disease of Irra)!” This (dream) I (Aššurbanipal) heard and put my trust upon the word of my lord Sin.¹⁵⁷

In the variant reading of this text, the god Nabu appears and reads over and over the inscription on the pedestal of Sin’s cult statue. Since the message is from the moon god Sin, Nabu here acts as an intermediary making the message known to the dreamer.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ See Ronald F. G. Sweet, “The Sage in Akkadian Literature,” in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (eds. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 55–56. Aššurbanipal’s claims to divine knowledge recall the description of Gilgamesh’s retrieval of antediluvian knowledge in the Sumerian hymn “The Death of Bilgamesh” (see the trans. in Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation* [London: Penguin, 1999], 195–208). Both texts call to mind the story of Canaan’s discovery of antediluvian tablets containing the forbidden teachings of the Watchers in *Jub.* 8:1–3, as well as the instruction of Enoch by the angels in *1 En.* 17–82 and *Jub.* 46–26.

¹⁵⁶ See Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 249.

¹⁵⁷ Aššurbanipal, V R 2, III: 118–27 (Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 249–50).

¹⁵⁸ Jean-Marie Husser classifies this dream report as a “prophetic dream” (*Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World* [trans. Jill M. Munro; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 46). While he goes to considerable lengths elsewhere to distinguish between dreams and prophetic “night visions,” such as those found in Zech 1–6, Husser is inconsistent in making this distinction within extra-biblical texts. For example, he discusses the Deir ‘Alla “Balaam Text” as a West Semitic example of a dream, “even though the term ‘dream’ does not actually appear there” (82). Rather, the text states that “The gods came to him at night and he saw a vision” (*wy’ tw. ʾlwh. ʾlhn. blylh*), which is roughly parallel to the scene described in Zech 1:7–17. Likewise, Husser notes that in Akkadian poetic texts *šuttu* (“dream”) is often paralleled with *tabrīt mūsi* (“night vision”) (28).

A number of dream reports are associated with the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus (555–539 B.C.E.). In one royal inscription, Nabonidus describes that in a dream:

Marduk, the Great Lord, and Sin, the luminary of heaven and earth, stood (there) both; Marduk said to me: “Nabonidus, king of Babylon, bring bricks on your own chariot (drawn by your own) horse, (re)build the temple É.HÚL.HÚL and let Sin, the Great Lord, take up his dwelling there!”¹⁵⁹

Here one deity (Marduk) appears to act as a messenger for another deity (Sin), although both gods are credited with having revealed the dream to Nabonidus. While this dream lacks the elaborate architectural descriptions of Ezek 40–42 and the utopian imagery of Ezek 47:1–12, the subject matter—the reconstruction of Sin’s temple and the return of Sin to “take up his dwelling there”—is remarkably similar to that in Ezek 40–48. In the famous Persian period Nabonidus Verse Account, the Babylonian priests of Marduk ridicule Nabonidus, saying:

He would stand in the assembly (and) exalt him[self] (as follows):
“I am wise. I am knowledgeable. I have seen hid[den things].
I do not know a tablet (made by) a cut-reed stylus (i.e., cuneiform writing), (but) I have seen se[cret things].
Ilteri has given me revelations; he has [made known to me] everything.
As for (the series) *u₄.sakar* ^d*A-num* ^d*En.lil.la*, which Adapa compiled,
I surpass it in all wisdo[m].¹⁶⁰

This text satirizes Nabonidus’ claims of divine wisdom by portraying him as someone who claimed to surpass even the great sage Adapa in wisdom, but who could not even

¹⁵⁹ V R 64 I: 13–55 (Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 250).

¹⁶⁰ Trans. Peter Machinist and Hayim Tadmor, “Heavenly Wisdom,” in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo* (eds. Mark E. Cohen, *et al.*; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993), 146.

read cuneiform.¹⁶¹ Although this text clearly has an anti-Nabonidus agenda, it may reflect actual claims of Nabonidus to have received secret revelations from the gods.¹⁶²

In another royal inscription, Nabonidus describes the interpretation of a celestial omen first by a “man” and then by Nebuchadnezzar II in a dream:

With regard to the conjunction of the Great Star and the moon, I became apprehensive (but in a dream) a man (1-*en et-lu*) stood (suddenly) beside me and said to me: “There are no evil portents (involved) in the conjunction!” In the same dream, Nebukadnezzar, my royal predecessor and one attendant (appeared to me) standing on a chariot. The attendant said to Nebukadnezzar: “Do speak to Nabonidus so that he can report to you the dream he has had!” Nebukadnezzar was agreeable (literally: listened to him) and said to me: “Tell me what good (signs) you have seen!” I answered him saying: “In my dream I saw with joy the Great Star, the moon and the planet Jupiter (literally: Marduk) high up in the sky and it (the Great Star) called me by my name [].”¹⁶³

In this text the conjunction of the moon and the “Great Star” (Jupiter, associated with the god Marduk) causes Nabonidus concern, but a “man” appears to him in a dream and informs him that the sign is not an evil omen. In the same dream, the deceased Nebuchadnezzar and one of his attendants also appear to Nabonidus, and the attendant suggests that Nebuchadnezzar interpret Nabonidus’ dream for him. Unfortunately, the interpretation he gives is lost, but what remains of this text parallels the interpreting angel motif in many ways. Nabonidus’ initial apprehension at his vision-dream is similar to Daniel’s reaction to his vision-dreams in Dan 7:15; 8:27. The appearance of a “man” (1-

¹⁶¹ Machinist and Tadmor see the Verse Account as a polemic against an inscription which portrays Nabonidus as out-performing the scribes of Babylon by being able to understand the astronomical collection *Enūma Anu Enlil* (u₄ An ^dEn.lil.lá). The alteration of the name of this series in the Verse Account to u₄.sakar ^dA-num ^dEn.lil.la is a pun based on Nabonidus’ exaltation of the moon god Sin, whose cultic emblem was the “lunar crescent” (u₄.sakar), at the expense of Marduk, at least in the eyes of the priests of Marduk (Machinist and Tadmor, “Heavenly Wisdom,” 146–49).

¹⁶² See Sweet, “Akkadian Literature,” 57.

¹⁶³ *MVAG* 1(1) pl. 76, VI:1–36 (Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 250).

en et-lu) to assure Nabonidus that the sign is not an evil omen recalls the “man” (שׂא) who appears to Ezekiel in Ezek 40:3. The appearance of a dead person (Nebuchadnezzar) in a dream in order to act as interpreter here is unique in Mesopotamian literature, and such is not a feature in angelic interpretation in Jewish texts. But the fusing together of the vision-dream and the interpretation is similar to the interpretation of visions by angels *within* the visions themselves, as seen in Ezek 40–48; Zech 1–6; *I En.* 17–82; Dan 7.¹⁶⁴ Finally, the interpretations of Nabonidus’ dream come from intermediaries, rather than from the gods themselves.

Although certain Mesopotamian kings, Nabonidus in particular, claimed to have received revelations directly from the gods or from supernatural intermediaries, royal access to divine secrets was typically mediated through specialized professionals such as prophets and diviners. In a number of Old Babylonian period texts from Mari, as well as some Neo-Assyrian texts, divine revelation is channeled through human prophets (*âpilû* [Mari]; *muhûû* [NA]), who were closely associated with the royal court.¹⁶⁵ These prophets would utter inspired speeches in a sort of trance, and occasionally revelation to the prophet would take the form of a dream or vision. In such cases, or whenever the message of the prophet was vague or cryptic, a specialized “interpreter” (*ša’ilu*) would be summoned to interpret the matter.¹⁶⁶ The art of interpreting dreams, omens, and other

¹⁶⁴ The interpretation of a dream within the dream itself is an attested form in Mesopotamian dream reports, and it is accounted for in tablet X of the Neo-Assyrian *Dream Book* (Husser, *Dreams*, 41–42; see Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 205, 305, n. 229).

¹⁶⁵ Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 90–106. See also VanderKam, “Prophecy and Apocalypics,” 3:2083–84.

¹⁶⁶ Bottéro, *Religion*, 171–72. Women are well-represented as both prophets and interpreters in Mesopotamian texts, and for some reason, they seem to have been preferred for such matters. See also Alfred Guillame, *Prophecy and Divination Among the Hebrews and Other Semites* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 39–42.

signs (Akkadian *pašāru*; cf. Hebrew פֶּשֶׁר) was precisely detailed in vast handbooks for diviners, among which is the Neo-Assyrian *Dream Book*, which provides meanings for the many possible symbolic elements within dreams.¹⁶⁷

More often, divine communication took the form of divination (extispicy, astrology, omens, etc.).¹⁶⁸ The ancient Mesopotamians believed that the gods had encoded all of history, both past and future, within nature in the form of “codes” which could be deciphered by one who possessed the knowledge of *bârûtu* (“divination”).¹⁶⁹ Thus, in order to discern the will/plans of the gods, an individual (most often the king, but also private citizens) would summon or hire a *bârû* (“diviner”) who could “read” the “code” hidden within various natural phenomena, such as the organs of animals. Thus, the diviner became an intermediary between the gods and the king or employer, allowing them access to the secrets of the divine council.¹⁷⁰

While at a certain conceptual level there is similarity between these two forms of divine revelation in Mesopotamia and the interpreting angel motif, the fact that both

¹⁶⁷ See especially Oppenheim’s edition of the *Dream Book*, appended to his study of the interpretation of dreams in the ancient Near East (*Interpretation of Dreams*, 256–373). See also Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 32–33.

¹⁶⁸ Some have suggested that the concentration of evidence for prophets at Mari (where there was significant Amorite influence) and in the Neo-Assyrian period (when Aramaean influence was great) may indicate that prophecy was a distinctively West Semitic form, while the Sumerian-rooted Mesopotamian tradition preferred divination (see Bottéro, *Religion*, 175; for an argument against this view, see Alan Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods: Secret Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia and Biblical Israel* [SAAS 19; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2008], 59).

¹⁶⁹ Bottéro, *Religion*, 178–79. This belief may indicate a sort of determinism, based upon a cyclical view of history in which a certain natural phenomenon will always be followed by the same historical event. The strong determinism evident in apocalyptic literature, as well as the familiar *Urzeit-Endzeit* pattern noted especially by Gunkel (*Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* [trans. K. William Whitney, Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006]), would seem to suggest, however, that this is one area in which Mesopotamian religion comes quite close to Jewish apocalypticism.

¹⁷⁰ Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 57.

prophets and diviners were humans clearly distances them from the angelic guide/interpreter found in Ezek 40–48 and later apocalyptic texts. In the case of the prophets at Mari and in the Neo-Assyrian texts, it was the prophet (or in some cases, a professional “interpreter”) who conveyed the meaning of the vision or inspired speech. In the case of divination, the possession of technical knowledge in the divinatory arts enabled the diviner to discover divine secrets. Yet the art of divination itself was believed to trace back to and was patterned after a mythological tradition in which semi-divine sages (*apkallū*), sent from the god Ea, mediated the secrets of the gods to humans.¹⁷¹ The primary texts representing this tradition are an incantation from the Neo-Assyrian *Bīt mēseri* series,¹⁷² Berossus’ *Babylonica*, and a Seleucid era “Sage List” from Uruk. These sources indicate that the *apkallū* served as mediators of divine knowledge (as “culture bearers”) before the Flood, and the later *ummânū* (“scholar-scribes”), whose expertise included *bârûtu*, claimed that their knowledge ultimately derived from their patron deity, Ea, via the *apkallū*.¹⁷³ In particular, the Uruk Sage List indicates that the *apkallū* served the antediluvian kings, to whom they presumably communicated divine knowledge.¹⁷⁴ Likewise, the later *ummânū* served the king as wise men, counselors, and diviners, including the interpretation of visions and dreams (cf. Dan 2:1–11, 25–45; 4:4–7; 5:5–9).

¹⁷¹ Among these mythological *apkallū* was Adapa (known in Greek sources as Oannes), the Great Sage whom Nabonidus is portrayed as having boasted concerning his incantation series in the Verse Account (see Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 119).

¹⁷² See Erica Reiner, “The Etiological Myth of the Seven Sages,” *Or* 30 (1961): 1–11.

¹⁷³ Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 106–22.

¹⁷⁴ Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 107–09, 114–20.

A number of Akkadian myths and hymns contain bits of information which may relate in some way to the motif of angelic interpretation of visions. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh recounts a dream to his mother, the goddess Ninsun, and she interprets its meaning for him:

Wild-Cow Ninsun was clever, she was wise, he knew everything, she said to Gilgameš:
“My son, the axe you saw is a man,
You will love him like a wife, and will caress and embrace him,
And I, I shall make him your equal.
A mighty companion will come to you, the savior of (his) friend:
He is the mightiest in the land, he has strength,
His strength is as mighty as a lump of rock from the sky.”¹⁷⁵

Similarly, two Middle Babylonian hymns to Nusku speak of divine communication through dreams. In the first text, Nusku appears to be identified with Anzagar, the “messenger of prince Marduk,” who “brings (dreams) to humankind.”¹⁷⁶ The second specifically indicates that the dreamer does not understand his dreams, but that Nusku does.¹⁷⁷ There is no indication in either hymn that Nusku interprets the dreams for the pray-er. In another prayer, King Sin-Iddinam of Larsa recounts an ominous dream which he had to the goddess Nin-Isina and prays for healing from the sickness which he believes his dream portended.¹⁷⁸ Once again, there is no mention of the goddess interpreting the dream.

In the Akkadian poem *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, the speaker recounts the appearance of four messengers to him in a dream. First, a “man” (*eṭlu*), who is described as

¹⁷⁵ SBV I.287–93 (Andrew George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts* [2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 1:554–57).

¹⁷⁶ “Courier of Dreams,” lines 9–10 (Foster, *Before the Muses*, 718).

¹⁷⁷ “Forefender of Nightmares,” lines 3–4 (Foster, *Before the Muses*, 719).

¹⁷⁸ See Hallo’s translation in *COS* 1.164:532–34.

“extraordinary in fo[rm], magnificent in physique, clothed in new gar[ment]s” appears and stands over the dreamer.¹⁷⁹ Just before the text breaks off, this “man” states that “[You]r lord sent [me],” indicating that he is acting as a messenger of Marduk.¹⁸⁰ Unfortunately, the message which he bears is badly damaged and unclear. In a second dream, the poet recounts:

[I saw] a dream a sec[on]d time.
 In the dream I saw [at night],
There was a singular purifier ...
 He was holding in [his ha]nd a pur[if]ying t[ama]risk rod.
 “Laluralimma, resident of Nippur,
 Has sent m[e] to purify you.”
 He po[ured] the water that he was carrying over me,
 He pronounced the incantation of life *and* rubbed [my bod]y.¹⁸¹

In this dream, a “purifier” (*ramku*-priest) with a “purifying tamarisk rod” (^{giš}*bīnu mullilu*) appears, speaks to him, and anoints him with water as part of a purification ritual.¹⁸² The *ramku*-priest also states that he has been sent to the sufferer, although the sender here is not a deity, but a resident of Nippur. Like the “man” in Ezek 40:3, the *ramku*-priest holds in his hand an instrument, a tamarisk rod, which symbolizes and facilitates the action he has come to perform—the purification of the suffering person. Next, a “young woman” (KI.SIKIL) whose “[appear]ance *was* beautiful, cl[oth]ed like a human, *but* eq[ual] to a god” appears and speaks words of encouragement to the sufferer (the text is fragmentary here).¹⁸³ Finally, the text describes a fourth dream:

¹⁷⁹ III.9–10 (Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, 23, 38).

¹⁸⁰ III.15 (Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, 23, 38).

¹⁸¹ III.21–24 (Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, 23, 38).

¹⁸² Compare the *ramku*-priest’s act of purification with that of the seraph in Isa 6:6–7.

¹⁸³ III.31–39 (Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, 23, 38).

In the dream, Ur-Nintinugga ...
A bearded man, wearing his crown,
An exorcist, carrying a writing-[board].
“Marduk sent m[e].
I brought *this* band[age] to Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan,
From his pure hands I brought a band[age].”¹⁸⁴

In this final dream, a bearded man named Ur-Nintinugga appears, wearing a crown, and states that Marduk has sent him. The text identifies him as an exorcist (MAŠ.MAŠ), and he carries a writing-board (*lē’um*). He presents the sufferer with a bandage (*šimda*) from Marduk, and when the dreamer awakens the next morning, he has been healed from his sickness. As with the *ramku*-priest in the second dream, the exorcist holds an object, in this case a writing board, which identifies his major function as an exorcist (cf. Ezek 40:3). Likewise, he identifies himself as a messenger sent from Marduk, and he delivers items (a bandage) which symbolize the sufferer’s healing.

Although none of the figures in *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* interpret the dream, two of them (the *ramku*-priest and the exorcist) perform symbolic actions, which is also the case with the angelic guide/interpreter in Ezek 40–48. Likewise, they hold objects in their hands which correspond to their actions. In the case of the exorcist, while the bandage from Marduk represents healing, the writing-tablet may indicate that cause of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan’s sickness is an evil spirit which must be exorcised by means of an incantation.¹⁸⁵ These symbolic actions are similar to the angel’s acts of measuring which occur numerous times in Ezek 40–48, and in several other texts interpreting angels perform symbolic actions (e.g., Zech 2:1–2, 4–5; 5:8–11).

¹⁸⁴ III.40–45 (Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, 23, 38).

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Foster, *Before the Muses*, 393.

One further possible parallel to angelic interpretation of a vision comes from the Atrahasis myth. Following the decision of the gods to destroy humanity by sending a flood, Enki presumably warns Atrahasis in a dream (this portion of the text is lost), the meaning of which Atrahasis asks Enki to explain to him. Although Enki is not able to tell the meaning to Atrahasis directly, due to the oath he had taken in the divine assembly, he cryptically instructs him by warning the “reed wall” of Atrahasis's house to build a boat.¹⁸⁶ In the version of the story preserved in Tablet XI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Ea admits to revealing the secret to Utnapishtim (here actually called Atrahasis!) in a vision:

I did not myself disclose the great gods' secret (*pirišti* DINGIR.MEŠ);
I let Atra-ḥašīs see a dream (*šunata*) and so he heard the gods' secret.¹⁸⁷

The dream/vision may be preserved in the Sumerian version of the story in *The Eridu Genesis*:

[As he] stood there regularly day after day something that was not a dream was appearing: conversa[tion] a swearing (of) oaths by heaven and earth, [a touching of throats], and the gods [bringing their] thwar[ts] (up) to [K]iur.¹⁸⁸

This complex of texts representing the Mesopotamian Flood-Hero tradition appears to come quite close to the interpreting angel motif, except that Enki/Ea is not an intermediate deity but a major god. However, since it was not his own secret that Enki/Ea revealed, but rather that of the divine assembly, he is in a sense acting as an intermediary (though an unauthorized one).¹⁸⁹ Although the form is still quite different

¹⁸⁶ OBV III.1.11–25 (Foster, *Before the Muses*, 247).

¹⁸⁷ SBV XI.196–97 (George, *The Gilgamesh Epic*, 1:716–17); see also Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 52.

¹⁸⁸ Lines 89–92 (*COS* 1.158: 514–15).

¹⁸⁹ Lenzi likens Enki/Ea's actions here to those of a person who breaches the security of the royal secret council by divulging the king's plans (*Secrecy and the Gods*, 52).

from that found in Ezek 40–48 and similar texts, the root concept of an intermediary divine being (of sorts) revealing the plans of higher deity (in this case, the combined authority of the divine assembly) by interpreting a cryptic vision to a human recipient is present.

While the interpreting angel motif does not appear in any clear form in comparative ancient Near Eastern literature, it is evident that the key components of the motif had a long history in ancient Near Eastern religious thought and that they abounded during the Neo-Babylonian period, when we see the appearance of the interpreting angel motif in biblical literature. These components include the mediation of divine knowledge to humans by intermediary deities, the revelation of the secret plans of the gods through symbolic dreams and visions, and their “interpretation” by professional specialists, and they are reflected in inscriptions, ritual texts, and even mythological narratives. Susan Niditch has traced the development of the symbolic vision motif—which is closely related to the interpreting angel motif—from Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3, through Jer 1:11–19; 24 and Zech 1–6, and ultimately to Dan 7–8. She likewise detects similarities between ancient Near Eastern divinatory practices, especially the interpretation of dreams and visions, and symbolic visions in prophetic and apocalyptic visions.¹⁹⁰ In its early stages in Amos and Jeremiah, the symbolic vision motif adopts a consistent form: 1) indication of a vision, 2) description of the vision, 3) the deity’s question to the seer regarding what he has seen, 4) the seer’s reply, which repeats the description of the vision, and 5) the deity’s interpretation of the vision.¹⁹¹ The deity’s (or angel’s) role as interpreter of the

¹⁹⁰ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 29–34.

¹⁹¹ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 9. Niditch notes that in later stages of development, the form undergoes changes which place greater emphasis on the interpretation/explanation of the vision in a

vision corresponds to that of the diviner, so that one could understand divine/angelic interpretation of symbolic dreams/visions as an “acceptable” alternative to condemned forms of divination. Emphasis on the “inspirational” nature of the revelation (i.e., God gives the vision and he interprets it) renders this form of “divination” acceptable because the vision comes from Yahweh and is also interpreted or “divined” by Yahweh.¹⁹² Also, the divine source of both vision and interpretation, whether by Yahweh or by an angel, ensures the validity of the interpretation and prevents the vision from being misunderstood.¹⁹³ It may, therefore, have been seen as a more reliable means of discerning Yahweh’s plans.

Building on the work of Niditch, the interpreting angel motif could be viewed as a response to ancient Near Eastern (specifically, Mesopotamian) divinatory practices, in which the form of Babylonian divination/dream-vision interpretation is imitated while at the same time transformed into a form acceptable to Israelite religious beliefs. The Exilic community’s situation in the heart of Babylonia may have provided the added impetus to spur the development of the motif from the form seen in Amos and Jeremiah to the angelic interpretation of Ezek 40–48. The key development here is the shift from Yahweh as interpreter to an angel as interpreter. What caused this shift is not clear, but it could well be that the earlier form stood too much in continuity with pre-exilic prophecy, which began to give way to apocalyptic literature within certain circles during the post-

prosaized narrative form, so that the vision report becomes “bottom heavy” (*The Symbolic Vision*, 82). There is, likewise, a breakdown of the relationship between the symbol and its meaning, which originally relied heavily on wordplays and logical associations but now becomes more or less direct—though heavily mythologized—equivalence. Niditch describes this new symbol-meaning relationship as “symbol=itself” (*The Symbolic Vision*, 74).

¹⁹² Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 34, 39; cf. Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 141.

¹⁹³ Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 127, 141.

exilic period. Angelic interpretation further removed the visionary from the ultimate source of the vision and its interpretation, thus diminishing the seer/prophet's status as a mediator between God and humanity.¹⁹⁴ Direct encounters with God do still occur (Ezek 40:1–2; 43:4–27; 44:4–46:18; *I En.* 14:8–16:3), and there is no indication that Yahweh has become distant or inaccessible. Rather, it is the role of the prophet which has changed, from that of mediator with unique access to the divine council to recipient of mediated revelation.

Summary

In this chapter, I have examined the historical background of the development of the interpreting angel motif in the Neo-Babylonian period, the first appearance of the motif in biblical literature in Ezek 40–48, and comparative religious texts which may indicate similar motifs in the broader religious context of the sixth century B.C.E. The Babylonian conquest of the Near East, including Judah, in the early sixth century transformed the socio-political landscape of the region by replacing native local dynastic rule with a very minimalistic imperial administrative system in peripheral areas of the empire. Neo-Babylonian imperial policy was highly centralized and tended to neglect provincial regions, but archaeological evidence does indicate the presence of a Babylonian administrative center at Mizpah during the Neo-Babylonian period.

The replacement of the local Davidic monarchy with a vast imperial administration which mediated the authority of the emperor through an imperial bureaucracy coincides with the appearance of a mediating figure in the Book of Ezekiel.

¹⁹⁴ Rofé argues that the scarcity of divine מלאכים in prophetic literature (with the exception of Zech 1–6) is due to the identification of the prophets as Yahweh's "messengers" (Hag 1:13) (*The Belief in Angels*, 89–119; cf. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 139–266). With the rise of angelic interpretation, the role of the prophet shifts from messenger/mediator to visionary and recipient/transcriptionist.

In Ezek 40–48 a “man” guides the prophet through a future Jerusalem temple and explains/interprets various features for him. This “man” is clearly distinguished from Yahweh in Ezek 43:6, and based on the descriptions of his appearance and his mediation of divine revelation to the prophet, he appears to be an angel. Ezekiel’s vision culminates in a highly apocalyptic scene in which Jerusalem is transformed into a paradise which corresponds in many features to the Garden of Eden in Gen 2, as well as depictions of an eschatological Jerusalem-paradise in later apocalyptic literature (Zech 14:4–11; *I En.* 24–26; Rev 21:9–22:7). Nevertheless, Yahweh’s unmediated presence also appears alongside angelic mediation in Ezek 40–48, and although there is evidence for a heightening of Yahweh’s transcendence, Yahweh does not appear to be distant or far removed from humanity.

Finally, while no clear parallel example of angelic interpretation appears in comparative literature during the Neo-Babylonian period, there is limited evidence for divine/angelic interpretation in Mesopotamian religious/mythological texts. Royal inscriptions from the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods indicate that kings sometimes claimed secret revelations from gods, sometimes in the form of dreams in which a god or another being spoke and at time interpreted various features. The Mesopotamian divinatory arts express a worldview which saw the secrets of the gods as revealed through dreams and visions which could be interpreted by specialists, as well as embedded in nature. The mythological tradition of the *apkallū* links later divinatory practices with the mediation of divine knowledge by semi-divine beings. Lastly, a few Mesopotamian myths and hymns depict the interpretation of dreams/visions by gods or other divine beings in a manner which somewhat resembles the interpreting angel motif.

The general background of ancient Near Eastern divinatory practices presents a possible catalyst for the development of the interpreting angel motif as an acceptable form of divination, due to the divine source of both vision and interpretation. At the same time, the shift from Yahweh as interpreter (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24) to the interpreting angel indicates movement away from classical prophecy through the transferal of the role of mediator/messenger from prophet to angel, thereby also ensuring the correctness of the interpretation.

CHAPTER THREE

The Angel Who Spoke With Me: The Interpreting Angel in Persian Period Biblical Literature

Introduction

In chapter 2, I examined the appearance of a “man” (איש) in Ezek 40–48. This “man” leads Ezekiel through a visionary tour of an eschatological temple in Jerusalem. His primary task is to take measurements of various architectural features, although he does occasionally offer explanations or answer questions, particularly in Ezek 47:1–12. In this final vision, Ezekiel comes closest to the classical form of the interpreting angel motif, with angelic interpretation of an eschatological-cosmological revelatory vision (cf. Rev 21:9–22:6). The guide/interpreter figure in Ezek 40–48, as I have argued, marks the emergence of an early form of the motif of angelic interpretation of visions in the Neo-Babylonian period.

The next example of the interpreting angel appears in the night visions of Zech 1–6. In Zech 1:9, Zechariah asks “the angel who spoke with me” (המלאך הדבר בי) about the identity of the four horses in his vision.¹ The angel replies that he will show him what they are, and after this the “man standing among the myrtles” (האיש העמד בין־ההדסים)—

¹ It is possible that the horses also have angelic riders, as the man standing (!) among the myrtles is said to be riding on a red horse (1:8) (see K. Seybold, *Bilder zum Tempelbau. Die Visionen des Propheten Sacharja* (SBS 70; Stuttgart: KBW, 1974). This possibility would seem to be further underscored by the fact that “they” speak to the angel of Yahweh in v. 11. Schöpflin notes this, yet maintains that “[a]s these horses are celestial ones they might as well be celestial beings able to speak” (“God’s Interpreter,” 192, n. 16). While the text does not explicitly state that the horses all have riders, and it is therefore theoretically possible that it is the horses which speak in v. 11, it seems much more likely that the horses should be understood to have angelic riders.

who is identified as the “angel of Yahweh” (מלאך יהוה) in v. 11—answers the question: “These are the ones whom Yahweh has sent to go back and forth throughout the earth.” The interpreting angel thus not only mediates between Yahweh and the prophet, he also at times stands in a mediating position between the prophet and the elements of his vision.

Chapters 4–6 include a series of symbolic visions of such items as a lampstand and bowl (4:2), two olive trees (4:3), a flying scroll (5:1), a basket with a woman inside (5:6–8), two women with wings (5:9), and four chariots with horses (6:1–3). Each vision follows the familiar pattern of the prophet being asked, “What do you see?” or the prophet asking the angel “What is this?” and the angel explaining the meaning of the vision (cf. Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24).²

This chapter examines the interpreting angel motif in Persian period biblical literature, namely Zech 1–6. As with the previous chapter, I begin with a review of the historical background of Zech 1–8 (“Proto-Zechariah”), the socio-political situation and imperial administrative system of the Persian Empire in the late sixth century in particular. Following an overview scholarship on Zech 1–8 and a discussion of issues surrounding the composition and dating of Zech 1–6, I then turn to the primary texts under consideration in this chapter (Zech 1:7–17; 2:1–9; 4:1–6a, 10b–14; 5:1–11; 6:1–8). Here I analyze the form and function of the interpreting angel motif in the biblical texts,

² Niditch sees in Zech 1–6 a middle stage in the development of the symbolic vision motif in biblical literature, in which the seer *requests* interpretation of his visions from an angelic mediator (rather than Yahweh) and in which the visions have become more “mythologized” than in pre-exilic texts (*The Symbolic Vision*, 10–11). Likewise, I will argue that Zech 1–6 marks a mid-point in the development of the interpreting angel motif, which began in Ezek 40–48 and reaches its fully-developed form in apocalyptic literature (e.g., *I Enoch*; Dan 7–8). Although closely related, the interpreting angel motif and the symbolic vision motif have different tradition histories, as evident from the fact that, as Niditch points out, Ezekiel’s visions are not symbolic (*The Symbolic Vision*, 8). The two motifs become intertwined in Zech 1–6 and largely remain so in the later apocalyptic tradition.

in dialog with earlier and later biblical and extra-canonical texts and relevant archaeological and epigraphic material. I follow this examination of Zech 1–6 with a survey of comparative religious material from the Persian period, including textual and archaeological/epigraphic material. I conclude with a brief summary of the findings of this chapter.

Historical Background: Persian Imperial Administration

The rapid rise of the Persian Empire as the successor of the Neo-Babylonian Empire had a decisive impact on the history of the Jewish people and the development of Judaism.³ Yet the history of the Persian Empire and the nature of Persian imperial administration must be gathered largely from Greek writers, who often bore strong anti-Persian biases.⁴ The one great piece of Persian historical writing from the Achaemenid period is the Behistun inscription of Darius I (521–486 B.C.E.), which he inscribed on the side of a cliff to commemorate his military campaigns at the beginning of his reign, by which he secured control of his vast empire.⁵ Otherwise, most of our information regarding Persian imperial administration comes from Greek sources (especially

³ The Persian period is increasingly viewed as the time frame in which much of the Hebrew Bible took shape, and also during which the view of certain texts as “Scripture” began to emerge (see Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*, 238–39; cf. Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1989], 107–13). Also, Persian support for the return from exile and the rebuilding of the temple may explain the largely positive attitude toward Persia in much of the Hebrew Bible (2 Chron 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4; 6:1–12; 7:21–28; Isa 45:1–7, 13–14).

⁴ See J. M. Cook, “The Rise of the Achaemenids and Establishment of Their Empire,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 2: The Median and Achaemenian Periods* (ed. Ilya Gershevitch; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 200–01. According to Van de Mierop, Greek historians tended to portray Persia negatively due to the threat which Persia posed to Greek society, although there are exceptions, such as Herodotus’ positive portrayal of Xerxes and Xenophon’s presentation of Cyrus as “the example of the ideal king.” Also, Greek historians primarily discuss the Persian Empire as it related to themselves, so that they say very little about the administration of eastern regions (Van de Mierop, *History*, 286–87).

⁵ See Cook, “The Rise of the Achaemenids,” 200, 208–09.

Herodotus), some Babylonian documents, a significant collection of Aramaic papyri from Egypt, and archaeological data.

While Darius I is usually credited as the master organizer of the Persian Empire, it is clear that Cyrus and Cambyses also played important roles in establishing Persian imperial administration throughout the lands they conquered.⁶ It appears that at least some satrapies did exist prior to the accession of Darius, since the Behistun inscription mentions several who held power already in 522 B.C.E.⁷ Initially, it seems that the Persians retained much of the Neo-Babylonian administrative system. Several high-ranking officials in Nabonidus' administration retained their positions well into the Persian period,⁸ and as late as the end of the reign of Darius I (486 B.C.E.) the old Neo-Babylonian Empire (Babylonia and Eber-nari) remained intact as a single satrapy.⁹ One significant change Cyrus did make was to replace some vassal kings with his own

⁶ Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (trans. Peter T. Daniels; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 62–63. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* credits most of the work of organizing the empire to Cyrus, but his credibility is doubtful, as his work is driven by the overt agenda of presenting Cyrus as the "ideal king" (Cook, "The Rise of the Achaemenids," 207; cf. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*, 124–25).

⁷ The Behistun inscription mentions Dādaršī "satrap in Bactria" and Vivāna "satrap in Arachosia" (Briant, *History*, 64). Darius' father, Hystaspes, appears to have been satrap of Parthia, although Herodotus claims he was satrap of Persia itself (Cook, "The Rise of the Achaemenids," 217; Briant, *History*, 64).

⁸ An official named Nabū-aḥḥē-bullīṭ held the rank of *šakin tēmi* (governor) of Babylon under Nabonidus and continued in that position until the third year of Cyrus. Similarly, Širikti-Ninurta was *šandabakku* at Nippur from the seventeenth year of Nabonidus until the seventh year of Cambyses (Briant, *History*, 71). See also Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*, 134; Cook, "The Rise of the Achaemenids," 212. 261).

⁹ Although many scholars suggest that a division of Babylonia and Eber-nari into separate satrapies may have occurred as early as the sixth year of Darius I, a Babylonian text from the end of Darius' reign mentions a governor of a united "Babylon and Across-the-River" (M. Stolper, "The Governor of Babylon and Across-The-River in 486 B.C.," *JNES* 48 [1989]: 283–305; see also David Vanderhooft, "New Evidence Pertaining to the Transition from Neo-Babylonian to Achaemenid Administration in Palestine," in *Yahwism After the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era: Papers read at the First Meeting of the European Association for Biblical Studies, Utrecht, 6–9 August, 2000* [eds. Rainer Albertz and Bob Becking; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003], 226). On the other hand, beginning in 502 B.C.E. one finds mentions of governors of Eber-nari alone, which may indicate that the satrapy of Babylonia and Eber-nari was subdivided into two sub-satrapies, each with its own governor who was subject to the satrap.

satraps, although even in later periods local officials, often connected with old native dynasties, did continue to occupy lower levels of administration.¹⁰ In his fourth year, Cyrus appointed Gubāru (Gobryas) as governor (*pihātu*) of Babylonia and Ebir-nari, and according to Herodotus, Cambyses appointed a Persian named Aryandes as satrap (*ὑπαρχος*) over Egypt.¹¹ As is also the case with Darius I and later Persian kings, Cyrus and Cambyses appointed only Persians, usually close friends or relatives of the king, as satraps. Briant notes that:

The local political and social structures and elites were not appropriated, except to the extent they could be integrated into the new state-information. Local dignitaries were associated with the government of the Empire as auxiliaries to a new ethnically and socially homogenous ruling group.¹²

There is disagreement regarding the status of Judah/Yehud within the Persian Empire. Neither Herodotus nor the Behistun inscription mention Yehud as a province.¹³ Alt argues that Yehud was under the jurisdiction of Samaria until the time of Nehemiah (mid-fifth century).¹⁴ The excessive preoccupation of the governor of Samaria with the

¹⁰ Cook, "The Rise of the Achaemenids," 221. Under Cyrus, non-Persians do appear in positions of high authority, but under Darius I all high-ranking officials were Persian, mostly Achaemenid nobility and relatives of the king. Even under Darius I and later emperors, however, lower-level officials in provincial administrations were drawn from the local population (Cook, "The Rise of the Achaemenids," 279–80; but cf. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews I*, 147, 154). Examples of such local governors include Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Also, Vanderhooft cites three Babylonian texts from the early Persian period which indicate that Jews living in Babylonia served as low-level bureaucrats in the imperial administration, even outside Yehud (Vanderhooft, "New Evidence," 223–24).

¹¹ Briant, *History*, 64.

¹² Briant, *History*. 82.

¹³ Cook suggests that Judah's absence may simply indicate that it was considered a part of Babylonia ("The Rise of the Achaemenids," 260–61), but this still leaves open the question of whether a province of Judah/Yehud existed as a sub-district of the satrapy of Babylonia and Ebir-nari (and later just Ebir-nari).

¹⁴ Albrecht Alt, "Die Rolle Samarias bei der Entstehung des Judentums," in *Festschrift Otto Procksch zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (eds. Albrecht Alt, *et al.*; Leipzig: Deichert, 1934), 5–28.

affairs of Yehud in the book of Nehemiah may lend support to Alt's hypothesis. On the other hand, Ezra 5:14 states that Cyrus had made Sheshbazzar "governor" (פחה), and Haggai 1:14 and 2:2 speak of Zerubbabel as "governor of Judah" (פחת יהודה). Nehemiah 5:14 states that Artaxerxes I appointed Nehemiah as "governor of the land of Judah" (פחם בארץ יהודה).

A number of stamp seals inscribed with the word יהוד, some bearing the (Jewish) names of officials identified as "governor" (פחוא), have been uncovered.¹⁵ The value of the seals in determining when Yehud became a province depends upon their dating, which remains a matter of some disagreement. Avigad dated most of them to the late sixth or early fifth century, but many others have dated them to the late fifth or early fourth century (i.e., after the time of Nehemiah). There is no reason to doubt the biblical statements regarding governors of Yehud, and Meyers and Meyers have attempted to reconstruct a line of governors from Zerubbabel to Nehemiah based on a combination of biblical and epigraphic data (seals).¹⁶ It is possible that Yehud was a province during the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses and the early years of Darius, where biblical texts situate

¹⁵ See Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*, 61–62; Stern, *Archaeology*, 548–51. One such seal identifies its owner as "Shelomith, handmaid of Elnathan the go[vernor]" ([לשלמיית אמת אלנתן פ[חוא]). Eric Meyers identifies this Shelomith as the daughter of Zerubbabel (1 Chron 3:19) and suggests that Elnathan married into the Davidic line ("The Shelomith Seal and the Judean Restoration: Some Additional Considerations," *EI* 18 [1985]: 33–38). Avigad, argues that אמה is the equivalent of עבד and indicates nothing more than a government official (Nahman Avigad, *Bullae and Seals from a Post-Exilic Judean Archive* [Qedem 4; Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1976], 11–13).

¹⁶ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 14. Particularly important in this regard is the seal of "Shelomith, maidservant of Elnathan the governor." Meyers' reading of Shelomith as Elnathan's wife aside, the identification of Shelomith with the daughter of Zerubbabel mentioned in 1 Chron 3:19 may provide a chronological anchor. This identification is, however, quite tenuous.

the governorships of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, but that messianic fervor surrounding Zerubbabel (Hag 2:20–23; Zech 4:6b–10a; 6:9–15) led to his removal and Yehud’s loss of provincial status until the time of Nehemiah in the mid-fifth century.¹⁷

The Persian imperial administrative structure was greatly enhanced by Darius I, who is often regarded as the great organizer of the Persian Empire. According to Herodotus, Darius divided the empire into twenty satrapies, each governed by a powerful Persian satrap appointed by the king.¹⁸ In the Behistun inscription, Darius also describes his division of the empire into twenty-three *dahyāva* (“peoples”), which some have interpreted as referring to satrapies. It is more likely, however, that the Behistun inscription does not list satrapies but different ethnic groups which existed in the empire.¹⁹ The word “satrap” comes from an Old Persian term *xšapāvan* (“protector of the kingdom”). Satraps were powerful, semi-autonomous governors, and, as noted above, they were without exception drawn from the Persian ruling class.²⁰ Although the satraps exerted considerable authority and independence, ultimately they derived their power from and were solely dependent upon the Persian king, whom they represented in their respective territories. The tension between satrapal autonomy and the king’s total

¹⁷ This is essentially the reconstruction offered by Stern—that Zerubbabel was deposed due to suspicion of insurrection and that Yehud was incorporated into the jurisdiction of the governor of Samaria until Artaxerxes I appointed Nehemiah as governor of Yehud (Ephraim Stern, “The Persian Empire and the Political and Social History of Palestine in the Persian Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 1: Introduction: The Persian Period* [eds. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], 70–72).

¹⁸ See Cook, “The Rise of the Achaemenids,” 268; Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*, 133.

¹⁹ Cook, “The Rise of the Achaemenids,” 246.

²⁰ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*, 132. According to Briant, the office of satrap was often hereditary, although the king could at any time appoint or remove any satrap he wished (*History*, 338–40).

sovereignty may be clearly seen in the frequency with which satraps rebelled against the emperor.²¹

One strategy for mitigating the threat of insurrection by satraps and other officials was the use of imperial informants and inspectors. These were emissaries sent by the king to keep an eye on the satraps and report back any suspicious activity. A number of sources speak of an official called the “King’s Eye” who acted as the king’s spy throughout the satrapies.²² As I discuss in the analysis of Zech 1–6 below, there appears to be an angelic parallel to the “eyes of the king” in Zech 4:10b, and perhaps in Zech 1:10–11 and 6:1–8 as well.²³

Beneath the satrap were a number of lower-level bureaucrats, including, most notably, provincial governors. In contrast to the satraps, provincial governors were generally drawn from the local population and often belonged to native or at least pre-Persian political hierarchies.²⁴ Whereas the satraps enjoyed considerable autonomy,

²¹ Grabbe notes that it was not uncommon for satraps to rebel, but nevertheless maintains that in general imperial authority was never seriously threatened (*A History of the Jews 1*, 133; see also Briant, *History*, 339). Two possible exceptions are the rebellions which Darius I had to suppress during the early years of his reign, as described in the Behistun inscription, and the widespread “Revolt of the Satraps” in 366–60 B.C.E. In fact, Grabbe argues that the satraps’ autonomy strengthened the empire but encouraging competition among satraps for the emperor’s favor (*A History of the Jews 1*, 133).

²² Several Greek sources (Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Plutarch, Herodotus) speak of a single “Eye” as a distinct office. Xenophon, on the other hand, writes that there were many “eyes” and “ears” of the king scattered throughout the empire. Indeed, anyone could potentially be the king’s “eye” by reporting back to the king any signs of treason (Xenophon, *Cyr.* VIII.2.10–12) (see Briant, *History*, 344; Cook, “The Rise of the Achaemenids,” 233).

²³ In Zech 4:10b the interpreting angel identifies the seven lamps in Zechariah’s vision as the “eyes of Yahweh” which “roam throughout all the earth.” The horsemen in Zech 1:10–11 and the chariots in Zech 6:1–8 also parallel the “eyes of the king” in function, if not in nomenclature. Both are said to patrol the earth and to report back to Yahweh concerning its status.

²⁴ In the case of Yehud, at least two early governors (Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel) were Davidides and, thus, represented continuity with the old kingdom of Judah (see Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* [JSOTSup 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 50–52).

provincial governors were totally dependent upon their Persian overlords and could do little without their approval. Briant writes:

In a general way, the heads of provinces did not have the right to take the smallest military or diplomatic initiative....In order to justify their actions, they exchanged many letters with the central authority.²⁵

The need for constant communication between local authorities and the central administration necessitated the development of a highly efficient mail courier system.

Xenophon credits Cyrus with establishing a royal mail system in order to keep informed about events and developments in distant provinces. He writes:

We hear of another arrangement, devised to meet the huge size of the empire and enable the king to learn with great celerity the state of affairs at any distance. Cyrus first ascertained how far a horse could travel in one day without being over-ridden, and then he had a series of posting-stations built, one day's ride apart, with relays of horses....Some say that, when this is done, the post travels more quickly than the crane can fly, and, whether that is true or not, there is no doubt it is the quickest way in which a human being can travel on land. To learn of events so rapidly and be able to deal with them at once is of course a great advantage (*Cyr.* VIII.6.17–18).²⁶

We find more evidence of the importance of communication between local officials and the central government in the book of Ezra. In Ezra 4 we read of a series of letters exchanged between provincial officials in Samaria and Artaxerxes I regarding the efforts by the Jewish restoration community to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Again in Ezra 5–6 a series of letters are sent between Tattenai “the governor Abar-nahara” (פּתַח)

²⁵ Briant, *History*, 345.

²⁶ As cited in Briant, *History*, 369–70. Herodotus also describes the Persian mail system during the reign of Xerxes, and he concurs with Xenophon's remarks regarding its speed and efficiency (Briant, *History*, 370).

עבר־נהרה) and Darius I (Ezra 5:3, 6; 6:6, 13).²⁷ Artaxerxes I sends a letter to Ezra in Ezra 7:11–26. Likewise, in Neh 6 the provincial governors of Samaria (Sanballat) and Yehud (Nehemiah), as well as two other provincial officials (Tobiah and Geshem) exchange a series of letters with one another.

The Persian royal mail system provides a helpful background against which the development of Jewish angelology may be understood. Meyers and Meyers suggest that the central role of angels as agents of divine revelation in Zech 1–6 is related to the increased importance of messengers in the Persian Empire.²⁸ The empire was simply too large for a centralized government to control all of it from Persia. Rapid communication between higher-level officials and lower-level officials was necessary in order to maintain the supremacy of the Persian central authority—the king in particular—over distant provinces governed by local authorities. Even the Persian satraps presented potential threats, due to their autonomy. The royal mail system allowed the king to keep tabs on distant provinces, as well as to issue commands to his subordinates in the chain of imperial command. Thus, through letters and messengers the king extended his presence throughout his domain. Likewise, the king had informants (“the eyes of the king”) located throughout the empire, who reported back to him concerning any potentially rebellious satraps or other officials. Both of these forms of imperial communication find analogues in Zech 1–6, in the form of angels/messengers (מלאכים) of Yahweh and divine informants/spies, such as the “eyes of Yahweh” (Zech 4:10b) and the horsemen in Zech 1

²⁷ The identification of Tattenai as governor (פּוֹחַת) of Ebir-nari suggests that he should be understood as a Persian satrap (see Ahlström, *History*, 843). This is confirmed by the listing of Tattannu as “governor of Ebir-nari” in VAS 4 152:25 (see Stolper, “Governor,” 290–91).

²⁸ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, lviii–lix, 114.

and Zech 6. But while Persian imperial institutions may explain the increased importance of angels in Persian period Judaism and may influence the way in which angelic mediation is portrayed, it does not, in itself, account for the specific motif of angelic *interpretation* of visions.²⁹ In order to trace the continued development of the interpreting angel motif, I now turn to the analysis of the Persian period biblical texts in which interpreting angels appear.

The Interpreting Angel Motif in Zech 1–6

Scholarship on Zech 1–8

A number of scholars view Zech 1–8 as either apocalyptic or proto-apocalyptic due to its employment of symbolic, mythological visions as opposed to oracles, its more subtle but still transcendent eschatology, and the increased role of angels as mediators of divine revelation.³⁰ This last point is exemplified especially by the appearance of an interpreting angel (המלאך הדבר בי) throughout Zechariah’s “night visions” (Zech 1–6).

The identification of Zech 1–8 as apocalyptic (or proto-apocalyptic) poses a serious challenge to Hanson’s thesis regarding the origins of apocalypticism among

²⁹ It is important to bear in mind that angelic revelation is not a new phenomenon in post-exilic Judaism. It is well-attested in earlier biblical texts (Gen 18–19; 21:17–18; 22:11–12; 31:10–16; Exod 3:2; Judg 6:11–24; 13:3–21). Also, imperial bureaucracy, which no doubt included political intermediaries and messengers, were not a new development in the late sixth century. Israel and Judah had existed as imperial provinces/vassal kingdoms under the Neo-Assyrians and the Neo-Babylonians. What is different about the Persian Empire is the sheer scale of the imperial administration and the tight control which the Persian authorities maintained over provincial officials. The biggest change for Judah/Yehud was not the presence of a foreign imperial power, but the loss of the Davidic monarchy and any true sense of national independence. Yehud’s loss of nationhood, by which it suddenly found itself merely one small outpost in a vast, seemingly universal empire, may well have spurred the transformation of Yahweh from Israel’s national God to the universal God. Likewise, just as the Persian king had at his disposal a vast hierarchy of servants and representatives, so also Yahweh now sits atop a heavenly hierarchy of angelic ministers.

³⁰ See Robert North, “Prophecy to Apocalyptic via Zechariah,” *VTSup* 22 (1972): 47–71; Hartmut Gese, “Anfang und Ende der Apokalyptik, dargestellt am Sacharjabuch,” *ZTK* 70 (1973): 20–49; Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 123–65.

marginalized, anti-priestly visionaries, since Zechariah is explicitly pro-Second Temple and pro-Zadokite priesthood (e.g., Zech 3; 4:9–10a; 6:9–15).³¹ Cook argues that Zech 1–8 is *both* priestly *and* apocalyptic—“a millennial group of central priests.”³² He argues on the basis of the presence in Zech 1–8 of “radical eschatology, dualism, and several other features of apocalyptic literature” (angelic mediation, angels and other divine beings, numerology, symbolic visions, messianism).³³

While Cook overstates his case for reading Zech 1–8 as apocalyptic, there are several features which suggest that Zech 1–8 stands somewhere in between classical prophecy and apocalyptic literature. Prominent literary motifs in apocalyptic literature appear in Zech 1–8, and clear lines of development may be traced through Zech 1–8. These include especially Zechariah’s heavy use of symbolic visions as the primary mode of revelation. Niditch traces the development of this motif back to Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3, but she notes that in Zech 1–8 the motif undergoes considerable development, so that it

³¹ The same may be said regarding Ezekiel. Like Zech 1–8, Ezekiel clearly represents the interests of the central Zadokite priesthood, not disenfranchised visionaries, yet Ezekiel’s visions (chs. 1; 8–11; 37–38; 40–48) are among the most “apocalyptic” in the Hebrew Bible. See also Wilson’s critique of Hanson with regard to Zech 1–8 (Robert R. Wilson, “From Prophecy to Apocalyptic: Reflections on the Shape of Israelite Religion,” *Semeia* 21 [1981]: 83).

³² Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 125.

³³ Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 127. Cook’s argument for “radical eschatology” in Zech 1–8 is a bit overstated, as he is forced to adopt unlikely readings of key passages (e.g., Zech 2:4; 6:8) in order to find an apocalyptic final battle in Zech 1–8 (cf. David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984], 271; Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi* [WBC 32; Waco: Word, 1982], 215; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 330). In contrast to Zech 9–14, the eschatology of Zech 1–8 appears much more this-worldly, and several scholars have read Zech 1–8 as having a “realized” eschatology which envisioned nothing more than the reestablishment of the temple and perhaps the Davidic monarchy (e.g., W. J. Dumbrell, “Kingship and Temple in the Post-Exilic Period,” *RTR* 37 [1978]: 33; Christian Jeremias, *Die Nachtgesichte des Sacharja* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977], 223). Finitis argues that Zech 1–8, and Haggai as well, embody a unique brand of eschatology which differs from both prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology, which he dubs “restoration eschatology.” This eschatology envisioned a transformation in the immediate future through the institutions of the post-exilic restoration (priesthood/temple and Davidic monarchy/messiah), but it differed from apocalyptic eschatology in its affirmation of the political system and its blending of supernatural divine causality and human agency (Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 102–36).

may be said to mark an intermediate stage between the classical prophetic form and the apocalyptic (“baroque”) form of the motif found in Dan 7–8.³⁴ Finitis also notes Zechariah’s preference for visions rather than oracles, and he understands this shift as a strategic one given the socio-historical situation of Zech 1–8. Visions were more rhetorically powerful and better suited for eliciting the desired response (the rebuilding of the temple).³⁵ The visionary mode of revelation may have enhanced Zechariah’s prestige as one who is able to enter into and interact with the divine realm (e.g., Zech 2:5–6; 3:5).³⁶ When one moves from prophecy into apocalyptic literature, visions become the normal mode of revelation and all but replace the prophetic oracle, and this transition, which began in Ezek 40–48, picks up steam in Zech 1–8.

Zechariah 1–8 also evidences the development of Jewish angelology in a way that anticipates later apocalyptic literature. Multiple angelic beings populate Zechariah’s night visions (Zech 1–6), appearing as divine cavalry patrolling the earth (Zech 1:8–11; 6:1–8), a surveyor of Jerusalem (Zech 2:5–6), a messenger between two angels (Zech 2:7–8), a heavenly defense attorney (Zech 3:1–3), and attendants in the divine council (Zech 3:4–5). By far the most prominent and significant angelic being in Zech 1–8 is the interpreting angel, who is called “the angel who spoke with me” (הַמְּלַאֲךְ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי) (Zech

³⁴ Key developments in Zech 1–6 include the seer’s request for an interpretation of his vision, increasingly mythological imagery in the visions, the breakdown of the logical correspondence of the symbol to its meaning (wordplay, etc.), the merging of the vision with its meaning so that the vision *is* the message, and the substitution of an interpreting angel for Yahweh (Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 10–11).

³⁵ Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 145.

³⁶ Finitis observes, “In the visions, Zechariah stands in proximity to YHWH and is present at the heavenly council. More importantly, the prophet converses with YHWH’s angels and witnesses divine action in the world. This privileged status places him in an elevated position, which adds prestige and stature” (Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 141). This elevation of the seer’s status as a result of his close interaction with Yahweh and the divine council presents a direct challenge to the assertions of Eichrodt and others that the shift toward angelic mediation of revelation in the post-exilic period indicates an increasingly remote and inaccessible view of God.

1:9). Meyers and Meyers attribute the new emphasis on angelic intermediaries to the increased importance of political intermediaries in the Persian Empire.³⁷ The loss of the local Davidic monarchy and its replacement with a vast imperial bureaucracy influenced the understanding of divine communication in the post-exilic period by creating a greater preference for mediated revelation, rather than direct revelation.³⁸

Dörfel notes that the *המלאך הדבר בי* in Zech 1–8 becomes the prototype of the interpreting angel in apocalyptic literature (though she also sees the development of the motif in Ezek 40–48), but she reads *המלאך הדבר בי* as “the angel who speaks *through* me”, i.e., the prophetic spirit, now perceived as an intermediary being.³⁹ Dörfel’s reading does a good job of explaining the transition from direct divine revelation to angelic mediation by positing a transitional stage in Zech 1–8, but it is problematic in the context of the night visions. The visions and the interpreting angel appear to be completely external to Zechariah, and although there are several prophetic oracles interspersed throughout the night visions, they are consistently set in the mouth of the interpreting

³⁷ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, lviii–lix, 114. Meyers and Meyers acknowledge that angelic intermediaries are not a new phenomenon in Zech 1–6, but they maintain that the interpreting angel in Zech 1–6 “represents a new stage in the function of angelic figures in the transmission of messages” (114). In support of this correlation of political emissaries and bureaucrats with angelic intermediaries is the seeming parallel between the “eyes of Yahweh” and the “eyes of the king” in Zech 4:10b.

³⁸ In support of this correlation of political emissaries and bureaucrats with angelic intermediaries is the seeming parallel between the “eyes of Yahweh” and the “eyes of the king” in Zech 4:10b, which suggests that political realities in Persian period Yehud did influence conceptions of the divine realm and Yahweh’s relation to the world.

³⁹ Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 256.

angel, not Zechariah. Zechariah's role in the night visions is that of recipient, not prophetic mediator.⁴⁰

Tollington suggests that the prominence of angelic intermediaries in Zech 1–8 is not a new development in the post-exilic period, but rather a revival of an early Israelite motif. She notes that angels appear not infrequently in non-P Pentateuchal texts and argues that angelic mediation was an important feature of pre-prophetic Israelite religion.⁴¹ For the interpreting angel, specifically, Tollington points to an angel's "interpretation" of Jacob's dream in Gen 31:10–13 as possible evidence for an early pattern upon which Zechariah drew.⁴² One should note, however, that although the angel speaks concerning Jacob's dream, he does not interpret it, but merely calls attention to the action taking place. In this sense, at least, Gen 31:10–13 differs considerably from the interpreting angel in Zech 1–6. Furthermore, this single, brief appearance of an angelic "interpreter" in the entire pre-exilic corpus of the Hebrew Bible is hardly sufficient

⁴⁰ Finitis suggests that Zechariah's role as intermediary may have diminished as a result of the changed social setting in the post-exilic period. Most notably, the absence of the monarchy removed one of the poles in the prophets' intermediary relationship (Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 157–58). If this is correct, it may account for the sudden appearance of angelic intermediaries in Zech 1–8 in sharp contrast to their total absence from the pre-exilic prophetic corpus. The description of Haggai as the "messenger of Yahweh" (מלאך יהוה) in Hag 1:13, as well his continued use of oracles, may indicate that Haggai attempted to retain the older function of prophet as intermediary and mouthpiece of Yahweh, and Finitis notes that Haggai takes care to address his prophetic oracles to the traditional recipients of oracles in pre-exilic times: the people, Joshua (high priest), and Zerubbabel (prospective king) (Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 158). All of these features are generally lacking in Zech 1–8, especially in the night visions (Zech 1–6). Furthermore, from the late exilic period onward anonymous and pseudonymous prophecy becomes the norm, and the final prophetic book in the Hebrew canon bears the intriguing ascription to "my messenger" (מלאכי), once again raising the question of the prophet's role as Yahweh's messenger.

⁴¹ *Tradition and Innovation*, 94–96. A similar idea is put forth by Rofé, who notes that angels are almost completely absent from the Prophets, Priestly literature, and Wisdom literature. He posits that these traditions rejected belief in angels for various reasons. In the case of the Prophets, tension between the prophets as Yahweh's messengers and the idea of divine messengers presents a likely explanation, especially in light of the identification of at least one prophet (Haggai) as the מלאך יהוה (Hag 1:13) (Rofé, *The Belief in Angels*, 89–119).

⁴² Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 98–99.

evidence for supposing that Zechariah's primary inspiration was an early Israelite pattern of angelic interpretation of dreams/visions.⁴³

Edgar Conrad offers a unique interpretation of the "angels" in Zech 1–8. Conrad notes that the word מלאך may refer to either divine or human messengers and that the Hebrew Bible does not always clearly distinguish between human and divine messengers.⁴⁴ He then points to the identification of Haggai as the מלאך יהוה in Hag 1:13 and argues that the מלאך יהוה in Zech 1:11–12; 3:1–6 is none other than Haggai.⁴⁵ Both Haggai and Zechariah bear witness to the decline in prophecy and are transitional figures between the prophets and the "messengers" of Yahweh.⁴⁶ Indeed, all of the מלאכים in

⁴³ This is not to deny that earlier motifs and traditions exerted a significant influence on the development of the interpreting angel motif. Taken as a whole, the numerous appearances of angels in Genesis–Exodus, Judges, and Samuel–Kings provide a rich background for the development of Jewish angelology in the post-exilic period, so that one need not suppose that angels are a sign of foreign influence (cf. W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions* [New York: Schocken, 1972], 446; Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:194–202; Oesterly and Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, 275; cf. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, 312; Russell, *The Method*, 259–60). Nevertheless, significant development and innovation occurred in the post-exilic period, as early motifs and traditions were transformed in order to meet the needs of Second Temple Judaism.

⁴⁴ Conrad goes further by pointing out that in earlier texts the מלאכים often "[blur] the distinction between the human and the divine" (Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 59). He notes that the recipients usually perceive Yahweh's messengers as humans, and only when some miraculous event occurs do they realize that the messenger was from Yahweh (Gen 19:1, 5, 12, 15–16; Judg 6:11–24; 13:3, 6, 8, 10–11, 13, 15). Their miraculous powers need only indicate that they are men of God, shamans or prophets, rather than divine beings (60).

⁴⁵ Conrad is cautious in his identification of the מלאך יהוה as Haggai, but nonetheless he provides several intertextual clues for such a reading. The date of Haggai's first oracle was the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, when work on the temple had begun, and the messenger of Yahweh (Haggai) speaks to Zechariah on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which was also the date of a "significant event associated with the temple construction," according to Conrad (*Zechariah*, 64). This event was the "returning" of Yahweh, and likewise the people, to Jerusalem, specifically the temple site, as indicated in Zech 1:16 (71). Additionally, Conrad points to the similarity between the name of the messenger in Judg 13:18 as "Wonderful" and the name Haggai, which means "Festive" as a sign that Haggai was indeed the מלאך יהוה (*Zechariah*, 64).

⁴⁶ Although Conrad makes much of the distinction between "prophets" and "messengers," he does not clearly explain how they differed. Prophets have traditionally been understood as Yahweh's

Zech 1–6 are human “messengers” rather than angels, according to Conrad. Conrad’s reading has won little support and may be dismissed.⁴⁷

In summary, Zech 1–8 is a late prophetic book which employs apocalyptic imagery and motifs in support of the central priestly agenda of temple reconstruction in the early Persian period.⁴⁸ This paradoxical blending of traditions often thought to be antithetical to one another calls into question the popular theories of Plöger and Hanson on the emergence of apocalypticism. While Zech 1–8 is not an apocalypse, it evidences important developments in the transition from prophetic literature to apocalyptic literature, most notably a new emphasis on symbolic visions and angelic interpretation as the primary mode of revelation.⁴⁹

messengers, and I would argue that the general absence of angels (divine messengers) from the prophetic books, followed by their sudden appearance in conjunction with the demise of prophecy and the rise of apocalyptic literature in the post-exilic period implies that their roles overlapped, i.e., both were considered Yahweh’s messengers in different periods and/or by different groups. On the other hand, Greene argues that prophets were not understood to be messengers prior to the time of Haggai (Greene, *The Role of the Messenger*, 231–58). Greene’s thesis, however, has been roundly rejected, and it is widely acknowledged that the Israelite prophets utilized messenger formulae in delivering their oracles, thus characterizing themselves as messengers of Yahweh and their oracles as messages (cf. Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 98–128).

⁴⁷ The singular reference to Haggai is the מלאך יהוה is insufficient for reading all מלאכים as human messengers, particularly when divine messengers are well-attested in comparative ancient Near Eastern literature. Furthermore, the view of prophets as messengers of Yahweh is common in the post-exilic period, particularly in the works of the Chronicler, where it is not only post-exilic prophets who are “messengers,” but pre-exilic prophets as well (2 Chron 36:15–16). Such a reading also leaves the later development of Jewish angelology, including the interpreting angel motif in *I Enoch*, Dan 7–8, and other literature strangely without antecedent. Perhaps the chief flaw in Conrad’s interpretation is his denial of the visionary nature of Zech 1–6. Along with Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3 and Jer 1:11–19, Conrad identifies what Zechariah sees as “‘seeing-sayings’ . . . items one can see in the surrounding world.”⁴⁷ Surely it makes much better sense to read gigantic flying scrolls (Zech 5:2) and winged women (Zech 5:9) as indicative of a vision than as reflective of Zechariah’s actual setting.

⁴⁸ Cook notes that visions are characteristic of those prophets closely associated with the royal Zion theology of the Judean monarchy (*Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 141; cf. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, 289). This is perhaps the case with Isaiah (e.g., Isa 6) and certainly Ezekiel (e.g., Ezek 1; 8–11; 40–48), but visions also abound with other prophets not aligned with the Judean royal court, such as Jeremiah (Jer 1:11–19; 24), Amos (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3), and Micaiah ben Imlah (1 Kgs 22:19–22).

⁴⁹ The question of whether such motifs qualify Zech 1–8 as apocalyptic is beyond the scope of this study. I am inclined to define apocalyptic literature along the same lines as Koch—that is, as a cluster of

Dating and Composition of Zech 1–8

Zechariah 1–8 is generally dated within the late sixth century B.C.E. in association with the construction of the second temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua.⁵⁰ Some scholars have argued that it originally belonged to a composite work consisting of Haggai and Zech 1–8, with which it shares close thematic (though not literary) similarities.⁵¹ Date notices in Zech 1:1, 7; 7:1 place the prophet’s activity between 520–518 B.C.E., and there is nothing in Zech 1–8 which suggests a significantly later date.⁵² The prophet himself appears (alongside Haggai) in Ezra 5:1 in connection with the rebuilding of the temple.

literary motifs which all appear in other types of literature, but which when grouped together constitute the apocalyptic genre (*Rediscovering Apocalyptic*, 18–35). Since no single motif is distinctively “apocalyptic,” different types of apocalyptic literature vary in their use of apocalyptic motifs, and some texts may be more strongly apocalyptic than others. This understanding accounts for the wide variety within apocalyptic literature, not all of which is overtly eschatological in focus. On the other hand, Finitsis dismisses the idea that literary motifs constitute apocalyptic literature (*Visions and Eschatology*, 103). Like Cook, Hanson, and others, he defines apocalypticism primarily in terms of eschatology, and as a result he concludes that Zech 1–8 (along with Haggai) expresses a unique brand of eschatology which saw the restoration and rebuilding of the temple as a sort of realized eschatology.

⁵⁰ A few scholars actually date some of the visions to the exilic period (pre-538 B.C.E.) as anticipations of future restoration along the lines of Second Isaiah (Kurt Galling, *Studien zur Geschichte Israels im Persischen Zeitalter* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1964], 112–13, 123; Lawrence A. Sinclair, “Redaction of Zechariah 1–8,” *BR* 20 (1975): 38–39). On the other hand, the five oracles in Zech 8:2, 3, 4–5, 6, and 7 have been dated variously to the exilic period and to the period following the completion of the temple (516/5 B.C.E.) (see Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 26–27). Yet the absence of any mention of the completion of the temple favors a date for the completion of the book prior to 515 B.C.E. (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, xlv).

⁵¹ See Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, xlv–xlviii; Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 47.

⁵² As is also the case with Ezekiel, many have attributed not only the oracles and vision reports to the Zechariah, but also their compilation and editing. Tollington argues that the bulk of Zech 1–8 “may have derived from the prophet and...the book was initially compiled during his active ministry” (*Tradition and Innovation*, 47).

Although there is little doubt concerning the general dating of the core material in Zech 1–8, there is some question regarding compilation and redaction.⁵³ Zechariah 1–8 contains two distinct types of material: vision reports and oracles. Vision reports comprise the majority of chs. 1–6, although there are several oracles interspersed here as well, while chs. 7–8 consist entirely of oracles. To these two blocks of material an introduction has been added (Zech 1:1–6), so that nearly all commentators recognize three basic sections in the book: Introduction (1:1–6), Visions (with oracular insertions) (1:7–6:15), and Oracles (7:1–8:23), each section being marked by a date formula (1:1, 7; 7:1).⁵⁴ Most scholars regard the visions in Zech 1–6 as the core of the book, into which oracular responses have been inserted (e.g., Zech 1:14–17; 2:10–17; 3:8–10; 4:6b–10a; 6:9–15) and appended (Zech 7–8).⁵⁵ The fourth vision (Zech 3:1–10) is often excluded as a later addition, and it is noteworthy that the interpreting angel does not appear in this vision.⁵⁶

⁵³ Beuken argues for a single Chronistic redaction of Haggai and Zech 1–8 (*Haggai-Sacharja 1–8*). Others, however, allow for a more complex formation of the book, including multiple redactions and editions. Mason argues for an earlier Deuteronomistic redaction in contrast to the late Chronistic redaction proposed by Beuken, but he also allows for the addition of later expositions on the oracles (e.g., Zech 8:1–8) (R. A. Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); R. A. Mason, “The Prophets of the Restoration,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honor of Peter R. Ackroyd* (eds. R. Coggins, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 148–49.). Likewise, Petersen questions the identification of a single redaction on the basis of the variety among the oracles, including the likely genuineness of some of those in chs. 7–8, and the short time which elapsed between utterance and composition (Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 124–25).

⁵⁴ Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 124; Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Rebuilding with Hope: A Commentary on the Books of Haggai and Zechariah* (ITC; Grand Rapids/Edinburgh: Eerdmans/Handsel, 1988), 51; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 1–2; Marvin Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets: Volume 2* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000), 566; Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 24.

⁵⁵ Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 125; Sinclair, “Redaction”; Albert Petitjean, *Les Oracles du Proto-Zacharie* (Paris: Gabalda, 1969). Petersen understands the oracular additions as interpretations or even corrections of the visions (Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 124).

⁵⁶ Meyers and Meyers argue for a 7 + 1 pattern in Zechariah’s night visions, with 3:1–10 being the “+ 1.” The form of this passage differs significantly from the other seven visions, and a sequence of seven visions would seem to provide a more natural pattern due to the symbolic value of the number seven

Zechariah 1–8 displays limited evidence of significant redactional activity.⁵⁷ The clearest evidence for redaction in Zech 1–8 appears in ch. 4, where a vision report is broken in half by the insertion of two oracles which are clearly secondary (Zech 4:6b–10a). Here a vision of a golden lampstand with seven lamps and two olive trees is interrupted by two oracles concerning Zerubbabel (the first oracle is actually addressed to Zerubbabel) before resuming with the interpretation of the vision. Assuming that the two olive trees represent Joshua and Zerubbabel, there is some relationship between the oracle and the vision, but here at least it is clear that the oracle has been inserted within a pre-existing text.⁵⁸

As Hallaschka notes, it is only in the first and third visions that the interpreting angel can be removed from the vision report.⁵⁹ In the vast majority of Zech 1–6, no

throughout the Bible (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 215–16). See also Jeremias, *Die Nachgesichte*, 201–05; Petitjean, *Les Oracles*, 161; Sinclair, “Redaction,” 45; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 174; Hallaschka, “Zechariah’s Angels,” 16.

⁵⁷ Tollington is cautious about reconstructing the redaction of Zech 1–8 and allows that the vast majority of the book may have originated with and even been compiled by the prophet himself (Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 33–34). With regard to the night visions, she does not detect any evidence of editing other than the insertion of oracles and one addition in Zech 4:12. This evidence leads her to suggest that they may have been committed to writing from the outset (*Tradition and Innovation*, 36). The literary nature of the visions accords well with later apocalyptic literature, which is also a literary phenomenon and also emphasizes the seer’s (or occasionally the angel’s) act of writing down what he sees (Dan 12:4; *1 En.* 33:4; 81:1–3, 6; 82:1; Rev 1:19; 22:7, 10 18–19).

⁵⁸ Tollington views Zech 4:6b–10a as the insertion of a later editor, rather than the original compiler (*Tradition and Innovation*, 43–44; also Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 224, 238–39). Others, however, have preferred to rearrange the text and retain the oracle as original but displaced (Petitjean, *Les Oracles*, 207–15; Hinckley G. Mitchell, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai and Zechariah* [ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1951], 190–94). Meyers and Meyers associate Zech 4:6b–10a with 3:8–10 and 6:9–15 as supplementary oracles which “ground the visions in the reality of the late sixth-century organization of the Persian province of Yehud” (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 265–66). As such, it need not be part of a single redaction with the other two supplementary oracles, but it addresses a common concern to relate the visions to the political situation.

⁵⁹ Hallaschka breaks with the majority of scholars by positing multiple redactional layers within the visions reports themselves (Martin Hallaschka, “Zechariah’s Angels: Their Role in the Night Visions and in the Redaction History of Zech 1,7–6,8,” *SJOT* 24 (2010): 13–27). He bases this reconstruction on the appearance of at least three different angelic figures in the night visions. He notes, first, that in the first

textual layer in which the interpreting angel is absent can be reconstructed, and therefore it is questionable whether any form of the night visions cycle existed prior to this stage. A possible explanation for the features which Hallaschka points out would be that the first and third visions incorporate and build upon two earlier, independent vision reports. In these earlier visions, the divine interpreter of the visions is simply called a “man,” as in Ezek 40–48. These earlier vision reports would perhaps mark a stage in between Ezek 40–48 and Zech 1–6, in which the identification of the divine interpreter as a מלאך has not yet developed, but in which his role as an interpreter of visions has become heightened. When these two vision reports were incorporated into the composition of Zech 1–6, the identity of the interpreter of Zechariah’s visions was clarified as the המלאך הדבר בי, who is the guide and interpreter in the second, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth visions.

That Zech 1–8 dates to the late sixth or early fifth century is beyond doubt, and given the strong concern for the rebuilding of the temple and the roles of Joshua and Zerubbabel as leaders of the community, a date in the earlier part of this range is

vision the interpreting angel (המלאך הדבר בי) suddenly appears without introduction in 1:9, and although he states that he will show Zechariah what the horses are, it is the “man standing between the myrtles” who actually answers Zechariah’s question (1:10) (Hallaschka, “Zechariah’s Angels,” 17). Again, in 2:5–6 a “man” appears, this time holding a measuring cord (חבל מדה) in his hand, and once again, it is some time before the interpreting angel (המלאך הדבר בי) suddenly and unexpectedly appears on the scene (2:7) (Hallaschka, “Zechariah’s Angels,” 24). Hallaschka concludes that in the earliest layer, it is the “man” who speaks with Zechariah and that the interpreting angel was inserted later to function as an interpreter who stands outside the visions. At a third stage, the “angel of Yahweh” was inserted in ch. 1 and ch. 3 to act as an intercessor/mediator between Yahweh and humanity and as a substitute for Yahweh (Hallaschka, “Zechariah’s Angels,” 23–27; cf. Schöpflin, “God’s Interpreter,” 192).

preferable.⁶⁰ Here I stand in agreement with Meyers and Meyers in placing the compilation of Zech 1–8 prior to 516/5 B.C.E.⁶¹ This early date does not allow for a significant oral stage, which leads me to concur with Tollington’s assertion that Zech 1–8 was a literary composition at its earliest stage.⁶² There is evidence of limited editing and redaction in Zech 1–8, most notably in Zech 4:6b–10a, which Tollington sees as the work of a later editor who sought to offer an “alternative interpretation” of the vision.⁶³ Yet even here the content of the oracles, concerned as it is with the completion of the temple under Zerubbabel’s leadership, does not appear to be late (post-516/5 B.C.E.), even if it did not originally belong to this literary context. One should note that it is only in the oracles (and the fourth vision) that political figures (Joshua and Zerubbabel) are mentioned by name.⁶⁴ The visions themselves, even when interpreted by the angel, are cryptic and vague. The oracles bridge the gap between the mythic/visionary world and the political world.

⁶⁰ K. Seybold regards the reconstruction of the temple as the chief concern of Zechariah’s visions (“Die Bildmotive in den Visionen des Propheten Sacharja,” *VTSup* 26 [1974]: 92–110; *Bilder zum Tempelbau: Die Visionen des Propheten Sacharja* [Stuttgart: K.B.W. Verlag, 1974], 107, 110).

⁶¹ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, xlv.

⁶² Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 47. Tollington does allow for some later editorial activity and insertions, such as Zech 3:8–10 and 8:23, but she regards the basic compilation as having taken place during Zechariah’s ministry. She furthermore allows that Zechariah may have been the compiler and that he may also have compiled Haggai as well (cf. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, xlv–xlvi).

⁶³ Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 44.

⁶⁴ David L. Petersen, “Zechariah’s Visions: A Theological Perspective,” *VT* 34 (1984): 196–97. Peterson reads Zech 1–8 as a response to Ezekiel’s vision for restoration. Whereas Ezek 40–48 envisions a restored Jerusalem with walls and with Yahweh dwelling in the temple, Zech 2:8–9 speaks of an unwallled city and Yahweh’s presence as a wall of fire *around* the city. Petersen argues that Zechariah’s visions (as opposed to the oracles, which are later additions) was not overly concerned with the temple restoration, but with cosmic renewal (196–205). Cf. D. Nathan Phinney, “Life Writing in Ezekiel and First Zechariah,” in *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology* (eds. Mark Boda and Michael Floyd; LHBOTS 475; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 98. Phinney likewise views Zech 1–8 as interacting with Ezekiel, but he sees the relationship as complementary.

Zech 1:7–17

The first of Zechariah’s “night visions” is of different colored horses with riders, standing among myrtle trees (הדסים) in a hollow (מצלה) at night. The date notice in Zech 1:7 places Zechariah’s first vision in the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month in the second year of Darius I (Feb. 15, 519 B.C.E.),⁶⁵ but as noted above, the first vision appears to incorporate an earlier vision report in which the “man” (איש), rather than the interpreting angel (המלאך הדבר בי) explains the vision.⁶⁶ It is not clear whether Zechariah sees dreams or waking visions. Verse 8 indicates that the visions occurred at night (הלילה), but does not state that Zechariah was asleep.⁶⁷ Niditch notes the formal similarity between symbolic dreams in the Hebrew Bible (including those in Zech 1–6)

⁶⁵ There is some question whether this date applies to all of the visions or merely the first one. Mitchell believes all of the visions occurred together in a single night (*Zechariah*, 115–16; so also Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 111; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 188; Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 574–75). Gese sees in the structure of the vision sequence a paralleling of the different phases of the night: visions 1–3 correlate with the evening, vision 5 with midnight, and visions 6–8 with dawn (“Anfang und Ende der Apokalyptik,” 36). Meyers and Meyers read הלילה as “by night,” and do not see it as necessarily indicating that all visions occurred in a single night, although they regard this as a possibility. Although they do not argue that all of the visions occurred in a single night, they acknowledge that “the use of [הלילה] here seems intended to give that impression” (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 109–10). Galling, on the other hand, argues that each vision is the product of a different historical setting (*Studien zur Geschichte Israels*, 123). Tollington allows that the visions may span the gap between the date notice in Zech 1:7 and the final notice in 7:1—a period of nearly two years (*Tradition and Innovation*, 35–36). If these “night visions” are dreams, then it is plausible that all occurred in a single night, as it is common for multiple dreams to occur in succession in a single night (Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 111; cf. A. Rechtschaffen, *et al.*, “Reports of Mental Activity During Sleep,” *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* 8 [1963]: 409–14; A. Rechtschaffen and W. Offenkranz, “Clinical Studies of Sequential Dreams,” *Archives of General Psychiatry* 8 [1963]: 497–509).

⁶⁶ Cf. Hallaschka, “Zechariah’s Angels.”

⁶⁷ Husser sharply distinguishes between prophetic “visions” and true dreams (*Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 139–54). His argument is weakened, however, by his own admission that ancient Near Eastern sources often parallel dream (*šuttu*) and “night vision” (*tabrīt mūsi*), implying that even if the two experiences were not the same, they were highly similar (*Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 28).

and ancient Near Eastern dream interpretation.⁶⁸ Likewise, the formal similarity between the visions in Zech 1–6 and Daniel’s dream-vision in Dan 7, which freely uses the words “dream” (חלם) and “visions” (חזוי) interchangeably (e.g., Dan 7:1–2), suggests that dreams and “night visions” (cf. Dan 7:2, 7) were at least highly similar and perhaps even synonymous. On the other hand, the statement in Zech 4:1 that the angel “awoke me again, like a man who is awakened from his sleep” would suggest that with the possible exception of the fourth vision (Zech 3:1–10), Zechariah’s visions were not dreams, since he is here awakened *prior* to his vision.

Zechariah reports a vision of a man (איש) riding upon a red horse, behind whom also stand other horses (presumably with riders) of various colors (Zech 1:8). The significance of these horses/horsemen becomes clear in v. 10, in which they are identified as “those whom Yahweh has sent to walk about on the earth” (אלה אשר שלח יהוה להתהלך) (בארץ). They are, thus, a divine reconnaissance team sent by Yahweh to spy out and keep watch upon the earth.⁶⁹ A number of scholars note the similarity of the horsemen in Zech 1:7–17 and 6:1–8, as well as the “eyes of Yahweh” in 4:10b, with the networks of spies

⁶⁸ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 29–34.

⁶⁹ Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer identifies these “spies” with the cherubim of Ezek 1; 8–11 (“Zechariah’s Spies and Ezekiel’s Cherubim,” in *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology* [eds. Mark Boda and Michael Floyd; LHBOTS 475; London: T & T Clark, 2008], 104–27. Tiemeyer’s identification of the function of the horses/horsemen as emissaries sent by Yahweh to keep surveillance throughout the earth and report back to him is correct, but her identification of such agents with cherubim is questionable. Not only do the horses in Zechariah lack the elaborate description as *mischwesen* characteristic of cherubim in Ezekiel and in ancient Near Eastern artwork, cherubim do not appear elsewhere as spies patrolling the earth. Rather, they are usually found in royal throne rooms and temples, where they act as guardians or even as part of the divine chariot-throne itself (cf. Ezek 10:9–22), although they do sometimes represent the power of the god over enemies (see Eric Gubel, “The Iconography of Inscribed Phoenician Glyptic,” in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals: Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Fribourg on April 17–20, 1991* [eds. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger; OBO 125; Fribourg/Göttingen: University Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993], 101–29).

and messengers employed by ancient Near Eastern emperors, particularly the Neo-Babylonians and Persians.⁷⁰ Hallaschka sees the horses as modeled after Persian imperial messengers, who rode on horses rather than in chariots.⁷¹ Just as these “eyes of the king” helped the Persian (or Babylonian) king rule his vast domain by extending his watchful presence throughout the empire, so also these divine emissaries represent extensions of Yahweh’s presence on earth. As noted in the discussion of Persian imperial administration above, Persian messengers and political intermediaries may have contributed to the development of Jewish angelology by providing a “real world” model for a new conception of the divine realm in which Yahweh communicated through divine intermediaries.⁷²

Aside from the horses and their riders, the other major figure—and the one with whom this study is most concerned—is Zechariah’s angelic guide/interpreter, who appears for the first time in Zech 1:9. He is described as *המלאך הדבר בי* “the angel who spoke with me.” In contrast to Ezek 40–48, which is unclear regarding the identity of the “man” (*איש*), in its present form Zech 1–6 clearly identifies the interpreter as an angel

⁷⁰ See especially A. Leo Oppenheim, “The Eyes of the Lord,” *JAOS* 88 (1968): 173–80. See also Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 114. Tiemeyer identifies the horses/riders and the “eyes of Yahweh” (Zech 4:10b) as one and the same (“Zechariah’s Spies,” 115–16). But such an assumption is not only questionable, it is unlikely, since there are seven “eyes” and four horses. Nevertheless, both the horsemen and the “eyes of Yahweh” seem to correlate with the Persian imperial surveillance networks through which the kings maintained control over their vast empire.

⁷¹ Hallaschka, “Zechariah’s Angels,” 21–22.

⁷² It is noteworthy that Persian Zoroastrianism also possessed an elaborate angelology with a similar celestial hierarchy to that portrayed in some Second Temple Jewish texts (e.g., *1 Enoch*). See the discussion of Persian religious sources below.

(מלאך).⁷³ As noted above, Conrad argues that this “messenger,” like all of the messengers in the post-exilic prophetic books, is not a divine being but a human messenger.⁷⁴ Conrad’s reading should be dismissed on the grounds that it makes far too much of a single characterization of a human prophet as Yahweh’s “messenger” (Hag 1:13), that it fails to recognize the visionary/mythological nature of Zech 1–6, and that it isolates Zech 1–6 from the development of the interpreting angel motif in earlier (Ezek 40–48) and later (*I Enoch*; Dan 7–8) texts.

Dörfel takes a very different interpretation of the מלאך הדבר בי by reading it not as “the angel who spoke with me” but as “the angel who spoke *in* me,” i.e., the prophetic spirit, here portrayed as internal to and yet markedly distinguished from the prophet.⁷⁵ But the preposition –ב may also be used with דבר to indicate speech directed toward an audience, as is the case in Num 12:2, 6, 8; Hab 2:1.⁷⁶ More importantly, the context in Zech 1–6 militates against Dörfel’s reading, since there is clear dialog between the

⁷³ But cf. Hallaschka (“Zechariah’s Angels”), who, as noted above, argues that in ch. 1 and ch. 3 an earlier textual level, in which the “man” is the interpreter, may be recovered.

⁷⁴ While he does not explain what distinguishes a “messenger” from a “prophet,” he implies that messengers were heirs of the prophets who differed in some significant way and marked the demise of prophecy in the Second Temple period (Conrad, *Zechariah*, 59–62). Conrad identifies the מלאך יהוה in Zech 3:1, 5–6 as Haggai (cf. Hag 1:13) and the other מלאכים as unnamed “messengers” (*Zechariah*, 64, 88). In addition, Conrad makes the unlikely assertion that Zechariah’s “visions” are not truly visions, but actual scenes from Zechariah’s surrounding environment upon which he expounds (*Zechariah*, 58).

⁷⁵ Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 89, 93–97, 256.

⁷⁶ Numbers 12:6 clearly describes communication mediated through visions and dreams, but v. 8 then contrasts this indirect communication with Yahweh’s direct communication with Moses “face to face...clearly and not in riddles, and he looks at the form of Yahweh.” Thus, –ב דבר may describe both mediated communication and direct conversation. In Hab 2:1, –ב דבר likewise describes Yahweh’s response *to* the prophet concerning his complaint (תוכחה), not Yahweh’s communication to an audience *through* Habakkuk.

prophet and the angel, while the angel is never mentioned in connection with Zechariah's delivery of prophetic oracles.

Verse 9 begins a series of vision + question and answer exchanges between Zechariah and the angel. In Ezek 40–48, there was little dialog between Ezekiel and the “man,” who was chiefly a guide who occasionally explained the significance of objects. The exception comes in Ezek 47:6–12, where the guide asks Ezekiel “Have you seen?” and then describes the destination of the river which flows from the temple and its effects on the environment. In Zech 1–6, on the other hand, the prophet frequently asks the interpreting angel concerning what he sees. Prior to Zech 1–6, when questions are asked in the context of symbolic visions, it is Yahweh (or the angel) who asks the visionary what he sees, and the visionary has no trouble describing what he sees, even if he does not grasp its deeper, symbolic meaning (e.g., Amos 7:8; 8:2; Jer 1:11, 13; 24:3; Ezek 47:6). In Zech 1–6, however, it seems that without the angel's interpretation, Zechariah is unable to understand his visions at all.⁷⁷ Niditch remarks that

Now...the seer must seek to know God's message via a vehicle of symbol-interpretation. The symbolic images sent by God are a code which must be deciphered in order that the seer truly see. In a sense, God's own prophet, the one selected to transmit the word of the Lord, is as ignorant before the interpretation of the vision as are the dreaming Pharaohs of Genesis 41 and the Tanutamun Stele....⁷⁸

She further suggests that the development of the symbolic vision motif in this stage resembles divination insofar as the seer actively seeks to receive the interpretation of the

⁷⁷ This point is made by Schöpflin, who observes “the prophet sees enigmatic things or beings that needs must [sic] be explained to him (and his recipients). Without any help the prophet could make absolutely nothing of it” (“God's Interpreter,” 189).

⁷⁸ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 101.

mysterious, enigmatic symbols which he sees.⁷⁹ In order to receive the interpretation of his visions, Zechariah needs the services of a “professional” interpreter. Thus, in Zech 1–6 the figure of an angelic “specialist” in the interpretation of symbolic visions—the “interpreting angel”—emerges.⁸⁰ At the same time, the prophet’s admitted inability to understand his own visions distances him from the art of divination, which depended upon the diviner’s possession of the knowledge required to interpret signs and symbols. Against this background, one may view the decline of prophecy in the post-exilic period as a subtle polemic against divination and the rise of apocalyptic literature, with its preference for angelic mediation, as an alternative to divination which stressed the divine source of both the vision *and* its interpretation, leaving little room for human involvement in the process of revelation.

After seeing the horses and riders, Zechariah asks the angel “What are these, my lord?” (מה־אלה אדני). The angel responds by saying “I will show you what these are” (אראך מה־המה אלה) (Zech 1:9). Immediately following the angel’s response, the “man standing between the myrtles” (cf. Zech 1:8) speaks, in answer to Zechariah’s question: “These are those whom Yahweh has sent to walk about on the earth” (אלה אשר שלח יהוה) (להתהלך בארץ) (Zech 1:10). The interpreting angel’s statement that he would show

⁷⁹ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 10.

⁸⁰ Dörfel sees the development of the interpreting angel motif as reflective of an increasing specialization in the functions of angels in the post-exilic period (*Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 255). The development of specialized functions for angels may be compared with Smith’s and Handy’s detection of a tier of deities in the Syro-Palestinian pantheon of the Late Bronze Age which consisted of “craftsmen” deities, such as Kothar wa-Hasis at Ugarit (Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 57; Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 131–47). While beyond the scope of this study, this development, in conjunction with the increasing autonomy of high ranking angels in post-exilic texts (especially apocalyptic literature) may indicate that within some segments of Jewish society the older multi-tiered pantheon continued to exist in a modified form well into the Second Temple period.

Zechariah what the horses were, followed by their interpretation, not by the angel, but by the man standing between the myrtles, suggests that originally the “man” was the interpreter.⁸¹ I take this to be evidence of the incorporation of an earlier, independent vision report in which the interpreting angel motif stood closer to the form in which it appears in Ezek 40–48. In the present form of the text, however, the implied relationship between the interpreting angel and the “man” in the vision suggests that the interpreting angel is able not only to interpret visions, but to control or at least cross over into them as well.⁸² Most likely, the interpreting angel and the מלאך יהוה are the same, since when the angel of Yahweh asks Yahweh a question in v. 12, Yahweh answers the interpreting angel in v. 13.⁸³ The angel is thus much more than a simple interpreter; he is the agent of revelation. Both the vision and its interpretation come from the interpreting angel, who fills the role of Yahweh in earlier visionary texts (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24) as

⁸¹ See Hallaschka, “Zechariah’s Angels,” 20.

⁸² Schöpflin observes that “the interpreting angel seems to have the opportunity to cross the line and to exert influence on or to enter the visualized sphere. Hence his announcement, ‘I’ll let you see what these are’ (1:9bβ), may be understood as prompting the man’s answer (1:10, and also 1:11b) (“God’s Interpreter,” 191). Niditch argues that the “man standing between the myrtles” is none other than the interpreting angel, who is also called the angel of Yahweh (מלאך יהוה) in v. 11. She argues thus on the basis that MT’s plural verb ויענו in v. 11 should be emended to a singular verb (ויען). According to this reading, it is the “man standing between the myrtles,” who is identified via a gloss with the angel of Yahweh, who speaks, and Niditch equates this angel with the interpreting angel (*The Symbolic Vision*, 130–31). Militating against this reading is the fact that in the text as it stands, the מלאך יהוה cannot be the subject, since it is preceded by the definite accusative marker את. Most commentators follow the MT in understanding the subject in v. 11 as the group of riders on horses who speak to the angel of Yahweh, who is identified as the man standing between the myrtles (Mitchell, *Zechariah*, 130; Peterson, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 136; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 107; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 187; McComiskey, “Zechariah,” 1038).

⁸³ Hallaschka sees the identification of the interpreting angel with the “man” as one of the reasons for the insertion of the מלאך יהוה in Zech 1 (“Zechariah’s Angels,” 20).

Yahweh's representative.⁸⁴ One may compare the interpreting angel's "representative" duty with the extension of the Persian king's presence throughout the empire through his networks of administrators, spies, and messengers.

Niditch discerns a formal pattern in Zech 1:7–17 which links it with earlier biblical vision reports (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24) and with ancient Near Eastern divination and also anticipates future developments (e.g., Dan 7–8). This formal pattern may be summarized as follows:

- V. 7 – date-line
- V. 8 – indication of vision
- V. 8 – description of vision
- V. 9 – question of seer to interpreter
- V. 10 – answer of interpreter
- Vv. 11–13 – observations of divine activities; prophet drawn into them
- Vv. 14–17 – charge⁸⁵

The absence of this formal pattern in Ezek 40–48 leads Niditch to dismiss this text from her discussion of the development of the symbolic vision motif. For a study focused on the vision motif, this is appropriate. But the "man" in Ezek 40–48 clearly anticipates the interpreting angel of Zech 1–6, suggesting that Zech 1–6 merges two different literary motifs/traditions: the prophetic symbol-vision, with its vision + question and answer + interpretation pattern, and the motif of the angelic guide/interpreter.⁸⁶

In vv. 12–17 the vision of the horsemen is supplemented by an exchange between the angel of Yahweh and Yahweh (vv. 12–13) and three oracles concerning Yahweh's

⁸⁴ See Schöpflin, "God's Interpreter," 195. Niditch calls the interpreting angel's role in divine revelation "revelation through interpretation" (*The Symbolic Vision*, 96, 119).

⁸⁵ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 134–35.

⁸⁶ Even Schöpflin, who argues against Zechariah's dependence on Ezek 40–48, recognizes a genetic link between the two texts with regard to the interpreting angel motif but sees Ezekiel as dependent upon Zechariah ("God's Interpreter," 197–98).

return to Jerusalem spoken by the interpreting angel to Zechariah, which Zechariah is then to repeat to the people (vv. 14–15, 16, 17). The מלאך יהוה calls out “Yahweh of hosts, how long (עד מתי) will you not have compassion on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, which you have cursed these seventy years?” (Zech 1:12).⁸⁷ Yahweh responds by speaking to the interpreting angel with “good words, comforting words” (דברים טובים) (דברים נחמים).⁸⁸ It is significant that Yahweh communicates here with the angel, but not with Zechariah directly. Whereas direct divine communication stood alongside angelic mediation in Ezek 40–48, in Zech 1–6, while Zechariah observes Yahweh speaking and even witnesses a meeting of the divine council (albeit in a text generally regarded as a secondary addition [Zech 3:1–10]), Yahweh does not speak directly to Zechariah himself. Here Zech 1–6 departs from earlier prophetic tradition, in which prophetic inspiration took the form of the coming of the “word of Yahweh” (דבר יהוה) to the prophet and in which direct communication between Yahweh and his prophet was the norm. This shift has led some to argue that post-exilic Judaism viewed God as transcendent and remote from humans, with angels filling the “gap” between God and his people.⁸⁹ Rather than

⁸⁷ The angel’s words here recall the lament found in many psalms, as well as Amos 7:5; Jer 47:6–7 (see Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 137; cf. also Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 146–47).

⁸⁸ It is unclear whether the interpreting angel (המלאך הדבר בי) ought to be distinguished from the angel of Yahweh (מלאך יהוה). In favor of identifying the two is the fact that when the angel of Yahweh cries out with a lament/question to Yahweh in v. 12, Yahweh answers the interpreting angel (v. 13). One may also note that the angel of Yahweh appears only in the visions, while the interpreting angel stands alongside and speaks to Zechariah. It is possible that the same figure is referred to as the “angel of Yahweh” when he interacts with the visionary realm or with Yahweh, but the “angel who spoke with me” when he interacts with Zechariah (but cf. v. 13). For an argument in favor of equating the two angels, see Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 130–31.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:200; Oesterly and Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, 280; Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 174–75.

indicating that Yahweh has become remote and inaccessible, however, I would argue that the lack of direct communication from Yahweh to Zechariah indicates a change in the view of prophecy and divine revelation in the post-exilic period. Human prophets no longer channel the word of Yahweh, but Yahweh is not remote or inaccessible, as the oracles in Zech 1:14–17 make clear.⁹⁰ This transformed view of the mode of divine revelation/communication is consistent with the new image of Yahweh’s kingship as analogous to the Persian king, who likewise communicated indirectly, but whose imminent presence was never in doubt.

Zech 2:1–9

Zechariah’s second and third visions occur in rapid succession in chapter 2, following the three oracles in Zech 1:14–17.⁹¹ The second vision (Zech 2:1–4) is much more concise than the first vision. Zechariah looks up and sees four horns (קרנות) (2:1). He then asks the interpreting angel, “What are these?” (מה־אלה), and the angel responds, “These are the horns which scattered Judah and Israel and Jerusalem” (אלה הקרנות אשר זרו את־יהודה את־ישראל וירושלם) (2:2).

⁹⁰ Zechariah 1–8 is transitional with regard to this new view of prophecy, which will eventually give way to apocalypticism. The older form of classical prophecy, in which the word of Yahweh comes to and is proclaimed by the prophet, appears in Zech 1:1–6; 7–8 (i.e., outside the night visions). The oracular insertions in Zech 1–6, while redactionally cast as the words of the interpreting angel, may also indicate that classical prophecy was not yet dead. In this way, as in many others, Zech 1–8 is marked by “in-betweenness” and bridges earlier and later literary forms (cf. Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 73–74).

⁹¹ As noted above, there is disagreement regarding whether all of the visions occurred in the same night. Grammatically speaking, Zech 2:1 reads as though the second visions followed immediately upon the first vision (see Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 161). On the other hand, the visions cycle in Zech 1–6 may be a purely literary creation rather than a report of actual visionary experiences. This is the perspective of Schöpflin (“God’s Interpreter,” 190), as well as many German commentators (e.g., Gese, “Anfang und Ende der Apokalyptik,” 36–38; Seybold, *Bilder zum Tempelbau*, 31–39). This is a false dichotomy, since there is no reason to assume that the original vision cycle in Zech 1–6 could not be a literary composition based on an actual visionary experience.

Meyers and Meyers note that Zechariah’s confusion regarding the horns seems to lie in their deeper significance rather than their basic identity, since horns are fairly ordinary objects.⁹² Horns commonly symbolize power, kingship, or divinity in ancient Near Eastern iconography.⁹³ Likewise, the Hebrew Bible often uses the word קֶרֶן to refer to might (2 Sam 22:3; Ps 75:11) or national power (Deut 33:17; Jer 48:25). In apocalyptic literature, horns typically represent kings or kingdoms (e.g., Dan 7:24–25; 8:20–25), clearly drawing on this earlier ancient Near Eastern tradition of horns as symbols of power. This is also the case in Zech 2:1–4, as the angel explains that the four horns are the nations which scattered Judah (2:4).⁹⁴ After the angel identifies the horns as those which scattered Judah, Yahweh shows Zechariah four “skilled craftsmen” (חרשים) (Zech 2:3). The

⁹² Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 144.

⁹³ Gods and divinized kings are often depicted wearing helmets with two, four, or even six horns (see, for example, G. Loud, *The Megiddo Ivories* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1939], 10; E. Douglas Van Buren, “Concerning the Horned Cap of the Mesopotamian Gods,” *Or* 12 [1943]: 318–27; Othmar Keel, *Wirkmächtige Sigeseichen im Alten Testament* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974], 123–46). Some have proposed that this association between horns and the power of the divine warrior lies behind Zechariah’s second vision (Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 122–24).

⁹⁴ The numbering of these horns as four is puzzling, since no four historical nations who “scattered” Israel and Judah are forthcoming. The best explanation is to understand four here as referring to the four directions/winds (cf. Zech 6:1–8), so that the horns represent the totality of world powers who have oppressed Yahweh’s people. Zechariah also sees four horses/horsemen in 1:8 and again in 6:1–8, so the number four in the second vision may correspond to Zechariah’s tendency toward numerical symmetry and completeness. On the other hand, a four-kingdom schema is well-known within apocalyptic literature (e.g., Dan 2) and also finds parallels in Mesopotamian, Persian, and Greek texts (Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 92–98). The four kingdoms in Zech 2:1–9, however, do not refer to ostensibly future kingdoms (even in an *ex eventu* manner), but rather to nations which have oppressed Israel in the past, thus distinguishing it from the apocalyptic motif of the four kingdoms. If there is any connection, it may be that Zech 1–8, in light of its “realized eschatology” presents the domination of Israel by foreign nations as now complete, whereas later apocalyptic texts, such as Dan 2, present this oppression as ongoing.

number four here corresponds to the number of horns, which probably represent all the nations of the world (or at least all of ancient Israel's enemies).⁹⁵

Of note in the second vision is that Yahweh is said to have shown Zechariah the craftsmen (Zech 2:3). In Zech 1:9 the interpreting angel said “I will show you what these are,” but here the vision (at least the second part) is attributed to Yahweh. Mitchell compares the wording here with Amos 1:1, 4, 7; 8:1, in which Yahweh is also said to have shown a vision to the prophet.⁹⁶ There is thus continuity between earlier prophetic tradition and Zech 1–6, in spite of the latter's innovation—divine revelation, even if given through an angel, still has Yahweh as its source.⁹⁷ Meyers and Meyers argue that Yahweh actually appears on the scene in v. 3, and that is Yahweh who interprets the vision in v. 4.⁹⁸ On the other hand, it could simply be that the interpreting angel is so closely identified with Yahweh that the text may speak of Yahweh as having shown the vision to Zechariah.⁹⁹ Either way, it would seem that even in Zechariah's night visions a

⁹⁵ See Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 125.

⁹⁶ Mitchell, *Zechariah*, 133.

⁹⁷ Finitis argues—and I concur—that the interpreting angel motif actually underscores the divine source of the vision/revelation and its interpretation, thus validating its meaning (*Visions and Eschatology*, 141).

⁹⁸ They write, “[I]t indicates in a general way the fluidity between Yahweh and the angelic figures as mediators of divine will. Yahweh here performs the role played by the Interpreting Angel in the other visions” (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 139).

⁹⁹ A blurring of the distinction between Yahweh and his מלאך is a common feature in earlier biblical texts (e.g., Exod 3:2–6; Judg 6:11–24). A similar phenomenon was also observed in Ezek 44:1–5, although in this case there appears to have been alterations to the text in order to smooth out the tensions regarding the identity of the speaker. The best explanation for this phenomenon is that the understanding of messengers (and therefore also messenger deities) in ancient Israel, as in the broader ancient Near East, was such that the messenger could be identified with the sender. Samuel Meier notes in his study of messengers in the ancient Near East that messengers always deliver messages in first person, following a standard message formula in which the messenger becomes, as it were, a “living letter” (Meier, *The Messenger*, 166–201; see also Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 159–60, 163–66; Cho, *Lesser Deities in the Ugaritic Texts*, 168–72).

clear and consistent distinction in roles between Yahweh and the interpreting angel had not fully developed. At the very least, it shows that the interpreting angel's appearance does not indicate a view of Yahweh as distant and removed from humanity.

The third vision follows immediately after the second and is likewise very concise, but it differs in that it lacks symbolic elements which require interpretation. Rather, this vision may be described as “real-mythic.” In contrast to the symbolism of earlier visions (e.g., Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24), Zechariah's visions do not depend upon wordplays or other surface level associations between symbol and meaning but rather upon mythological traditions and motifs. In many cases, the “symbols” in Zechariah's visions *are* the meaning of the vision, i.e., they are literal visions of spiritual/mythic realities.¹⁰⁰

Zechariah once again “lifts up his eyes” and sees a “man with a measuring cord in his hand” (איש ובידו חבל מדה) (Zech 2:5). This vision immediately recalls the “man” (איש) who holds a “measuring rod” (קנה המדה) in his hand in Ezek 40:3.¹⁰¹ Even in the present form of the text, this “man” cannot be the interpreting angel, as the interpreting angel gives order for “another angel” (מלאך אחר) to run and speak to him (2:7–8). Here we see the interpreting angel able to cross over into the vision and interact with the figures within.¹⁰² But the interpreting angel is not unique in this sense, for Zechariah is

¹⁰⁰ See Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 10–11, 74.

¹⁰¹ Jeremias, *Die Nachgesichte*, 164.

¹⁰² Schöpflin understands the interpreting angel as a liminal figure. “[T]he angel is not a part of the visions, but an observer like Zechariah, though an observer initiated into the secret visionary world. At the same time the interpreting angel seems to have the opportunity to cross the line and to exert influence on or to enter into the visualized sphere” (“God's Interpreter,” 191).

also able to interact with the visionary world. In v. 6 he asks the “man” “Where are you going?” (אנה אתה הליך), and the “man” replies “To measure Jerusalem, to see how much its width and how much its length are” (למד את־ירושלם לראות כמה־רחבה וכמה ארכה).¹⁰³

Zechariah is thus also a liminal figure and enhances his prestige as one who is able to enter into and interact with the divine realm.¹⁰⁴ Zechariah, like earlier prophets (e.g. 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Isa 6), is able to enter the divine council (Zech 3:1–10), and he even dares to speak in the council (3:5). Thus, although Zech 1–6 evidences new developments with regard to Yahweh’s transcendence and manner of revealing his plans, as well as the nature of prophecy and the role of the prophet in divine revelation, there is neither a growing distance between Yahweh and the world nor a diminishing of the status of Yahweh’s prophet.

The third vision concludes with another oracle, this time set in the mouth of the interpreting angel and entrusted to another angel to speak to the “man” with the measuring cord. The oracle concerns the city of Jerusalem, specifically, that it will be an unwalled city so as to allow room for multitudes of humans and cattle.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, a city wall is unnecessary, because Yahweh himself will be “a wall of fire surrounding it”

¹⁰³ Here, once again, one of Zechariah’s visions comes very close to Ezek 40–48, in which a “man” measures the temple with a measuring rod and also speaks with the prophet. As in Zech 1, the appearance of a “man” who speaks and interacts with Zechariah, in addition to the interpreting angel, may indicate the incorporation of an earlier vision report which lacked the *המלאך הדבר ב* and included only the “man” (cf. Hallaschka, “Zechariah’s Angels,” 24). Here, however, the interpreting angel cannot be identified with the “man,” since they are clearly two distinct figures in 2:8.

¹⁰⁴ Finitis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 141; see also Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 106.

¹⁰⁵ Meyers and Meyers note that the angel’s proclamation is grounded in historical realities of the sixth century Persian Empire. Jerusalem was, at this point in time, a settlement without walls, itself surrounded by smaller unwalled settlements (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 160). Also, this description of Jerusalem recalls the Achaemenid royal city of Pasargadae, which also lacked walls (Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 171).

(חומת אש סביב) (2:9).¹⁰⁶ This vision of a Jerusalem surrounded by a tangible manifestation of Yahweh's presence and protection (cf. Exod 13:21–22) and the concluding statement that Yahweh will “be glory in its midst” (2:9) further underscore the fact that Zech 1–6 does not portray Yahweh as remote and inaccessible, in spite of its use of angelic mediation/interpretation for divine revelation. Angels serve as an extension of Yahweh's presence, rather than a sign of his absence.

Zech 4:1–6a, 10b–14

Zechariah's fifth vision (Zech 4:1–6a, 10b–14) is perhaps the most important in the book as far as the historical and political situation of the book is concerned.¹⁰⁷ Here issues of temple and cult, priesthood, and messianic/Davidic leadership stand at the core of Zechariah's vision and the oracles interspersed within it. The fifth vision is also more complex than all but perhaps the fourth vision in terms of the text's history of development and editing. Zechariah 4:6b–10a is almost universally regarded as a secondary insertion which breaks up an original literary unit.¹⁰⁸

The vision begins with the interpreting angel awakening Zechariah “like a man who is awakened from his sleep” (כאיש אשר-יעור משנתו) (Zech 4:1). This statement

¹⁰⁶ The imagery here appears to be drawn from the Achaemenid royal city, Pasargadae, which was surrounded by fire altars representing the presence of Ahura Mazda (Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 171; Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 586).

¹⁰⁷ The fourth vision (Zech 3:1–10) is also key in this regard, but it is excluded from this study because, while it does include angels, the interpreting angel is absent in this vision.

¹⁰⁸ The interpretation of the seven lamps as the “eyes of Yahweh” in v. 10b clearly refers back to v. 6a, wherein the angel begin to answer Zechariah's inquiry. The two oracles concerning Zerubbabel and the construction of the temple are unrelated to the vision and split the vision account in two. See Mitchell, *Zechariah*, 161–63; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 265–66; Peterson, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 238; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 203–04.

suggests that the vision is not a dream, since the prophet is awakened *before* he sees the vision.¹⁰⁹ The angel asks Zechariah, “What do you see?” (מה אתה ראה) (4:2). The wording here is identical to Yahweh’s questions in Amos 7:8; 8:2; Jer 1:11, 13; 24:3, and in contrast with the first, second, and third visions, it is not Zechariah who asks, but the interpreting angel. Also unlike the earlier visions, there is no introductory description of the vision—it begins with the angel’s question, and it is only in Zechariah’s answer that we find a description of the vision:

Look! I see a completely golden lampstand and a bowl on top of it, and there are seven lamps on it and seven spouts for each of the lamps which are on top of it and two olive trees beside it, one on the right side of the bowl and one on its left (Zech 4:2–3).

It is still clear that Zechariah does not understand the vision, since he must ask in v. 4 “What are these, my lord?” (מה-אלה אדני). However, unlike in the previous visions, the angel expresses shock that Zechariah does not understand his vision, responding “Do you not know what these are?” (הלוא ידעת מה-המה אלה) (4:5).¹¹⁰ Following Zechariah’s answer that he does not know what they are, the angel proceeds to explain the vision (4:6a), but here the narrative is severely interrupted by two oracles which have been artificially inserted into this context. Scholars are divided on the origin of these oracles

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, 151. Husser distinguishes too sharply between dreams and visions, but with regard to Zech 1–6 I must agree that the visions do not appear to be dreams in a technical sense, although they are very dream-like (cf. Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 95). I do not, however, consider this distinction to be of significant consequence, and in Dan 7, at least, angelic interpretation *does* occur within a dream.

¹¹⁰ Petersen reads the angel’s retort as something of a reprimand of Zechariah for not understanding his visions (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 224).

and the manner in which they came to be in their present location, but they are nearly unanimous in regarding them as an intrusion which splits the fifth vision in half.¹¹¹

If 4:6b–10a is removed, the narrative continues smoothly in 4:10b with the angel’s interpretation of the seven lamps: “These seven are the eyes of Yahweh. They roam throughout all the earth” (שבעה־אלה עיני יהוה המה משוטטים בכל־הארץ).¹¹² As noted by Oppenheim, these “eyes of Yahweh” may be compared with the “eyes of the king,” informants and agents of the Persian kings, through which they maintained control over their vast domain.¹¹³ Their action of roaming throughout all the earth is similar to that of

¹¹¹ Mitchell places Zech 4:6b–10a between 6:14 and 6:15, and he rearranges the two oracles so that 4:8–10a comes before 4:6b–7 (*Zechariah*, 193). Petersen argues that the insertion of 4:6b–10a indicates a desire on the part of an editor to elevate Zerubbabel above Joshua as “a new Solomon” (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 244). Such a move would only be plausible at a very early date, prior to the completion of the temple and before the disappearance of Zerubbabel from the history of Yehud. Similarly, Meyers and Meyers identify Zech 4:6b–10a as one of three supplementary oracles (along with 3:8–10 and 6:9–15) which sought to balance the emphasis on the high priest Joshua (e.g., 3:1–7) with “a reminder of the future role of the house of David in bringing about full restoration” (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 266). Yet they also note that Joshua’s role in the foundation of the new temple is much greater than that typically enjoyed by high priests in the monarchic period, and they suggest that Zerubbabel’s limited role (which is highlighted in 4:6b–10a) is due to the fact that, although a Davidide, he is not a full king (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 266–67). Tollington sees 4:6b–10a as an insertion offering “an alternative interpretation of the [vision] without obscuring its original meaning” (*Tradition and Innovation*, 44). It does this by emphasizing the importance of Zerubbabel in relation to the reconstruction of the temple, perhaps reflecting an early struggle for primacy between Joshua and Zerubbabel. Beuken stands over against the majority of commentators in regarding 4:6b–7 as original and 4:11–14 as secondary, on the basis that Zerubbabel would have been regarded as clearly superior to Joshua during the time of Zechariah’s ministry (*Haggai-Sacharja 1–8*, 261–63). Likewise, Petitjean considers 4:6b–10a original on the basis of ancient Near Eastern parallels to features in these verses (*Les Oracles du Proto-Zacharie*, 229–67). But as Petersen notes, these parallels do little to support Petitjean’s assertion that Zech 4 is basically homogeneous (*Haggai and Zachariah 1–8*, 238, n. 1).

¹¹² Meyers and Meyers note that the angel does not interpret the lampstand, but only the seven lamps (and later the two olive trees). They surmise that Zechariah had no trouble recognizing the lampstand as the menorah which stood inside the temple, but only the other symbolic/mythological elements of the vision (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 273).

¹¹³ Oppenheim, “The Eyes of the Lord,” 173–80; but cf. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 226–27.

the horsemen in 1:10–11; 6:1–8, and some have sought to identify the two groups of divine spies with each other.¹¹⁴

Niditch sees behind the description of Persian imperial spies as the “eyes of the king” an understanding of these spies as “essentially an extension of the king’s own body, allowing him to see more widely than any ordinary human could.”¹¹⁵ In my analysis of Ezek 40–48 (chapter 2), I called attention to the equating of other deities with specific body parts of Mesopotamian national gods (e.g., Marduk, Ninurta, Ishtar, etc.). This tendency manifests itself in Ezekiel’s description of hypostases of Yahweh’s presence as specific body parts of Yahweh, such as the “hand of Yahweh” (יד יהוה) and coheres with Ezekiel’s emphasis on Yahweh’s transcendence. A similar view of Yahweh’s presence as mediated through external agents which are so closely identified with or even subsumed into the person of Yahweh that they may be equated with parts of his body may be at work in Zechariah as well. In this case, the “eyes of Yahweh,” like the “eyes” of the Persian king, mediate Yahweh’s presence throughout the earth. Together with the interpreting angel and other angelic beings in Zech 1–6, they indicate an increasing preference for the mediation of Yahweh’s presence and word through divine intermediaries, following the model of the Persian imperial administration.

Following the interpreting angel’s explanation of the seven lamps as the seven “eyes of Yahweh,” Zechariah enquires concerning the two olive trees which stand on either side of the lampstand (4:11) and, specifically, “the two branches of the olive tree

¹¹⁴ E.g., Tiemeyer, “Zechariah’s Spies,” 112.

¹¹⁵ *The Symbolic Vision*, 111.

which empty out the ‘gold’¹¹⁶ from above them through the two golden pipes” (שתי שבלי) (4:12).¹¹⁷ Once again, the implication here is that Zechariah is unable to understand what he sees without supernatural assistance. Again, the angel expresses disbelief that the prophet does not understand his vision (4:13) before offering a remarkably concise interpretation, in light of the complexity of the vision: “These are the two sons of oil, who stand by the Lord of all the earth” (אלה שני בני-היצהר העמדים על-אדון כל-הארץ) (4:14). Along with the interpreting angel, who mediates Yahweh’s word/revelation, and the “eyes of Yahweh,” which mediate Yahweh’s watchfulness and dominion, they mediate and represent Yahweh’s divine presence and availability to his people.

Zech 5:1–11

Like the second and third visions, visions six (Zech 5:1–4) and seven (Zech 5:5–11) occur in rapid succession. Niditch considers the sixth vision (5:1–4) to correspond most closely to the earlier form of the symbolic vision motif, as found in Amos 7:7–9;

¹¹⁶ The word הזהב at the end of v. 12 has sparked considerable debate about its meaning and its place within the verse. The prominence of “gold” in the vision suggests a theme of prosperity, wealth, even opulence, and while the vision of a *lampstand* suggests that the “gold” is envisioned as being in the form of oil (which does, in fact, have a golden color), the description of the substance simply as “gold” may underscore the real meaning of the vision—Yahweh’s provision through the two “branches,” Joshua and Zerubbabel (see Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 203; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 256–57; McComiskey, “Zechariah,” 1092–93).

¹¹⁷ Petersen regards v. 12 as a later addition to the text which was intended to “obfuscate the quite clear and potentially ‘blasphemous’ picture created by the interpreted vision”—that Yahweh is dependent upon human agents (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 235–37). Indeed, a straightforward reading of the present text does imply that the two olive trees, interpreted as “sons of oil,” stand beside the lampstand so as to provide it with necessary oil. By removing v. 12, one gets a simple, straightforward question + interpretation, but v. 12, with its long, difficult description of the branches of the trees, clouds the implication that the trees supply oil to the lamps. It is possible that v. 12 is an addition, as it awkwardly poses a second question, while the angel’s response only appears to answer the first question.

8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24.¹¹⁸ Unlike the fifth vision, vision six begins with an introductory report of the vision: “Then I lifted up my eyes again, and suddenly I saw a flying scroll” (ואשוב ואשא עיני ואראה והנה מגלה עפה) (5:1). The interpreting angel asks Zechariah, “What do you see” (מה אתה ראה), and the prophet responds by restating the vision: “I see a flying scroll” (אני ראה מגלה עפה), but he adds that it is twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide (5:2).¹¹⁹ It is important to note, however, that the angel does not interpret the size of the scroll, so the dimensions may signify nothing other than the fact that the scroll was very large. What is of concern to the angel is the function of the scroll. He interprets the meaning of the scroll by saying:

“This is the curse (האלה) which is coming out upon the face of all the earth, for everyone who steals has been acquitted (נקה)¹²⁰ according to this

¹¹⁸ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 74.

¹¹⁹ As noted above, the flying scroll necessitates understanding Zech 1–6 as vision reports, rather than observations of Zechariah’s actual surroundings (contra Conrad). Not only the fact that this scroll flies through the air, but also its tremendous size, require that it be a vision and not a real scroll. While a scroll 20 cubits (ca. 10 m.) is not unreasonable, a scroll 10 cubits wide (ca. 5 m.) is impossible (see Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 279). Several scholars have noted that these dimensions correspond to the dimensions of the “vestibule” (אולם) in Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 6:3) (Mitchell, *Zechariah*, 168–69; Jeremias, *Die Nachgesichte*, 189; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 280). Since this was the location in which the priests and the laity met, Meyers and Meyers suggest that the scroll represents the renewal of priestly authority to adjudicate (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 280–81).

¹²⁰ The verb נקה may be either a Piel or a Niphal, and it could mean either “to be purged, banished” or “to be acquitted, innocent.” This wide disparity in possible meanings has led to a similarly wide disparity in scholarly understandings of this verse. On the one hand, some read the verse as stating that a curse has now gone out against those who have, until now, gone unpunished (Mitchell, *Zechariah*, 169–70; Peterson, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 245; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 286). By far the most common meaning for נקה is that of being clean, innocent, exempt, etc. On the other hand, in Isa 3:26 it describes Zion as ravaged and laid waste, thus signifying the emptying of the land of its population. Some understand נקה in Zech 5:3 to indicate banishment, purgation, or expulsion (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 207; McComiskey, “Zechariah,” 1094–96). The LXX reading ἐκδικηθήσεται “he shall be punished” supports this latter option, as does the context in Zech 5:3.

(מזה כמזה),¹²¹ and everyone who swears (הנשבע) has been acquitted (נקה) according to this (מזה כמזה)” (5:3).

As has generally been the case in Zech 1–6, the meaning of the vision is not readily apparent based upon simple logical or verbal relationship (e.g., wordplay) between the scroll and its meaning (cf. Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24).¹²² As a result, angelic interpretation is required in order for Zechariah to discover the true meaning of his vision.

The seventh vision, likewise, concerns the issue of wickedness in the land and, specifically, its removal. Many scholars note this vision’s departure from the usual pattern found in Zech 1–6.¹²³ Unlike the sixth vision, it lacks an introductory description of the vision. Instead, the interpreting angel instructs Zechariah, “Lift up your eyes and see what is this thing coming out” (שא נא עיניך וראה מה היוצאת הזאת) (5:5), to which the prophet immediately responds by asking, “What is it?” (מה־היא) (5:6). Once again,

¹²¹ The phrase מזה כמזה is rather opaque and difficult to decipher. Its meaning hinges largely on how one understands נקה. The most natural reading of the phrase is to understand it as referring to the scroll, thus “according to it” (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 207; McComiskey, “Zechariah,” 1095–96). Mitchell suggests that it is a corruption of כמה “how long” (*Zechariah*, 171), and Peterson follows a similar reading (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 245). If נקה means “unpunished,” this reading makes better sense and would even seem to be required. But Meyers and Meyers translate נקה as “acquitted” and understand מזה כמזה as referring to the scroll (“according to it”) (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 286). They note that defendants could acquit themselves of charges by invoking a curse upon themselves if they are truly guilty. Naturally, such a system could be exploited by persons who had no fear of the efficacy of such curses, and it could be that this vision asserts that Yahweh will now punish the guilty by these curses, which they have thus far evaded (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 286; see also Dominic Rudman, “Zechariah 5 and the Priestly Law,” *SJOT* 14 [2000]: 198).

¹²² Niditch sees this loss of logical correspondence between symbol and meaning as one of the major developments which occurs in Zech 1–6 (the other being the seer’s admission that he cannot understand his visions and his requests for interpretation) (Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 81).

¹²³ See Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 162–66; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 309–16; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 210.

Zechariah cannot understand his vision and must request assistance from the interpreting angel. The first identification of what Zechariah sees comes in the angel's reply: "This is the ephah basket coming out...this is their "eye" (עֵינַם)¹²⁴ in all the earth" (זאת האיפה (היוצאת...זאת עינם בכל־הארץ).

Like the third vision, the seventh vision includes narrative descriptions of the actions of additional characters beyond Zechariah and the interpreting angel. The vision is not static, but continues to unfold before the prophet's eyes. Following the angel's identification of the ephah basket the following narration appears:

Suddenly a lead cover was lifted up, and there was a single woman sitting in the middle of the ephah basket. Then he said, "This is wickedness (הרשעה)," and he threw her down to the middle of the ephah basket and threw the lead stone over its opening (Zech 5:7–8).

Following the vision of the woman in the ephah and the angel's brief interpretation Zechariah again looks up and sees:

two women (שתים נשים) coming out (יוצאות) with a wind in their wings (בכנפיהם). They had wings like the wings of a stork (החסידה), and they lifted up the ephah basket between the earth and the sky (Zech 5:9).

The interpreting angel does not explain the identity of the women, nor does Zechariah inquire. Instead, he asks "Where are they taking the basket?" (אנה המה מולכות את־האיפה)

¹²⁴ MT עֵינַם literally means "their eye," but most understand this as an expression meaning "their appearance" (cf. Lev 13:55; Num 11:7) (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 293; McComiskey, "Zechariah," 1100–01). Similarly, Smith understands עֵין as "what their eye sees" (*Micah–Malachi*, 209). LXX and Sry, however, support emending the text to עוֹנָם "their iniquity." This reading coheres with the identification of the woman inside the basket as הרשעה "wickedness" in v. 8. In many ancient Hebrew scripts ך and ך are practically indistinguishable, so it is easy to envision how the two divergent readings could have developed, but the difficulty lies in determining which reading is the original. The MT is the *lectio difficilior*, and it is much more likely that עוֹנָם would have become עֵינַם under the influence of v. 8 than the other way around.

(5:10). The angel replies, “To build for it a house (בית) in the land of Shinar, and when it is ready (והוכן) it will be placed (והניחה) there on its base (מכנתה)” (5:11).

The angel’s interpretation of the ephah/woman is brief and does little to clarify the meaning of the vision, and as a result opinions regarding the meaning of the seventh vision differ significantly.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, this vision departs from the “real-mythism” which characterizes much of Zech 1–6, wherein visionary elements do not represent objects other than themselves. Like the fifth vision, the seventh vision is allegorical.¹²⁶ Unlike earlier allegorical symbolic visions (e.g., Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24), however, Zech 5:5–11 does not utilize wordplay or other “economical-rhetorical” (to use Niditch’s term) imagery, but rather deeply mythological imagery. This technique will be perfected in Dan 7–8 and will become the norm in apocalyptic literature. Unlike Dan 7–8, however, Zech 5:5–11 does not clarify the meaning of these mythological symbols by having the angel interpret them as political entities, but rather leaves some of them as mythological entities. The angel’s interpretations are concise and unconcerned with secondary details, such as the identity of the winged women.

¹²⁵ Many scholars have read the vision as symbolizing the removal of sin from Yehud (David P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature* [Atlanta: Scholars, 1987], 273) or as the purgation of the land of idolatry (Mitchell, *Zechariah*, 175; Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 621; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 314).

¹²⁶ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 168.

Zech 6:1–8

Zechariah’s final night vision parallels the first vision in form, meaning, and imagery.¹²⁷ It begins with the customary introductory statement, “Then I lifted up my eyes again...” (ואשא ואשא עיני) (Zech 6:1a). Next follows a summary of the vision:

Suddenly I saw four chariots (מרכבות) coming out from between the two mountains (ההרים), and the mountains were mountains of bronze (נחשת). On the first chariot were red (אדמים) horses, and on the second chariot were black (שחורים) horses. On the third chariot were white (לבנים) horses, and on the fourth chariot were mottled (ברדים) horses; (they were) strong (אמצים).

The appearance of four chariots drawn by horses of four different colors links this final vision with the first vision. In the first vision (1:7–17), horses of different colors also appear, although only three colors are mentioned and the number of horses is not explicitly stated. Despite the attempts of some scholars to emend the text in order to bring the two visions into greater alignment,¹²⁸ the colors of the horses likewise do not match. Yet the function of the horses, as indicated by the interpreting angel in both visions, is similar—they patrol the earth in order to ensure that it is peaceful and at rest. Following the introductory report of his vision, Zechariah inquires once again of the angel, “What are these, my lord?” (מה-אלה אדני) (6:4).¹²⁹ The angel responds by offering the following interpretation:

¹²⁷ Niditch notes that the form of Zech 6:1–8 is identical to that of the first vision (Zech 1:8–17) (*The Symbolic Vision*, 152). See also Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 332.

¹²⁸ See especially W. D. McHardy, “The Horses in Zechariah” in *In Memoriam Paul Kahle* (eds. Matthew Black and Georg Fohrer; BZAW 103; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1968), 174–79.

¹²⁹ This question followed by the direct address of the angel by the title אדני is exactly identical to that in 1:9 (cf. also 4:4) (see Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 332).

These are the four winds (רחות) of heaven going out from standing by the Lord of all the earth. [The red horses go out toward the land of the east (?)],¹³⁰ whereas the black horses go out toward the land of the north, and the white ones go out toward the west,¹³¹ and the mottled ones go out toward the land of the south (Zech 6:5–6).

Zechariah then observes that “the strong ones came out and sought to walk about throughout the earth” (והאמצים יצאו ויבקשו ללכת להתהלך בארץ) (6:7a). Like the divine reconnaissance team in the first vision, the four chariots have been sent by Yahweh to patrol the earth (cf. 1:10–11). Each chariot proceeds toward one of the four directions of the compass, thus indicating Yahweh’s complete, worldwide dominion and

¹³⁰ *BHS* proposes adding ו הקדם אל-ארץ הקדם “The red horses went out toward the land of the east” at the beginning of the list of horses. There may be support for this reading in the unusual placement of אשר בה at the beginning of the verse, without a clear referent. This leads Peterson to restore the text along the same lines as those proposed in *BHS* (Peterson, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 263–64).

¹³¹ The MT, and indeed, all of the ancient versions, have the white horses following behind the black horses, headed northward. Meyers and Meyers suggest that perhaps the black horses were headed for Mesopotamia and the white horses for Europe, which would lead both of them northward through Palestine along one of the major highways through the Levant (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 325). At the same time, however, they recognize that such an interpretation is out of step with the clearly stylized language of the vision in Zech 6. It would be much better if in place of אחריהם the text listed another direction. Meyers and Meyers think it likely that the text originally did include another direction here—and also included the red horses and a fourth direction as well—but are unwilling to emend the text without textual support. Likewise, Smith notes the incongruity of the present text, but nevertheless maintains that “there is no real reason to emend the text here” (*Micah–Malachi*, 212; cf. McComiskey, “Zechariah,” 1109). Others, however, have felt much more free to emend, typically in order to have the white horses travel toward the west. Some even suggest that the color of the horses corresponds to the fair skinned European peoples who lived toward the (north)west (Mitchell, *Zechariah*, 180). Explaining the alleged corruption of the text, however, is rather difficult in this instance. *BHS* proposes אל-ארץ הים, which has the advantage of preserving the pattern of the vision in describing the horses’ destinations as “lands” (cf. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 325) but it is rather unlikely from a text critical point of view. ארץ is not a likely candidate for corruption to אחר/אחרי, especially when the context would favor corruption in the opposite direction (ארץ→אחר/אחרי). A more plausible emendation is אל-אחרי(ים), which requires only the loss of a י (אחריהם→אחרי הים) or the metathesis of ה and י (אחריהם→אחר הים) (Peterson, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 264). As for the disparity between the characterization of the other directions as “lands” and the lack of such here, one should note that to the phrase “land of the sea” is something of an oxymoron. The fact is there was no “land” to the west of Palestine, but rather the Mediterranean Sea, and this fact may account for the difference in phraseology here.

sovereignty.¹³² Like the Persian emperor, he rules over all the earth and makes his presence known through his emissaries who represent him. In this way, the chariots also correspond closely to the “eyes of Yahweh” in 4:10b, which “roam throughout all the earth” (משוטטים בכל-הארץ) and signal the re-conception of Yahweh as a world emperor who exercises dominion through intermediaries.

Upon the command of the interpreting angel, the chariots set out to their destinations (6:7b), and the angel concludes the vision by affirming that “those who go out toward the land of the north have given rest to my spirit in the land of the north” (היוצאים אל-ארץ צפון הניחו את-רוחי בארץ צפון) (6:8). Here, for the second time in Zech 1–6 (the first being in 1:9), the distinction between Yahweh and the interpreting angel becomes blurred, as the angel speaks of what should be understood as Yahweh’s spirit as “my spirit.”¹³³ Angels in earlier biblical texts often speak for Yahweh in first person (e.g., Exod 3:2–6; Judg 6:11–24), and as I have discussed above, first person speech by messengers speaking on behalf of their senders was the norm in the ancient Near East.¹³⁴ Yet the close identification between Yahweh and his messenger here underscores the imminent presence of Yahweh on earth through the mediation of his angel(s), even as Yahweh has become a transcendent, universal deity. As in the first vision, the divine patrols ensure peace and quiet under Yahweh’s rule over the entire earth, and the interpreting angel mediates the word of Yahweh to his people in much the same way that

¹³² See Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 270.

¹³³ Cf. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 627. I do not include the placing of the two oracles in 4:6b–10a as examples, since these are removed from their original context and only secondarily attributed to the interpreting angel.

¹³⁴ See Meier, *The Messenger*, 166–201; see also Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 159–60, 163–66; Cho, *Lesser Deities in the Ugaritic Texts*, 168–72.

the pre-exilic prophets had done. Prophecy begins to recede into Israel's past and to be replaced by angelic mediation of divine revelation to seers dependent upon supernatural interpretation of their visions.

Persian Religious Background

Several very close parallels between Persian Zoroastrianism and Jewish apocalypticism with regard to angelic spirits suggest that the former likely influenced the latter.¹³⁵ Among these are the seven Amesha Spentas, benevolent spirits which surround Ahura Mazda in his heavenly abode. The Amesha Spenta's have often been compared to the seven "eyes of Yahweh" which roam throughout all the earth" (עיני יהוה המה משוטטים) (Zech 4:10b), the seven archangels (*I En.* 20:1–8; 81:5; 90:22; Rev 8:2), and the "seven spirits of God" (Rev 4:5). A further Persian parallel to apocalyptic angelology is the belief that angels rule over various natural phenomena, such as the seasons and meteorological phenomena (cf. *I En.* 60:11–24; *Jub.* 2:2). Persian sources also attest to spiritual guardians (*fravashis*) of individual human beings, an idea which parallels the notion of "guardian angels" in the Jewish and Christian traditions (Ps 91:11–12; *I En.* 100:5).¹³⁶

Persian influence is also evident in the development of Jewish demonology and the transformation of the satan (השטן) from a member of Yahweh's divine council into a diabolical figure. Persian religion contained an evil counterpart to the good Ahura

¹³⁵ See Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:199; Russell, *The Method*; Hutter, "Demons and Benevolent Spirits," 26–28.

¹³⁶ Russell, *Method*, 259–60.

Mazda, the “Enemy Spirit” Angra Mainyu, who led an army of evil demons, including a demonic counterpart to the Amesha Spentas.¹³⁷ Furthermore, direct borrowing is suggested by the appearance of the Persian demon Aeshma in the book of Tobit as the demon Asmodaeus (*Aeshma daeva*) (Tob 3:17).¹³⁸

Although the Persian parallels to developing Jewish angelology (and demonology) in the Second Temple period are quite impressive and in some cases (e.g., Asmodaeus) clearly indicate Jewish dependence upon Persian traditions, many of these parallels also extend back into pre-Persian Babylonian literature, and therefore it may well be that both Jewish and Persian angelology were influenced early on by Babylonian ideas.¹³⁹ Similarly, Persian and Jewish angels of natural phenomena, guardian spirits, and demons find abundant parallels in earlier Mesopotamian texts, and indeed, across the ancient Near East in general. Thus, one must be cautious in claiming that such developments in Jewish angelology are the result of Persian influence, as such influences probably came from a variety of sources.

¹³⁷ Hutter, “Demons and Benevolent Spirits,” 27.

¹³⁸ Russell, *Method*, 261; Hutter, “Demons and Benevolent Spirits,” 27.

¹³⁹ Russell entertains this notion in his treatment of apocalyptic angelology/demonology, especially with regard to the Amesha Spentas, whom, Russell points out, actually only numbered six in early Zoroastrianism. The likely source of the number seven, Russell argues, is the Babylonian worship of the seven “planets” (sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn) as deities. Russell suggests that the numbering of the Amesha Spentas as seven may actually be the result of Jewish influence on Zoroastrianism (*Method*, 258–59), but it is also possible that Babylonian ideas penetrated both Judaism and Zoroastrianism independently. For example, the idea of a lower ranking deity (usually the “personal god/goddess”) acting as an intercessor on behalf of a human patron before a higher deity appears in Mesopotamian texts as early as the Isin-Larsa period (early second millennium B.C.E.) (see the “Letter-Prayer of King Sin-Iddinam to Nin-Isina” [*COS* 1.164: 533–34]; cf. also a Middle Babylonian hymn to Gula as an intercessor [Foster, *Before the Muses*, 671]). The same motif appears in a number of cylinder seals from the late third–early second millennia B.C.E., in which a deity leads a human patron by the hand into the presence of a seated deity (see Alomia, “Lesser Gods, pl. XXIV, fig. 64; pl. XXV, fig. 66; pl. XXVIII, fig. 75).

According to Zoroastrian tradition, Zoroaster is supposed to have received his revelations from Ahura Mazda around 1200 B.C.E.¹⁴⁰ The initial encounter between Zoroaster and Ahura Mazda was facilitated by one of the Amesha Spentas, Vōhū Manah (“Good Mind”), similar to the leading of the prophet into Yahweh’s presence by an angel in some biblical texts (Ezek 8:2–4; 43:1–5; Zech 3:1–5).¹⁴¹ However, it is Ahura Mazda who actually discloses revelations to the prophet.

Two key Persian texts have sometimes been held as parallels to (and possible sources of) the apocalyptic genre, including the motif of mediated revelation. The first is *Bahman Yasht*, the earliest core traditions of which Boyce dates shortly after the conquests of Alexander the Great.¹⁴² In *Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5, Zartosht (Zoroaster) sees vision of a tree with four branches made of four different metals. After he relates his vision to Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda), the deity interprets the vision:

As it is declared by the Sudgar Nask that Zartosht asked for immortality from Ohrmazd, then Ohrmazd displayed the omniscient wisdom to Zartosht, and through it he beheld the root of a tree, on which were four branches, one golden, one of silver, one of steel, and one was mixed up with iron. Thereupon he reflected in this way, that this was seen in a dream, and when he arose from sleep Zartosht spoke thus: ‘Lord of the spirits and earthly existences! It appears that I saw the root of a tree, on which were four branches.’ Ohrmazd spoke to Zartosht the Spitaman thus: ‘That root of a tree which thou sawest, and those four branches, are the four periods which will come. That of gold is when I and thou converse, and King Vishtasp shall accept the religion, and shall demolish

¹⁴⁰ Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 2. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine the genuine antiquity of most Zoroastrian traditions, since the earliest texts date from the ninth–tenth centuries C.E. in their present form. Boyce, however, maintains that many of these traditions are indeed quite old, and that some, especially the Gathic portions of the Avesta, go back to Old Iranian religion and perhaps even to Zoroaster himself. The teachings were transmitted orally until perhaps the fifth century C.E. (*Textual Sources*, 1). According to Boyce, however, the fact that most of the Avesta is preserved in the East Iranian Avestan language with little evidence of Persian infiltration suggests that much of it is genuinely old material. The fact that it took so long for it to be written down may be attributed in part to Zoroastrian resistance to written language as demonic (Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 50).

¹⁴¹ Russell, “The Sage,” 82.

¹⁴² *Textual Resources*, 91.

the figures of the demons, but they themselves remain for . . . concealed proceedings. And that of silver is the reign of Ardashir the Kayanian king, and that of steel is the reign of the glorified Khosraw son of Kobad, and that which was mixed with iron is the evil sovereignty of the demons with disheveled hair of the race of Wrath, and when it is the end of the tenth hundredth winter of thy millennium, O Zartosht the Spitaman!¹⁴³

The similarity of this text in form to such prophetic texts as Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; Ezek 8:5–18; and Zech 4:1–5:11, and in content to such apocalyptic texts as Dan 2:31–45 is striking indeed. Although it is chiefly likened to Jewish apocalyptic by virtue of its periodization of history, its determinism, its eschatological focus, its obvious *vaticina ex eventu* form, and its use of decreasingly valuable metals to symbolize decreasingly splendid kingdoms, the vision + divine interpretation form also parallels the pattern often associated with the interpreting angel motif.¹⁴⁴ This text differs, however, from the interpreting angel motif in that it is Ahura Mazda himself, rather than an intermediary deity, who interprets the vision. In this respect, then, the *form* of *Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5 better parallels those texts in which Yahweh interprets visions (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19). At the very least, this text is no closer to the interpreting angel motif than are the prophetic texts mentioned above. Furthermore, even accepting Boyce’s early date for the core traditions of this text, it post-dates Zech 1–6 by at least two centuries. Thus, the most that can be claimed on the basis of this text is that it may attest to the existence of a similar motif in earlier Persian (or other?) traditions which relate both to *Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5 and to Zech 1–6.

¹⁴³ *Bahman Yasht* 1:1:1–5, trans. E. W. West, in *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East, Volume V* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1897). An extended version of this story appears in *Bahman Yasht* 3:6–29, in which the number of branches/metals/kingdoms is increased to seven, apparently in order to extend the history down to a later time period (see Mary Boyce, *Textual Resources*, 91–92). This later version also includes a question and answer + interpretation form similar to that found in the above mentioned prophetic texts, as well as many apocalyptic texts.

¹⁴⁴ See Collins, *Imagination*, 30; see also VanderKam, “Prophecy and Apocalypics,” 3:2088.

A second Persian parallel comes from the *Arda Viraf*, a ninth century C.E. apocalyptic-type text. In this text, Viraf drinks three cups of a narcotic drink and enters a sleep-like state in which his soul leaves his body for six days. On the seventh day it returns, he awakes, and he tells his companions of angel-guided visions of heaven and hell. It contains nearly 100 questions and answers concerning the sights which Viraf beholds.¹⁴⁵ Here is an example, from *Arda Viraf* 7:1–9:

And afterward, I put forth the first footstep to the star track, on Humat, the place where good thoughts (*humat*) are received with hospitality. And I saw those souls of the pious whose radiance, which ever increased, was glittering as the stars; and their throne and seat were under the radiance, and splendid and full of glory. And I asked Srosh the pious, and Ataro the angel [*yazata*], thus: “Which place is this? and which people are these?” Srosh the pious, and Ataro the angel, said thus: “This place is the star tract [*sic.*]; and those are the souls who, in the world, offered no prayers, and chanted no Gathas, and contracted no next-of-kin marriage; they have also exercised no sovereignty, nor rulership, nor chieftainship. Through other good works they have become pious.”¹⁴⁶

Here we indeed find true angelic interpretation (that is, interpretation by a lesser deity who is subservient to the chief deity), but once again, this text is far too late to have served as an antecedent of the interpreting angel in Zech 1–6, or indeed any early Jewish or Christian apocalypse.¹⁴⁷ Rather, Himmelfarb argues that it was Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature which influenced *Arda Viraf*.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 47.

¹⁴⁶ *Arda Viraf* 7:1–9, trans. Martin Haug, in *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East, Volume VII* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), 196–97.

¹⁴⁷ Once again, Boyce argues for an “ancient kernel” for this late text, based upon the appearance of Viraf in the Avesta (see Mary Boyce, “Middle Persian Literature” in *Iranistik* 4.2.1 [HdO I; Leiden: Brill, 1968], 48). But even if this is the case, the Avesta itself post-dates Zech 1–8, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove that *Arda Viraf* preserves anything of sufficient antiquity to have influenced the biblical text.

¹⁴⁸ Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell*, 47–48.

To the Zoroastrian text should be added the Nabonidus Verse Account, discussed in chapter 2 above, for although the text was written by Babylonian priests concerning the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus, it was actually composed during the early Persian period. In this text, Nabonidus is said to have often stood in the assembly and proclaimed “I am wise. I am knowledgeable. I have seen hid[den things]....Ilteri has given me revelations; he has [made known to me] everything.”¹⁴⁹ Although the text is an anti-Nabonidus satire, it may reflect actual claims by Nabonidus that he had received special divine revelations from a deity named Ilteri. The text’s claims are not unbelievable, as Mesopotamian kings, including especially Nabonidus, often did claim special divine revelations through dreams or other means. There is, however, no reason to assume that these revelations were in the form of interpreted visions.

Finally, the most pertinent extra-biblical religious evidence comes from Yehud itself. Among this is evidence for the development of monotheism. Clay cultic figurines, which were very popular during the monarchic period, are entirely absent in the Persian period.¹⁵⁰ Biblical texts advocating a monotheistic outlook also appear during the late exilic and post-exilic periods (e.g., Isa 45:5–7; Deut 32:39). As noted above, Yahweh has become the universal deity, in many ways analogous to the Persian emperor who reigned over all the earth with absolute sovereignty.¹⁵¹ Other deities, insofar as they are

¹⁴⁹ See Machinist and Tadmor, “Heavenly Wisdom,” 146.

¹⁵⁰ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*, 242. Stern notes that clay figurines are well-attested during the Persian period in other areas of Palestine, including Galilee, the coastal region, and Idumea, but they are completely absent from Judea and Samaria (Stern, *Archaeology*, 490).

¹⁵¹ See Smith, *The Early History of God*, 194.

retained at all, are transformed into subservient agents of Yahweh, i.e., angels.¹⁵² Yet it is clear that Persian period Yehud retained a vibrant belief in a spirit world populated by more than just Yahweh. In addition to the angels which appear with increased frequency in literary texts beginning in the late sixth century, there is abundant evidence for Jewish belief in demons and evil spirits in the form of apotropaic devices and practices. Persian era biblical texts polemicize against necromancy or divination (Isa 57:3–13; 65:1–7; 66:3–4) suggesting that such practices continued to function in Yehud.¹⁵³ Amulets, pendants, masks, and jars or bowls depicting demons in anthropomorphic or animal form are well attested in Persian period Yehud.¹⁵⁴ Thus, while monotheism certainly existed in the Persian period and was likely the official religion of the Jerusalem temple cult, veneration or at least the appropriation of other deities as apotropaic or good luck charms continued at the popular level. Also, among the Jews living at Elephantine in Egypt there is evidence which may suggest the worship of other deities alongside Yahweh. These include Ishum-Bethel, Anat-Bethel, and Anat-Yahu.¹⁵⁵ The latter, especially, has sparked debate over whether Yahweh may have been believed to have a consort as late as the fifth century among at least some Jews. On the other hand, these may have been understood

¹⁵² See especially Mark Smith's description of the collapsing of the four-tiered pantheon of ancient Israel in Deuteronomistic thinking (*Memoirs of God*, 115–16). See also Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*, 243.

¹⁵³ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 1*, 255.

¹⁵⁴ For a survey of such cultic objects, see Stern, *Archaeology*, 507–13. These include especially clay masks and vases depicting Bes, Ptah, and Pataikos, necklaces with beads depicting the “eye of Horus” (probably to ward off the “evil eye”), and pendants bearing images of gods or goddesses or sometimes birds. These objects have been found in Jerusalem and En-Gedi in contexts dating them to the late sixth and fifth centuries.

¹⁵⁵ See Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, 22.124–25; 44.3.

as hypostases of Yahweh,¹⁵⁶ and aside from the names there is no other evidence in the papyri of non-Yahwistic worship among the Jews at Elephantine.

Although impressive parallels to the interpreting angel motif do appear in Zoroastrian texts, they occur too late to serve as conclusive evidence regarding the origin of the motif in Jewish texts. Achaemenid inscriptions and other artifacts do indicate that at least the Persian rulers in the sixth century were Zoroastrians and that they held to some of the key tenets of faith and practices of the later Zoroastrianism reflected in the Avesta and other religious texts, including perhaps some which parallel apocalyptic broadly, but there is no evidence for the interpreting angel in Persian religion in the sixth century.¹⁵⁷ The Nabonidus Verse Account may attest to some sort of tradition of divinely mediated revelation current in Babylonia during the early Persian period, but the persons and events it describes are pre-Persian. Also, evidence from Yehud itself suggest that, while monotheism was the official religion in Jerusalem, Yahweh was by no means believed to be the only supernatural being in existence. Biblical texts show an increasing fascination with angels as ministers of Yahweh, while at the level of popular religion other deities and demons continued to be invoked for apotropaic and magical purposes. As I argued in chapter 2, the interpreting angel may be understood as a reaction against forms of divination considered inappropriate by positing a legitimate source of divine revelation which de-emphasized the human role in obtaining information. While there

¹⁵⁶ See Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968), 179.

¹⁵⁷ For a discussion of Zoroastrianism in the Achaemenid period, see Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 48–77. Note especially the discussion of the “Three World Saviors” in Achaemenid Zoroastrianism, as this tradition parallels some features which are prominent in apocalyptic, such as periodization of history and messianism. There even appears to have been something akin to the later Christian tradition of the Virgin Birth (Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 74–75).

are no clear Persian period extra-biblical parallels which could plausibly constitute sources for the interpreting angel motif, the above evidence provides a background against which the development of the motif may be understood.

Summary

During the Persian period several important developments occurred within Jewish society and religion, including the emergence of monotheism, the rise of apocalypticism, and the restoration of Judah in the form of the Persian province of Yehud. The latter development was especially significant due to the transformations which the loss of the Davidic monarchy required. The new social context for Jewish existence was that of a vast empire ruled by a foreign king who held total sovereignty over his domain. But due to the scale of the Persian Empire, the king's authority was mediated through a large administrative hierarchy, atop which sat the Persian king and his satraps, all of whom belonged to the Achaemenid ruling class. Classical sources agree that in spite of this administrative hierarchy, the king kept a close watch over even distant provinces through networks of informants ("the eyes of the king") and a highly efficient royal mail system. The importance of such methods of communication and imperial control provide a background for the development of Jewish angelology, including the interpreting angel motif, in Zech 1–6.

Analysis of the Persian period biblical texts containing the interpreting angel (Zech 1:7–17; 2:1–9; 4:1–6a, 10b–14; 5:1–11; 6:1–8) shows significant development from the early form of the motif found in Ezek 40–48. Here the guide/interpreter is clearly identified as an angel (המלאך הדבר בִּי) and several other angels also appear alongside him. His role also shifts to that of an interpreter rather than a guide. Dialog

between Zechariah and the angel consists primarily of a question and answer form reminiscent of earlier prophetic texts in which Yahweh interprets a symbolic vision for a prophet (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24), as well as ancient Near Eastern divinatory practices. Also new are several indications that the prophet is unable to understand his visions. These take the form of his requests for explanation and his occasional confessions that he does not know what he sees. The prophet's inability to understand his visions suggests a clear break with divination, which depended upon the diviner's knowledge and ability to interpret omens and symbols. It also signals a change in the view of the prophet—he is no longer Yahweh's agent of mediation. Instead, the interpreting angel replaces the prophet as Yahweh's spokesperson, as revelation now takes place through the angel's interpretation.

Finally, while Zoroastrian texts do contain at least two parallels to the interpreting angel motif (*Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5 and *Arda Viraf*), these texts post-date Zech 1–6, even if they contain earlier Persian traditions. The Persian era Nabonidus Verse Account may provide a retrospective view of the last Neo-Babylonian king as one who claimed to have received special revelations from a deity named Ilteri, but there is no indication that Ilteri interpreted visions for the king. Yet Jewish religious developments attested both in biblical texts and in epigraphic/archaeological material provide evidence for an important role for divine beings other than Yahweh in Persian period Judaism, both in Yehud and in the diaspora. The tension between monotheism and a persistent belief in lesser deities and demons may have contributed to the development of an “orthodox” view of the spirit world in which Yahweh alone was God but had at his disposal a host of subservient angels, through whom Yahweh could act and reveal secrets.

CHAPTER FOUR

Angelic Bystanders and a Man Named Gabriel: Interpreting Angels in Early Hellenistic Period Biblical Literature

Introduction

We have seen in the previous chapter that several new developments of the interpreting angel motif appear in Zech 1–6, including the clear identification of the guide/interpreter as an angel (המלאך הדבר בִּי), the seer's admission that he cannot understand his visions apart from the angel's explanation, and the adoption of a formal vision pattern clearly derived from earlier prophetic literature (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24). Niditch identifies in Zech 1–6 an intermediate stage in the development of the symbolic vision motif, of which the interpreting angel motif is an offshoot.¹ Zechariah 1–6 draws upon this prophetic symbolic vision pattern, which has its roots in ancient Near Eastern divination, building upon the figure of the heavenly guide of Ezek 40–48. The endpoint in the development of this motif is in the apocalyptic literature of the third century B.C.E. and later, to which I now turn. This chapter completes the present study by examining the interpreting angel motif in its mature form in the Jewish apocalyptic literature of the early Hellenistic period (*1 En.* 1–36; 72–82; Dan 7–8).

Near the end of the Persian period, the composition of an extensive body of texts centering on heavenly revelations given to the antediluvian sage Enoch began and continued throughout the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, resulting in the corpus of

¹ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 10–11, 82.

literature known as *I Enoch*.² Interpreting angels appear in three of the five books in the corpus (*The Book of Watchers*, *The Book of Similitudes*, and *The Book of Luminaries*), as well as in a final appendix in *I En.* 108. Only *The Book of Watchers* (*I En.* 1–36) and *The Book of Luminaries* (*I En.* 72–82) fall within the chronological parameters of this study, and therefore I restrict my discussion to these two books. Because very large portions of these texts consist of revelations given by interpreting angels, it is not possible to analyze each text in detail.³ Therefore, I present the interpreting angels in *I En.* 1–36; 72–82 in an overview fashion, with a focus on new developments and major features.

Somewhat later than *The Book of Watchers*, interpreting angels once again appear in Dan 7–8. In Dan 7, Daniel sees a vision of four mythological creatures, followed by a vision of the divine council and the throne of God, and finally the appearance of “one like a Son of Man” approaching the throne to receive dominion. Daniel is disturbed and perplexed by his visions, so he approaches an unnamed heavenly attendant and asks him to interpret the visions for him (Dan 7:15–16). The rest of the chapter consists of the angel’s interpretation of the visions. In Dan 8, Daniel sees another vision, this time of a ram and a male goat engaged in battle. Once again, Daniel is unable to understand his vision, and a “man” (שׂר) named Gabriel appears and interprets the vision (Dan 8:15–16). Despite the angel’s explanation, Daniel still cannot understand his vision (Dan 8:27).

² For an overview discussion of the literary development of *I Enoch*, see Nickelsburg, *I Enoch* 1, 7–8, 21–26.

³ Enoch’s cosmic journeys in *The Book of Watchers* (*I En.* 21–36) and all of *The Book of Luminaries* are presented as angel-guided tours with interpretation.

In *1 Enoch* and Dan 7–8, the interpreting angel motif emerges in its mature form. Not only are the guide/interpreters clearly angels, they now have personal names (with the exception of Dan 7). The transition from classical prophetic modes of revelation to apocalyptic-style angelic interpretation of visions is also complete, and the older form of prophetic oracle disappears completely. Even when revelation takes place through means other than symbolic visions (e.g., Dan 9–12), it is still mediated by angels.⁴ At the same time, however, God is not necessarily distant or absent. Enoch ascends to heaven, where he sees God on his throne, and God speaks to him directly (*1 En.* 14:8–16:3). Daniel sees the “Ancient One” seated on his throne in the divine council (Dan 7:9) and hears God’s voice speak directly to Gabriel (Dan 8:16).

This chapter follows the same approach used in the previous two chapters. I begin with an examination of the historical background of these Hellenistic period texts, with a focus on imperial administration techniques which parallel the picture of the heavenly realm found in the texts under discussion. Next, I discuss the composition and dating of the relevant Enochic texts and present, in summary fashion, the Enochic evidence concerning the interpreting angel motif. I then turn to Dan 7–8, beginning with standard historical-critical concerns and proceeding with detailed analysis of the motif in Dan 7–8. Finally, I present comparative religious data which may illuminate the development of the interpreting angel motif in the early Hellenistic period, before concluding with a summary of findings.

⁴ Angels and angelic revelation are prominent in Dan 9–12, but in these chapters the angels do not interpret visions. In Dan 9:20–27, Gabriel interprets Jeremiah’s prediction of a seventy-year exile (Jer 25:11–12; 29:10–14), and in Dan 10–12 an angel narrates a lengthy *ex eventu* prophecy of historical-political events, culminating in the salvation of Israel and the resurrection of the dead. In neither instance, however, does the angel interpret a vision, although Gabriel does interpret an earlier prophecy (Dan 9:20–27).

Historical Background: The Early Hellenistic Period

Socio-political developments during the early Hellenistic period (ca. 332–165 B.C.E.) do not seem to have played as great a role in the portrayal of divine mediation as they did during the Persian period.⁵ Nevertheless, the Macedonian, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid administrations of Judah and other territories in the region continued to support a view of the divine realm which paralleled the political realm within which Second Temple Judaism developed. This view included the use of divine intermediaries who represented and extended Yahweh's authority and presence, facilitated divine communication/revelation, and, increasingly, enjoyed considerable autonomy.

Alexander's conquest of Palestine in 332 B.C.E. is usually viewed as the beginning of the Hellenization of the ancient Near East, and Jewish culture in particular. Recent research, however, has shown that Hellenization was a lengthy, gradual process which began long before Alexander's conquests and continued long after his death.

Archaeological evidence indicates the limited spread of Greek culture and perhaps even

⁵ The great exception to this observation is the rise in traditions of angelic rebellion or "malfunctioning," as Handy labels it (*Among the Host of Heaven*, 163–67). Handy notes that in early periods, the lower-level deities of the Syro-Palestinian pantheon, including that of ancient Israel, did not "malfunction." They performed their tasks perfectly, and any failure was due to the foolish commands of their masters (*Among the Host of Heaven*, 163–65). In later times (i.e., the Second Temple period), however, increasing autonomy was granted to lower level deities, by this time understood to be angels, in order to deal with the problem of theodicy arising from belief in a single, all-powerful deity and the recognition of evil in the world. A solution to this problem was to attribute evil to the rebellion of a group or groups of angels who "malfunctioned" by disobeying the will of God. The two best examples of this development are the transformation of "the satan" from a submissive agent of Yahweh into a demonic figure opposed not only to humanity but to God and the expansion of the tradition contained in Gen 6:1–4 into an etiology of evil as the result of the rebellion of a group of heavenly beings, as described in *1 En.* 6–11 (Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 166–67). Although Handy attributes these developments to a problem of theodicy arising from monotheism, another explanation is to see the increased autonomy—and occasional rebellion—of heavenly beings as a reflection of the increased autonomy of local rulers and conflict among the heirs of Alexander the Great in the fourth–second centuries B.C.E. (cf. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 62, 119).

religion in the Levant in the fifth–fourth centuries B.C.E.⁶ At the same time, however, local indigenous culture and broad ancient Near Eastern traditions, such as the use of Aramaic as *lingua franca*, continued to dominate well into the first century B.C.E. and later in many areas, so that Hellenization must be understood as a very lengthy process which by no means uprooted and replaced local cultures.⁷ Rather, Hellenism was a blending of eastern and western cultures which touched, to greater and lesser extents, all inhabitants of the Mediterranean basin in the late fourth–first centuries B.C.E. and included considerable influences from ancient Near Eastern, as well as Greek, sources.

The administration of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires remains somewhat unclear, but it appears that much of the local administrative apparatus from the Persian Empire remained in place, at least in peripheral areas.⁸ In Egypt, at least, territory was

⁶ A number of bullae and coins bearing Greek iconographic motifs and even a few Greek inscriptions dating to the fifth and fourth centuries have been found in Judah and Samaria, as well as a juglet inscribed כד הרמש “the juglet of Hermes” at Jaffa (Hanan Eshel, “Hellenism in the Land of Israel from the Fifth to the Second Centuries BCE in Light of Semitic Epigraphy,” in *A Time of Change: Judah and its Neighbors in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* [ed. Yigael Levin; LSTS 65; London: T & T Clark, 2007], 117–19). Greek coins first appear in the Levant in the fifth century, shortly after their initial appearance in the Aegean, and the manufacturing of local imitations, including imitations of cultic iconography, appears to have begun very quickly. The same is also true of Greek-style pottery, which first appears as imports in the seventh–fifth centuries but quickly gives birth to local imitations (Einat Ambar-Armon and Amos Kloner, “Archaeological Evidence of Links between the Aegean World and the Land of Israel in the Persian Period,” in *A Time of Change: Judah and its Neighbors in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* [ed. Yigael Levin; LSTS 65; London: T & T Clark, 2007], 6–8). Ambar-Armon and Kloner attribute the early appearance of Greek and Greek-inspired material culture during the Persian period to small-scale emigration of Greek artisans as a result of the Peloponnesian War (Ambar-Armon and Kloner, “Archaeological Evidence,” 7–8).

⁷ Hengel forcefully argues for the thorough Hellenization of ancient Near Eastern culture, and Jewish civilization in particular, from at least the mid-third century onward (*Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:103–06), although he has since tempered his argument by acknowledging that Hellenization was a gradual process which did not penetrate the lower levels of society until the Roman period (*Jews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the pre-Christian Period* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980], 51–53). Ambar-Armon and Kloner conclude that Hellenization in the Levant was slow and gradual, that it began well before 332 B.C.E., but that it took several centuries for Hellenism to become dominant (Ambar-Armon and Kloner, “Archaeological Evidence,” 22). See also Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 2*, 162–63.

⁸ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 2*, 186. Hengel contrasts the Ptolemaic administration with both the Persian Empire and the Seleucid Empire which mimicked it. The former he characterizes as strongly

divided into about 40 nomes, each of which was governed by three officials of equal rank: a nomarch, who oversaw agriculture, an *oikonomos*, who oversaw finances, and a royal scribe, who oversaw official records. Each of these officials reported directly to the *dioikētēs* (finance minister) in Alexandria, who reported directly to the king and was the head of the Ptolemaic administration, next to the king.⁹ Alongside these three officials was a fourth, the *stratēgos* (general), who was in charge of the military.¹⁰ Over time the power of the *stratēgos* increased, eventually replacing the nomarch as the dominant authority over civil matters in the nomes. The lower levels of Ptolemaic administration consisted of village officials, consisting of at least a *kōmarchēs* (village headman) and a *kōmogrammateus* (village scribe) for each village. Each of these officials, at all levels, had numerous subordinates answering to him. These “ground level” officials were typically highly specialized officers who oversaw individual industries, such as threshing and grain storage.¹¹

It is not clear how much of this system was replicated outside Egypt. In the Levant, local kings and priests often filled important administrative roles, and while the upper levels of the administrative bureaucracy were typically, though not always, occupied by Greeks, mid- and lower level officials were usually drawn from the native

centralized, with a powerful monarch managing his kingdom as though it were his household, whereas the latter was largely decentralized and reliant upon satraps and other powerful intermediaries (*Judaism and Hellenism*, 18). Although each administration was unique, it should be recognized that even the Ptolemies relied considerably upon local administrators, who were often members of native dynasties which had also been part of the Persian administration, including especially the Jerusalem priesthood.

⁹ There is some evidence which suggests that there may, at times, have been more than one *diokētēs* (see Grabbe, *A History of the Jews* 2, 168).

¹⁰ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews* 2, 167; Roger S. Bagnall, *The Administration of the Ptolemaic Possessions Outside Egypt* (CSCT 4; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 3–10.

¹¹ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews* 2, 168.

population.¹² That there were Ptolemaic garrisons under the leadership of various *stratēgoi* in the major cities of Phoenicia and Syria is known from the Zenon papyri (ca. 260 B.C.E.). These papyri also indicate that the primary administrative unit in the Ptolemaic Levant was the *hyparchia*, and one mentions an *oikonomos* over one of these units.¹³ The papyri also mention several mid- and lower level officials, but they do not provide any information regarding their duties or hierarchical arrangement.¹⁴ One also mentions an important Jewish military official named Tobias, whose family (the Tobiads) held considerable power and autonomy in Transjordan, who seems to have become an eponymous figure in the region, since he is said to rule in “the land of Tobias.”¹⁵ Another important source of information is the Vienna papyrus, which contains two partial decrees by Ptolemy II (ca. 262 B.C.E.). The papyrus indicates that the *hyparchia* was the basic administrative unit, governed by an *oikonomos*. Beneath the *oikonomos* were the village headmen, who oversaw the villages.¹⁶

The Seleucids appear to have preserved the Persian administrative system to a very large extent, although in Judah the imprint of Ptolemaic administration may still be

¹² Hengel writes, “The leading places were exclusively in the hands of Greeks, but there were also many non-Greeks in the lower ranks of the administration” (*Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:19). On the other hand, Grabbe maintains that advancement in the Ptolemaic administration was “equal opportunity” and that non-Greek sometimes did obtain high-level positions, such as nomarch, *oikonomos*, and royal scribe, and he provides several examples (*A History of the Jews* 2, 169). All that seems to have been required was facility in the Greek language, but not Greek ethnicity.

¹³ Bagnall, *Administration*, 14.

¹⁴ Bagnall, *Administration*, 16.

¹⁵ Bagnall, *Administration*, 17; Lester L. Grabbe, “Hyparchs, *Oikonomoi* and Mafiosi: The Governance of Judah in the Ptolemaic Period,” in *Judah Between East and West: The Transition from Persian to Greek Rule (ca. 400–200 BCE)* (eds. Lester L. Grabbe and Oded Lipschits; LSTS 75; London: T & T Clark, 2011), 73–74. The Tobiads are also the subject of a legend recounted by Josephus (*Ant.* 12.4.1–11).

¹⁶ Bagnall, *Administration*, 19.

seen in Seleucid times.¹⁷ Like the Persian Empire, the Seleucid kingdom was divided into approximately 20 satrapies, although they were usually called eparchies.¹⁸ On the other hand, the Seleucids separated financial and civil authority, so that satraps (usually called *stratēgoi*) had no authority over financial matters. Instead, the financial minister (*dioikētēs*) in each satrapy reported directly to the king, as indicated in the Hefzibah inscription, which records a memorandum written from the *stratēgos* Ptolemy to Antiochus III.¹⁹ The subdivision of satrapies into *hyparchiai* was maintained by the Seleucids, and they also seem to have preserved much of the Ptolemaic bureaucracy at the lower levels. Of course, the Ptolemies had largely utilized pre-existing structures at this level, as did the Persians before them, so the only major change was the incorporation of these structures into a different imperial administration. In some cases, even high-level offices were filled with personnel from the Ptolemaic administration, such as Ptolemy Thrax, who served in some unknown capacity in the Ptolemaic administration before defecting to Antiochus III, who appointed him “*stratēgos* and high priest of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia.”²⁰ Two local authorities over Judah are mentioned in early Hellenistic texts: the high priest and the *gerousia*. Hecataeus, as quoted by Diodorus, states of the Jews:

The Jews never have a king, and authority over the people is regularly vested in whichever priest is regarded as superior to his colleagues in

¹⁷ A number of texts indicate that many of the same administrative offices from the Ptolemaic bureaucracy, such as *dioketai* and *oikonomos*, also existed within the Seleucid administration. See S. Sherwin-White and A. Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis: A New Approach to the Seleucid Empire* (London: Duckworth, 1993), 48–49.

¹⁸ Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis*, 45; Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 2*, 171; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:18.

¹⁹ See Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 2*, 172.

²⁰ Grabbe, *A History of the Jews 2*, 174.

wisdom and virtue. They call this man the high priest and believe that he acts as a messenger to them of God's commandments (Diodorus 40.3.5).

Assuming that Diodorus' citation of Hecataeus is authentic—a matter of some dispute—it may indicate that the high priest was an important official in Ptolemaic Judah.²¹ On the other hand, Josephus quotes a decree of Antiochus III which mentions the *gerousia* (senate) alongside the priests as authorities who are temporarily exempt from paying certain taxes (*Ant.* 12.3.3–4). It thus appears that the *gerousia* (= Sanhedrin?) was also recognized as a legitimate authority in the early Hellenistic period.²²

Under both the Ptolemies and the Seleucids local rulers (dynastic kings, priests, etc.) were incorporated into the imperial administration and enjoyed a great deal of autonomy.²³ A well-known example is the Tobiad family, which ruled in Transjordan in the third–early second centuries and also had connections to the Jerusalem high priesthood.²⁴ The independence with which these local rulers operated may be reflected in the increasing autonomy of angelic beings in Jewish texts of the early Hellenistic period (*I En.* 1–36; 72–82; Dan 7–12). As shall be seen below, angels become the primary agents of revelation, including interpretation of visions, and even of other forms of divine activity, and Yahweh generally recedes from the stage in these texts. Beginning around 300 B.C.E., with the Enochic *Book of Luminaries*, angels are identified with

²¹ For a discussion of the debate and an argument for the authenticity of Diodorus' quotation of Hecataeus, see Grabbe, *A History of the Jews* 2, 114–18.

²² Grabbe, *A History of the Jews* 2, 189–91.

²³ Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis*, 50.

²⁴ Grabbe compares the power and influence of local “strongmen” and “powerful families” in the Levant under Ptolemaic rule to the influence of the mafia in Sicily (“Hyparchs, *Oikonomoi* and Mafiosi,” 88–90).

personal names, further emphasizing their autonomy.²⁵ Thus, the preference for revelation/communication through divine intermediaries, which began in the Neo-Babylonian period (Ezek 40–48) and became more pronounced in the Persian period (Zech 1–6), continues in the early Hellenistic period (*1 En.* 1–36; 72–82; Dan 7–12) with a new emphasis on the autonomy of angelic beings as heavenly counterparts to earthly powers.²⁶

Interpreting Angels in 1 Enoch

Composition and Dating

Although *1 Enoch* reappeared in the West in 1773 with James Bruce's discovery of three Ethiopic mss and a number of translations and editions appeared in the nineteenth century, it was R. H. Charles' 1893 translation and critical edition which set the standard for future research on *1 Enoch*.²⁷ Charles dated the composition of *1 Enoch* to the second–first centuries B.C.E.²⁸ He considered *The Book of Watchers* (*1 En.* 1–36) to be the oldest section of the book, and he dated it prior to 170 B.C.E.²⁹ *The Book of*

²⁵ See Heidt, *Angelology*, 101–11.

²⁶ While it falls outside the scope of this study, the identification of angels (and demons?) as guardians of nations (e.g., Dan 10:13, 20–11:1; 12:1) may at the same time draw on the ancient belief in national patron deities and also reflect conflict among local kings and other rulers. Cf. also Nickelsburg's hypothesis that the story of the Watchers in *1 En.* 6–11 mythologizes the wars of the Diadochoi (*1 Enoch* 1, 62, 119).

²⁷ For a survey of Enoch scholarship up to Charles, see R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1893), 6–21. For scholarship since Charles, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 111–17.

²⁸ Charles identified at least three redactional stages of independent material: 1) the "Ground-Work," consisting of *The Book of Watchers*, *The Book of Similitudes*, and finally 3) various interpolations (Noachian materials, etc.) (Charles, *Enoch*, 25).

²⁹ Charles' dating of *The Book of Watchers* was based largely on the absence of any references to Antiochus IV and the Maccabean crisis (*Enoch*, 26).

Dreams (1 En. 83–90) he dated between 166–61 B.C.E., due to its similarity to Dan 7–12 and its apparent references to the Maccabees as the allies of the Hasidim, while *The Epistle of Enoch* (1 En. 91–104) reflects a later period (ca. 134–94 B.C.E.), when the Maccabees had become supporters of the Sadducaic rivals of the Hasidim/Pharisees.³⁰ *The Book of Similitudes* reflects a still later period (94–64 B.C.E.), in which the Hasmoneans are no longer friends but open enemies of the Hasidim.³¹ As for *The Book of Luminaries*, Charles does not identify any features which permit him to assign a secure date, although he regards it as a clearly independent work.³² Charles believed *I Enoch* to have been originally composed in Hebrew, in Palestine, due to its employment of Hebrew etymologies, a generally Hebraistic (Semitic?) style, the easy translation of the work back into Hebrew, and the authors' intimate knowledge of Palestinian geography.³³

A major turning point in the study of *I Enoch* came with the discovery of a number of Aramaic fragments of the book at Qumran. J. T. Milik published the Aramaic materials from Qumran in 1976, along with an introduction, commentary, and critical

³⁰ Charles, *Enoch*, 26–29.

³¹ Charles points to the Hasmonean persecution of the Hasidim/Pharisees beginning in 95 B.C.E. as the *terminus post quem* and the absence of any references to Rome or the Herodians as providing a *terminus ad quem* of 63 B.C.E. (Charles, *Enoch*, 29–30).

³² Charles, *Enoch*, 32.

³³ Charles explicitly follows Dillmann in his assertion of a Palestinian Hebrew original (cf. August Dillmann, *Das Buch Henoch übersetzt und erklärt* [Leipzig: Vogel, 1853], li–liii) (Charles, *Enoch*, 21–22). The discovery of Aramaic mss at Qumran suggests an Aramaic, rather than Hebrew, original, although Charles' concern seems to have been to assert the Semitic, rather than Greek, textual basis of the book (cf. Nickelsburg, *I Enoch* 1, 9). With regard to geographical provenance, a distinction should be made among the various compositions included in the corpus. *The Book of Watchers* appears to reflect traditions associated with the vicinity of Mt. Hermon (Nickelsburg, *I Enoch* 1, 65), while *The Book of Luminaries* and many features of *The Book of Watchers* seem to reflect a Mesopotamian background (see Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*; Nickelsburg, *I Enoch* 1, 61–62).

notes, in which he argued that *I Enoch* comprised an Enochic “Pentateuch.”³⁴ The earliest of the Qumran Enoch mss is a copy of *The Book of Luminaries* (4Q208 = 4QEnastr^a ar), which Milik dates to the late third or early second century B.C.E. on paleographical grounds.³⁵ While some of Milik’s specific claims regarding the antiquity of *The Book of Luminaries* are questionable,³⁶ his general assertion of the early date and Mesopotamian background of the materials in *The Book of Luminaries* continues to win support among scholars, although many would push its date toward the end of the Persian period or beginning of the Hellenistic period, and almost no one follows Milik’s assertion that Gen 5 and other Pentateuchal texts presuppose *The Book of Luminaries*.³⁷

³⁴ J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976). Part of Milik’s reason for proposing an Enochic Pentateuch was the persistent incorporation of five distinct literary works within *I Enoch*. While one of the Enochic books included in the Ethiopic and Greek versions, *The Book of Similitudes*, does not appear at Qumran, in its place appears *The Book of Giants*, an Enochic text otherwise known only from Manichaean sources. Thus, while the contents changed over time, from the early first century onward the Enochic corpus consisted of five major works. According to Milik, these five books were written on two scrolls. The first contained *The Book of Luminaries*, which is considerably longer in its Aramaic version at Qumran than in the Ethiopic version, and the second contained *The Book of Watchers*, *The Book of Giants*, *The Book of Dreams*, and *The Epistle of Enoch*. Later, *The Book of Similitudes* replaced *The Book of Giants* in Christian editions of *I Enoch* (Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 4).

³⁵ Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 7. It should be noted that Cross dates 4Q208 (4QEnastr^a ar) considerably later, and radiometric dating of the scroll places it in the mid-second century to early first century B.C.E. (see George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *I Enoch 2: A Commentary in the Book of I Enoch 37–82* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012], 339–40). Tigchelaar and García Martínez, however, have suggested that “the calibration curve needs to be lowered somewhat” and uphold Milik’s dating (Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar and Forentino García Martínez, “4QAstronomical Enoch^{a-b} ar,” DJD 36:106).

³⁶ Milik argues that *The Book of Luminaries* has roots in the Persian period, and he connects it with the Priestly redactors of the Pentateuch. He even goes so far as to suggest that the entire biblical calendrical system was based off the 364 day solar calendar as described in *The Book of Luminaries* (Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 8).

³⁷ Milik’s view is anticipated by von Rad (*Genesis* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961], 70) and Grelot (“La légende d’Hénoch dans les apocryphes et dans la Bible: origine et signification,” *RSR* 46 [1958]: 192–95). VanderKam critiques Milik’s argument for the priority of *The Book of Luminaries* in relation to Gen 5 and the sixth–fifth century dating that it implies. He notes that there is no evidence that the 365 years of Enoch’s life in Gen 5:23 ever read 364, nor is there evidence for a body of astronomical lore circulating under Enoch’s name in the sixth century (James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* [CBQMS 16; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984], 83–84). VanderKam maintains that the only secure datum for dating *The Book of Luminaries* is

Milik's views regarding *The Book of Watchers* are similar to his views regarding *The Book of Luminaries*. He dates it to the mid-third century B.C.E., although he believes it incorporates a much earlier Samaritan source for its account of the legend of the Watchers (*1 En.* 6–19).³⁸ This source, he argues, was the basis for Gen 6:1–4, and it is at least as old as *The Book of Luminaries*.³⁹ While many scholars have observed that Gen 6:1–4 appears to be a truncated version of a much larger myth, it is much more likely that *1 Enoch* depends on Genesis than vice versa. *1 Enoch* almost certainly draws on very old traditions, both Israelite and non-Israelite, but their configuration in the present book offers an expansive retelling of Gen 4–9 in response to crises in the early Hellenistic period.⁴⁰

A recent trend in Enochic research has been the attempt to identify cultural and religious influences on *1 Enoch*. VanderKam argues that *1 Enoch* draws heavily on

4QEnastr^a ar (4Q208), which provides only a *terminus ad quem* around 200 B.C.E., although he allows that the work may be considerably older than that.

³⁸ Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 24–25.

³⁹ According to Milik, Gen 6:1–4 presupposes and is an abbreviated version of *1 En.* 6–19 (*Books of Enoch*, 31). A similar hypothesis is advanced by Margaret Barker, who argues that *1 Enoch* embodies the wisdom and mythology of the Davidic monarchy, which was suppressed by later Priestly writers (Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* [London: SPCK, 1987]).

⁴⁰ Nickelsburg argues that the legend of the Watchers in *1 En.* 6–11 refashions the old Semitic myth represented in Gen 6:1–4 as a response to the wars of the Diadochoi and the early Hellenistic kings' claims of divinity. He also sees influence from Greek mythology, particularly the Prometheus myth, in the Watchers' revelation of forbidden knowledge to primeval humans (Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 62, 119). Hanson associates the Watchers myth with ancient Near Eastern traditions regarding a rebellion in heaven and early culture heroes and understands the Asael myth as a polemic against the Day of Atonement ritual in Lev 16 (Paul D. Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6–11," *JBL* 96 [1977]: 195–233). Sacchi rightly considers *The Book of Watchers* the oldest Jewish apocalypse, and the oldest part of this text (*1 En.* 6–11) he dates to the fifth century B.C.E. He understands *The Book of Watchers* as a response to the problem of evil by positing an otherworldly origin of evil (Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 47–62).

Babylonian mantic/divinatory wisdom traditions and mythology.⁴¹ He notes that the traditions about Enoch, both in Gen 5 and in *I Enoch*, find several parallels in early Sumerian and Babylonian traditions regarding the sage-king Enmeduranki and the primeval *apkallu* sages, particularly Oannes/Adapa.⁴² He also finds much in *I Enoch* which is reminiscent of Babylonian divination and mantic wisdom, including Akkadian prophecies and omen texts, from which he posits that mantic wisdom was an important component in the rise of apocalypticism in early Judaism.⁴³ Shortly after VanderKam, Helge Kvanvig published an even more thorough and extensive comparative study of *I Enoch* and Mesopotamian traditions, which puts forth similar conclusions.⁴⁴

I Enoch is also a key element in the debate concerning apocalyptic origins (i.e., prophecy vs. wisdom). Michael Knibb notes that there are clearly prophetic elements in *I Enoch*, such as the characterization of Enoch as a “seer,” his beholding of visions (cf. Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Isa 6:1–8; Jer 1:11–19; 24; Ezek 1; 8–11; 40–48; Zech 1–6), his heavenly ascent, and, most notably, the book’s eschatology.⁴⁵ On the other hand, a number of wisdom features are also prominent in *I Enoch*. The book never identifies

⁴¹ Mesopotamian mantic wisdom, as evidenced by the vast corpus of omen texts and texts concerning dream interpretation (see Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams*), contrast with Israelite/Jewish mantic wisdom, which emphasized visions and dreams, as means of predicting the future. Mesopotamian mantic wisdom, on the other hand, was dominated by a more “scientific” or “deductive” type of divination which focused on natural phenomena, such as astrology and extispicy (VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 52–71; Bottéro, *Religion*, 176–85). *I Enoch* reflects a greater concern with interpreting the significance of such natural phenomena than is typically found in the Hebrew Bible.

⁴² VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 23–51.

⁴³ VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 52–75. In considering the likely modeling of Enoch as the original recipient of heavenly secrets after Enmeduranki, who also received a body of astronomical wisdom from his *apkallu* sage, VanderKam writes “Enoch’s science is a Judaized refraction of an early stage in the development of Babylonian astronomy” (*Apocalyptic Tradition*, 101).

⁴⁴ Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*.

⁴⁵ Knibb, *Essays*, 24–25.

Enoch as a prophet, but rather calls him a scribe or wise man.⁴⁶ As also noted by VanderKam, there are strong features of manticism and divination in the book, which may suggest a background in the mantic wisdom traditions of the ancient Near East (particularly Mesopotamia).⁴⁷ Thus, the prominent role of cosmological and mantic wisdom in *I Enoch* (especially chs. 20–36; 72–82) suggests significant influence from wisdom traditions.

There have been various attempts to discern the social setting of *I Enoch*. Gabriele Boccaccini identifies *I Enoch* with a distinct group within Second Temple Judaism, part of which eventually separated to form the Essene movement.⁴⁸ He posits a power struggle between the Zadokites and another group of priests, which he identifies as “Enochic Judaism” because of its appropriation of Enoch as its principle forbearer, beginning in the late Persian period (fourth century B.C.E.).⁴⁹ At the same time, however, Boccaccini asserts that *I Enoch* presupposes the Priestly tradition and that both Enochic

⁴⁶ In *I En.* 12:4 Enoch is called a “scribe of righteousness,” and a “scribe of truth” in 15:1. The Aramaic text of *I En.* 92:1 also describes Enoch as “the wisest of men” (see Knibb, *Essays*, 25).

⁴⁷ Knibb, *Essays*, 25–26. Knibb also detects seeming tension between *The Book of Watchers* and Sir 3:21–24, which cautions against prying into things which “[God] has kept hidden” (see Knibb, *Essays*, 26–27).

⁴⁸ See Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways Between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). While there continues to be considerable debate regarding the relationship between the Qumran community (generally viewed as Essenes) and Enochic Judaism, the presence of several copies of Enochic texts at Qumran and parallels to Enochic texts and ideas in sectarian documents, such as the *Damascus Document* and IQS, suggest that the Enochic writings were highly valued by the Qumran community. For a presentation of the current state of the question within scholarship and scholarly responses, see Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

⁴⁹ Gabriele Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, from Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 90, 100–03. Boccaccini’s hypothesis has been criticized for assuming that tensions between texts necessarily reflect different social groups. As Henze points out, often diverse viewpoints may be represented within a single group, and it could well be that *I Enoch* incorporates texts and traditions from multiple groups, rather than representing the perspective of a single, homogeneous social group (Matthias Henze, “Enoch’s Dream Visions and the Visions of Daniel Reexamined,” in *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* [ed. Gabriele Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 17–22.).

and Zadokite Judaism depend upon early Priestly thought and traditions, especially as exemplified by Ezekiel.⁵⁰ Paolo Sacchi, on the other hand, seeks to identify *I Enoch* with the birth of a distinct Jewish apocalyptic tradition. He understands the central theme of *The Book of Watchers*, which is further developed in later apocalyptic literature, as the origin of evil, specifically, that its origins are otherworldly, having arisen through the transgression and teachings of the fallen Watchers.⁵¹ Nickelsburg departs from Milik, Boccaccini, and Sacchi in his dating of *The Book of Watchers* and his understanding of the historical and social background of the Enochic corpus. He sees the form of the myth of the fallen angels in *The Book of Watchers* as a reflective of the wars of the Diadochoi in the early Hellenistic period.⁵² As noted above, the turbulent political situation which existed in the wake of the death of Alexander the Great and the resulting dependence of Hellenistic kings upon local dynasties and strongmen is consistent with the view of the spiritual realm in *I Enoch* and Daniel. While not ruling out a significant priestly

⁵⁰ Notably, Boccaccini prefers to date at least *The Book of Watchers* to the Persian period (prior to *The Book of Luminaries*), rather than the Hellenistic period. He is doubtful that the introduction of Hellenism in the late fourth century produced the “culture shock” that scholars such as Nickelsburg posit as the catalyst for *The Book of Watchers* and views the late Persian period as a time of conflict over the priesthood (Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 100–02).

⁵¹ Like Boccaccini, Sacchi posits a date for *The Book of Watchers* in the Persian period (Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 97–98).

⁵² Nickelsburg allows that the story of the fallen Watchers may be based upon a much earlier myth, but he situates the Enochic form of the myth in the early third century B.C.E. (*I Enoch* 1, 7, 25). In the demonic children of the fallen Watchers he sees a parody of the Diadochoi, who claimed divine parentage, such that their “divinity” is not denied but is transformed into an act of heavenly rebellion (*I Enoch* 1, 62, 119). In the teaching of forbidden knowledge by Asael and the other Watchers he sees a refraction of the Prometheus myth from the point of view of the chief deity (*I Enoch* 1, 62). In contrast to Sacchi’s association of *I En.* 6–11 (or at least the myth that stands behind it) with southern/Yahwistic tradition, Nickelsburg argues that the geography of the myth in *I En.* 6–11 points toward the vicinity of Mt. Hermon (Nickelsburg, *I Enoch* 1, 25, 65).

component to Enochic ideology, Nickelsburg sees the book as arising from a social setting among sage-scribes.⁵³

I largely follow Nickelsburg and VanderKam with regard to the composition of *I Enoch*. As noted by VanderKam and others, *I Enoch* draws on ancient Mesopotamian traditions concerning primeval kings (Enmeduranki) and sages (the *apkallū*) who obtained and/or transmitted heavenly wisdom.⁵⁴ Likewise, the central myths in *I Enoch*—the transgression of the Watchers and Enoch’s heavenly ascent—incorporate early traditions. But those who argue for the primacy of *I Enoch* over Gen 5–6 fail to distinguish between old traditions and old texts.⁵⁵ The fact that *The Book of Watchers* incorporates traditions from both P (Gen 5:21–24) and non-P (Gen 6:1–4) texts suggests that it post-dates the Priestly redaction of the Pentateuch, although it may well be aware of the earlier, more extensive traditions upon which these (admittedly truncated) texts are based.⁵⁶ Likewise, the fact that the only mention of Enoch’s heavenly journey anywhere

⁵³ The epithets used to describe Enoch suggest such an identification of the authorial community. Enoch is called “scribe” (*I En.* 12:3; 92:1), “scribe of righteousness” (12:4), and “scribe of truth” (15:1). Accordingly, the chief concern of the book is the heavenly wisdom revealed to Enoch by the angels during his heavenly journey, contrasted with the illicit teachings of the Watchers (Nickelsburg, *I Enoch* 1, 28). Enoch transcribes this revealed wisdom and transfers it to his son, Methuselah, who is to teach it to his sons. Thus, Enoch stands at the head of a body of specially revealed wisdom, of which the authorial community claims to be custodians (*I Enoch* 1, 52). One may compare the Enochic tradition with the Mesopotamian scribal-scholar tradition, the *ummanū*, who likewise claimed custodianship over an ancient body of revealed wisdom which had as its source the antediluvian *apkallu*-sages, the greatest of whom was Adapa/Oannes (see Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*; cf. also VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 23–109). While prophetic and priestly models also appear to have influenced the portrayal of Enoch, his status as a sage-scribe is dominant.

⁵⁴ See VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 23–51; Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*.

⁵⁵ Even Boccaccini recognizes this point, as he writes “The antiquity of these [Enochic] traditions, however, cannot be used to support an ancient, preexilic origin for Enochic Judaism. Dating traditions is not the same as dating documents, social groups, and systems of thought, exactly as the age of a building cannot be dated by the age of its bricks” (*Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 95).

⁵⁶ See, for example, David P. Melvin, “The Gilgamesh Traditions and the Pre-History of Genesis 6:1–4,” *PRSt* 38 (2011): 23–32.

in the Hebrew Bible is in a Priestly text (Gen 5:21–24) cautions against associating “Enochic Judaism” with an early southern (“Yahwistic”) tradition, especially since the geography in *The Book of Watchers* suggests a northern tradition.

Allowing that an anti-Zadokite perspective may have shaped *1 Enoch*, it seems unlikely that the fallen Watchers represent Zadokite priests, as some have argued.⁵⁷ Illicit marriage between the Watchers and human women could, perhaps, reflect concerns over the purity of priestly ancestry, but the forbidden teachings of the Watchers are much more suggestive of pagan Hellenism than of Zadokite Judaism, even granting the subjective perspective of Enochic Judaism. Divination, magical arts, and even technologies, such as weaponry, had long been associated with the discoveries and/or teachings of ancient culture heroes, who were often divinized.⁵⁸ Nickelsburg’s argument that the Asael/instruction motif in *The Book of Watchers* is inspired by the Prometheus myth seems closer to the truth than attempting to equate these teachings with Zadokite teachings.⁵⁹ This would suggest that the figure of Enoch is cast as a Jewish response to

⁵⁷ E.g., David W. Suter, “Fallen Angel, Fallen Priest: The Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch 6–16,” *HUCA* 50 (1979): 115–35; cf. Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 99.

⁵⁸ Culture hero traditions are well attested across the ancient Near East, stretching back to Sumerian traditions concerning Enmerkar and Gilgamesh, both of whom are said to have discovered or invented various technologies. In the case of Gilgamesh, these discoveries include, specifically, cultic practices (“The Death of Bilgames,” M 52–61 [Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation* {London: Penguin, 1999}, 198–99]). While Enmeduranki and the *apkallu*-sages are often held as models for Enoch, they also parallel the Watchers, just as Enoch himself is the counterpart to the Watchers and their evil teachings (see especially Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, 313–15). Culture hero traditions continued to flourish into the Hellenistic period, as evidenced by the Uruk Sage List in Mesopotamia (see Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 107–08), Berossus’ account of Oannes (= Adapa) and the fish-men (*Babyloniaca* 1.5 [Stanley M. Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus* {*SANE* 1/5; Malibu: Undena, 1978}, 155]), and Philo of Byblos’ *Phoenician History* 808.2–809.12.

⁵⁹ Boccaccini dismisses the suggestions of Nickelsburg and others that Enochic Judaism developed in response to “culture shock” produced by Hellenism by pointing out that in the third century the Jewish priesthood was attracted to Hellenism, rather than repulsed by it (*Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, 101). It could well be that the infiltration of Hellenism within the Zadokite priestly ranks precipitated the Enochic response and, eventually, the split within the priesthood which Boccaccini posits.

pagan culture heroes, which would fit well within the context of the early Hellenistic period, when mythological traditions of both Greek and Near Eastern provenance circulated widely and local cultures often attempted to demonstrate that theirs was the oldest civilization, from which all others developed.⁶⁰

Ultimately, the upper end of the dating of the earlier portions of *1 Enoch* is difficult to establish. VanderKam concludes that the only concrete date which one may establish is that *The Book of Watchers* and *The Book of Luminaries* both existed by ca. 200 B.C.E., as evidenced by the Qumran evidence and Pseudo-Eupolemus' likely dependence upon *The Book of Luminaries* in his claim that Egyptian astrology ultimately traced to Enoch through Abraham.⁶¹ While both works likely contain traditions which trace back to the Persian period or even earlier⁶²—and in the case of *The Book of Luminaries* may even have begun taking shape in the fourth century—the early

⁶⁰ In this sense, the portrayal of Enoch and the Watchers would be analogous to Berossus' attempt to trace civilization back to ancient Mesopotamia and Philo's attempt to trace it back to Phoenician heroes. While the heroes in Mesopotamian and Phoenician traditions are euhemeristic, the Watchers are demonic, and their teachings lead to the corruption of the earth. That the Watchers represented, at least in part, the heroes of pagan mythology is suggested by *The Book of Giants*' inclusion of Gilgamesh, and Humbaba among the fallen Watchers. The name Daniel, which recalls the Ugaritic hero Dan'el, also appears as one of the Watchers in *1 En.* 6:7 (Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 29). Enoch, by contrast, constitutes a Jewish counterpart (and therefore an alternative) to Hellenistic wisdom. As Collins notes, Enoch's primeval context allows him a universalism not shared by Moses. Moses may stand as the father of Israelite civilization, but not of all human civilization (Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 46–47).

⁶¹ VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 83–88. See also Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 345.

⁶² VanderKam argues that *The Book of Luminaries* parallels early Mesopotamian astronomical texts much more closely than later texts (VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 91–104). These early comparative texts include especially *Enūma Anu Enlil* (late second millennium B.C.E.) and ^{mul}APIN (probably Neo-Assyrian). Thus, VanderKam concludes that “the author of the AB has fixed in writing a very old stage in the evolution of Enochic lore, a stage in which its eastern origins are clearly apparent and no admixture of Greek influences is yet demonstrable” (*Apocalyptic Tradition*, 102). Nevertheless, the preservation of pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamian astronomical traditions in *The Book of Luminaries* does not necessarily indicate that the book was composed at such an early date, and VanderKam cites an early Hellenistic writer (Theophrastus) as indicating that Jews in the late fourth century were very interested in astronomy as a possibly clue regarding the origins of *The Book of Luminaries* (VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 103).

Hellenistic period provides the most likely context for the composition of the early portions of *1 Enoch*.

The Book of Luminaries

The Book of Luminaries offers a Jewish counterpart/alternative to the vast body of ancient Near Eastern astronomical wisdom, especially as it is represented in Mesopotamian traditions. Multiple studies have compared Enoch with Enmeduranki, Adapa/Oannes and the *apkallu*-sages, and similar Mesopotamian, Phoenician, and Hellenistic culture heroes.⁶³ *The Book of Luminaries*, in particular, corresponds closely with early Mesopotamian astronomical texts, such as *Enūma Anu Enlil* and ^{mul}APIN, so that VanderKam concludes that “Enoch’s science is a Judaized refraction of an early stage in the development of Babylonian astronomy.”⁶⁴

All of *The Book of Luminaries* (*1 En.* 72–82) is cast as angelic revelation, with the strong implication that the angel, identified as Uriel, explains the various features of the cosmos and their workings to Enoch as they travel. The Ethiopic text begins:

The book of the revolutions of the lights of heaven, each as it is, according to their classes, according to their (period of) rule and their times, according to their names and their places of origin, and according to their months... which Uriel, the holy angel who was with me and is their leader, showed me; and he showed me all their regulations exactly as they are, for each year of the world and for ever, until the new creation shall be made which will last for ever (*1 En.* 72:1).⁶⁵

⁶³ For example, VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*; Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*; Hanson, “Rebellion in Heaven”; Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (TSAJ 107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 23–85.

⁶⁴ VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 101.

⁶⁵ Translation, Knibb, *Enoch*, 167. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the Ethiopic text are from Knibb’s critical edition.

The importance of the above passage for the development of the interpreting angel motif—and indeed, Jewish angelology in general—cannot be overstated. Here, for the first time, an angel is clearly given a personal name (Uriel).⁶⁶ Uriel’s revelation of astronomical/calendrical knowledge to Enoch flows from his status as leader (*marāḥihomu*) of the heavenly luminaries (cf. *1 En.* 75:3; 79:6; 82:8–20), each of which is under the control of a leader, subordinate to Uriel.⁶⁷ His name, Uriel (אוריאל = “God is my light”), suggests his primary role as ruler over the heavenly luminaries,⁶⁸ and he appears elsewhere in *1 Enoch* as one of the chief angels (*1 En.* 9:1; 10:1; 19:1; 20:2; 21:5, 9; 27:2; 33:4). Uriel also appears as an interpreting angel in other apocalyptic works, such as *4 Ezra* and *2 Enoch*.⁶⁹

Uriel speaks very little in *The Book of Luminaries*. In *1 En.* 80:1 he declares:

Behold I have shown you everything, O Enoch, and have revealed everything to you, that you may see this sun, and this moon, and those who lead the stars of heaven, and all those who turn them, their tasks, and their times, and their rising.

In this passage, Uriel indicates that he revealed to Enoch all of the preceding material, which accords with the notice in *1 En.* 72:1 that Uriel showed Enoch the luminaries.

⁶⁶ Heidt credits Daniel with this innovation, although he can hardly be faulted for failing to recognize the early date of *The Book of Luminaries* due to his writing prior to the publication of the Qumran texts (Heidt, *Angelology*, 105).

⁶⁷ Presumably these “leaders” are other angels (*1 En.* 82:10–20), although Nickelsburg and VanderKam point out that they are never identified as such (*1 Enoch* 2, 413; cf. Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch of 1 Enoch: A New English Edition* [Leiden: Brill, 1985], 387). Dörfel understands these subordinate “leaders” as divine beings associated with natural phenomena, as also seems to be the case with many of the Watchers in *1 En.* 8:3 (“EL-Gestalten”) (Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 173).

⁶⁸ Dörfel suggests that Uriel may be a personification of the אור of God created in Gen 1:3 (*Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 173).

⁶⁹ In *2 Enoch*, extant only in Slavonic, the angel who reads to Enoch from the tablets of heaven is called Vrevoil, which is probably a rendering of Uriel (see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 412).

While the text does not explicitly portray angelic interpretation, it is implied that Uriel explains the sights which Enoch beholds, since Enoch knows quite a bit about their functions.⁷⁰

Following this reference back to the astronomical revelations of *1 En.* 72–79, Uriel proclaims a prophecy concerning the end times (*1 En.* 80:2–8). Notably, many scholars consider at least parts of *1 En.* 80–82 to be additions to *The Book of Luminaries*, as this material differs markedly from *1 En.* 72–79 in form and content.⁷¹ If this is indeed the case, at least part of ch. 82 had been added by the first century B.C.E., as portions of it are included among the fragments of 4QEnastr^b ar (4Q209) and 4QEnastr^d ar (4Q211).⁷²

Dörfel correlates the two textual traditions in *The Book of Luminaries* with two different functions of the angel Uriel: leader of the luminaries (“Führer der Lichter”) and interpreting angel.⁷³ While Uriel clearly functions in both capacities, these roles overlap considerably, especially in *1 En.* 72–79.⁷⁴ Uriel’s status as leader of the heavenly luminaries appears to be connected with his role as Enoch’s guide and interpreter on his heavenly journey. In *The Book of Luminaries*, at least, Uriel functions as an interpreting angel due to the nature of the revealed knowledge, not necessarily because that is his

⁷⁰ One may compare *1 En.* 72–82 with Ezek 40–48, in which the prophet’s angelic guide leads him through a tour of the temple and occasionally explains important features (see ch. 2 above).

⁷¹ For a discussion of the problem of *1 En.* 80–82 and an overview of scholarship, see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 359–65.

⁷² See Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 6; also Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 555–56, 567–68.

⁷³ Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 173.

⁷⁴ While Uriel does not speak in *1 En.* 72–79, the text clearly implies that he explained the luminaries and their functions to Enoch (*1 En.* 72:1; 75:3–4; 78:10; 79:2–6). His function as interpreting angel here is very similar to that of Ezekiel’s guide in Ezek 40–48, who also speaks little and primarily “shows” things to the prophet. Likewise, Uriel’s speech in *1 En.* 80 is not really an interpretation of Enoch’s vision, but an eschatological prophecy of the disruption of the luminaries’ movements and wickedness on the earth.

typical role (but cf. *4 Ezra*, where Uriel is also an interpreting angel). The choice of the leader of the heavenly luminaries as Enoch's guide/interpreter highlights the importance of an authoritative, divine interpreter, and there could be no better candidate than Uriel. As Nickelsburg and VanderKam note, "If the divinely appointed, celestial leader or guide of all the luminaries showed the contents of the book to Enoch, the information is unimpeachable."⁷⁵ The singling out of Uriel to reveal the solar calendar to Enoch in *The Book of Luminaries* grants it a level of authority it would otherwise lack. Likewise, Uriel's specialization and autonomy recall the political situation in the early Hellenistic period, in which local authorities, although subordinate to the upper-level imperial administrators, enjoyed considerable autonomy. At the same time, Enoch's role in the revelation is also significant. He is solely a recipient of information who records and passes on what he received, in written form (*1 En.* 82:1) to his son and to later generations.⁷⁶ While he has access to revelation, he is not the mediator of revelation, but the first recipient.

The Book of Watchers

While *The Book of Luminaries* is usually regarded as the oldest Enochic text, *The Book of Watchers* is built around what may be an even older mythological narrative tradition concerning the rebellion of a group of angelic beings (the Heavenly Watchers)

⁷⁵ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 413.

⁷⁶ In this sense, Enoch is more akin to a scribe than to a prophet, as noted by Nickelsburg (*1 Enoch* 1, 65–67). The transition from prophet to apocalyptic seer coincides with the shift from spoken prophetic oracles to the writing down of visions (and interpretations) in book form, as may be seen already in Ezek 40–48 and Zech 1–6. In Dan 7–12, the distinction between apocalyptic seer and prophet is complete, as Daniel is unable to understand his visions even *after* the angel interprets them for him (Dan 8:27). The visions and interpretations which he writes down are explicitly designated for future generations (Dan 12:9–13). Likewise, Enmeduranki was not a prophet, but a king who merely received revelations from Šamaš and Adad or from his *apkallu*-sage, Utuabzu (VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 50).

by marrying and having children with human women (cf. Gen 6:1–4), as well as revealing forbidden knowledge to primeval humanity. The core of this myth appears in *I En.* 6–11, and some regard these chapters as an early, pre-Enochic source document incorporated by the author of *The Book of Watchers*.⁷⁷

Angelic beings figure prominently in *The Book of Watchers*, just as they do in *The Book of Luminaries*. While Uriel’s role as an interpreting angel is implied in *I En.* 72:1, he clearly functions in this regard in the latter part of *The Book of Watchers*. In *I En.* 17–36, Uriel and other angels lead Enoch on a tour of the cosmos, though without the astronomical and calendrical focus of *The Book of Luminaries*. On a number of occasions, the angels explain various sights to Enoch. In the first instance, Enoch’s guide-interpreter is simply called “the angel”:

And a terrible thing I saw there—seven stars like great burning mountains. And like a spirit questioning me the angel said: “This is the place of the end of heaven and earth; this is the prison for the stars of heaven and the host of heaven. And the stars which roll over the fire, these are the ones which transgressed the command of the Lord from the beginning of their rising because they did not come out at their proper times. And he was angry with them and bound them until the time of the consummation of their sin in the year of mystery (*I En.* 18:14–16).

In *I En.* 19:1, Enoch’s angelic guide is identified as Uriel. He indicates that the fallen Watchers will join the stars of heaven in prison awaiting the final judgment (*I En.* 19:1–2). Other angels also accompany Enoch on his cosmic journeys and function as interpreting angels, including Raphael (*I En.* 22:3–22; *I En.* 27:1–4; 32:5–6), Raguel (*I En.* 23:4–24:4), and Michael (*I En.* 24:5–25:6). Uriel appears again in *I En.* 33, where he is said to have shown Enoch the stars of heaven, their coming and going, their times

⁷⁷ Sacchi calls *I En.* 6–11 *BW1*, and he notes that Enoch does not appear at all in these chapters, which may imply that it is an earlier (pre-Enochic) composition (Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 48).

and positions, and their names. Here he is also said to have written down “their names...their laws and their functions” for Enoch (*1 En.* 33:4).

The familiar pattern of question and answer appears several times in *The Book of Watchers*. Enoch’s second journey takes him to the temporary desert prison of the fallen angels. Enoch asks:

“For what sin have they been bound, and why have they been thrown here?” And Uriel, one of the holy angels who was with me and led me, spoke to me and said: “Enoch, about whom do you ask? About whom do you inquire and ask and care? These are (some) of the stars which transgressed the command of the Lord Most High, and they have been bound here until ten thousand ages are completed, the number of the days of their sin” (*1 En.* 21:4–6).

Similarly, Enoch asks questions of his angelic guides concerning what he sees in *1 En.*

22:6, 8; 23:3; 27:1. On one occasion, Michael asks Enoch a question, namely the reason for his questions:

And then I said: “Behold, this beautiful tree! Beautiful to look at and pleasant (are) its leaves, and its fruit very delightful in appearance.” And then Michael, one of the holy and honoured angels who was with me and (was) in charge of them, answered me and said to me: “Enoch, why do you ask me about the fragrance of this tree, and (why) do you inquire to learn?” Then I, Enoch, answered him, saying: “I wish to learn about everything, but especially about this tree” (*1 En.* 24:5–25:2).

The pattern of vision + question and answer is familiar from Zech 1–6, as well as earlier prophetic texts (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24).⁷⁸ Unlike, Zechariah, however, Enoch does not confess ignorance or inability to understand his visions, although his questions may imply some initial lack of understanding. On the contrary, in the book’s

⁷⁸ Nickelsburg identifies four components to the visionary/interpretation form in *The Book of Watchers*: 1) Introductory setting of the scene, 2) Description of the scene, 3) Dialog between Enoch and the interpreting angel, and 4) Enoch’s praise of God. He detects two different types of the third component (dialog between Enoch and the angel). In the first type, Enoch asks a question regarding what he sees, and the angel responds with an explanation. In the second type, Enoch expresses amazement at something he sees, the angel responds by asking Enoch why he wants to know about it, Enoch responds, and the angel explains (see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 291).

introductory preface Enoch declares “I heard everything from [the angels], and I understood what I saw” (*1 En.* 1:2). Rather, when asked why he inquires, Enoch states that it is because he wishes to learn about everything (*1 En.* 25:2). Given Enoch’s association with heavenly knowledge and his removal from the earth to live among the angels, it is not surprising that *The Book of Watchers* takes care not to portray him as lacking knowledge. Nevertheless, it is clear that the source of Enoch’s knowledge is the angels who reveal these sights to him and explain their meanings. His knowledge is revealed knowledge, mediated by angels, and as such it requires interpretation by an angel.⁷⁹

One final feature of *The Book of Watchers* warrants mention. In *1 En.* 14–16, Enoch ascends to heaven and sees God seated on his throne (*1 En.* 14:18–20). Nickelsburg sees Enoch’s ascent to the presence of God as a transitional stage between the Ezekiel tradition and later Merkabah mysticism.⁸⁰ He further notes that

Our author’s God is the transcendent, wholly other, heavenly King. He does not appear on earth, as he did to Abraham or Moses or Isaiah. His chariot throne does not descend to earth as it did for Ezekiel....Consonant with this view of God is God’s inaccessibility.⁸¹

On the other hand, Enoch is actually granted unmediated access to God, and in *1 En.* 14:24–16:4, God speaks to Enoch directly, instructing him to deliver a message of

⁷⁹ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 291.

⁸⁰ Nickelsburg identifies four points of transition in *1 En.* 14. First, Enoch is transported to heaven, rather than God appearing on earth (as in Ezek 1). Second, Enoch sees not only God and the cherubim, but also the heavenly temple and “ten thousand times ten thousand” heavenly attendants (*1 En.* 14:22). Third, Enoch plays a much more active role in his vision than does Ezekiel. Fourth, although similar in many ways to Ezek 8–11; 40–48, Enoch is not accompanied by an angel in his heavenly ascent, although he does have angelic guides for his cosmic journeys in *1 En.* 17–36 (Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 259).

⁸¹ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 260.

condemnation to the fallen Watchers. Enoch's bearing of a message from God, which he is to proclaim to the Watchers, hearkens back to the older prophetic model of the human prophet as the mouthpiece of Yahweh. The irony of Enoch's mission may be clearly seen in *1 En.* 15:2, which declares "And go, say to the Watchers of heaven who sent you to petition on their behalf: 'You ought to petition on behalf of men, not men on behalf of you.'"⁸² Angels are the ordinary mediators between God and humans, but the Watchers have forsaken their heavenly status and must ask a human to act as mediator for them.

Enoch's ascent indicates that, although angelic mediation was viewed as the norm, a privileged human *could* still receive the word of God directly and function as a prophet. Likewise, although God is transcendent and his presence heavily guarded, a human like Enoch could come as close to God as could most angels (*1 En.* 14:21, 24).⁸³ Nevertheless, Enoch is exceptional.⁸⁴ He is the Jewish counterpart to Utnapishtim/Atrahasis, a human who gained access to divine secrets and as a result was removed from humanity to dwell with the gods/angels.⁸⁵ Yet even Enoch receives his revelations (with the exception of the message he is to deliver to the Watchers) through

⁸² See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 271.

⁸³ *The Book of Watchers* does, however, allow for God's presence on earth, as well as in heaven. Enoch's vision of the mountain of God in *1 En.* 24–25, upon which God's throne sits, is explained (by Michael) as the dwelling place of God in the eschaton. Thus, while only a select few may approach God directly in the present age, in the age to come God will dwell on earth.

⁸⁴ Enoch is, in many ways, a foil for the fallen Watchers/angels. He serves as a mediator between God and the angels, who ordinarily bear the responsibility of mediating between God and humans. He is able to ascend to heaven, whereas the fallen Watchers are now imprisoned in the earth. He is even granted a level of access to God's presence which is not granted to most angels (*1 En.* 14:24–25). Whereas the Watchers corrupted the earth by teaching humans forbidden knowledge, Enoch receives and passes down heavenly knowledge which will benefit those who receive it. Thus, it is not surprising that in the continuing tradition, Enoch is eventually exalted to angelic status (*3 En.* 4:1–5).

⁸⁵ Cf. *Epic of Gilgamesh*, SBV XI.203–06 (George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 95). VanderKam sees in Enoch a blending of motifs associated with culture heroes, such as Enmeduranki and the *apkallu*-sages, and the Mesopotamian flood hero (*Apocalyptic Tradition*, 50–51).

the mediation of angels and angelic interpretation of visions. The importance of angelic interpretation for Enoch, who *did* gain direct access to God, suggests that by the time of *The Book of Watchers* the interpreting angel motif had already become the standard mode of divine revelation in Jewish apocalyptic literature.

The Interpreting Angel Motif in Dan 7–8

Composition and Dating

The Book of Daniel stands apart as the only full-blown apocalypse in the Hebrew canon. Although Daniel is placed in the Writings (*ketuvim*) in the Masoretic tradition, in antiquity Daniel was often considered a prophet, and the book that bears his name was sometimes grouped with the Prophets.⁸⁶ Yet the book clearly differs from the rest of the prophetic corpus and is almost universally regarded as an apocalypse.⁸⁷ On the other hand, Daniel is not monolithic. The book naturally falls into two halves. Chapters 1–6 are not truly apocalyptic, but more closely resemble court tales such as Esther and the

⁸⁶ Josephus calls Daniel “one of the greatest prophets” (*Ant.* 10.11.7), as does Matt 24:15. At Qumran, 4Q174 (4QFlor) speaks of “the book of Daniel the prophet” (בספר דניאל הנביא), and many early rabbinic sources also list Daniel among the prophets (John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 52; cf. Klaus Koch, “Is Daniel Also among the Prophets?” *Int* 39 [1985]: 117–30; John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986], 35–37).

⁸⁷ Daniel is usually classified as a “historical” apocalypse due to its employment of *vaticina ex eventu* in chs. 7–12 and is often compared with the Enochic *Book of Dreams* (*1 En.* 83–90). Boccaccini sees Daniel as the product of a group which espoused a “third way” between Zadokite and Enochic Judaism, based on its defense of (but not identification with) Zadokite Judaism and the importance of such concerns as the temple and the Mosaic covenant (Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 83–84). This explains why Daniel was eventually canonized, while *1 Enoch* was not—Daniel was more appealing to Rabbinic Judaism, which preserved the Zadokite heritage. Lange argues that Daniel shares the same “apocalyptic milieu” as some Enochic texts, such as *The Animal Apocalypse* and *The Book of Giants*, and although they were produced by different groups with different views of the Maccabees, they share the same visionary motifs (Armin Lange, “Dream Visions and Apocalyptic Milieus” in *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* [ed. Gabriele Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 27–34).

Joseph narrative in Gen 37–50, although they contain some apocalyptic elements (particularly in ch. 2). Chapters 7–12, however, clearly belong to the apocalyptic genre, as they consist entirely of symbolic vision reports and historical narrations of the *ex eventu* type. This division has often led to speculation of at least two separate stages of composition—an early collection of tales (chs. 1–6) and a later collection of apocalyptic visions (chs. 7–12).⁸⁸

Further complicating the matter is the fact that Daniel is composed in two different languages—Hebrew (chs. 1 and 8–12) and Aramaic (chs. 2–7)—yet the language division does not correspond to the formal division of the book. One explanation is that the languages reflect different layers, i.e., the incorporation of older Aramaic material into a later Hebrew composition.⁸⁹ This requires, however, that Dan 7 have a different provenance than Dan 8–12, with which it shares many features.⁹⁰ That

⁸⁸ E.g., James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1927), 88–98; Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 23; New York: Doubleday, 1978), 13–14; André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel* (trans. David Pellauer; Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 8–10; John Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas: Word, 1989), 326–28. Hölscher argues for three stages of composition, with chs. 1–6 dating to the third century, followed by the addition of ch. 7 later that century to form an Aramaic book of Daniel. Finally, chs. 8–12 were added in the mid-second century to complete the present book (Gustav Hölscher, “Die Entstehung des Buches Daniel,” *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 92 [1919]: 113–38). Noth, on the other hand, argues that the dream/vision reports of chs. 2 and 7 are the oldest sections of the book, dating to the fourth century, which were then supplemented by the narratives of chs. 1–6 to form an early Aramaic book (Martin Noth, “Zur Komposition des Buches Daniel,” *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 98/99 [1926]: 143–63). D. S. Russell suggests that chs. 1–6 originated as oral traditions during the Persian and early Hellenistic periods and were first written down by the author of chs. 8–12 as a preface to his own work, along with ch. 7, which he also inherited (*Daniel* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981], 3–4). Cf. H. H. Rowley, who argues for the unity of Daniel as a Maccabean-era composition (“The Unity of the Book of Daniel,” in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament* [2nd ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1965], 249–80; also Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965], 18–20) and Stephen R. Miller, who argues for a single, sixth century author (*Daniel* [NAC 18; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994], 24–43).

⁸⁹ Montgomery, *Daniel*, 88–99.

⁹⁰ Thus Hölscher (“Die Entstehung”), Noth (“Zur Komposition”), and Russell (*Daniel*, 3–4) argue that at least the core of ch. 7 was earlier material “inherited” by the author of chs. 8–12.

Dan 7 draws on very old mythological imagery is well established,⁹¹ but as it stands it is difficult to separate this vision from the Maccabean crisis of 167–64 B.C.E., given the clear allusions to Antiochus IV in vv. 8, 11, 20–22, 24–27, and arguments that the references to Antiochus IV are late redactional material are unconvincing.⁹² Numerous attempts to date the Aramaic of Dan 2–7 have yielded inconclusive results and are of little help for dating the text with precision.⁹³

The Book of Daniel must be dated on the basis of references to known historical events and persons. The book’s own internal dating schema, which places both the tales and the visions in the sixth century—from early in Nebuchadnezzar’s reign to the reign of Darius I—is fraught with historical and chronological problems. Not least among these

⁹¹ The vision of the four beasts and the “one like a Son of Man” (vv. 13–14) are widely regarded as drawing upon the *Chaoskampf* tradition found throughout the ancient Near East, and the Ugaritic myth of Baal’s defeat of Yamm in particular (see the extensive discussion in John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 280–94; see also John J. Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* [FOTL 20; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], 77).

⁹² Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 277–80, 294; Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction*, 75–78.

⁹³ Driver concludes that the Aramaic (and Hebrew) of Daniel require a date after Alexander’s conquests, due to the presence of some Greek words. He also points to the use of 𐤀, rather than the 𐤁 of early Aramaic inscriptions (late eighth–fourth centuries), as the relative pronoun, as an indication of a late date (S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel* [The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900], lx–lxiii). Yet the same form appears consistently in the Aramaic portions of Ezra, and the later form also appears many times in the Elephantine papyri, and some argue that the phonetic shift had already occurred in the fifth century but was not consistently reflected orthographically even as late as the first century B.C.E. (see K. A. Kitchen, “The Aramaic of Daniel,” in *Notes on some Problems in the Book of Daniel* [eds. D. J. Wiseman, et al.; London: Tyndale, 1965], 50–54; Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 16). Thus, Schaeder concludes that “Imperial Aramaic” was fairly standard throughout the duration of the Persian Empire and even afterward, effectively ruling out the dating of Daniel on linguistic grounds (H. H. Schaeder, “Iranische Beiträge I,” in *Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft, geisteswiss. Kl.*, 6/5 [Halle: Niemeyer, 1930], 199–296). Further discoveries in the mid and late twentieth century allow for only slight refinement of Schaeder’s conclusion. Fitzmeyer classifies the Aramaic of Daniel as late Official (Imperial) Aramaic (late Persian or early Hellenistic) (Joseph Fitzmeyer, “The Phases of the Aramaic Language,” in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* [SBLMS 25; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1979], 61), and Collins argues for a date later than the Samaritan papyri of the fourth century but earlier than at least most of the Aramaic Qumran texts (Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 17).

are the apparent attribution of Nabonidus' "madness" to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4),⁹⁴ the errant identification of Belshazzar as the son of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 5:11–12), and the identification of Darius I as a Median king who conquered Babylon and preceded Cyrus the Great (Dan 5:30–6:2).⁹⁵ Likewise, the visions of Dan 7–12 point to a setting in the persecutions under Antiochus IV in the mid-second century B.C.E. In contrast to chs. 1–6, chs. 7–12 refers to events in the Hellenistic period, up to about 164 B.C.E., with remarkable accuracy and precision. After Antiochus' second Egyptian campaign, his desecration of the Jerusalem temple, and the fortification of the Akra (Dan 11:29–39), however, the predictions become much more vague, leading most to conclude that this is the point at which *ex eventu* prophecy gives way to genuine prediction.

That Dan 7–12, at least in its present form, dates to roughly 167–64 B.C.E. is the consensus among all but the most conservative of scholars.⁹⁶ Defenses of a sixth century date for Daniel depend, to a large degree, on the identification of "Darius the Mede" (Dan 5:31) with Gubāru, who served as governor (*piḥatu*) of Babylonia and Ebir-nari under Cyrus, since the book's claims that Darius, rather than Cyrus, conquered the Neo-Babylonian Empire is one of its more glaring historical errors.⁹⁷ This explanation is highly unlikely for a number of reasons. First, Gubāru was governor/satrap (*piḥatu*) of

⁹⁴ Tales of Nabonidus' madness are well-known both from Babylonian sources, such as the Persian era "Nabonidus Verse Account," and from Jewish sources (4Q242 [4QPrNab]).

⁹⁵ For an extensive discussion of historical problems in Daniel, see Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 29–33.

⁹⁶ A small minority argue for a date in the sixth century (e.g., Miller, *Daniel*, 22–43; Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel* [TOTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978]; Bruce K. Waltke, "The Date of the Book of Daniel," *BSac* 133 [1976]: 319–29).

⁹⁷ Waltke, "Date," 327–28; J. C. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

Babylonia and Ebir-nari, but there is no evidence that he was ever given the title “king.”⁹⁸ Cambyses did briefly serve as “king of Babylon” for a few months before Cyrus assumed the title himself, but he was a Persian Achaemenid, not a Mede. Second, even if Gubāru (or Cambyses) did go by the name “Darius the Mede,” he would have been a satrap himself, subject to Cyrus (who assumed the title “king of Babylon” himself shortly after the conquest of Babylon), and would have lacked the authority to appoint satraps throughout the empire (cf. Dan 6:1–2).⁹⁹ Others have suggested that Darius the Mede was none other than Cyrus, who did have a Median heritage.¹⁰⁰ There is, however, no evidence that Cyrus ever used the name “Darius the Mede,” and Daniel refers to Cyrus as Cyrus in 1:21; 6:28; 10:1. Daniel 9:1 describes the accession of Darius in slightly greater detail than 5:31. Here Darius is said to be “a Mede by birth” (מִזְרַע מְדִי) which suggests a true Mede, rather than a Persian with some Median ancestry through his mother.¹⁰¹ The identification of Darius the Mede as Cyrus is dealt a fatal blow in Dan 6:29, which mentions both Darius and Cyrus as distinct kings and implies that Cyrus succeeded

⁹⁸ Grabbe, *History of the Jews I*, 267; Briant, *History*, 64. A general in Cyrus’ army named Gubāru did lead the capture of Babylon in 539, but according to *Nab. Chron.* 3.22 he died only a few days after its capture (Grabbe, *History of the Jews I*, 266). Either the accounts are confused or there were two different individuals named Gubāru.

⁹⁹ *Nab. Chron.* 3.20 does indicate that Gubāru appointed officials in Babylon, but this is far less than the claims of Dan 6:1–2, which seems to recall the fame of Darius I as an administrator who established many satrapies (see Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 30–31).

¹⁰⁰ D. J. Wiseman, “Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel,” in *Notes on some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (eds. D. J. Wiseman, et al.; London: Tyndale, 1965), 9–16; Baldwin, *Daniel*, 26–28, 127.

¹⁰¹ Daniel 9:1 also claims that Darius was the son of Ahasuerus (Xerxes). Hartman and Di Lella suggest that this attribution is a confused reflection of Darius I, who was the *father* of Xerxes I (*Daniel*, 36).

Darius.¹⁰² The best explanation for the figure of Darius the Mede is that the author of Daniel inherited a historical schema in which a Median or Medo-Persian (with the Medes being dominant initially) preceded Cyrus' Persian Empire.¹⁰³

Daniel 1–6, while not sixth century, likely originated as folklore of the eastern diaspora in the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods.¹⁰⁴ The visions of Dan 7–12, on the other hand, appear to reflect conditions and concerns of the Maccabean crisis is 167–64 B.C.E. While chs. 1–6 do portray persecution or discrimination against Jews by Babylonian and Persian authorities, such opposition is sporadic and isolated to certain individual Jews. In these chapters, Jews prosper and ascend to positions of high authority and prestige, and even pagan kings pay homage to and recognize the supremacy of the Jewish God (Dan 2:47; 3:26, 28–30; 4:1–3, 34–37; 6:25–28). In chs. 7–12, however, foreign kings and kingdoms are portrayed as manifestations of evil and chaos, eternally opposed to God and to the people of God. This is nowhere clearer than in Dan 7, which portrays a series of four kingdoms as four mythological beasts which recall the *Chaoskampf* tradition of ancient Near Eastern mythology. Jewish persecution is no longer isolated but systematic and severe. In Dan 7:21 the “horn” (קרנא) “made war with the holy ones and prevailed over them” (עבדה קרב עם־קדישין ויכלה להון), and in 7:25 he

¹⁰² Wiseman's translation of במלכות דריוש ובמלכות כורש as “in the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus the Persian” is unconvincing (“Historical Problems,” 12), especially when one considers that the same sequence (Belshazzar→Darius→Cyrus) appears in the visions of chs. 7–12.

¹⁰³ This view was common in antiquity. As Grabbe writes of Cyrus' defeat of the Medes at Ecbatana, “This brought Persian hegemony over the Medes, though it evidently appeared to outsiders that there had simply been a change of dynasty among the Medes....The Persian Empire continued to be referred to as ‘the Medes’ not only at this time but as an alternative to ‘Persian’ for centuries afterward” (*History of the Jews I*, 266).

¹⁰⁴ See Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 35–37, 48.

speaks blasphemies against God, overpowers the holy ones, and attempts to change זמנין “times” and דת “law,” while the holy ones are given into his hand “for a time, times, and half a time” (עדן ועדנין ופולג עדן).¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in 8:10–12 the “little horn” (קרן־אחת) even tramples on the host of heaven, in addition to putting an end to offerings in the (Jerusalem) temple. Daniel 9:27 also mentions the cessation of sacrifices for “half of the week” (3 ½ years) and adds that the sanctuary will be defiled with “a desolating abhorrence” (שקוצים משמים). These three chapters all refer, rather unambiguously, to the events of 167–64 B.C.E., when, according to 1 Macc 1:11–64, Antiochus IV instigated a severe persecution of Jews living in Palestine, attempted to eradicate the Jewish religion, and defiled the Jerusalem temple with a “desolating sacrilege” (βδέλυγμα ἐρημώσεως) (1 Macc 1:54).¹⁰⁶ Chapter 11 is even clearer with regard to its *ex eventu* nature. Here an angel narrates an extensive *ex eventu* prophecy of history from the Greco-Persian wars of the fifth century through the desecration of Jerusalem by Antiochus IV (Dan 11:2–39) and largely parallels the Enochic *Book of Dreams* (1 *En.* 83–90) in terms of content, although it lacks the animal symbolism. In 11:40, however, the narrative becomes much

¹⁰⁵ This time frame of 3 ½ years is close to the length of the Seleucid persecution, which lasted just over 3 years (167–64 B.C.E.) and may indicate that this number reflects a genuine prediction at a time when the Maccabean victory was on the horizon (see Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 215–16).

¹⁰⁶ Attempts to read these visions as sixth century predictions of events in the Roman period, connected with the death of Jesus and the Roman destruction of the temple and city, fail to appreciate the nature of the apocalyptic genre. All Jewish apocalypses are pseudonymous, and those of the “historical” type (1 *En.* 83–90; 93; 4 *Ezra*; 2 *Baruch*; Dan 7–12) universally employ *ex eventu* prophecy in order to connect the present crises of the authors with God’s past saving acts, thereby encouraging the suffering with the assurance that God is in control, just in the past. Moreover, *ex eventu* prophecy is not unique to Jewish apocalyptic literature, but it is also characteristic of Babylonian (e.g., *Dynastic Prophecy*) and Persian (e.g., *ZVYt.* 1:1–5) apocalyptic literature. The burden of proof rests on those who claim that Dan 7–12 alone deviates from this practice, which is characteristic of its genre.

more vague, and the account of Antiochus' death in 11:45 is historically inaccurate, leading most scholars to conclude that it is at this point that *ex eventu* prophecy gives way to genuine prediction.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Dan 11:40–45 provides the best evidence regarding the date of Dan 7–12 as ca. 164 B.C.E.¹⁰⁸

Daniel and Mantic Wisdom

A final point of interest is the relationship between the book of Daniel and mantic wisdom. As noted above, *The Book of Watchers* and especially *The Book of Luminaries* appear to have a background in Mesopotamian mantic wisdom traditions/divinatory practices, and similar observations have been made with regard to Daniel. In contrast to Israelite/Jewish mantic wisdom, in which visions and dreams are the dominant form of revelation, Mesopotamian mantic wisdom, while also containing “inspired” divination (dreams, visions), tends to be of a scientific/deductive sort. That is, the secrets of the gods were believed to be encoded in natural phenomena, which could be interpreted by anyone possessing the technical knowledge required to interpret the signs and symbols (*bârûtu*).¹⁰⁹ One could say that divination, in the Mesopotamian system, was more of a profession than a divine calling.

The portrayal of Daniel as a “wise man” led von Rad to argue that apocalyptic literature is the child of wisdom, rather than prophecy.¹¹⁰ While recent research has

¹⁰⁷ Montgomery, *Daniel*, 470; Porteous, *Daniel*, 169–70; Lacocque, *Daniel*, 232–33; Russell, *Daniel*, 213–14; Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 303–05; Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction*, 36; Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 61.

¹⁰⁸ Collins, *Daniel with an Introduction*, 36; Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 61.

¹⁰⁹ Bottéro, *Religion*, 176–85; VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 52–62.

¹¹⁰ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:301–15; Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 263–83.

refined von Rad's thesis by distinguishing mantic wisdom, rather than didactic wisdom, as an important influence on apocalyptic literature, evidence from Qumran, as well as other Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic literature, generally support von Rad's proposal.¹¹¹ One popular theory with regard to the authorship of Daniel places it within a circle of wisdom teachers known as the *maskilim* (cf. Dan 11:33–35; 12:3).¹¹² At the same time, however, the centrality of the prophetic tradition in the rise of apocalypticism must not be overlooked.¹¹³ Both streams played important roles in the emergence of apocalyptic literature.

Daniel's connections with mantic wisdom are apparent on a number of levels. In Dan 1–6, Daniel is portrayed as a “wise man” (חכמים) and as “chief of the magicians” (רב חרטמיא) in the courts of several Mesopotamian and Persian kings. Specifically, he serves among the court diviners of the king as one who possesses the necessary knowledge and wisdom for interpreting signs, symbols, and omens and, thereby, discerning the will of the gods (Dan 1:3–21; 2:12–49; 4:5–24; 5:11–28), and this portrayal may indicate the

¹¹¹ See especially the discussions of 4QMysteries (4Q299–301) and 4QInstruction (4Q415–18), which link wisdom with apocalyptic eschatology (see Knibb, *Essays*, 27–29; Elgvin, “The Mystery to Come”). Studies of Jewish apocalyptic literature have also detected a common concern with the revelation of cosmological secrets and the possession of divinely revealed wisdom by certain humans (see Stone, “Lists of Revealed Things”).

¹¹² Collins champions this view, arguing that the *maskilim* were members of wisdom circles of a mantic variety and that the portrayal of Daniel in the book is a reflection of the *maskilim* (Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 66–70; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 90, 111; see also Goldingay, *Daniel*, 329). This identification applies both to chs. 1–6 and 7–12, although Collins believes these sections reflect different historical settings and respond to different concerns. Others seek to identify the *maskilim* with the *hasidim* known from 1 Maccabees and other Second Temple period texts as allies of the Maccabees (e.g., Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 85; Lacocque, *Daniel*, 10–12; Montgomery, *Daniel*, 87; Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 43–45).

¹¹³ See Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*; Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak, eds., *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, The Apocalyptic and Their Relationships* (JSPSup 46; London: T & T Clark, 2003).

background or at least the aspirations of the book's author(s).¹¹⁴ At the same time, Daniel consistently outshines his Babylonian counterparts, who appear as incompetent pretenders and frauds (Dan 1:20; 2; 3:3–6; 5:7–16). While Daniel serves among the Babylonian diviners, he is unique among them. Although he possesses wisdom far superior to his colleagues, Daniel highlights the divine source of his wisdom in such a way as to dispel any notion that it is his own wisdom or knowledge which permits him to interpret dreams and visions. Thus, in Dan 2:27–30, Daniel asserts:

No wise men, sorcerers, magicians, or diviners are able to explain to the king the mystery of which the king asks. But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in latter days....But as for me, this mystery was not revealed to me because I possess wisdom more than any other creature, but so that the interpretation might be made known to the king and that you might understand the thoughts of your mind.

When viewed within the context of the Babylonian diviners' inability to interpret the dream—a theme which persists throughout Dan 1–6—Daniel's assertion carries with it an implied polemic against pagan divination in favor of genuine divine revelation from the true God, the Jewish God.¹¹⁵ Thus, Daniel is at the same time a wise man/diviner by profession and a witness against all attempts to discern the future through human knowledge. Likewise, in chs. 7–12, Daniel's inability to understand his own visions is emphasized (Dan 7:15–16; 8:15–16, 27; 12:8; cf. 10:1, 12–14), thus further highlighting his dependence upon divine revelation, rather than his own wisdom and knowledge. Indeed, the contrast between the Babylonian diviners, who claim to have divine knowledge but really lack it, and Daniel, who confesses his lack of knowledge and as a

¹¹⁴ See John J. Collins, "The Court Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *JBL* (1975): 218–29.

¹¹⁵ Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 50; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 91.

result receives knowledge from God, is a theme which unites the two halves of the book.¹¹⁶ This theme is important for understanding the role of angelic interpretation in the book of Daniel, and I shall return to it in the discussion below.

Dan 7:15–27

In Dan 7 the apocalyptic motif of angelic interpretations of symbolic visions reaches its mature, classical form.¹¹⁷ All traces of classical prophecy are now gone, and the interpreting angel is the sole mediator of divine revelation, while Daniel is merely an observer and recorder. In contrast to the portrayal of Daniel in Dan 1–6, Daniel lacks any ability to understand his visions and must ask an angel for interpretation of what he sees.¹¹⁸ Whereas in Ezek 40–48; Zech 1–6; *The Book of Luminaries*; and *The Book of Watchers* interpreting angels were sent to the human visionary, in Dan 7 Daniel must seek out his heavenly interpreter. In the midst of his vision of the four beasts, the Ancient of Days (עתיק יומין), and the One like a Son of Man (כבר אנוש), Daniel

¹¹⁶ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 91. In contrast to Daniel’s divine revelation, whether given directly or through angelic mediation, Babylonian mantic wisdom (*bârûtu*) was transmitted within the guild of diviners, who belonged to the broader category of the *ummânû* (“scholars”). The technical knowledge of the *ummânû* was ultimately believed to have originated with their patron deity, Ea, who dispatched a group of divine beings known as *apkallû* to teach primeval humanity (see Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 106–22). As heirs to the *apkallû*, the *ummânû* were custodians of this body of knowledge, to which those outside the guild (into which Daniel and his companions appear to have been inducted in Dan 1:3–5) lacked direct access. The repeated failure of the Babylonian diviners, in contrast to Daniel’s success, may constitute a polemic against Babylonian mantic wisdom in favor of another kind of divine revelation, similar to the polemic found in Isa 44:25–26 (Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 49–50).

¹¹⁷ Niditch labels this stage of the symbolic vision tradition the “baroque stage,” and although her focus is on symbolic visions rather than angelic interpretation, much of what she observes in Dan 7–8 is equally applicable to the interpreting angel motif, since the latter is closely intertwined with the former (see Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 177–241).

¹¹⁸ Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 311. Niditch notes that Daniel’s request for interpretation brings the scene very close to a divinatory/dream interpretation setting (Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 185). Note, however, that Daniel does not fill the role of the diviner, but of the dreamer, while the angel acts as diviner. This shift, already observed in Zech 1–6 and, to a lesser extent, in Ezek 40–48, highlights divine source of the interpretation by removing from the human visionary the role of mediator/interpreter of revelation.

approaches a bystander (חד מן־קאמיא) in the divine council and asks him to explain what he has seen (Dan 7:16).¹¹⁹ Like Zechariah, Daniel is able to interact with his visions and communicate with angelic beings in them (cf. Zech 2:5–7; 3:5). The angel replies that he will “make known to me the interpretation of the matter” (ופשר מליא יהודענני).

Daniel’s inability to understand his vision, and hence his need for an angelic interpreter, presumably arises from the elaborate symbolism of his vision. The vision consists of three parts: four composite beasts arising out of the sea, the fourth of which has ten horns plus a “little horn” (Dan 7:2–8), the gathering of the divine council around the throne of the “Ancient of Days” (עתיק יומין), who sits in judgment (7:9–12), and the appearance of “One like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven” (עם־ענני שמיא) (כבר אנש אתה הוה) to whom authority is given to rule all the earth as an everlasting kingdom (7:13–14). Gone are the logical relationships between the symbolic visions of Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24, which rely on wordplay, puns, etc., as well as the “real mythic” imagery of Ezek 40–48; Zech 1:7–17; 2:5–9; 6:1–8. Instead, Daniel’s visions are fully symbolic and depend upon “deep interrelationships in the ancient mythology of Near Eastern culture.”¹²⁰ At the same time, Niditch argues that the

¹¹⁹ The bystander is not explicitly identified as an angel, but given the setting in the divine council it may be safely assumed that he is a divine being. Collins compares the scene with that of 1 Kgs 22:21 and Isa 6:6, both of which take place in the divine council and involve divine (angelic) beings, and he also notes that Dan 9:21 refers to Gabriel as the man “whom I had seen in the vision at first,” possibly referring back to Dan 7:16 (Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 311). Montgomery reads קאמיא as a specific reference to the angels of Yahweh’s presence, who stand in attendance of the heavenly king (Montgomery, *Daniel*, 306; also Russell, *Daniel*, 129).

¹²⁰ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 185. These “deep interrelationships” include especially the chaos monster motif for the four beasts and the divine warrior motif for the “One like a Son of Man.” The latter, especially, has been the subject of much comparative study with Babylonian (Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*; H. Gressmann, *Der Messias* [FRLANT 43; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1929], 368) and

meaning of the symbols themselves would have been understandable to those in the author's circle, well versed as they likely were in the mythological traditions of the ancient Near East. It is only the nature of the kingdom which follows the destruction of the fourth beast and the little horn which is a mystery.¹²¹ Nevertheless, within the narrative of Dan 7, the meaning of the vision is completely obscured to Daniel and he is dependent upon the angel for interpretation (Dan 7:15–16, 19–20, 28).¹²²

The angel offers a succinct interpretation of Daniel's vision:

These four great beasts are four kings which will arise from the earth.¹²³
But the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom, and they
will take possession of the kingdom forever—forever and ever (Dan 7:17–
18).

especially Ugaritic/Canaanite (Montgomery, *Daniel*, 111; J. Emerton, "The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery," *JTS* 9 [1958]: 225–42; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 165; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* [HSM 16; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977], 99) sources. For a thorough survey of scholarship on the background of Dan 7:2–14, see Jürg Egger, *Influences and Traditions Underlying the Vision of Daniel 7:2–14: The Research History from the End of the 19th Century to the Present* [OBO 177; Fribourg/Göttingen: University Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000]).

¹²¹ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 204–05, 215.

¹²² Daniel's fearful response to his visions (Dan 7:15, 28) echoes the responses of Nebuchadnezzar to his dreams (Dan 2:1, 3; 4:2) and Belshazzar to his vision (Dan 5:6, 9), as well as Pharaoh's response to his dream in the Joseph story (Gen 41:8). Daniel now stands in the position of the dreamer/visionary who is bewildered by what he has seen and must seek out a wise interpreter, in this case, an angel (Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 219; Porteous, *Daniel*, 111; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 172). As noted by Oppenheim, symbolic dreams which remained uninterpreted were considered "evil dreams," for the act of interpreting had the effect of neutralizing the negative effects of a bad dream or of producing the good effects of a good dream (A. Leo Oppenheim, "Mantic Dreams in the Ancient Near East," in *The Dream and Human Societies* [eds. G. E. von Grunbaum and R. Callois; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966], 349–50; also Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 23). This may explain the fearful responses of Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Daniel to their dreams and their immediate concern to find an interpreter.

¹²³ The "four kingdoms" motif is well-known across the eastern Mediterranean basin. It appears in the Persian "apocalypse" *Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5, in which the four kingdoms are symbolized by a tree with four branches of different metals (cf. Dan 2). The Seleucid era *Dynastic Prophecy* from Babylon has also possibly utilizes a four kingdoms schema, although the fragmentary state of the text makes this uncertain. Earlier still, Hesiod's *Works and Days* employs a sequence of four primeval "ages" symbolized by metals of decreasing value (gold, silver, bronze, iron), although he adds a fifth, non-metal age (the age of heroes) between the bronze and iron ages (see Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 92–98). Daniel 7 adapts this four kingdoms motif by merging it with the *Chaoskampf* mythological motif.

Some scholars, most notably Martin Noth, have argued that vv. 9–10 and 13–14 are independent compositions incorporated by the author of ch. 7, and the absence of any direct mention of either the Ancient of Days or the One like a Son of Man in the angel’s interpretation in vv. 17–18 may support this thesis.¹²⁴ On the other hand, the second part of the interpretation, in which the holy ones receive an eternal kingdom, presupposes the securing of an everlasting dominion by the One like a Son of Man in v. 14, and allusions to vv. 9–10 appear in vv. 19–27. Thus, even if vv. 9–10, 13–14 are earlier than the rest of ch. 7, they are essential to the basic narrative.¹²⁵

Following the angel’s interpretation of Daniel’s vision, Daniel requests further explanation regarding the fourth beast and its “little horn.” Of the four beasts, the fourth is the most cryptic, for Daniel provides comparative descriptions for the first three beasts (lion, eagles’ wings, bear, leopard, etc.), while the fourth is described as:

Frightening and terrible and extremely strong; it had large iron teeth, and it was devouring and crushing and trampling the remains with its feet. It was different from all the beasts which preceded it, and it had ten horns (Dan 7:7).

The description of this beast is less detailed than that of the other beasts, while at the same time emphasizing its “destructive behavior” above the others.¹²⁶ Likewise, the “otherness” of the “little horn” is emphasized, adding to the mystery of the vision and

¹²⁴ Noth, “Zur Komposition,” 145–47. Note, however, the Ancient of Days is mentioned in the continuation of Daniel’s description of his vision in v. 22, and the judgment scene of v. 10 is reprised in v. 26 (part of the angel’s second interpretation).

¹²⁵ Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 280; see also Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 193–95.

¹²⁶ Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 299. Staub identifies the fourth beast as a Seleucid war elephant on the basis of iconography (especially Seleucid coins) which depict kings wearing elephant skin hats with tusks on them, which were styled as horns (U. Staub, “Das Tier mit den Hörnern. Bein Beitrag zu Dan 7, 7 f.,” *FrZPhTh* 25 [1978]: 356–97). Horns were a common symbol of power in the ancient Near East, and gods were often depicted wearing horned headdresses. Perhaps owing to their self-divinization, the Seleucid kings (and Alexander the Great, as well) were often depicted wearing horns as well (see Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 299).

prompting Daniel to ask for further explanation. In vv. 19–20 Daniel repeats his vision of the fourth beast, with one added detail (claws of bronze).¹²⁷ New action follows, as the text narrates:

While I was looking, this horn made war with the holy ones, and it was prevailing over them, until the Ancient of Days came and gave judgment in favor of the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived, and the holy ones took possession of the kingdom (Dan 7:21–22).

As in Zech 1–6, Daniel’s visions are not static but continue to unfold before his eyes. To the initial vision of the fourth beast and the little horn is added the horn’s persecution of the “holy ones” (קדישין) and their eventual victory and possession of the kingdom.¹²⁸

These become the subject of the angel’s next act of interpretation in vv. 23–27. The angel replies to Daniel’s second inquiry with a much longer interpretation, focused specifically on the fourth beast and the little horn.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Repetition is an essential feature in Babylonian dream interpretation, and the act of reciting the dream could itself be an apotropaic ritual (Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 23). Niditch notes that repetition of symbolic visions is a common feature in the first stage of the symbolic vision motif (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24), but is rare in Zech 1–6, with the exception of the fifth vision. It reappears in Dan 7 (Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 199–200).

¹²⁸ The identity of the “holy ones” has been a topic of debate among scholars. The fact that קדישין/קדישין typically refers to divine beings in the Hebrew Bible has led some to argue that the horn is engaged in a heavenly battle (Otto Procksch, “Der Menschensohn als Gottessohn,” *Christentum und Wissenschaft* 3 [1927]: 429; Martin Noth, “The Holy Ones of the Most High,” in *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays* [London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966; repr., London: SCM, 1984], 215–28; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 176–78). On the other hand, if the horn is Antiochus IV, as is nearly universally acknowledged, the persecution in question would best be understood as his persecution of the Jews (Porteous, *Daniel*, 116; Lacocque, *Daniel*, 126–28, 131; Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 207). Collins notes the “mingling of angels and human beings” in Qumran texts, such as *The War Scroll* and *The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, as well as Dan 10:13–14, 20, and suggests that in the book of Daniel “there is, then, a synergism between the faithful Israelites on earth and their angelic counterparts in heaven,” so that the קדישין are, first and foremost, angels, but the persecution of the Jews is inextricably linked with supernatural events in the heavenly realm (Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 317–18).

¹²⁹ The angel identifies the fourth beast as a final kingdom which will be different from all others, just as the fourth beast was different from those that preceded it. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom, and the “little horn” is a final king who will blaspheme the Most High, persecute the “holy ones,” and attempt to change “times and law” (זמנין ודת) (Dan 7:25). After two and a half year, God will judge the beast and the horn and will destroy them, at which time the “people of the holy ones of

Conspicuously absent from Dan 7 is any direct communication from Yahweh. Indeed, Yahweh only appears as the Ancient of Days who sits in judgment in vv. 9–10, 13, 22, and as the Most High to whom the holy ones belong in vv. 18, 22, 25, 27. All revelation takes place through the medium of the symbolic dream-vision, as interpreted by the angel. The interpreting angel is essential to the text, for Daniel is unable to comprehend his vision and, like Pharaoh (Gen 41:8), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:1, 3; 4:2), and Belshazzar (Dan 5:6, 9), he must seek out an interpreter. This portrayal of Daniel contrasts with the wise interpreter of dreams and visions found in Dan 1–6, but there is a logical relationship between the two. Daniel confessed the inability of him or any other human to divine the future or interpret dreams (Dan 2:27–30), and in contrast to the Babylonian diviners, who claim to possess divine knowledge but do not, Daniel’s confessed lack of knowledge emphasizes the divine source of all knowledge of the future. This emphasis continues in Dan 7 in Daniel’s inability to understand his visions apart from angelic interpretation. Although Daniel serves among the diviners in the Neo-Babylonian court, he is not a diviner but a recipient of divine revelation mediated by angels.

Dan 8:15–26

Although Dan 8 has received far less scholarly attention than Dan 7, its importance for the development of the interpreting angel motif may well eclipse the latter. Whereas in Dan 7, Daniel must seek out an interpreter from a bystander in the divine council, in Dan 8 God commissions the angel Gabriel, specifically, to interpret

the Most High” will inherit an everlasting kingdom. That the “little horn” corresponds to Antiochus IV is beyond doubt, thus providing a secure anchor for dating Dan 7 to the mid-second century B.C.E. (see Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 320–24)

Daniel's vision for him (Dan 8:16). Niditch notes that both Dan 7 and 8 have an increased narrative quality in comparison with earlier symbolic vision texts (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24; Zech 1–6).¹³⁰ This story-like character is similar to Ezek 1; 8–11; 40–48; and much of *I Enoch*, and it may indicate the contribution of the Ezekeilian/Enochic tradition to apocalyptic literature. With the increased emphasis on the mode of revelation—angelic mediation/interpretation—comes a transformation of the role of the human visionary from that of mediator to that of recipient.

Daniel sees a vision of a single ram (אֵיל אֶחָד) with two horns, one of which is longer than the other (Dan 8:3). The ram charges toward the west, north, and south and overpowers all who stand in its path (8:4). Then, a male goat (צפִּיר־הָעִזִּים) with a single horn between its eyes charges from the west, without touching the ground, and attacks the ram, breaking its horns and trampling it to the ground (8:5–7). The male goat then grows extremely great, but at the height of its power, its single horn is broken and replaced by four new horns, one for each direction (8:8). Finally, another, “little horn” arises toward the south and the east. This horn is clearly the same as the “little horn” in Dan 7, as it commits the same atrocities, including persecution of the host of heaven (8:9–10), cessation of offerings and desecration of the sanctuary for “2,300 evenings and mornings” (8:11–14).

Although the symbolism of the vision in Dan 8:1–14 is even more transparent than that of Dan 7:1–14,¹³¹ Daniel is unable to understand it (Dan 8:15, 27). Suddenly,

¹³⁰ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 222–23.

¹³¹ Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 226–28. The ram and male goat are explicitly identified as the Medo-Persian and Greek kingdoms in the angel's interpretation (Dan 8:20–21). The single horn of the

he sees someone “with the appearance of a man” (כמראה־גבר) standing before him (8:15), and he hears a voice call out, “Gabriel, explain the vision to this person” (גבריאל הבן להלז) (את־המראה) (8:16). A number of new features appear here. First, the interpreting angel is identified by name (Gabriel). Although named angels appear in *The Book of Luminaries* and *The Book of Watchers*, this is the first time an angel is identified by name in the Hebrew Bible.¹³² Moreover, in *1 Enoch* several different angels act as Enoch’s interpreters, while in Dan 8 Gabriel is singled out as the interpreting angel, and he continues to fill the role of revealing angel throughout the rest of Dan 8–12 (and perhaps in ch. 7, as well).¹³³ Second, Gabriel is specifically commissioned to interpret Daniel’s vision. In none of the earlier instances of the interpreting angel motif is the commissioning of the angel portrayed. The closest parallels are 1 Kgs 22:20–23, in which a spirit (הרוח) in the divine council volunteers to go and be a “lying spirit” (רוח שקר) in the mouths of Ahab’s prophets, and Isa 6:8, in which Yahweh asks for a

male goat is clearly Alexander the Great (cf. Dan 8:21), the four horns that replace it are clearly the Diadochoi (cf. Dan 8:22), and the “little horn” is clearly Antiochus IV.

¹³² See Cho, *Lesser Deities*, 183–85; Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptische Literatur*, 155–61.

¹³³ Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 311. The granting of personal names to angels indicates increased autonomy and “personality” for angelic beings, in comparison with the rather static view of angels in most of the Hebrew Bible. Angelic autonomy may be seen especially in the depiction of angelic “princes” of nations in Dan 10:13, 20–11:1; 12:1, in which angels appear to function as national/patron deities. One could say that some of the attributes of Smith’s “second tier” deities reappear in the form of the highest ranking angels in the Second Temple period, following the collapse of the four-tiered pantheon into two tiers (Yahweh and the angels) (see Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 45–53; Smith, *The Early History of God*, 191–94). Handy attributes the breakdown of the perfect submissiveness of the fourth-tier (angels) to theodicy. Other autonomous deities besides Yahweh could explain evil without attributing it to Yahweh (Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 165–67). While theodicy may have played a role, especially in the development of Jewish demonology (cf. *1 En.* 6–11), Daniel does not appeal to demons to explain evil. Instead, Yahweh appears to be firmly in control of all of history in the book of Daniel. As suggested above, the increased autonomy of angels in the Hellenistic period may reflect the increase autonomy of local rulers under Ptolemaic and Seleucid rule.

volunteer in the divine council, and Isaiah volunteers to speak for Yahweh. On the other hand, Gabriel does not volunteer but is assigned to the job, which may indicate a more specialized function as interpreting angel.¹³⁴ Finally, while God does speak directly in Dan 8, it is not directed toward Daniel, but toward Gabriel (cf. Ezek 43:6). On the one hand, the audible voice of God implies divine presence, but the mode of communication/revelation is not that of earlier prophecy.¹³⁵ Rather, the proper channel for revelation is through the interpretation of the vision by the angel Gabriel. Significant as this shift is, one may not conclude that a universal shift toward a view of God as distant had taken place within Judaism, for God himself functions as interpreter of symbolic visions in *4 Ezra* 12:10–39; 13:21–58; *2 Bar.* 39–43. While certain texts may

¹³⁴ See Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptische Literatur*, 256. As noted above, there seems to be a connection between the specialized function/domain of the angels and their roles as interpreters in *1 Enoch* (e.g., Uriel rules over and also explains the heavenly luminaries). Gabriel functions as messenger/interpreter not only here, but also in Luke 1.

¹³⁵ In Ezek 43:6–27, Yahweh speaks to Ezekiel directly as a voice emanating from the temple, bringing a temporary halt to the angel-guided tour. Likewise, in Zech 1–6 classical prophetic oracles are interspersed with angelic interpretation of visions. Even *1 En.* 15–16 has God speak directly to Enoch and commission him to speak the word of God to the fallen Watchers. Such traces of classical prophecy are completely absent from Dan 7–12. Recent discussions of the theme of divine presence/absence in the Hebrew Bible have noted an increased emphasis on divine absence in the post-exilic period. Friedman reads the marked decline (in fact, complete absence) of miracles, theophanies, certain features of the temple (ark, bronze serpent, glory/cloud), and angels from such post-exilic texts as *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Esther* as an indication of divine absence (Richard Elliot Friedman, *The Disappearance of God: A Divine Mystery* [Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1995], 26–29). The book of Daniel comprises a curious anomaly to this pattern, and Friedman concludes that it “serves to convey the notion that a few miracles are called for in this age in which the Jews, exiled from their land, are encountering life in foreign lands. The miracles may thus function as indicators that their God’s presence extends beyond the borders of their land and pervades the entire world” (Friedman, *The Disappearance of God*, 26). Joel Burnett, on the other hand, notes that the city of Jerusalem and especially the temple are the focus of divine presence in *Ezra-Nehemiah*, which may suggest that it is not simply a matter of divine presence in the pre-exilic period and divine absence in the post-exilic period, but rather the channeling of divine presence through different sources (see Joel S. Burnett, *Where Is God? Divine Absence in the Hebrew Bible* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010], 167–73). For example, Burnett points to the divergent perspectives of *Ezra-Nehemiah* and *Chronicles*, Zech 1–8, and Haggai with regard to the importance of the Davidic line to the temple as the center of divine presence (Burnett, *Where Is God?*, 169). Korpel and de Moor provide a thorough discussion of the theme of divine silence, including divine revelation through intermediaries as well as technical means (divination) (Marjo Korpel and Johannes C. de Moor, *The Silent God* [Leiden: Brill, 2011], esp. 139–230). However, the issue at stake here is not so much divine silence as a shift from one form of divine communication to another, both of which Korpel and de Moor show to be attested across the ancient Near East.

indicate that a *preference* for angelic mediation had developed within certain circles, this preference does not appear to have been universal.

Gabriel speaks to Daniel in Dan 8:17b–26, interpreting his vision of the ram, the male goat, and the “little horn.” Certain stylistic features suggest that the author may have drawn on Ezekiel and Zechariah. I have already noted the similarity of the voice in v. 16 to Ezek 43:6. The angel’s opening address to Daniel (“Understand, O son of man [בן־אדם], that the vision concerns the time of the end” [Dan 8:17b]) recalls the frequent addressing of Ezekiel as בן־אדם in the book of Ezekiel, while the cry of one of the “holy ones” in the vision, “How long?” (עֲד־מתי) is identical to the cry of the מלאך יהוה in Zech 1:12.¹³⁶ As soon as Gabriel begins speaking, Daniel falls to the ground, and the angel must set him back on his feet, just as the angel has to awaken the seer in Zech 4:1. Moreover, the entire motif of angelic interpretation of symbolic visions in Dan 7–8 builds on the earlier forms found in Ezek 40–48 and Zech 1–6 (and to a lesser extent *1 Enoch*).

Following the angel’s interpretation of the vision, which largely parallels Dan 7:23–27 and contains nothing of interest, Daniel is told to “seal up the vision, for it is for many days” (סתם החזון כי לימים רבים) (Dan 8:26b). This statement may be intended to reconcile the supposed sixth century date of the vision with its recent appearance in the second century.¹³⁷ It is also a step away from classical prophecy, which typically concerned itself with the contemporary context of the prophet (cf. Ezek 12:27–28).¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Niditch reads this parallel as evidence that Dan 8 depends directly on Zech 1 (*The Symbolic Vision*, 232).

¹³⁷ Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 341–42; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 218–19.

¹³⁸ Goldingay, *Daniel*, 218–19.

But it also underscores the need for an authoritative, angelic interpretation—the vision pertains to a time far removed from that of the visionary, who cannot reasonably be expected to understand it. Indeed, even after the angel interprets the vision, Daniel admits that he still does not understand it (Dan 8:27). But in order to provide the intended encouragement to the community suffering under the Antiochene persecutions, the exposition of the vision needs to be as precise as possible and as certain as possible. Angelic interpretation fills this need by ensuring that the interpretation is true, since it did not arise from a human being but from an angel. At the same time, the emphasis on Daniel’s inability to understand his visions is emphasized in Dan 8 beyond even Dan 7 and Dan 1–6. Here even the angel’s interpretation is insufficient, and Daniel still does not understand the vision (Dan 8:27; also 12:5; but cf. 10:1). This is not a problem, however, because the vision is not for Daniel but for those living in distant times, for whom the angel’s interpretation is to be sealed up.¹³⁹ For the *maskilim*, the angel’s words will provide the definitive interpretation of the vision, certain because it came from a heavenly being and not from a human being.

In summary, in the Jewish literature of the early Hellenistic period the interpreting angel motif reaches its mature form. The earliest portions of the Enochic corpus, *The Book of Luminaries* and *The Book of Watchers*, both contain extensive sections of angelic interpretation of visions. Here the interpreting angels are given personal names, and in

¹³⁹ Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 342. Hartman and Di Lella regard Dan 8:27, along with all passages concerning the duration of the persecution, as later insertions (*Daniel*, 236–37). Porteous dismisses the notice of Daniel’s consideration as “a little odd” but “little more than a device on the part of the author to prepare the way for the highly detailed interpretation of chapter 11” (*Daniel*, 130). Lacocque sees the notice as indicating that Daniel had partial understanding of the details of the vision but could not grasp their synthesis (*Daniel*, 172–73). But the pervasive theme of the inability of humans to interpret dreams/visions pertaining to the future suggests that the notice in Dan 8:27 is significant, for it indicates that even Daniel is limited in his understanding. At the same time, it highlights the importance of the angel’s interpretation, not for Daniel, but for those who will read his words in a “later” time.

some instances the angel chosen as interpreter seems to be selected due to particular expertise on the subject being revealed (i.e., Uriel explains the luminaries in *1 En.* 72–82). The increased autonomy of angels may reflect political conditions in the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires, in which local rulers held considerable authority. The background of the Enochic texts appears to be Mesopotamian mantic wisdom, suggesting that angelic interpretation offers an authorized alternative to divination. This understanding of the significance of the interpreting angel motif receives even greater support in the book of Daniel. In Dan 7–8, Daniel is unable to understand his visions, in seeming contrast to the portrayal of Daniel as a wise interpreter of dreams and visions in Dan 1–6. Yet even in the court tales Daniel admits that neither he nor any other human can discern the future. Instead, God alone may reveal such secrets (Dan 2:27–30). The implied polemic against Babylonian divination in Dan 1–6 is applied even to Daniel in Dan 7–12 by means of the interpreting angel motif, erasing any notion that he is able to discover the future through his own wisdom.

Early Hellenistic Religious Background

Early Hellenistic period religious influences on the development of the interpreting angel motif fall into two categories. First, many of the influences from earlier periods, such as Babylonian and Persian parallels, continued to exist in the early Hellenistic period. These include especially the Babylonian *apkallu* tradition and other myths concerning the mediation of culture to primeval humans, which continued to circulate in Hellenistic times. Second, new influences may have come from the Aegean, as Greek literature also shows a proclivity toward the use of divine intermediaries. Two

sources in particular, Xenophon's *Banquet* and Plato's *Symposium*, speak of the need for a mediating spirit in order to obtain divine knowledge.

Chapter 2 discusses the Mesopotamian *apkallu* tradition in detail, so I only note here that this tradition continued to flourish and even grow in Hellenistic times. In his *Babyloniaca*, Berossus describes the mediation of the arts of civilization through a race of semi-divine fish-men. The first of these fish-men is Oannes, who is widely recognized as U-Anna from the *Bīt Mēseri* myth of the Seven Sages and Adapa from other mythological texts.¹⁴⁰ According to Berossus:

[Oannes] gave to the men the knowledge of letters and sciences and crafts of all types. It also taught them how to found cities, establish temples, introduce laws and measure land. It also revealed to them seeds and the gathering of fruits, and in general it gave men everything which is connected with civilized life. From the time of that beast nothing further has been discovered. But when the sun set this beast Oannes plunged back into the sea and spent the nights in the deep, for it was amphibious. Later other beasts also appeared (Berossus, *Babyloniaca* 1.1.5).¹⁴¹

Another Hellenistic period exemplar of the *apkallu* tradition is the "Uruk Sage List," which dates ca. 165 B.C.E. This text lists the names of seven antediluvian and one post-diluvian *apkallū*, alongside the names of the kings whom they served/advised.¹⁴²

In no extant text does an *apkallu* interpret visions, although Berossus writes of the creatures which came after Oannes, "These creatures all together explained in detail the

¹⁴⁰ See Reiner, "Seven Sages," 1–11; Kvanvig, *Mesopotamian Background*, 202–04; Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 119.

¹⁴¹ Translation, Stanley M. Burstein, "The *Babyloniaca* of Berossus," *SANE* 1/5 (Malibu: Undena, 1978), 156–57.

¹⁴² See Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 107–08. Notably, the seventh antediluvian king is Enmeduranki, who, as noted above, is often compared with Enoch (see VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 39–45). His *apkallu*, Utu'abzu, then, would parallel Uriel and the other angels who instructed Enoch in *1 En.* 17–36; 72–82.

things which had been spoken summarily by Oannes” (*Babyloniaca* 2.1.8).¹⁴³ The tradition’s primary relevance to the interpreting angel motif may lie in the theme of the transmission of divine secrets. The *apkallū* are in many ways analogous to the Watchers in *I En.* 6–11, who, in addition to mating with humans, taught forbidden knowledge.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, the instruction of Enoch by the angels in *I En.* 19–36; 72–82 provides a legitimate counterpart to the illicit teachings of the Watchers in *I En.* 6–11 and is itself rather similar to the *apkallu* tradition.¹⁴⁵ Angelic revelations, at least in *I Enoch*, constitute a positive alternative to the destructive teachings of the Watchers. Furthermore, the body of teachings ostensibly revealed by the *apkallū* became the foundation of Babylonian mantic wisdom/divination, which forms the background of *The Book of Luminaries* and, to a lesser extent, *I En.* 19–36. Following his description of Oannes, Berossus narrates a revelation of Oannes concerning creation and cosmology (*Babyloniaca* 1.2). Likewise, in the “Uruk Sage List” the names of nine “scholars” (*ummânū*), along with their kings, follow the list of the *apkallū*. Lenzi argues that the *ummânū* were understood as the successors of the *apkallū*, who preserved the secret knowledge of the *apkallū* and thus formed a bridge between the antediluvian revelation and the mantic wisdom of later times.¹⁴⁶ Both *I Enoch* and Daniel appear to polemicize against the methods and tradition of Babylonian mantic practice and the professionals who practice it by portraying them as either evil (*I En.* 6–11) or as frauds (Dan 1–6) and

¹⁴³ Translation, Burstein, *Babyloniaca*, 19.

¹⁴⁴ Kvanvig argues that *I En.* 6–11 is dependent upon the *apkallu* tradition for its depiction of the Watchers as teachers of primeval humanity (*Mesopotamian Background*, 313–15).

¹⁴⁵ For a comparison of Enoch with the *apkallu* tradition, see VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 45–51.

¹⁴⁶ *Secrecy and the Gods*, 106–22.

by offering an alternative method of predicting the future through the visions and dreams for which the angels provide authoritative interpretations (*I En.* 19–36; 72–82; Dan 7–12).¹⁴⁷ Thus, the preferred method of Mesopotamian divination—natural phenomena and omens—is replaced by symbolic visions/dreams, and the role of the diviner is filled, not by the seer, but by the interpreting angel.

The Zoroastrian text *Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5 (see chapter 3) may also have existed in some form during the Hellenistic period. Although all extant manuscripts date to medieval times, Boyce argues that the earliest portions of this text may have been written in the late fourth or early third century.¹⁴⁸ Even if it did not exist in written form at this time, it is likely that the core tradition circulated orally in the early Hellenistic period, as Babylonian, Greek, and Jewish parallels to the four-kingdom schema of *Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5 are attested at this time.¹⁴⁹

In addition to the continuation of earlier parallels and influences, a few new parallels do appear with the Hellenistic conquest. Greek mythology is replete with divine messengers and intermediaries.¹⁵⁰ Nickelsburg argues that the Asael/instruction motif in *I En.* 6–11 draws on the Prometheus myth, in which Prometheus angers Zeus by

¹⁴⁷ Here I build upon the work of VanderKam, who demonstrates that the Mesopotamian Enmeduranki/*apkallu* tradition forms the background of the Enoch tradition in Gen 5 and the later Enochic literature. He further argues that Enoch forms a Jewish counterpart to Enmeduranki (and perhaps his *apkallu*, Utuabzu) as the founder of Jewish mantic wisdom, through his reception of secret divine knowledge (*Apocalyptic Tradition*, 23–45). Not only the figure of Enoch, but the interpreting angel motif as well, implies the rejection of Mesopotamian (and now Hellenistic) mantic practices and traditions.

¹⁴⁸ Boyce, *Textual Resources*, 91.

¹⁴⁹ See Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 90–94.

¹⁵⁰ For an overview of Greek parallels to Jewish angelology, see Wolfgang Speyer, “The Divine Messenger in Ancient Greece, Etruria and Rome,” in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings – Origins, Development and Reception* (eds. Friedrich V. Reiterer, *et al.*; Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 35–47.

revealing forbidden knowledge—the making of fire—to primeval humans.¹⁵¹ Two discussions relevant to the interpreting angel motif are Xenophon’s *Symposium*, 4.47–48 and Plato’s *Symposium*, 202e–203a. In the former text, Hermogenes states to those present:

Very well; in the first place, it is clear as day that both Greeks and barbarians believe that the gods know everything both present and to come; at any rate, all cities and all races ask the gods, by the diviner’s art, for advice as to what to do and what to avoid. Second, it is likewise manifest that we consider them able to work us good or ill; at all events, every one prays the gods to avert evil and grant blessings. Well, these gods, omniscient and omnipotent, feel so friendly toward me that their watchfulness over me never lets me out of their ken night or day, no matter where I am going or what business I have in view. They know the results also that will follow any act; and so they send me as messengers omens of sounds, dreams, and birds, and thus indicate what I ought to do and what I ought not to do (Xenophon, *Symposium*, 4.47–48 [Todd, LCL]).

Hermogenes’ boastful claims of divine favor contrast the attempts of all peoples to discern the will and plans of the gods through divination and prayer with his reception of “omens of sounds, dreams, and birds” (φήμας καὶ ἐνύπνια καὶ οἰωνοὺς) as “messengers” (ἀγγέλους). As Speyer notes, birds often function as divine messengers in Greek literature.¹⁵² Also, dreams could be personified as a divine messenger sent by a god, as in *Iliad* 2.5., in which Zeus commissions Oneiros to speak to Agamemnon. His claims here are significant because they describe divine revelation through audible and visible omens/dreams and divine messengers as a superior alternative to divination.

¹⁵¹ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 171. Hanson, on the other hand, prefers a background among Semitic culture-hero traditions (see Hanson, “Rebellion in Heaven,” 226–32). A possible bridge between the Semitic and Greek traditions is narrated by Philo of Byblos, who tells of Phoenician traditions of euhemeristic heroes, some of whom (most notably Chousar [= Kothar]) are known as lesser deities in the Ugaritic myths (*Phoenician History*, 808.21–24).

¹⁵² Speyer, “Divine Messengers,” 40.

Even more relevant is the discussion between Diotima and Socrates described in Plato's *Symposium*, 202e–203a. Diotima describes a “great demon” (δαίμων μέγας) which mediates between gods and humans. He goes on to describe this act of mediation:

Interpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances and requitals from above: being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one. Through it are conveyed all divination and priestcraft concerning sacrifice and ritual and incantations, and all soothsaying and sorcery. God with man does not mingle: but the spiritual is the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, whether waking or asleep. Whosoever has skill in these affairs is a spiritual man (Plato, *Symposium*, 202e–203e [Lamb, LCL]).

Like Xenophon, Plato here links the “interpreting and transporting” (ἐρμηνεῦον καὶ διαπορθμεῦον) of communication between gods and humans with divination. Moreover, Diotima argues that it is only through such spiritual intermediaries that gods communicate with humans.

These two examples illustrate that within Greek thought there was a belief in the mediation of divine revelation through such “messengers” as dreams/omens, sometimes personified as divine beings or birds, and demons.¹⁵³ Such mediation was connected with divination and other mantic arts. Although he falls outside the chronological parameters of this study, Philo of Alexandria understood the prophetic spirit as an angel, external to the prophet.¹⁵⁴ Levison sees in Philo's interpretation of the prophetic spirit as an angel the influence of Greek philosophy, especially Plato's *Symposium*, with regard to the

¹⁵³ Speyer, “Divine Messengers,” 42–44.

¹⁵⁴ For example, in *Vit. Mos.* 1.274, Philo's retelling of the story of Balaam (Num 22–24) has the angel tell Balaam, “You must say what I prompt you, without any thoughts of your own, finding utterance, as I will guide the organs of your speech in the way that shall be just and expedient, for I will direct your words, predicting all that shall happen through the agency of your tongue, though you yourself shall understand nothing of it” (trans. C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo*[Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993], 485).

mediation of divine revelation through intermediary spirits/demons.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, he understands Philo's explicit characterization of Balaam's angel-inspired speech in *Vit. Mos.* 1.274 as "the ousting of his abilities of artificial divination."¹⁵⁶ Balaam's reputation as a diviner and sorcerer stands in contrast to prophecy through the angel. Philo's interpretation, although late, indicates the influence of earlier Greek views regarding the mediation of divine revelation on a Jewish understanding of prophecy and angelic mediation.

Summary

In the early Hellenistic period the interpreting angel motif reached its mature form. Many of the developments which began in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods achieved a fuller form in the fourth–second centuries B.C.E. These include especially the guidance of the seer along a cosmic journey by an angel, who explains various features and answers his questions. The major exemplars of this form of the motif, which is heavily indebted to Ezek 40–48 and to Babylonian mantic wisdom, are *The Book of Luminaries* (*I En.* 72–82) and *The Book of Watchers* (*I En.* 1–36). New developments in the Enochic texts are the identification of angels by personal names, the presence of multiple interpreting angels, and the organization of angels into a hierarchy of specialized personnel. The latter at times appears to guide the choice of angel for Enoch's interpreter (e.g., Uriel in *I En.* 72–82).

¹⁵⁵ Jon R. Levison, "The Prophetic Spirit as an Angel According to Philo," *HTR* 88 (1995): 189–207.

¹⁵⁶ Levison, "The Prophetic Spirit," 191. Levison compares Philo's view with that expressed by Plutarch with regard to the oracle at Delphi. Plutarch argues that the oracle depends upon the presence of demons (*δαίμονιοις*), so that when the demons leave the oracle, all prophecy ceases (*De defectu oraculorum*, 418c–418d) (Levison, "The Prophetic Spirit," 192).

In Dan 7–8 the function of the interpreting angel motif as an alternative to divination becomes clear. Throughout Dan 1–6 Daniel is contrasted with the Babylonian diviners, who are repeatedly unable to perform their primary task of discerning the secret plans of the gods by interpreting dreams, visions, omens, etc. (Dan 2:4–11; 4:4; 5:7–8). Daniel is able to do what they cannot, but he credits the interpretation of secrets to God alone, rather than his own wisdom and knowledge (Dan 2:27–30). Moving into Dan 7–12, Daniel no longer appears as the wise interpreter of dreams, but instead he stands as dumbfounded by his dreams and visions as Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and the Babylonian diviners (Dan 7:15, 28; 8:15, 27; 12:8). Daniel relies completely on the interpretations offered by the angels (Dan 7:16–18, 23–27; 8:17–26). These interpretations and the visions to which they correspond are given in a form familiar from Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24; Zech 1–6. The key difference in Dan 7–8 is that all traces of prophecy are gone, replaced by apocalyptic symbolism and angelic interpretation. At the same time, Yahweh’s absence is not absolute, for Daniel is able to stand in the divine council, and he hears the voice of God speaking to the angel in Dan 8:16. But there is no direct communication between God and Daniel, and Daniel does not function as a prophet in any capacity.¹⁵⁷ The discontinuity between Daniel and earlier prophets, in conjunction with the polemic against divination in Dan 1–6 and Daniel’s own lack of understanding in Dan 7–12, suggests that angelic interpretation emphasized the divine source of both the revelation (vision) and its interpretation, thereby ensuring its accuracy and authority and clearly distinguishing it from all human efforts to discover the future.

¹⁵⁷ Enoch, on the other hand, does function as a prophet speaking the word of God to the fallen Watchers in *1 En.* 15–16.

Political developments in the early Hellenistic period appear to have played a limited role in the development of the interpreting angel motif. Much of the situation under the Persian Empire continued in the late fourth–mid-second centuries, including the absence of a local monarchy in Judah and rule by imperial authorities through political intermediaries arranged within an administrative bureaucracy. The most significant new feature was the increased autonomy of local authorities. Neither the Ptolemaic nor the Seleucid Empires were as strong as the Persian Empire had been, and competition among the Diadochoi and their successors in the Hellenistic kingdoms necessitated reliance on local dynasties and strongmen, such as the Jewish Tobiads, who held considerable power and functioned as semi-independent regional rulers. This autonomy may be reflected in the higher level of autonomy of angelic beings in Hellenistic period Jewish texts. Angels now bear personal names, represent nations (Dan 10:13, 20–11:1; 12:1), and do battle against one another, perhaps reflecting the turbulence of the early Hellenistic period.

Finally, many of the religious influences and parallels from earlier periods continued to flourish in the Hellenistic period. The Mesopotamian *apkallu* tradition is well-attested in the fourth–second centuries and appears to form a significant part of the background of *1 Enoch*. Persian parallels, such as *Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5, may have existed in some form during the early Hellenistic period, and the general culture of mantic wisdom was certainly widespread at this time. The influence of Greek thought regarding the mediation of divine revelation by intermediary demons and spirits, as found in Xenophon's *Symposium* and Plato's *Symposium*, may also have played a role in the continued development of Jewish angelology and the role of angels in divine revelation, as seen in the later writings of Philo of Alexandria.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The Development of the Interpreting Angel Motif

As the preceding chapters have shown, the interpreting angel motif underwent considerable development from its first appearance in Ezek 40–48 to its full blossoming in Dan 7–8. In the summary below, I trace the development of this motif through the texts analyzed in the preceding chapters. I then note the influence of imperial administration on Jewish angelology, as evident in the texts under discussion, and religious influences which contributed to the shift from prophetic mediation to angelic interpretation. Finally, I discuss the function and significance of the interpreting angel motif in the texts under discussion and in the context of Second Temple Judaism in general, before offering some observations regarding issues for further research.

The Neo-Babylonian Period: Ezek 40–48

In Ezek 40–48 a “man” (אִישׁ) appears in “divine visions” (מֵרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים) and guides the prophet through a tour of the future temple (Ezek 40:1–4). This is not the first time such a “man” appears in the book of Ezekiel. Similar figures appear in Ezek 1:26–28; 8:2–3, but in these texts the being in question appears to be Yahweh or a hypostasis of Yahweh, whereas the guide in Ezek 40–48 is distinct from, although closely associated with, Yahweh (Ezek 43:6). In Ezek 40–48, the man, whom I identify as an angel, functions primarily as a guide and surveyor of the temple, and most of his activity

consists of taking measurements of rooms and other features of the temple.¹ His stated duties include showing Ezekiel the temple (Ezek 40:4) and instructing him about the laws and ordinances of the temple (Ezek 44:5), but he periodically explains features (Ezek 40:45–46; 41:22; 42:13–14; 46:20, 24; 47:8–12). Overall, the angel’s role in Ezek 40–48 is primarily that of guide and only secondarily an interpreter. The angel’s role as interpreter is most prominent in Ezek 47:1–12, which differs from most of Ezek 40–48 in its strongly mythological imagery and its apocalyptically-oriented eschatology. Here the angel asks the only question of the tour, “Have you seen, O Son of Man?” (Ezek 47:6). Without waiting for a reply, the angel explains the meaning of the river which flows from the temple (Ezek 47:8–12).

Throughout Ezek 40–48 angelic interpretation of the prophet’s vision stands alongside classical prophetic mediation through oracles (Ezek 43:7–27; 44:6–46:18; 47:13–48:35). The presence of the interpreting angel does not indicate divine distance, for Yahweh also appears and speaks directly in much of the text.² Moreover, the close identification of the angel with Yahweh, almost to the point of hypostatization, suggests that the angel represents and extends Yahweh’s presence.³ This understanding is consistent with the function of messengers in the ancient Near East.⁴

¹ As noted in chapter 2, the man’s primary duty is indicated by the measuring reed he holds in his hand (Ezek 40:3; cf. Zech 2:5; Rev 21:15).

² Cf. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 560; Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:200; Oesterly and Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, 250–51.

³ See Schöpflin, “God’s Interpreter,” 201–02.

⁴ See Meier, *The Messenger*, 191–201; Green, *The Role of the Messenger*, 7.

The Persian Period: Zech 1–6

Significant development of the interpreting angel motif is apparent in Zech 1–6. Here the interpreter of Zechariah’s night visions is unambiguously identified as “the angel who spoke with me” (המלאך הדבר בי) (Zech 1:9, 14; 2:1, 7; 4:1, 5; 5:5, 10; 6:4). Zechariah’s visions are more highly symbolic and mythological than those in Ezek 40–48—with the exception of Ezek 47:1–12—and require the angel’s interpretation in order for their meaning to be clear. The necessity of angelic interpretation is apparent in the prophet’s admissions that he does not understand what he sees (Zech 4:5, 13) and his frequent requests for explanation (Zech 1:9; 2:2, 4, 6; 4:4, 11, 12; 5:6, 10; 6:4). Zechariah is portrayed more as a recipient of divine revelation than as a mediator of divine revelation, as the angel now fills the role of mediator.

Zechariah 1–6 closely parallels a handful of earlier prophetic texts in which a prophet sees a symbolic vision, which Yahweh interprets (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24). In her study tracing the development of the symbolic vision motif, Niditch argues that Zech 1–6 marks a transitional stage between the pre-exilic form of the motif and the “baroque” form of Dan 7–8.⁵ The symbolism of Zechariah’s visions does not depend on wordplays or other “logical” correspondence between symbol/vision and meaning, but rather draws on mythological imagery. In some instances, the visions *are* their meaning, i.e., they are “real-mythic” (Zech 1:8–12; 2:5–9; 6:1–8). Thus, in Zech 1–6 the mystery and otherworldliness of the visions is heightened, as is the need for a supernatural interpreter. The formal pattern of vision + question and answer is similar to

⁵Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 10–11. Not only is the symbolic imagery more highly developed in Zech 1–6, the inability of the seer to understand his visions is explicit. While Yahweh interprets the visions of Amos and Jeremiah, there is no indicate that these earlier prophets did not or could not understand their visions, whereas Zechariah’s ignorance is readily apparent.

ancient Near Eastern dream interpretation, which suggests a divinatory context. The key difference in Zech 1–6, however, is that the “prophet” stands in the position of the bewildered dreamer, while the angel acts as diviner/interpreter. The diminishing of Zechariah’s role as mediator of the word of Yahweh signals a shift away from classical prophecy and toward apocalyptic literature.⁶ At the same time, however, there is a heightening of the authority of the revelation, since the interpretation of the vision is spoken not by a human being, but by an angel.⁷

The Early Hellenistic Period: 1 En. 17–36; 72–82; Dan 7–8

The interpreting angel motif reaches its mature form in the early Hellenistic period. With the exception of Enoch’s ascent to heaven and his commissioning by God to deliver a message to the fallen Watchers (*1 En.* 14–16), all traces of classical prophecy disappear. The seer is no longer the mediator of divine revelation but the recipient. Questions and requests for further explanation are abundant, and in the case of Dan 7–8, the seer’s inability to understand his visions is explicit.⁸ As in Zech 1–6, the formal pattern suggests a divinatory background, and the content of the visions in *The Book of Luminaries*, especially, supports this view.⁹ In Dan 1–6, Daniel is portrayed as a member

⁶ Zechariah 1–8 is transitional between prophetic literature and apocalyptic literature, i.e., it is proto-apocalyptic (see especially Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 125–27). Zechariah does still function as a true prophet in some cases (e.g., Zech 1:1–6; 4:8–10; 6:9–15; 7–8). The line between angelic interpretation and prophetic oracle is sometimes blurred, as the angel sometimes speaks an oracle which Zechariah is to repeat to the people (Zech 1:14–17).

⁷ See Finitsis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 141.

⁸ Enoch’s questions are not presented as a sign of ignorance but as an expression of his great curiosity (*1 En.* 25:1–2). Given Enoch’s status as the primeval sage *par excellence*, it is not surprising that care would be taken not to present him as lacking understanding. At the same time, however, it is quite clear that Enoch’s knowledge does not arise from his own wisdom but from the revelations of the angels.

⁹ As discussed in chapter 4, *1 Enoch*, especially *The Book of Luminaries*, shows considerable dependence upon Babylonian-style mantic wisdom (VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 23–51).

of the guild of court diviners, and he is constantly contrasted with his Babylonian colleagues, who are unable to discern divine revelations (Dan 2:4–11; 4:4; 5:7–8). Daniel is able to do so, but only because God reveals the meanings of dreams and visions to him (Dan 2:27–30). In Dan 7–12, Daniel is dumbfounded before his visions and must receive interpretations from angels (Dan 7:15, 28; 8:15, 27; 12:8). Any notion that Daniel interprets visions through his own wisdom and knowledge is completely dispelled, and the interpreting angel is the only mediator of revelation.

Angels first receive personal names in the literature of the early Hellenistic period. Named angels appear in *The Book of Luminaries*, *The Book of Watchers*, and Dan 7–12.¹⁰ All of *The Book of Luminaries* is presented as the revelation of the angel Uriel, who is called the “leader” (*marāḥihomu*) of the heavenly luminaries (*1 En.* 72:1). A number of different angels serve as Enoch’s guide/interpreter in *The Book of Watchers*, including Uriel (*1 En.* 19–21; 33), Raphael (*1 En.* 22:3–22; *1 En.* 27:1–4; 32:5–6), Raguel (*1 En.* 23:4–24:4), and Michael (*1 En.* 24:5–25:6). Daniel’s interpreter, at least in ch. 8, is Gabriel (Dan 8:16), and Gabriel also appears as an angel of revelation in Dan 9–12. In some instances, the choice of interpreting angel appears to reflect the particular specialization of that angel (e.g., Uriel for the luminaries).¹¹ On the other hand, the interpreter in Dan 7:15–27 seems to be a bystander in the heavenly council, chosen at random (Dan 7:16). The identification of angels by personal names indicates greater autonomy and personality than in either Ezek 40–48 or Zech 1–6. Likewise, the angels in

¹⁰ One may add to this list the book of Tobit, which likely dates to the third century B.C.E. (John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004], 546). An angel named Raphael, as well as a demon named Asmodeus, figure prominently in the narrative.

¹¹ Dörfel, *Engel in der apokalyptischen Literatur*, 173; Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 413.

I Enoch and Dan 7–12 wield a considerable amount of authority, as officials in an angelic hierarchy (*I En.* 6:3–8; 9:7), guardians and overseers of spiritual and natural phenomena (*I En.* 20; 72:1), and “princes” of nations (Dan 9:13, 20–21; 12:1).

God does not communicate directly with the seer in *The Book of Luminaries* or Dan 7–12, but in *I En.* 15–16 Enoch ascends to the throne of God and receives a message directly from God, which he is to deliver to the fallen Watchers.¹² Daniel is able to stand in the divine council and see the “Ancient of Days” (עתיק יומין) seated on his throne (Dan 7:9–10), and he hears the voice of God speaking to Gabriel in Dan 8:16. While God does not play a direct role in revelation (except in *I En.* 15–16), nor does God interpret visions, God is accessible in other ways.¹³ By the third–second centuries B.C.E., it seems, divine revelation had become the work of angels,¹⁴ and one of the chief forms of angelic revelation, at least in apocalyptic literature, was angelic interpretation of visions.

Imperial Administration and Jewish Angelology

The sixth–second centuries saw the socio-political landscape of ancient Israel transformed with the fall of the Davidic dynasty and the demise of the kingdom of Judah. For the next 450 years, Judah and the Jewish people were subject to foreign imperial rule,

¹² Enoch is a unique figure in Jewish tradition. In *I En.* 15–16 his mediation of the word of God to the Watchers is ironic, as indicated in the admonition, “You ought to petition on behalf of men, not men on behalf of you” (*I En.* 15:2). Angelic mediation is held up as the norm and human mediation as an aberration. Enoch’s uniqueness may be compared with that of Atrahasis/Utnapishtim in the Mesopotamian flood narrative, and he was eventually exalted to the status of archangel in *3 Enoch*.

¹³ As noted in chapter 4, however, in some later texts God acts as interpreter of visions (*4 Ezra* 12:10–39; 13:21–58; *2 Bar.* 39–43). It could be that in some circles the increasing emphasis on angels was seen as a threat to monotheism, and God was more directly involved in the process of revelation. Yet even in these instances, the seer does not function as prophet/mediator but as recipient of revelation. Even when received revelation is passed on to others, either through writing (*I En.* 68:1) or orally (*I En.* 83:1), it is not proclaimed as a prophetic oracle, but as a narration of the seer’s reception from the angel or from God.

¹⁴ The normativity of angelic revelation may be seen in the attribution of the revelation of the Torah at Mt. Sinai to angels in *Jub.* 1:27; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2.

first by the Neo-Babylonian Empire, then the Persian Empire, then briefly by a unified Greek-Macedonian Empire under Alexander the Great, and finally by the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires of the Hellenistic period. Against this historical background, the development of Jewish angelology and the increasing preference for mediated revelation (through angels) may be seen as an imitation of the new political situation. Yahweh is now a world deity, rather than a national deity, and he sits atop a network of intermediaries who do his bidding and extend his authority and presence throughout his domain. In this sense, Yahweh parallels his earthly counterparts, the “world” emperors, who likewise oversaw their political domains through intermediaries.¹⁵

During the Neo-Babylonian period, the role of imperial administration on the development of the interpreting angel motif is less clear, due in large part to the uncertainties regarding Neo-Babylonian policies and structures. A handful of inscriptions, most notably the Etemenanki inscription and the Babylonian Chronicle, describe some sort of Neo-Babylonian administration consisting of governors, vassal kings, and other officials existed both in Babylonia and in peripheral territories. In Judah, both biblical (Jer 40:5–7; 2 Kgs 25:22–23) and archaeological evidence support the identification of Mizpah/Tell en-Naşbeh as a Babylonian provincial capital. That such political transformations could influence conceptions of the divine may be seen beginning somewhat earlier in world-deity/one-god theologies (“summodeism”) of Assyrian and Babylonian religion in the first millennium B.C.E.¹⁶ Smith argues that as Judah increasingly came into the orbit of the Mesopotamian “world” empires and

¹⁵ This is the basic thesis of Meyers and Meyers in their discussion of angels in Zech 1–8 (*Haggai and Zechariah*, lviii–lix, 114).

¹⁶ Smith, *God in Translation*, 149–80.

simultaneously lost its national identity, Yahweh came to be viewed less as a national deity and more as a world deity.¹⁷ Along with the rise of monotheism came the birth of Israelite/Jewish angelology, as the pantheon was restructured with Yahweh alone at the top and subservient angels, who did Yahweh's bidding, below.

The evidence for influence from the political sphere is clearer and more abundant in the Persian period. On the one hand, Persian imperial administration is better documented than that of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The Behistun inscription of Darius I and several Greek historians describe the division of the vast Persian Empire into satrapies, each of which was governed by a powerful Achaemenid satrap who answered directly to the king. Beneath the satrap were numerous provincial governors and lower-level bureaucrats, often drawn from local dynasties. Notably, the management of such a vast empire required an efficient postal system to facilitate communication between provincial authorities as the central administration.¹⁸ Similarly, the Persian kings relied on networks of spies known as the "eyes of the king."¹⁹ These "eyes of the king" find a direct parallel in the "eyes of Yahweh" (עֵינֵי יְהוָה) in Zech 4:10b, and possibly Zech 1:10–11; 6:1–8 as angelic beings which mediate Yahweh's watchful presence throughout the earth.²⁰

The main contribution of the early Hellenistic (Ptolemaic, Seleucid) administrations to the development of the interpreting angel motif appears to be the

¹⁷ Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 165.

¹⁸ See Briant, *History*, 369–70. Meyers and Meyers attribute the prominence of angels as intermediaries in Zech 1–8 to the model provided by the Persian Empire's use of messengers (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai and Zechariah*, lviii–lix, 114).

¹⁹ Briant, *History*, 344; Cook, "The Rise of the Achaemenids," 233.

²⁰ See Oppenheim, "The Eyes of the Lord," 173–80.

increasing autonomy and “personality” of angels. The basic structure of the Hellenistic administrative bureaucracies was not that dissimilar from the Persian system, and especially in the Seleucid Empire it largely adopted pre-existing structures. Territory was divided into nomes (Ptolemaic) or satrapies (Seleucid), which were governed by high-level officials (nomarchs, *oikonomoi*, royal scribes, *strategoï*, etc.). These larger units were subdivided into smaller units, which were generally governed by low-level bureaucrats drawn from local dynasties, priesthoods, etc. Because the Hellenistic empires were smaller and less powerful than the Persian Empire had been, they relied more upon the cooperation of local dynasties and strongmen, such as the Tobiads, in provincial areas, resulting in increased autonomy at the local level.²¹ The increased autonomy of political intermediaries may have led to the increased autonomy of angels, as seen in *1 Enoch*, Tobit, Dan 7–12, and other Jewish texts of the Hellenistic period.²² While still subservient to Yahweh, angels now have personal names and operate more independently of Yahweh, who plays little or no role in revelation. Angels also function as national guardians or patrons (Dan 10:13, 20–11:1; 12:1), similar to the national patron deities of earlier times, making them more “god-like.”

²¹ See Grabbe, “Hyparchs, *Oikonomoi* and Mafiosi,” 88–90.

²² While not of primary concern for this study, perhaps the greatest ramification of increased autonomy of angelic beings was the potential for “malfunctioning” or rebellion. By allowing angels greater autonomy, it became possible to attribute evil to rebel angels, and by at least the third century B.C.E. a tradition of angelic rebellion had developed (*1 En.* 6–11). Handy argues that this tradition formed as a theodicy in response to the imputation of evil to Yahweh which monotheism created (e.g., Isa 45:7) (Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 166–67). As with the similarity of angelic guardians of nations to national patron deities, “fallen” angels are in many ways analogous to demons as independent divine beings often (though not always) viewed as harmful (see, for example, Frank Moore Cross and Richard J. Saley, “Phoenician Incantations on a Plaque of the Seventh Century BCE from ArslanTash in Upper Syria,” in *Leaves from an Epigrapher’s Notebook: Collected Papers in Hebrew and West Semitic Paleography and Epigraphy* [ed. Frank Moore Cross; HSS 51; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 265–272).

Religious Influences

Religious influences on the development of the interpreting angel motif are of two types. First, there are a handful of parallels to the motif in the literature of the ancient Near East and the eastern Mediterranean. These include Mesopotamian dream reports in which divine beings reveal secrets to dreamers, sometimes in the form of symbols which they interpret.²³ In the Persian era “Nabonidus Verse Account,” Nabonidus is said to have claimed to have received revelations of mantic wisdom from a deity, although the text does not state the manner in which the revelation took place.²⁴ In a few mythological texts, divine beings interpret symbolic dreams, such as Ninsun’s interpretation of Gilgamesh’s dream,²⁵ Ea’s warning of Utnapishtim/Atrahasis through a dream in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*,²⁶ and the various divine figures which appear to the dreamer in *LudlulBēlnēmeqi*. Close parallels appear in two Persian texts, *Bahman Yasht* 1:1–5 and *Arda Viraf*, in which divine beings (either Ahura Mazda or an angel [*yazata*]) interpret symbolic visions concerning the future and/or the cosmos. Both of these texts, even in their earliest forms, post-date at least Ezek 40–48 and Zech 1–6, and possibly *I En.* 1–36; 72–82 and Dan 7–12 as well, however.²⁷ Therefore their influence on the interpreting angel motif is questionable, although they may indirectly attest to Persian ideas regarding angelic mediation of revelation. Finally, discourses concerning the mediation and

²³ See especially the Neo-Assyrian dream report in which the dreamer sees an inscribed statue, which the god Nabu reads for him (Aššurbanipal, V R 2, III: 118–27 [Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 249–50]).

²⁴ See Machinist and Tadmor, “Heavenly Wisdom,” 146–49.

²⁵ *Epic of Gilgamesh*, SBV I.287–93.

²⁶ SBV XI.196–97.

²⁷ But see Boyce’s arguments for early “kernels” for these texts (“Middle Persian Literature,” 48; *Textual Resources*, 91–92).

interpretation of divine revelation (particularly dreams) by demons/spirits appears in Xenophon's *Symposium*, 4.47–48 and Plato's *Symposium*, 202e–203a, possibly indicating belief in interpretation of revelatory dreams by divine beings in Greek religion. These parallels may provide evidence of ideas in the religions of the ancient Near East and the eastern Mediterranean which contributed to the development of the interpreting angel motif in Jewish literature.

The second type of religious influence comes from mantic wisdom and divination, as reflected in a wide array of sources across throughout the ancient Near East. As discussed below, the interpreting angel motif functions as an alternative to banned forms of divination. While not necessarily paralleling the interpreting angel motif, a number of texts provide evidence of the divinatory background against which the motif developed. These include especially reports of dream interpretation and the Babylonian *apkallu* tradition. The Neo-Assyrian *Dream Book* provides an extensive guide for oneiromancers, in which the various potential symbols in dreams are correlated with their meanings, thus allowing the knowledgeable diviner to interpret symbolic dreams.²⁸ The knowledge required to interpret such symbols was enshrined within a vast body of mantic wisdom which was maintained by the guild of diviners.²⁹ It was believed to have derived, ultimately, from Ea through the mediation of the *apkallū*, a group of semi-divine antediluvian intermediaries who taught primeval humanity the arts of civilization. The *apkallu* tradition is known from several sources dating from the seventh–second centuries

²⁸ See especially Oppenheim, *Interpretation of Dreams*. As I have argued throughout this study, interpreting angels function analogously to diviners by interpreting symbols which relate divine revelation. The interpreting angel motif—and the biblical symbolic vision motif in general—clearly distinguishes Israelite/Jewish prophets and seers from pagan diviners by denying them the ability/knowledge to interpret symbolic visions and dreams and making them dependent upon a divine being for interpretation.

²⁹ See Bottéro, *Religion*, 178–79; Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 106–22.

B.C.E., thus placing it well within the chronological parameters of this study.³⁰ Although the *apkallū* have often been cited as a parallel to the Enoch figure of Gen 5 and *I Enoch*,³¹ as well as the Watchers of *I En.* 6–11,³² they also provide a background for the interpreting angel motif. Interpreting angels function analogously to the *apkallū* by mediating divine knowledge. Unlike the teachings of the *apkallū*, however, the revelations of interpreting angels did not become the basis of divination but instead served as a counter to divination by highlighting the inability of even great men like Ezekiel, Zechariah, Enoch, and Daniel to understand symbolic visions and dreams apart from an angelic interpreter.

The Function and Significance of the Interpreting Angel Motif

The interpreting angel motif is part of a larger shift away from classical prophecy which began in the sixth century B.C.E.³³ The role of the prophet as mediator of the word of Yahweh diminished, in favor of angelic mediation. Instead, the prophet was now a seer of visions and a recipient of interpretations and other forms of revelation from angels. While adopting a form reminiscent of divination (especially dream interpretation), the human element in discerning the will of God diminished. Niditch traces the development of the symbolic vision motif through Dan 7–8 and argues that the

³⁰ These include the “Etiological Myth of the Seven Sages” from the *Bītmēseriseries*, Berossus’ *Babyloniaca*, and the Seleucid era “Uruk Sage List” (see Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 106–20).

³¹ VanderKam, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, 45–51.

³² Kvanvig, *Mesopotamian Background*, 313–15.

³³ One could, in fact, trace this shift back into the eighth century, as it is anticipated by the symbolic visions in Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3 and later in Jer 1:11–19; 24. Yahweh, rather than an angel, interprets these visions, but there is a great deal of formal similarity between these and the visions of Zech 1–6. But such visions do not become prominent until Ezek 40–48. Prior to the sixth century, divinely interpreted symbolic visions are rare, but from this time onward they are plentiful, at least within one strand of literature.

motif draws on ancient Near Eastern divination (oneiromancy) but counters it by casting the prophet/seer in the role of dreamer and recipient of interpretation, rather than diviner. Instead, either Yahweh (Amos 7:7–9; 8:1–3; Jer 1:11–19; 24) or an angel (Zech 1–6; Dan 7–8)³⁴ fills the role of diviner/prophet, with the implication that human knowledge is insufficient for interpreting such visions.³⁵ At times the seer’s ignorance is explicit, as he confesses that he does not understand what he sees and/or asks for an interpretation (Zech 1:9; 2:2, 4, 6; 4:4–5, 11–13; 5:6, 10; 6:4; Dan 7:16, 19, 28; 8:15, 27).³⁶

What is implied in Ezek 40–48; Zech 1–6; *I En.* 17–36; 72–82 is made clear in the book of Daniel. In Dan 1–6, Babylonian divination and diviners are portrayed as inept frauds, while Daniel alone is able to interpret dreams and visions. Yet Daniel does not interpret by his knowledge of signs and symbols, i.e., mantic wisdom, but through special divine revelation (Dan 2:27–30). While Daniel’s abilities, though inspirational in nature, are highlighted in Dan 1–6, in Dan 7–12 he stands just as ignorant as his Babylonian counterparts. He cannot understand his visions without angelic interpretation (Dan 7:15–16; 8:15, 27; 12:8), and in one instance he does not understand even after he receives the interpretation (Dan 8:27).³⁷ The interpreting angel motif, thus, polemicizes against divination by presenting even great men like Ezekiel, Zechariah, Enoch, and

³⁴Niditch excludes Ezek 40–48 and *I En.* 17–36; 72–82 on formal grounds, but I have included them due to their utilization of interpreting angels, albeit in a somewhat different manner than Zech 1–6 and Dan 7–8.

³⁵Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision*, 34, 39. See also Schöpflin, “God’s Interpreter,” 189.

³⁶ Enoch frequently asks for explanations, but the text does not present his questions as arising out of ignorance or inability to understand, but a yearning for greater knowledge (*I En.* 25:2). Ezekiel does not ask questions of his guide, although the angel does question him once (Ezek 47:6).

³⁷ In only one instance is Daniel said to have understood a revelation (Dan 10:1), and the text implies that it was only because he received understanding from the angel that he was able to comprehend.

Daniel as dependent upon angels to interpret their visions for them.³⁸ Their role is less that of mediator than that of recipient of mediated revelation. At the same time, the authority of the revelation is enhanced and the certainty of its interpretation guaranteed by the fact that it came not from a human but from an angel.³⁹ This certainty is all the more paramount in the context of apocalyptic literature, where precision and determination are vital to the message of the text. The ability of the interpreting angel motif to provide this certainty explains why it is primarily found in apocalyptic and proto-apocalyptic literature.

Areas for Further Research

Apart from the present study, no extensive investigation of the interpreting angel motif has been conducted. A great deal of research remains to be done on the continued development of the motif beyond the parameters of this study. The terminal date of this study, ca. 165 B.C.E., marks the beginning of the flowering of Jewish apocalyptic literature and related genres, such as testamentary literature and rewritten Scripture. The interpreting angel motif appears in much of this later literature, such as *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and *3 Baruch*, and it also appears in the book of Revelation (Rev 22:16) and later Christian literature, such as *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *The Apocalypse of Peter*, and *The Apocalypse of Paul*. Future studies may trace the continuation of the motif in later periods.

³⁸The teachings of the Watchers in *1 En.* 7–8 contain many elements of mantic wisdom and closely parallel the myth of the *apkallū* as teachers of primeval humanity. Since the *apkallū* were believed to be the ultimate source of Mesopotamian mantic wisdom, the demonization of the Watchers in *1 En.* 6–11 may also be a polemic against divination, while the instruction of Enoch by the angels offers a sanctioned alternative.

³⁹Finitsis, *Visions and Eschatology*, 141.

Although the development of the interpreting angel motif from the sixth–second centuries appears fairly stable and consistent, in some later texts the more direct form of divine revelation reappears (e.g., *4 Ezra* 12:10–36; 13:21–53; *2 Bar.* 39:1–40:4), with God acting as interpreter. It may be that in some circles too much focus on angels was seen as a threat to monotheism and/or the sovereignty of God over his creation.⁴⁰ Likewise, the implications of the rise of Christianity, with its view of Christ as mediator between God and humanity and as the chief revelation of God (John 1:18; Col 1:15–16), warrant exploration. Similarly, the relationship between the interpreting angel motif and the renewed belief in the bestowal of the prophetic spirit as expressed in Acts 2:16–21; 1 Cor 12–14; and other New Testament texts presents an opportunity for further research. With regard to the latter, Philo’s identification of the prophetic spirit as an angel in *Vit. Mos.* 1.274 may be a key piece of evidence.

The interpreting angel motif is but one expression of the growth of Jewish angelology in the Second Temple period which warrants further study. Other developments, such as the role of angels as guardians of nations (Dan 10:13–14, 20–21; 12:1), angels as heavenly priests (4QShirShabb [4Q400–4Q407]), angels as intercessors for humanity before God (*1 En.* 9:4–11; 15:2; 89:76; 104:1), and the association of angels with heavenly bodies and natural phenomena (*1 En.* 72–82; *Jub.* 2:2) form the broader context of the development of the interpreting angel motif. *Jubilees* recasts the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai as revelation mediated by an angel—a tradition which also appears in Gal 3:19 and Heb 2:2—which may indicate that some segments of Second Temple Judaism read much of the Hebrew Bible as given through angelic mediation.

⁴⁰Rofé argues that a similar concern may be seen in some Wisdom texts (e.g., Job 4:18; 15:15; 25:5; 31:26–28), which caution against venerating or worshiping angels (*The Belief in Angels*, 89–119)

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